

John 8:31-48

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

31,32 Notice that Jesus is speaking to those who believed in Him, which probably means they believed He is the promised Messiah. Jesus explained what it means to truly be His disciple. It is to live continually in His word (Psalm 1:2). "Word" is singular - which could mean the whole of Scripture, or the whole of what Jesus taught. Disciples of the first century memorized the words of their rabbi.

If you do live in His Word, then you will know what truth is and that truth will set you free. Free from what? Freed from the enslavement of sin to walk in the Spirit (Romans 8:2; 2Corinthians 3:17). We are free to serve God instead of living selfishly. If we struggle to be free from selfish behavior or other sinful acts, it is because we are not living in His Word. The Word empowers and transforms us (Romans 12:2).

³³ They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

33 They answered like many people today would answer. "What are you talking about! We aren't enslaved to anything! We are descendants of Abraham!" That was a telling response because the Jews had been punished by God in their history and were captives of the Babylonians and Persians for 70 years. At the time this took place, Rome ruled over the Jews and could conscript them to forced labor at any moment. We don't like to recognize our lack of freedom. But Jesus will clarify what He means in the next verse.

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

34 Jesus makes it very clear that the slavery He is talking about is bondage to our sinful nature. Paul describes how it once held him in bondage in Romans 7. He said the things he was trying not to do, he ended up doing. And the good he wanted to do, he couldn't bring himself to follow through on it. At the end of that chapter, he asks who will deliver him from that bondage he felt he was under. His answer was, "Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." That is similar to what Jesus is saying here.

³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

35,36 Jesus is speaking to the Jewish concept that to be descended from Abraham meant having a reservation in the coming kingdom of God. He is declaring that if you are slave to sin, how could you expect to be a permanent member of the family of God? If the Son of God makes you into an adopted son of God and frees you from bondage to sin, only then do you have a guaranteed seat at the family of God table (Galatians 4:30; 1:4)!

37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.

37 Jesus knew their physical lineage, but He is saying their actions reveal their spiritual lineage (Matthew 7:20). The first and major clue of our spiritual lineage is if we have room for Jesus' words (1 Corinthians 2:14). We are back to where we started. They believe He is the Messiah, but do they cling to His words and live by them (Hebrews 2:1)? They are ready to kill Him because He suggested they are enslaved to sin. This crowd obviously did not have room for Jesus' words. Do we? Do you hunger for His word? Are you living in them to be free?

38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." 39 They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, 40 but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. 41 You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father--even God."

38-41 Very few think they are children of the devil. Most people believe they are children of God, destined for heaven. Yet, an honest look at their actions would reveal they are acting very differently than those whose father is God. It takes revelation and a willingness to face reality.

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.

42,43 Simple logic: If you love God, you will love the One He sent. They refused Jesus' teaching which was contrary to their beliefs because their hearts refused to consider it. We will often encounter those who refuse to hear because they have no room for Jesus' words in their hearts.

44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

44, 45 Now Jesus makes it very plain to get past their hard hearts and hopefully break through to some. Their father is the devil because they listen to his lies and want to do his murderous deeds. Jesus, however, speaks truth which they refuse to believe. Real love risks rejection when communicating the truth people don't want to hear.

46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

46 Here is one of those "no one ever spoke like this man" sayings. Who would dare ask this? Jesus' defense of His words was His sinless life. Then He pleads with them to consider why they can't believe the truth He is trying to share with them.

47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." 48 The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

47,48 The child of God receives God's Word. Those who refuse to hear the Word are not of God. There is nothing wrong with questioning. It is a necessary part of learning. But once we hear we have choice. Truth confirms itself over time in our hearts, our minds, and experience.

Questions

How do we become true disciples of Jesus?

Are we aware of sins enslaving power?

How can we have a place at the family of God table?

Why do people have no room for Jesus' word?

Why is it so hard for someone to admit that their father is the devil?

Why could they not understand Jesus?

How can we tell who our real spiritual father is?

Who can say verse 46? What was Jesus saying? Relate