

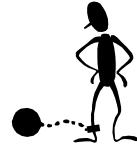
Truth & Freedom

John 8:31-59

Knowing the Truth

□ Read John 8:31-36.

1. According to Jesus, what is a true disciple?¹ (8:31) What is the result of “holding to” (remaining faithful) to Jesus’ teachings? (8:32)
2. “The truth will set you free” has become a popular saying. What do you think people usually mean by this saying? Many people believe that education “will set us free.” What do you think?²
3. In this passage, “the truth will set you free” has a particular meaning. In what way can we be “set free” by the “truth?” What is “freedom?” What kind of “slavery” is Jesus talking about? To what degree is humanity affected by this “slavery?”³
4. How do the Jews respond to Jesus’ offer of freedom? (8:33) What does this indicate about their perception of their need? How can one’s position; privilege; national, cultural, or religious identity keep him or her from true freedom?⁴



The Light & You

- Jesus was talking to people who believed *something* about Jesus (8:31), but it became clear that some of them were not “true disciples.” What about you? Are you a “true disciple?” Do you hold to Jesus’ teaching? A true disciple seeks to understand, and commits to obey Jesus’ teaching as a way of life. What changes in your life are needed to live as a true disciple?
- Have you acknowledged the need to be “set free?” What is enslaving or binding you? Jesus says, “Hold to my teaching. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

¹ ‘Disciple’ means ‘learner, follower of.’ Jesus says his true disciples ‘hold to’ (abide, remain, continue in) his teaching. True disciples seek to understand, and commit to follow as a way of life. Then true disciples will ‘know the truth’ and the ‘truth will set them free.’

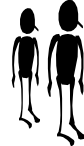
² ‘The truth will set you free’ is the motto of numerous universities. In the philosophical sense, the saying means the truth (knowledge of facts) will liberate us from the bonds of ignorance. This is true, and applies to our understanding of the gospel. However, education alone cannot ‘set us free’ from *spiritual* bondage. Our problem is not merely intellectual; it is spiritual, and relates to our moral condition and relationship with God.

³ Jesus says ‘everyone who sins (continues in sin)’ is a ‘slave to sin’ (8:34). The Bible says ‘all sin’ (*Romans 3:23*) and everyone enters life in slavery to sin. We are controlled by our sinful desires, and the necessary result of sin is death (*Romans 6:23*). The ‘truth’ offers freedom from both the controlling influence of sin and the result of sin (which is ‘spiritual death’ – separation from God, the Source of life). The ‘truth’ is closely connected with Jesus himself (14:6) who died on the cross for our sin and shame, and was raised from the dead thereby defeating sin and death. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are united with him in his victory over sin and death. This is true freedom!

⁴ They say, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone.’ Whatever Jesus is offering, they don’t think they need it. They feel secure as ‘Abraham’s descendants’ (‘God’s people’). They are relying on their ethnic/religious status, not realizing that a true relationship with God (and true freedom) is realized through faith. Those who rely on their status, descent, or achievements are blinded from their real needs, and the real solution.

Opposing the Truth

- ❑ In their discussion with Jesus, the Jews said, “We are Abraham’s descendants” (8:33). That’s true. The Jews are *physical* descendants of Abraham (8:37). However, it is more important to be a *spiritual* descendent of Abraham. The true children of Abraham are those who believe.
 - 📖 *Paul said, “So also Abraham ‘believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:6-7)*
- ❑ Read John 8:39-47. Jesus denies that his Jewish opponents are true (spiritual) descendants of Abraham (8:39). Jesus also denies that God is their father (8:42).
 5. According to Jesus, who *is* their “father?” (8:44) On what basis does Jesus say this? What characteristics are used as evidence?⁵ (8:44-47)



- ❑ They refused to believe Jesus. They accused him of being “demon-possessed” (8:48). Jesus responded, “I am not demon-possessed, but I honor my Father and you dishonor me” (8:49).

Proclaiming the Truth

- ❑ Jesus said he seeks to bring glory to the Father (8:50), and he said, “Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death” (8:51).
- ❑ The Jews responded in anger, “Are you greater than our father Abraham? ... Who do you think you are?” (8:53). Read John 8:54-59.
 6. Jesus makes several bold claims in his discussion with the Jews (8:31-32, 42, 51, 55-56), including, “...before Abraham was born, I am!” (8:58). What does Jesus mean by this statement? Do the Jews understand what Jesus is claiming about himself?⁶

📖 *As God sent Moses to Egypt to deliver Israel, he said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14)*

📖 *“I, the LORD – with the first of them and the last – I am he.” (Isaiah 41:4b)*

📖 *“Yes, and from ancient days I am he.” (Isaiah 43:13a)*

The Light & You

- The Jews in this passage were unwilling to believe Jesus’ claims. Like them, many people today are unwilling to believe Jesus’ claims. Assuming the Bible accurately records Jesus’ life and words (an “assumption” with sound basis), we are left with three alternatives. Either Jesus is a liar, lunatic (insane), or Lord. What do you believe? Why? Read John 20:30-31.

⁵ Jesus says their father is ‘the devil’ (8:44) – the chief fallen angel and leader of the demons and all that is opposed to God. The basis for this identification is their unbelief and behavior. The devil is opposed to the truth (Jesus), and so are they. They are ‘unable to hear’ (8:43, 47) because they are inclined against God and the truth. Their rejection of the truth is evidence that they do not ‘belong to God’ (8:44, 47). If God were their father, they would be sensitive to God’s voice (through Jesus).

⁶ Jesus is claiming his eternal existence and unique unity with God the Father (1:1-2, 14). The Jews must have interpreted his claim as blasphemy (insulting God) because they attempted to stone him. Stoning was the penalty for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16) though it was supposed to be carried out by judicial decision, not mob violence. The Jews understood Jesus’ claim, but rejected it, believing him to be a liar or lunatic (insane or demon-possessed).