

*True Disciples*  
John 8:31-38  
Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Bethany Baptist Church  
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...pray...

Let's begin by turning to **John 2:23-25** and reading it *together*.

I said last Sunday that this *brief text*, appearing early in John's Gospel, is a *paradigm* for understanding faith in John.

Do you understand John's *faith principle*? Not **all** faith is **real** faith (2X; *real = saving*). Jesus knows the *difference* in each of us, from the start.

Here's *another example*: In **John 6** Jesus *feeds a crowd* and they are ready to *make Him king!* But when His *teaching gets tough* ("I am the bread of life...eat My flesh...drink My blood") they *grumble and leave*.

**6:66** – As a result of **this** (His teaching) many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

They *grumbled* and *withdrew*. Was their faith *real*? Apparently **not**...

Now let's turn to **John 8:30-38**.

Last Lord's Day we concluded with this *seemingly hopeful statement*, the Jews' response to Jesus' warning about *sin and death and judgment*:

**v.30** - As He spoke **these things** many came to **believe in Him**.

What do you think, *true or false*...?

How can you *know*?

How do we distinguish between a *true disciple* and a *false follower*?

How about *you*? Are you a *true disciple* or a *false follower*? Or just *dead in your sins*?

Jesus explains **four characteristics** of a *true disciple*.

1. **Love**. Love of His *word* (31).
2. **Freedom**. Freedom from *sin* (32-34).
3. **Security**. *Eternal security* (35-36).
4. **Reflection**. Showing His *image* (37-38).

**A disciple loves the word of Jesus (read v.31).**

1. The idea of a *disciple* is popular in the NT gospels. What is a *disciple*?
  - a. Being a *disciple* is fundamentally an idea of *following* and *learning*.
  - b. The *Jewish Pharisees* and *rabbis* had followers. *John the Baptist* had followers. *Jesus* had followers.
  - c. Jesus raises the issue of *reality* with His most recent group of *wanna-be-followers*.
  - d. Note in **v.31** Jesus says that whether or not you are *truly* His disciples is *conditional*!
  
2. The **gate-keeper** to discipleship is *faith*. Jesus initiated this teaching with those from **v.30** who had listened to His *invitations* and *warnings*, and had *believed* in Him.
  - a. **Invitation:** v.12 – “*I am the Light of the World, He who follows Me will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of life.*”
  - b. **Warning:** v.23, 24 – “*You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefor I said to you that you will die in your sins.*”
  - c. **Condition (hope!):** v.24 – “*unless you **believe** that I am, you will die in your sins.*”
  - d. Apparent **outcome:** v.30 – “*As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.*”
  - e. **Two** keywords in John 8 are essentially synonymous: *believe* & *follow*.
    - i. “*He who **follows** Me (12)...unless you **believe** that I am (31)*”
  - f. So genuine *faith* is the **gatekeeper** to true *discipleship*.
    - i. Which *begs our question* and *leads to Jesus’ first evidence*, here in v.31....
    - ii. How do you **know** your faith is *real*? **Look again at v.31.**

3. *Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you **continue** in My **word**, then you are **truly disciples** of Mine.”*
  - a. The *initial evidence of discipleship* (therefore *faith*) is your relationship to Jesus’ *words*.
  - b. “**Jesus’ words**” here imply what He had *just said*, what He been *saying all along*, what He has *heard* from the Father, and what *all of Scripture* (OT/NT) says.
    - i. Rom 10:17 – *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*
  
4. Jesus could have used a *number of ideas* to *drill down* on the disciple’s relationship to the word of Jesus, but He chose the word “**continue**.”
  - a. *If you **continue** in My word, **then** you are truly My disciples.”*
  - b. **Continue**. This word is *huge*! The Gr. verb is  $\mu\eta\nu\omega$  – *continue in* or *abide in* or *remain in*.
  - c. To **continue** means to *keep on going*. To *remain in*.
  - d. W.r.t Scripture: *loving, absorbing, obeying...*
  - e. **Not** just loving Jesus’ words the **first day**, but **every day**.
    - i. “*O how I love Your law! It is my meditation **all the day**”*
    - ii. I can *assure* you, friend, **all the day**, implies **every day**.
  - f. To **continue** in Jesus’ words means to *obey* Jesus’ words.
    - i. Jesus: “*If you love Me you will keep my commandments.*”
  - g. And to **continue** in Jesus’ words leads to *knowing the truth*.
    - i. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the **truth**, and the life, not one comes to the Father but by Me.*”
    - ii. If **Jesus** is *truth*, **His words** are *truth*.

5. Beloved, this is perhaps the easiest *time & place* in church history to put this *condition* of your *discipleship* to the test! Are you *abiding* in the Word?
- a. *Our weekly prayer list* has a request that **never** gets erased: “*That every BBC listener would be **equipped** by the preaching & teaching of God’s Word.*”
  - b. So several times a week I *pray* that God will use His word to *equip* you in the faith. I *pray* for my *preaching*, for our *Sunday School teachers*, for *Bible studies*, your **QT**, your *personal study*, *Christian books*, and *Christian media*.
  - c. I know God will *answer my prayer* if you are His *disciple*!
  - d. So I’ll *wrap up* this first characteristic with a simple comment on **v.31** from **John MacArthur**: “*True disciples are Word oriented.*”

**Jesus' followers are free! (Read vv.32-34).**

1. Let's begin by picking out the *key words* and discerning the Jews' *changing attitude*.
  - a. The keywords here are *free* (2x), *enslaved*, *slave* and *sin*.
  - b. The Jews are *offended* by what Jesus *implies*, and their *enthusiasm* for Jesus begins to *crumble*!
2. The Lord *rounded-off* His first *declaration* about *discipleship* (32.b) with this promise: "*...the truth will make you free.*"
  - a. But if someone needs to be *freed* you must be *enslaved*.
3. And so the Jews were *offended*! **Read v.33.**
  - a. "*We are Abraham's descendants* (lit. *seed*)."
    - i. The Jews' *connection* to Abraham, and thus God's Covenant with the Patriarch, is their fundamental source of *spiritual identity* and *security*.
    - ii. If you belong to Abraham, **all** is *forgiven* thus **all** is *well*.
  - b. "*We...have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that you say, 'You will be free'?*" *That's* the source of their *irritation*!
    - i. Well, *everyone* in this conversation knows *Jewish history*, and in fact, the nation had been enslaved by *Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Syria*, and (now) *Rome*.
    - ii. But Jesus **wasn't** talking about *Jewish history* or *political oppression*, and these Jews *knew* it.

- c. Jesus has just reminded them of a *spiritual* truth: every woman/man born of Adam is man/woman *enslaved to sin!!!*
  - i. David himself lamented (Psa 51:1): *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.* The king was confessing His sinful nature.
  - ii. *Except...these Jews are **not** accepting it...*
  - iii. *“We have **never** yet been enslaved to **anyone.**”*
  - iv. This is a *spiritual* declaration of *spiritual* freedom, secured by being *Abraham’s descendents.*
- 4. Then Jesus corrects their *theology* with a *solemn warning* (35): *“**Truly, truly,** I say to you, everyone who **commits** sin is the **slave** of sin.”*
  - a. Sin makes *slaves.* *Every time.*
  - b. Turn w/me to **Romans 6. Follow as I read vv12, 16, 19-21.**
    - i. We are either *slaves of sin* **or** *slaves of righteousness.*
    - ii. There is **no** *middle ground.*
- 5. And the **only** *power* to *emancipate* you from sin is the *power* of Christ, who is the *truth.*

6. **That's the second truth** about Jesus' disciples: "*you shall know the **truth**, and the **truth** will make you **free**.*" As in...*free* from sin!
- a. When you *follow* Jesus and *love* His word, the daily grip of *sin* on your life will be *continually weakened* ("Progressive Sanctification").
  - b. As **Chas. Wesley** penned: *Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast closed in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I rose, the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off! My heart was free! I rose, went forth, and followed Thee!*
  - c. Beloved, *you're free!* the follower of Jesus has **no** obligation to sin's *penalty* or *power*, and in heaven, *you'll be free of its presence*.
  - d. Back in **Romans 6**, Paul concludes by turning the *spiritual slave principle* upside down (22,23): *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!*
7. Beloved in the Lord, you **don't** have to sin (you are free!). And if you are truly following Jesus, ever *increasingly*, you will *walk in your freedom!*



**Jesus' disciples are *eternally secure*. (Read vv.35-36).**

1. Jesus continues with His *slave* illustration, but He resets its *meaning*.
  - a. In vv.32-34 Jesus promised that His disciples are no longer *slaves to sin*.
    - i. It's an illustration of the *Doctrine of Total Depravity*, and Jesus' power to *free us from sin*.
    - ii. But that made the Jews *mad!* "*We've never been slaves of sin!*"
  - b. Now in vv.35-36 Jesus teaches that *slaves* of the household are *temporary residents*. As in, His Father's *heavenly* household.
    - i. Whatever *place* (real, assumed) the Jews have in God's *household*, it's *temporary!* *Slaves* don't stay. They don't have the same status/privileges as *family*.
    - ii. But the *sons* of the household are *permanent residents*.
    - iii. Do you see it v.35? – true sons *stay forever!*
    - iv. And Jesus' *disciples* are *true sons*.
2. If salvation makes you Jesus' *brother/sister*, your place in God's house is *secure*.
  - a. V.35 – Jesus promises: "*the son (us) does remain forever.*"
  - b. V.36 – Jesus promises: "*you will be free (sons, not servants) indeed.*"
    - i. The "*indeed*" is *emphatic*.

3. So Jesus underlines His *promise of eternal security* by emphatically repeating His *initial promise of freedom* from **v.32**.
  - a. “So if the Son makes you **free**, you will be free...**indeed**.”
  - b. Freed **by** the *truth*, free from *sin*, and free to *remain forever* in the *Father’s house*.
  
4. The **NT** clearly teaches that once you become Jesus’ *true disciple*, you are His *forever*.
  - a. Theologians have *several labels* for this truth.
    - i. *The Doctrine of Eternal Security*.
      1. We are *secure* in Christ. Our **v.36** teaches that; we *remain/continue/abide forever*.
    - ii. *The Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints*.
      1. The *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Truth* offers def’n: *...those who are truly among the elect will remain faithful to the end*.
    - iii. *The Doctrine of the Preservation of the Saints* (all the same truth)
      1. We **must & will** *persevere* to the end...because God **preserves** (always *enables*) us to *persevere* to the end.
      2. **Jude 24** – *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy. To Him be glory...*
      3. He *keeps you from stumbling*, He *makes you stand in the presence of His glory*. Because you are His *true sons/daughters*.

**Jesus’ disciples, God’s sons/daughters, have a forever home, forever secured.**

**Jesus followers *love His truth, walk in freedom, are kept secure, ... and they reflect their Father.* (Read vv.37-38)**

1. Several years ago we went on a *family vacation*.
  - a. We all piled into the *elevator* to go down and start our day. An elevator *full* of nothing but **Bowens!**
  - b. On the *ground floor* the *door opened* and there was older woman waiting to *ride back up*. She stared at all of us and said,
  - c. “*My! The power of genetics.*”
  - d. Jesus is simply saying, “*you look like your father*”!
  
2. Who are God’s *children*?
  - a. Being *Abraham’s descendant* is **no slam-dunk!** Jesus begins by *acknowledging* they have Abraham’s **DNA**, but **not** His *righteousness*.
  - b. Back in **v.12** (began), Jesus invited anyone/everyone to *follow Me*.
    - i. **Now** (37) He accuses these Jews that instead *following Him* they want to *kill Him*.
  - c. Just a moment ago (31) Jesus said His true disciples *continue in My word*.
    - i. **Now** (37) – *My word had no place in you* (lit. *finds no room, makes no progress*).
  - d. Does this sound like *real faith...like a true disciple*?

3. After such a *promising start* in vv.30& 31, why is their *faith a false start*?
  - a. It's a spiritual *paternity* problem!
  - b. Jesus' message is inspired by what He has *seen* with His Father.
    - i. Jesus is *repeating a claim* He's made often in John's Gospel.
      1. He has existed *with the Father* from all eternity.
      2. (→ Jesus is *eternal*. → Jesus is **God**.)
      3. Jesus' works & words reflect His eternal *fellowship with the Father*.
      4. **5:19 (Jesus)** – "*Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing.*"
    - ii. **I.e.** Jesus is *uniquely* God's Son...!
      1. So all that Jesus *does* reflects His *fellowship/relationship* with God.
  - c. As Jesus continues in v.38, He doesn't even allow these Jews to lay claim to **Father Abraham!**
    - i. **V.38.b** – "*you also do the things which you have heard from your father.*"
    - ii. They **don't** embrace Jesus' *word* and they **aren't** *true disciples* because God **isn't** *their father!*

iii. Who *is* their father...? **FF to v.44.**

1. Yes, *genetically*, they can pay for one of those *Ancestry* tests and trace their **DNA** to *Abraham*.
  2. But *spiritually*, their father is the *devil*, the ruler of *this world system*.
  3. Their *unrepentant pride*, their *words*, and their *deeds* all reflect the influence of their *true spiritual* father – *the devil*.
  4. So *despite* their promising start (30), we are *back* at Jesus' earlier *warnings* (23, 24): “*you are from below ...you are of this world ...you will die in your sins.*”
4. Christian, do you know God's *purpose* for **your** life? ***I do!*** It's to *be like Jesus*. Which implies you'll *reflect* God.
- a. We have a *responsibility* to be godly: **Eph 5:1** – *Be imitators of God, as beloved children.*
  - b. But **God** has the ***biggest*** part in helping you *become like Jesus*. **Rom 8:29-** *For those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become **conformed** to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.*
  - c. ...until finally, in the Last Day (Phil 3:20), *our Savior*, [the Lord Jesus Christ], will ***transform*** the body of our *humble estate* into ***conformity*** with the body of His glory, by the ***exertion of the power that He has*** even to *subject all things to Himself*.
    - Did you *hear that!*?! From *our humble estate* to His *body of glory!*  
**Hallelujah!**

**So who do you *reflect*...? Jesus reflected His Father. If you truly Christ's disciple, so will you.**

**I know there's *warning/confrontation here*, but this text should bring joy to Jesus' disciples!**

1. **You love His word!** That's why you're *here*...
2. **You are *escaping sin's bondage!*** Not all once, but w/*holy determination*...
3. **Your heavenly home is *reserved!*** Jesus (Jn 14) – “*In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you, for I go to **prepare a place for you.** If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and **receive you to Myself**, that *where I am*, there you may be also.”*
4. **You are *changing!*** You *love God better* than you did at the beginning. You *love your neighbor better* than you did at the beginning. **You look more like Jesus!**

*“If you continue in My word, then you are **truly disciples of Mine**; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*

*...pray...*