

Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 8:12-38 (June 14, 2026)

Jesus, the Light of the World and the Truth That Sets Us Free

Central Truth: As the Light of the world, Jesus reveals our bondage to sin and the truth that will set us free to be everything God intended for us to be.

John's purpose (20:31): "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

What are some areas of life where people commonly look for guidance, meaning, or freedom apart from God? Why will those sources always leave people disappointed?

I. Jesus Declares: "I Am the Light of the World" (verse 12)

- A. Context: Against the backdrop of the brilliantly illuminated Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus claims to be the ultimate fulfillment of everything the lights symbolized: God's presence, guidance, truth, and salvation.
- B. Just as the pillar of fire guided Israel through the wilderness, Jesus guides His followers through life's uncertainties.
- C. Darkness blinds people to truth and represents separation from God, ignorance, sin, and despair. Jesus delivers people from all forms of spiritual darkness.
- D. Light--physically speaking--allows us to see things. Figuratively speaking, it is whatever enables us to see and understand our moral duty and recognize the difference between right and wrong, justice and injustice, and that which is true and that which is false.
- E. The one who follows Jesus as the Light of the world "will not walk in darkness." To "follow" Jesus is to walk in the light.
- F. As we follow Him as the Light of the world, we also become "the light of the world."

Discussion Questions

Why was Jesus' statement so significant during the Feast of Tabernacles?

How is following Christ similar to Israel following the pillar of fire?

What does "light" symbolize throughout Scripture?

What dangers result from walking in spiritual darkness?

How does Jesus provide spiritual light that no other source can provide?

Am I looking to Christ as my primary source of truth and direction?

What areas of my life remain in spiritual darkness?

II. The Pharisees Reject the Light (verses 13-20)

A. They rejected His testimony.

B. They judged according to appearances.

C. They claimed to know God but failed to recognize His Son.

Discussion Questions

What evidence had Jesus already provided regarding His identity?

Why did the Pharisees struggle to accept Him?

Is my faith based on total, personal surrender or just religious familiarity?

III. The Danger of Unbelief (verses 21-30)

A. Jesus came from above; His opponents were focused on earthly things.

B. Refusing to believe in Jesus keeps people in a state of sin.

C. The cross would ultimately validate everything Jesus had claimed.

Discussion Questions

Why is Jesus' warning about dying in sin so serious?

How did the crucifixion and resurrection confirm His identity?

Am I living with an eternal perspective or merely an earthly one?

IV. True Discipleship: Abiding in Christ's Word (verses 31-32)

A. True disciples continue learning, obeying, and growing.

B. Abiding leads to knowing the truth.

C. Knowing the truth sets us free from the bondage of sin and death and frees us to live the life God intends for us to live.

Discussion Questions

What is the difference between believing about Jesus and abiding in His Word?

Why is perseverance a mark of genuine discipleship?

How does abiding in Scripture deepen our relationship with Christ?

What evidence of spiritual growth do I see in my life?

V. The Truth Shall Set You Free (verses 32-36)

A. The Jews misunderstood Jesus' statement about freedom.

B. Every unbeliever is a slave to sin.

C. Only the Son can provide true freedom.

Discussion Questions

How does our culture define freedom and is that the most important freedom?

How does Jesus define freedom?

What does it mean to be “free indeed?”

Have I experienced Christ's freedom from guilt and bondage?

Are there sinful patterns in my life that call for His deliverance?

VI. Who Is Your Father? (verses 37-38)

A. The reality of Abraham's offspring

B. Spiritual parentage is revealed by whom we obey.

Discussion Questions

Why wasn't physical ancestry enough to make them children of Abraham?

What characteristics marked Abraham's faith?

Is my faith producing obedience like Abraham's?

Do Christ's words find a welcoming place in my heart?

VII. Major Themes of the Lesson

1. Jesus is the Light of the World. Only He reveals God, truth, and the path to eternal life.

2. Following Christ requires faith and obedience. The blessings of light are experienced only by those who truly follow Him.
3. Unbelief has eternal consequences: those who reject Christ remain in their sins.
4. Genuine disciples abide in His Word. True faith perseveres and continues to develop.
5. Only Christ can set us free. Freedom from sin and the freedom to live as God designed and desires us to live is found in Christ alone.

Closing Challenge: Jesus presents every person with a choice. We can remain in darkness, trusting our own understanding, or we can follow the Light of the World. The true test of faith is not merely agreeing with Jesus' words but continually abiding in them. As we continue in His Word, we discover the truth, experience freedom, and walk in the light of life.

Final Reflection Questions

Am I genuinely following Jesus, or merely agreeing with Him?

What area of darkness does Christ want to illuminate in my life?

How consistently am I abiding in His Word?

In what ways has Christ set me free?

What step of obedience is the Light of the World calling me to take this week?

Sunday School Lesson for June 14, 2026
John 8:12-38

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallahassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this second Sunday in June, we're well into our study of the deep and wondrously profound gospel according to John, whose purpose in writing this book, as he tells us in chapter twenty, verse 31, is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Following Pastor Trey's sermon on the story of the woman caught in adultery in the first eleven verses of chapter eight, the focus of today's lesson is on verses twelve through 38 where Jesus speaks to the people gathered in the Temple court about His testimony, His departure, and how the truth could set them free.

With verse twelve of chapter eight, John returns to recording the dialogue from chapter seven between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, apparently still during the Feast of Tabernacles. In the first part of this conversation found in verses twelve through twenty, we find Jesus speaking in the treasury--the place where the offering containers were placed near the entrance to the Court of Women in the temple. According to the Talmud--the compilation of ancient teachings of Judaism--the Court of the Women was brilliantly illuminated every night of the Feast of Tabernacles perhaps as a reminder of the Pillar of Fire that led the Israelites as they made their way to the Promised Land.

On the first evening of the Feast, two huge golden lamps that stood by the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court were lit as night began to fall, and their light poured out a brilliant flood over the Temple and the city, perhaps **like you see in the picture behind me**. Such was the backdrop to our Lord's words here.

As He had done during the Feast of Tabernacles with the water pouring ceremony, the Lord Jesus links His words with the sights and sounds of the Temple. Against the backdrop of this brilliantly illuminated, architectural wonder--verse twelve--“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

“I am the light of the world.” This is the second of the “I am” sayings of Jesus, reminiscent of God’s instructions to Moses at the burning bush when He told him, tell the Israelites that “I am” has sent you. In the opening words of his gospel, John, / describing Jesus as the Word, told us “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”

Psalm 97 begins with the words, “The LORD is my light and my salvation.” Isaiah recorded the word of the Lord in chapter sixty, verse nineteen: “The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light.” In the midst of all these images and memories and prophecies flooding their minds during the Feast of Tabernacles, the Lord Jesus now sovereignly declares, “I am that light.”

“Light” is an extremely important word in the gospel of John. Light--physically speaking--is a type of electromagnetic radiation that allows us to see things, and, the greater the light, the better the sight. Light allows us to discern the form, the distance, the size, and the relation of objects, and makes it possible for us to perceive and thus avoid the threats and dangers that result from a state of darkness.

Light--figuratively speaking--is whatever enables us to see and understand our moral duty and recognize the difference between right and wrong, justice and injustice, and that which is true and that which is false. Light is, in every

language, a symbol--a representation--of insight because it allows us to “see” our duty in life and save us from the evils of ignorance and error.

As the people of Judah languished in fear of the Assyrians, Isaiah spoke this prophecy beginning in chapter eight, verse 21: “They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. ... And they will be thrust into thick darkness. But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.”

That very light that Isaiah said would shine on the people walking in darkness has now appeared, and His Name is Jesus. He is the Light of the world, because he is the Source of the life of the world. So Jesus is the Water of Life that whoever drinks of the water He gives will never thirst again. He’s the Bread of Life: “If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.” The Father has this life in Himself, and He has given to the Son to be the One Who grants eternal life.

One of the remarkable things about the Israelites’ forty-year march through the wilderness was that they were led by the pillar of fire, and the lights surrounding the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated God’s guidance through its light. The guidance the pillar of fire gave was uninterrupted and unerring; it was never mistaken for an ordinary cloud, its shape never changed in such a way that the people couldn’t recognize it. When it stopped, the people didn’t know how long they would rest, and when it moved, the people didn’t know where they were going next. Their steps were ordered by the light of the pillar of fire. They simply followed--each and every day--in faith. And each night the flame shot up, and assured the people they might rest in peace.

Our path through life is a little bit like that. It's not a GPS route we're promised, but a personal Guide to lead us--not externally with a pillar of fire, but internally by the One Who is the Light of the world. We can't know where we'll be next year or next month. We know nothing of what tomorrow might bring by way of blessing or adversity, but our future rests in the unchanging reality that we will always be guided by God's infallible and loving wisdom if we're willing to trust and follow Him. So part of the point that Jesus was making when He said, "I am the light of the world" and "whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness" was that the Israelites of old had an external means of guiding them through the wilderness, but those who trust Him as the Light of the world would have an internal compass to lead them through the wilderness wanderings of everyday life.

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." The light that Christ offers to those who would entrust their lives to Him is the "light of life." He has told them already that He is the Bread of Life and the Water of Life to point out that He is truly and eternally like what these physical things are in the present, material world. In the same way, He is the Light of life / in that He offers a far greater and eternal provision of life than what we experience in the / here and now. In saying that He is the Light of life, Jesus could have meant that He is the Light that gives life or illuminates life; or He may have meant that He is the Light that comes from Life. In reality, He gives both life and light.

The one, therefore, who follows Him as the Light of the world "will not walk in darkness." To "follow" Jesus is to walk in the light. "Following Jesus" is a central theme of John's gospel, beginning in verse 37 of the first chapter when John the Baptist told two of his disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" and they followed Him, and ending with Jesus' response to Peter's question in the last chapter about what would happen with John: "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."

And we follow Him because He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life--John, fourteen, verse six.

The fear of the darkness of death had brought the adulteress to the very verge of the end of her life. In saying He was the Light of life, He was saying that He and He alone, / as the source of life, / could give, secure, and sustain life in such a way that even the fear of physical death disappears in the light of His life.

The contrast between light and darkness is another favorite theme in John's gospel. In the profound symbolism of Scripture, "darkness" is the name given to the condition of the soul separated from God, wandering aimlessly in the absence of spiritual and moral guidance as we find in John, chapters eight and twelve, and in First John, chapters one and two.

Jesus here declares that following Him is the true deliverance from that depravity of the soul. Darkness takes many forms--the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of sin, and a darkness of despair that marks those who do not follow the Light. But the hopeful, blessed side of our Lord's words is that the very first, halting steps toward Jesus bring us into the light. Then, as Alexander MacLaren writes, "To follow, though it be afar off, and with unequal steps, fills our path with increasing brightness, and even though evil and ignorance and sorrow may thrust their blackness in upon our day, they are melting in the growing glory, and already we may give thanks 'unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.'"

It is this light that Christ is and Christ gives, the light that fills our lives, flooding everything that involves human character, human conduct, and human destiny. As we follow Him as the Light of life, He is the source of light that flows through us that we become, as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "the light of the world." And there's so much more we could add here

about Jesus as the Light of life and His deliverance from every form of darkness in this very moment and throughout all eternity, but we must press on.

As glorious and promising and life-giving as our Lord's words were at that very moment as the lights of the Feast of Tabernacles glowed and brought back the memories of God's leading them out of the darkness of Egyptian slavery to the light of the Land of Promise, the Jewish leaders weren't moved in the least--verse thirteen: "So the Pharisees said to him, 'You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.'" They were complaining that what He's said can't be verified by the testimony of two witnesses as the Law required, therefore it's not believable, and they refused to accept it." They seemed to have forgotten just how many witnesses had verified Jesus' claims--scripture, the voice from heaven at His baptism, His miracles, and His constant claims that He had not come on His own but that He had been sent from the Father. So set were they on destroying Jesus' credibility and seeking to kill Him that they disregarded any testimony, relying on their own evaluation of Him instead.

So Jesus responds by telling them that His testimony alone is sufficient and that He had evidence that His testimony was true--verse fourteen: "Jesus answered, 'Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.'" He knew by what authority He was acting. He knew Who had sent Him. He knew what instructions He had received from the Father. He says, "I know"--a form of the word that means, "I know with full and complete knowledge and understanding."

They thought they knew something about where and when He was born and something about His family, but they didn't know anything beyond that / as we said last week. And they certainly had no idea of where He was going. They were clueless to all of this because, as we saw last week, they had not chosen to do God's will--they weren't seeking His heart and longing to follow

Him in loving obedience. They had their own agenda that was completely contrary to God's will, so they couldn't know that His testimony was true or where He came from or where He was going.

Time and time again, Jesus had told them that He did not come of Himself, that He did not come to do His own will, and that He had come from Heaven to do the will of His Father Who had sent Him. Since they had not seen and known these things, they weren't qualified to judge, / yet, as self-appointed judges, they flatly dismissed his testimony. And that's exactly the charge Jesus makes in the next verse--verse fifteen: "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one."

They had judged by appearances alone--just as He had warned them not to do in chapter seven, verse 24. They had judged according to their corrupt, worldly thinking so that, by their preconceived opinions and prejudices, they were determined not to believe that He was the Messiah.

Even though **they** have judged **Him**, Jesus says He judges no one. He told Nicodemus in chapter three, verse seventeen that "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." The Pharisees judged everybody. They took their legalistic, self-righteous judgment with them wherever they went. It was their job--or so they thought. But Jesus told them / that wasn't His job--He didn't judge anyone like they did. He didn't come to judge people by how they looked on the outside. He will tell the Pharisees later in chapter twelve, verse 47 that there will come a time of judgment. And there is a sense in which He did judge in the sense of making a distinction between one person and another as we read in verses sixteen and 26 of this chapter, but His was not the unjust, prejudicial, condemning judgment of the Pharisees.

Even if He were to judge--verse sixteen, "Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. I am the

one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” Even if He were to express His judgment, His judgment, like His witness, could be verified by His Father. They would certainly have to admit that the Father’s judgment would be trustworthy and true; so, since the Father had sent Him, His judgment would be consistent with what God has willed and revealed.

And so He cites the Law that they were using against Him from Deuteronomy chapter seventeen, verse six and chapter nineteen, verse fifteen: “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

Jesus had told them back in the last two verses of chapter five that Moses wrote of Him. Here, He repeats yet again what He’s said so many times before: His witness is confirmed by His Father Who sent Him: “I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.” So, if these Jewish legalists wanted to press the letter of the law, they **had** their two witnesses. Who were these two, fully trustworthy witnesses? Jesus makes unmistakably clear His relation to His Father to declare the trustworthiness of His witness. There was a Jewish saying that was probably well-known to the Pharisees that said, “Judge not alone, for none may judge alone save One”-- “One” meaning God.

At that point, all they could do was answer out of their anger, unbelief, and confusion--verse nineteen: “They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, ‘You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’” The Pharisees well knew that God is invisible. If they were challenging Jesus about His relation to the Father, they knew He couldn’t produce that second witness. On the other hand, their sarcastic question might have actually been a derisive challenge for Him to explain His earthly parentage.

The Jewish leaders gladly boasted about their knowledge of God, but they actually didn't know Him at all. Their ignorance of the Lord Jesus clearly showed it. The knowledge of the Son and the Father go together, and we can't truly know the One without knowing the Other: and where One is known, the Other will be known as well. To Philip in the Upper Room, Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father"--John, chapter fourteen, verse nine. Christ is the "radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature"--Hebrews, chapter one, verse three. "No one can know the Father, but the one to whom the Son reveals Him"--John, chapter one, verse eighteen.

John concludes his notes about this conversation by saying, "These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come." Once again, John tells us that even this confrontation with the religious leaders, as contentious as it was and in a very public place, was not the time for our Lord to be glorified.

In the next conversation with the Jews, Jesus warns them that He will not be with them much longer and that, unless they believe Him, they will die in their sins. Then, when He is crucified, they will know that His witness is true.

He begins by telling them in verse 21, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." This is a development of what He had said previously in chapter seven, verses 33 and 34 with the addition that they will die in their sin as they reap the fruit of their unbelief. Since they know neither the Father nor the Son--Who is the Light of the world Who gives eternal life--they will die unrepentant, unsanctified, unatoned for, unreconciled, forever separated from God.

Once again, the people in the crowd are confused about what Jesus has said--verse 22: "So the Jews said, 'Will he kill himself, since he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come?"'" If they can't follow Him, they figure that it's because He's no longer alive, and that His "going" means that He's going to take His own life, thus putting Himself beyond their reach.

So, Jesus tries to get them back on track in verse 23 by saying, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.” Returning to the previous debate in chapter seven about where He’s from, Jesus tells them they are “from below”--the lower, sensual, earthly, temporal world as opposed to the higher, spiritual, ideal, eternal world.

They’re hearts are ruled by their attachment to the things of this world that is passing away--its desires and its passions--all will which one day be destroyed--and they oppose the things that are eternal. They think Jesus is going to take His own life because they can’t conceive of the spiritual reality of what He’s telling them. Their worldview--their frame of reference--doesn’t allow a place for what He’s saying to them.

As a result, they will die in their sins. In verse 21, Jesus said they would die in their **sin**--singular--meaning they would continue in a **state** of unforgiven sin into the afterlife. Here, they will die in their sins--plural. Their individual sins will now testify against them that they have not believed in the Lord Jesus.

Why? Because they have not believed, as Jesus says, “I am He”--they refuse to believe that He is God’s promised Messiah, the Redeemer. Believing that He is God’s promised Messiah is the only way they or we can be delivered out of a state of sin and be forgiven of all our sins. In Jesus’ original words, He says, “unless you believe that I am you will die in your sins.” He declares Himself to be the great I AM of Exodus, chapter three, verse fourteen--a reference every Jew would have immediately recognized.

They may have been familiar with the reference, but they rejected the reality of Who Jesus is--verse 25: “So they said to him, ‘Who are you?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Just what I have been telling you from the beginning.’” From our perspective, it’s difficult to understand why they haven’t made the connection between Old Testament prophecy and His teaching and miracles.

It could well have been because they rejected what He had been telling them from the beginning and refused to believe, and this is how they tell Him they're not buying His message; or they're trying to get Him to tell them more that they can use to develop a stronger case against Him.

In verse 26, rather than continue to dwell upon their question of Who He is, He continues His primary thought--that of shining the light of truth on Who He is and how that affects them: "I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." He still has a lot to say about the things He's been speaking about since verse sixteen--really since verse fifteen of chapter seven.

His judgment is true, because it wasn't His judgment--it perfectly reflected the judgment of the Father Who had sent Him. Whatever objection they had to His assessment of their spiritual condition, He directs them back to the Father Who is true.

Still--verse 27--they can't comprehend His message or His testimony. So, once again trying to correct their misunderstanding, Jesus gives them a final, confirming sign of His authenticity--verse 28: "So Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.'"

Jesus had told Nicodemus back in chapter three that, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up," drawing Nicodemus back to the story in Numbers, chapter 21 where God told Moses to make a brass serpent, attach it to a pole, and lift it up so that anyone bitten by the deadly snakes could look to this image and be healed."

We don't know for sure if Jesus was utilizing this image in this message, but His hearers would surely have understood that He was speaking of being crucified. His crucifixion would be followed by a number of signs: the tearing of the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place in the Temple, the earth shaking, the resuscitation of what Matthew describes as

“many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep,” and, finally, by the Lord’s resurrection on the third day.

When they do this, Jesus says, facts will be forced upon them that no words could convince them. Then they will have the evidence--the proof--of everything that He had been telling them, and the most important thing that they would know would be that, as Jesus said, “I am he”--referring either to the Son of Man He referred to in the previous phrase or, since Jesus didn’t add the “he”--taking His audience back to that conversation between God and Moses in Exodus, chapter three when Moses wants to know what to tell the Israelites who asked him who sent him, and God identified Himself as “I AM.”

Jesus does the same thing here and adds that He does nothing of His own authority, “but [I] speak,” He says, “just as the Father taught me.” As we saw previously in chapter five, verse nineteen, Jesus had the power to act on His own authority, but no permission and no desire to do anything other than what the Father had placed in His job description--if we can call it that. So focused was He on His Divine mission objective and so conditioned to submit Himself to the Father, that He could neither misinterpret His Father’s will nor oppose it. His interests, His views, His purpose, His actions, His attitudes, His thoughts were identical to those of His Father. Because of the deep, abiding, unbreakable bond between Father and Son, it was the joy of His life to do the will of His Father: “[I] speak just as the Father taught me.”

And then, to conclude this part of the conversation, Jesus tells the crowd--verse 29--, “And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” Our Lord’s faithfulness to the purpose of the Father Who sent Him affirmed His perpetual union and presence with His Father.

As a result of His compelling message--verse thirty: “As he was saying these things, many believed in him.” We don’t know how strong their belief

actually was, but this believing was the result of hearing His words, not by seeing His miracles. Although believing on the basis of His words seems to indicate a deeper level of commitment, it appears to have merely brought them to the door discipleship, which is why the Lord speaks to those among them who believed with an even lower level of commitment and trust.

We read in verse 31, “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” It’s only a slight variation, but, the believers of verse 29 believe “in Him,” while the believers of verse 30 “believe Him,” although it doesn’t read that way in many of our English translations.

Alexander MacLaren identifies three levels of believing: those who believe Him, / those who believe on Him, / and those who believe “unto” or “into” Him--the highest level of belief--, and John uses different words for each one. It’s those who simply “believe Him” that our Lord addresses in verses 31 through 59.

Speaking to those who simply accept the probability that what He says seems to be correct and well-presented--those who, like the demons of James, chapter two, verse nineteen, who also believe--Jesus tries to draw them to a deeper level of understanding, commitment, and transformation. Note also that John identifies them as “Jews”--an term John uses for those who were antagonistic to Jesus. Still, the Lord reaches out to them in love and compassion.

The first evidence of genuine faith that the Lord calls them to is abiding in His word--not merely continuing to believe, but immersing oneself in the words of the Lord--an activity that’s revealed in obedience to those words. It’s one thing to believe Jesus, but quite another to be His disciple--someone who truly desires to and actually continues to learn of Him. For this group, that would require their rejection of their own, nationalistic ideas of a Messiah / to

press behind the veil of His humanity to seek to understand His divine nature and mission.

Abiding in His word would lead them to the truth, and, Jesus said, “the truth will set you free.” Only truth can set our minds free from the bondage of ignorance, prejudice, and self-gratification. As the Light of the world shines into the dark places of the heart, all the chains that bind us to the darkness will not only become visible, they will be broken.

As we’ll see in chapter fourteen, “The Truth” is one of the distinguishing names that Jesus uses to identify Himself. He had told them earlier in verse 24 that, unless they believe He is the Messiah, they would die in their sins; now, He tells them that, unless they abide steadfastly in His word, they will never escape their bondage to sin and its ultimate payback. On the other hand, as they abide in His word, they will know the reality about sin and salvation, heaven and hell, right and wrong, and righteousness and unrighteousness. They’ll know and enjoy freedom from the power and penalty of sin; and the complete liberty they would experience from this abiding would allow them to live in a restored, growing, unbroken relationship with God and begin the process of becoming everything that God intended for them to be--truly His disciples.

But that was a bridge too far for those who had indicated a superficial belief--verse 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?”’” Yes, they were the direct descendants of Abraham, and all of them should have been able to trace their lineage back to him.

In saying, “[we’ve] never been enslaved to anyone.” They seem to have conveniently forgotten their bondage in Egypt, their oppressions in the times of the Judges, their captivity in Babylon, and the Roman yoke they currently bore. But that’s not what Jesus was talking about. He was talking about their bondage to sin, and He makes that clear in verse 34: “Jesus answered them,

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’”

Everyone who cannot free himself or herself from falling back into sin is enslaved to sin. Before a person comes to Christ, Paul writes in Ephesians, chapter two, beginning in the first verse, “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” A dead person can never free himself from trespasses and sins. It’s impossible for an unbeliever not to sin, and the wages of sin is death.

And this slave to sin doesn’t “remain in the house forever.” A slave isn’t an organic member of the household, has no inheritance, and can be sent away or sold according to the whims or wishes of the head of the house. For the Jews who thought that, just because they were children of Abraham, they had a guaranteed reservation in heaven, Jesus demolished their gross mistake. Their slavish obedience to the Law that only revealed their rejection of God’s rightful rule in their lives and could never provide atonement for their sin / didn’t qualify them for a place in God’s forever Home because they were still slaves to sin.

The Son, however, always has a place in God’s forever home. He belongs. He’s part of the family, and He’s told them about one of the many reasons He has a place with the Father--most recently in verse 29: “I always do the things that are pleasing to [My Father].” So, the Son abides there forever, along with all the adopted sons and daughters whom the Son Himself has set free from their bondage to sin and thus are no longer slaves to sin but--Romans, chapter six, verse eighteen, “slaves of righteousness” “having been set free from sin,” and who are now “fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of

God"--Ephesians, chapter two, verse nineteen, just as Paul explained to the followers of Christ in Galatia in chapter four, verse seven of his letter to them: "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." "So,"--verse 36--"if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." You'll be a member of God's forever family. And there's so much more we could say about our extraordinary freedom in Christ.

As to their declaration that they are "offspring of Abraham," Jesus addresses their misconception of what actually defines the "offspring of Abraham." In verse 37, Jesus says, "I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you." He's telling them that there's a contradiction between what they're saying and what they're doing. "Abraham believed God, and He counted it to Him as righteousness"--Genesis, chapter fifteen, verse six--but these supposed offspring of Abraham were slaves to sin--slaves to unrighteousness, evidenced by their refusal to accept the One God Himself had sent to set them free from their sin--and not only their refusal to accept Him, but their objective to kill Him. If they were truly the offspring of Abraham in terms of faith, His words would have found a place in their hearts just as the Word of the Lord had found a place in Abraham's heart that resulted in his believing God. That's what it really meant to be a child of Abraham.

The bottom line, Jesus says in verse 38 is that "I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." The Lord Jesus' Father was, of course, God the Father, and their father is--as we'll discover in verse 44--the devil, and that sparks an intense confrontation that ended as they took up stones to stone Him, but this is where our text for today comes to an end.

Just another day in the life of our Lord Jesus as His time draws nearer. As He introduces Himself to the crowd as the Light of the world, He's attacked by the Pharisees who question His authority. Although He identifies the two witnesses that testify to the truthfulness of what He's saying, they challenge His relation to the Father, and, although He warns them that they will die in their sin if they persist in their disbelief, they refuse to consider the possibility that what He's saying is in any way true. Still, there are those who are persuaded to believe, but the Lord tests the validity of their belief by stating the true test of discipleship--continuing in His word, and, by so doing, the truth would set them free.

The same test is applied to us: are you, am I continuing in His Word, growing closer to Him every day, discovering more of His love and living out His plan and purpose for your life, and enjoying more of the freedom He offers to become everything that God intended you to be?

Thank you for being a part of our study of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John's eyes that's meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him. Next week, we continue on to chapter nine where we learn of the sixth sign that Jesus gave to show that He is the Messiah. Following Trey's sermon about the healing of the man born blind, we'll turn to verses fifteen through 41 to learn how Jesus responded to the challenges to this sixth sign.

As always, as it's still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

The resources for this lesson include Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes (1834), text courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive; The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; The Expositor's Bible, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; The Expositor's Greek Testament - Nicoll, Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com; Exposition of the Entire Bible by

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