

Set Free by Truth

John 8:31-59

MPS: Jesus sets free from sin when we abide in His truth.

OBJ: Every person can understand how Jesus sets us free to live in salvation by three lessons.

INTRO When I was in high school I could not wait to get free. I thought graduating and getting out of the house was going to be the best thing in the world. Then, all the bills started coming, and they had my name on it. I quickly learned, freedom is not determined by what you get out of. This lesson about real freedom is one that most people have to learn. So many things threaten to hold us captive in life, addiction and jail to name a couple. But many people are also enslaved by their jobs, debt, bad decisions, broken relationships, etc. When we get into something like this we have a tendency to believe that "if only I could get out" is actually the answer. Paul David Tripp says, "Obedience never ends freedom; it is the evidence that true freedom has entered your life and liberated your heart." **True freedom is never just about getting out, but putting your life in the only One who can give life, Jesus Christ.**

The Freedom I'm talking about today is ultimate freedom. Freedom from condemnation and guilt. Freedom from that which sources all the brokenness in your life. Freedom from that which causes you to not love or like others, for reasons and in ways that are helpful to you, and not even rightly love yourself. True freedom is never found in what you get out of, but how you walk or live daily. **True freedom comes only when we entrust our life to Jesus Christ who sets us free from the ultimate slavery of sin to walk in truth.**

Jesus sets free from sin when we abide in His truth.

READ John 8:31-38

³¹So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ³³They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

³⁴Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." **John 8:31-38**

Jesus speaks to those who believed in Him.³⁰ He says that if they abide in his Word, they will be set from by the truth. He moves to clarify what it means to believe, to be a true disciple, a real Christ-follower. **Following Jesus begins with a single decision, but remains in the present tense of God's power at work in one's life.**

Salvation answers our biggest need, but discipleship teaches our hardest lessons where true sanctification occurs. Discipleship clarifies in the physical realm what has really occurred in the spiritual realm. We are saved to be transformed in Jesus' image. True salvation produces sanctification. **Transformation of life means salvation completes in an instant what sanctification takes a whole lifetime to work out.**

OBJ: Three Lessons teach us HOW Jesus sets us free to live in the salvation He gives.

TRANS The first lesson Jesus teaches clarifies God's purpose in salvation.

1. Abiding in God's truth sets us free from slavery to sin to live as a child of God. .31-38

Jesus uses three phrases that help us understand what He says about the freedom that truth brings. **First, abiding in Jesus' Word reveals true belief.** Jesus contrasts "abiding in" against only "enjoying" His Word. God's Word is not intended to be our inspirational thought of the day. **God's Word sources His life in us.** We must remain in His Word if we want His word to remain in us. Reading, meditating and memorizing God's Word are all essential practices that demonstrate true



belief in Jesus because it demonstrates our dependence upon God as our source of life. [Abiding in God's Word is the "life line" for Christ-followers.](#)

Second, when we abide in Jesus' word we come to know the truth. Christians abide in Jesus' Word because that is how we come to know the truth. "Knowledge" in the Bible never refers to useless facts or trivia, or even intellectual property, but understanding from personal experience through practice. One commentator states, "We come to know the truth, not simply by intellectual assessment, but by moral commitment."¹

ILLUS If you ever hear me say, "I want to tell you about skydiving", you can be confident of this, it's something I've read. I don't really "know" about it. You see, I do fly when necessary, but I DO NOT jump from airplanes or high places. I've never even jumped off the high dive at the community pool. But when it comes to God, many people claim to "know God" with the same level of knowledge that I have of skydiving or jumping from high places.

When we believe in Jesus, we remain in His word until what it says produces obedience in how we live. [From a Biblical perspective, knowing God's truth always produces obedience.](#)

Third, personal obedience to God's truth sets us free. As long as you practice sin you remain enslaved to it. Obedience displays our freedom from sin's enslaving practices. How we live demonstrates what we believe about who we are. Obedience is not the power that breaks sin's enslavement, but the fruit that reveals God's power in us that does break sin's power over us. [Obedience by abiding in God's truth reveals our true belief in what Jesus says about our new identity; we are children of God.](#)

[Abiding in God's Word reveals true belief is in us, that we know God as we walk in obedience and experience His freedom.](#)

APPL **We live by the words that live and grow in us.** The story we consistently tell ourselves tells us who we are, and what everything else is all about. The narrative we rehash in our mind holds our heart and determines our steps. When the living word of God lives in us, we are told a new story of life, peace, joy and real love. [Freedom from sin's enslaving habits comes as we listen to God's Word and believe our new identity in Jesus Christ, to live by obedience to Him.](#)

The gospel tells us the story of life in Jesus. Jesus says, "*The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.*" The slave is only in the house for a time, and usually busy with dirty work. God's child has permanent residence in the palace of God's Kingdom. [When we abide, Jesus' word sets us free by telling us the truth so we can live it out every day.](#)

Jesus says that to abide in His word, we must understand what holds us enslaved. We can be sure Jesus' words have not found a place to remain in us when we persist in our sin. The only way to know that you are abiding in God's truth is when sin's power over you is broken by obedience. [Obedience comes through the power of God's word in you as you live in your new identity by faith in Jesus.](#)

1. Truth sets us free from sin's slavery to live as a child of God.

TRANS Once we confess our sinful nature, recognize the way sin enslaves us, and embrace by faith the new identity Jesus gives to us, we cultivate our new identity in the way we live.

READ John 8:39-47

³⁹*They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the*

¹ D. A. Carson, [The Gospel according to John](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 348.



works Abraham did, ⁴⁰but 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. ⁴¹You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” ⁴²Jesus 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. ⁴³Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in 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. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” **John 8:39-47**

The people held a major misunderstanding about what it meant to be Abraham's children. God's promise was made to the children of Abraham's spiritual offspring, not only his natural offspring. The spiritual promise ruled the physical reality, and that misunderstanding caused many to continue in sin's slavery.

They argued that God was their father. But Jesus tells them that if God were truly their father, they would know who He was and believe in Him, because of his teaching. Instead, they cannot bear to receive His words because the one who really leads them is the devil. Their actions show that they want to do his will. Satan is a liar and has no truth in him. When you live in sin, you follow Satan's lie. When you follow him you cannot stand in the truth. And even when the truth stands right in front of you, you cannot see or hear it and will not entertain it because you do not know God.

APPL Jesus' words echo a strong warning for those who claim to be Christian today. It doesn't matter how well you wear the label or speak the language, if you do not believe Jesus so that you follow Him with your life, you don't really know Him.

Those who follow Jesus do the work Abraham did. Paul helps us understand the work of Abraham in Romans 4,

¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Romans 4:16-21

Abraham's work was simple, he believed God's promise and acted on it, even when the reality he could see said otherwise. When Abraham began to follow God he walked by faith. And that's how he walked every day after.

TRANS Jesus' second lesson builds on the first to teach us how to live from our new relationship with Him.

2. Truth exposes our sinful nature by our works, but builds our new identity in Jesus in our heart. .39-47

The hardest lesson of discipleship deals with the deepest reality of our being, our identity. And, everything else in life flows from this. We are sin-cursed to our core. We will never know victory over sins until we have freedom in our identity, when we are saved from slavery to become sons and daughters of God. Sinful habits persist because our sinful identity continues to define us. [We will never know victory over sin until we live in our new identity in Jesus.](#)

This second lesson shows us the process of discipleship. Jesus draws a stark contrast between a life motivated by sin and self, versus a life led by God from faith. Their actions, opposing and wanting to kill Jesus, show who they really are. How we live reveals what we believe about ourselves, and about God. Discipleship is the process that reveals to us the real motivation, and subsequently the Lord under which we live. [Good people live right according to the flesh. Godly people live](#)



by faith in God's Word.

ILLUS John Gerstner, a scholar of the early 20th century², rattles our comfort when he states, "The main thing between you and God is not so much your sins; it's your damnable good works." They make us feel right with God, but only because we measure them according to what is right in our own eyes. They make us feel little need for God, and think we are okay without God.

Living in our new identity in Jesus is a process that every believer must cultivate. Instead of living by Satan's lies that are born out of actions in the flesh, we live by faith in God through His truth that takes root in the heart. Cultivating our heart through God's Word to grow a comprehensive love for Jesus is the purpose of all discipleship. All that we do either grows from a love for Jesus, or it is born of self or religion, both the work of Satan's lies. Three indicators together help one discern who we are trusting, and whether we are living out of our new identity in Jesus.

Indicator #1: Obedience to God's word deepens our affections for Jesus. When a person lives by faith through God's Word, obedience ceases to be a burden and grows a deeper love for Jesus. This is not to say that obedience happens naturally or easily. But, what it always produces an increasing love for Jesus. When our love for Jesus increases and deepens within us, our obedience is strengthened because of the joy, peace and love that it produces within us. Indicator #1 leads us to regularly ask ourselves, "**Is my love for Jesus increasing and deepening to stronger motivation because I am living in obedience to His Word?**"

Indicator #2: Obedience to God's Word increases our intellect. Following Jesus informs a greater understanding of God, His work, way and will. As our understanding grows, we remain focused on what God is doing and don't get discouraged by Satan's schemes and the world's distractions. Indicator #2 leads us to regularly ask ourselves, "**Is my understanding of God's work, way and will growing because I am living in obedience to His Word?**"

Indicator #3: Obedience to God's Word strengthens our volition. Following Jesus strengthens our will to follow Him, as our affections and knowledge growing. The longer you follow Jesus doesn't mean you have less temptation to stray, but you have more remembrances of His faithfulness to hold you on course. Our volition directs or steers the drive of our life to keep following Jesus. Just as Paul said of Abraham in Romans 4:20-21, *No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*" Indicator #3 leads us to regularly ask ourselves, "**Is my understanding of God's work, way and will growing because I am living in obedience to His Word?**"

The more we follow Jesus the more we depend on every aspect of the work of God's Word in us to strengthen and guide us. The longer you follow Jesus, the more you depend completely upon Him for all things at all times in life because you recognize more and more your need for Him, and more and more His faithfulness to you. **Christian growth and maturity begins with looking at our actions to discern our master, but always moves to our identity to understand our root motivation and strength.**

2. Truth exposes our sinful nature by our works, but builds our new identity in Jesus in our heart.

TRANS As we learn to live from our new identity in Jesus, walking obediently in truth, our life overflows with praise and glory to God regardless of the tests, trials and hardships that arise.

READ John 8:48-59

⁴⁸The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Gerstner. Last viewed 17-0329.



seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” ⁵²The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’” ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” ⁵⁴Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’” ⁵⁵But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” **John 8:48-57**

They rejected Jesus with continued accusation. They accused him of the lowest human level they could imagine (Samaritan), being a self-seeking liar and even demon-possessed. But Jesus remains unmoved by their accusations and threats. Staying anchored against the harshest of attacks and hardest of trials presents a great challenge. The anchor that held Jesus is the same one that holds His followers today when we face these same difficulties in life, truth. [Truth anchors our life against any storm when we hold to God’s Word and walk in obedience by faith.](#)

3. [Truth anchors life in Jesus to produce rejoicing in God’s glory in all of life’s situation.](#) .48-57

The greatest test of discipleship sets us against our greatest enemy to teach us perseverance through which victory, and transformation, comes.

When Satan can’t deceive us, he’ll try to crush us. But the Christian’s strength is not in self. The strength of the Christian life is found in the one who gives that life, Jesus Christ. And, Jesus never loses to Satan. Jesus says, “*if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.*” He was speaking of the second, spiritual death, the one that really matters. But the more Jesus spoke, the hotter the Jew’s anger burned. Jesus refutes their every accusation and attack with one simple strategy, truth. Truth stands, regardless of what comes against it. And when we stand on the One who is truth, we stand IN that truth against every attack. [When we clothe our lives with the Lord Jesus Christ and stand by faith in Him, we will stand victorious against every scheme of Satan because He is a defeated foe.](#) Eph6:13; Rev12:8

This is the point at which we must choose life in the midst of life’s hardest decisions. Satan uses these same tactics today. He tells lies to us and about us. He attacks our character. He concocts wild accusation against us. These are all tactics to test the foundation on which we are standing. Choosing life means remembering that Jesus is our Source of life and victory, and remaining IN Him. The truth of God’s Word addresses every need and fear of our life as it guards and confronts Satan’s schemes. When Satan’s schemes are heaviest, hardest and most confusing, faith points us to God’s Word to fill our heart (affection, intellect and volition) to stand in Jesus.

When we take our eyes off of Jesus, we sink in our own understanding or strength. We often confuse what our life produces with what is happening around us, but circumstances don’t define our life. Circumstances can only “appear” to define our life or determine our well-being when we focus on them and allow them to consume us. When we allow this to happen, it’s always because we allow them to think that they hold our hope and security. We can easily become confused to think that our life is not producing praise when attacked by accusation or surrounded by others who are living in Satan’s lies. But praise and glory always originate from within us, through the life that Jesus gives. The intensity, frequency and severity of any attack by Satan never determines the ability of God to bring overflowing glory through joy, peace, love, contentment or any other fruit that comes from His presence within us. When we stay focused on Jesus by abiding in and obeying God’s Word, no matter how hard, or even impossible it may seem due to our circumstance, Jesus will bring glory to and through our lives. The truth of God’s Word anchors us in the Source of glory that only Jesus can provide, at all times, in all situations and circumstances, regardless of what rages around us.

3. [Truth anchors life in Jesus to produce rejoicing in God’s glory in all of life’s situation.](#)

READ John 8:58-59

⁵⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”



⁵⁹*So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. John 8:58-59*

Jesus tells them that He is the pre-existent God. He is the one that called Abraham, the one that supplied power to Moses, and the One that has come to give life to all that believe.

We should not be surprised at their response. They likely picked up the same stones at the end of this chapter that they dropped at the beginning. Unbelief leaves one with few and little options against the truth of Jesus Christ. But as long as we remain in unbelief, we revert back to those same old, tired, defeated options every time.

CLOSE

Why not believe in Jesus today! Give up the tired, defeated patterns of condemnation and guilt from sin in life. Receive God's eternal power for life, to walk in the light of His truth and victory! Jesus invites you to trust Him today, and to walk by faith in truth for glory and joy.

