

The Heart of a True Disciple

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[0 : 00] And as we come to this section, before we get into it, I just want to ask you, have you ever had one of those conversations with someone?

The conversation where you sense that they needed some urgent words of advice, a person that you care about is about to go down the wrong path, or to make a bad decision, and yet even as you speak to them, it's as though your words just aren't getting through.

They're listening, maybe they're even nodding, but you can tell by their response, by the things they say to you afterward, that they just aren't really getting it. And at the end of it all, they just went on ahead and did what they were planning on doing anyway, to their own detriment.

Have you ever had a conversation like that with someone? Maybe you felt some of the frustration of that, perhaps even heartbreak, trying to get through to them, trying to help them see, trying to spare them from facing consequences.

This is precisely what's happening right now between Jesus and the crowd in the temple courts as he speaks to them. From John 8, verse 36. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

[1 : 30] That's what Jesus just said to the crowd. He just told the whole crowd that if they continue to listen to his word, they will come to know the truth and be liberated from bondage.

What do you mean, liberated? They said to him. We've never been slaves. We're Abraham's descendants. And Jesus told them, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

But, he said, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Verse 37. Jesus continues on.

He says, I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me because you have no room for my word.

So Jesus acknowledges the biological reality. Yes, you are biologically descendants of Abraham. And yet there's a big problem here.

[2 : 33] There's something going on here with you that's terribly wrong. He says, you are seeking to kill me. Now at this point, it may be that Jesus' words are a little more directed to the religious leaders.

We know for sure that for some time, they've been trying to put Jesus to death. But probably at this point, it's more than just the religious leaders. Now it's probably some of the crowd as well. Very likely, some of these people had earlier had some pretty good thoughts about him, but now maybe have changed their minds towards Jesus.

And Jesus points out two things that really help us see what's going on here. First, and the most obvious, he says to them, you are looking for a way to kill me. Notice the words, looking for.

They are seeking for a way to get rid of Jesus. plotting, scheming in their thoughts, in their hearts, perhaps even whispering amongst others in the crowd while Jesus is talking about how they can take him out.

And the second thing that Jesus says seems to be the reason for why they want to kill him. He says, you're seeking to kill me, you're looking for a way to kill me because you have no room for my word.

[3 : 58] Some translations say because my word makes no progress in you. Either way, the problem is the same.

It's as though Jesus is saying, I'm speaking to you, but my words are not getting through. Your hearts are not responding in the way that they should to my words.

Jesus is speaking to the people, they are listening, but they're not really hearing. They're not receiving and responding to what he is saying to them the way they should.

My word makes no progress in you, says Jesus. It's like your hearts are hard to what I'm saying to you. And then Jesus says this to them, I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence.

And you are doing what you have heard from your Father. That's a hugely loaded statement, but let's look at the first part. Jesus says, I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence. [5 : 07] Literally, with the Father, from God. God. And so when your heart has no room for my word, it's not just my word that you are rejecting and shutting out, but his.

It's what he himself has given me to say to you that you are rejecting. If we kind of put all this together and read it from back to front, it's as though Jesus is saying, God the Father has shown me things.

And I am now speaking to you those things. I am telling you those things with the words of my mouth. But my words are not getting through to you.

You are listening, but you are not receiving. You are not hearing and responding as you should be to his words. It's possible to be thoroughly religious and yet have a heart that is hard and unresponsive to God.

It's possible to go through the motions. Living like a Jew should live or in our context like a Christian should live and yet have a hard and unresponsive heart toward God.

[6 : 29] Now I'm not here to tell you if that's you this morning, but if it is and you know it and if God is bringing conviction to your heart, then I encourage you to listen to him and to take it very seriously.

The mark of a true child of Abraham or child of God or disciple of Jesus is not just outward conformity, but inward receptivity.

the mark of whether you are a true child of God is not only whether you live like a Christian is supposed to live, but whether you listen with your heart like a Christian is supposed to listen. Whether you respond to the words of Jesus from your heart. And so I want to ask you some questions this morning. When you read your Bible, do you more often feel cold and unstirred by the words on the pages?

When you read the words of Jesus that are written in your Bibles and throughout the Gospels, what's happening in your heart? Are these words just kind of passing through your mind?

[7 : 48] Are you just reading them to kind of check the box on the Bible reading plan to be a good Christian? Or are these words often and regularly getting to your heart?

Stirring up a response inside of you? Do you entrust yourself fully to these words of Jesus and believe them as much as you can understand them?

Do you feel convicted of sin in your life when you read the words of Jesus? Do you feel joy and hope rising inside of you when you hear about the things that Jesus has promised to those who believe in him?

Or do these words seem more or less irrelevant? Do you read or reflect on them at all? Or have you got other, more important things to do?

or have you got to do? Do you listen to God? Do you listen like that when Jesus is talking to you?

[9 : 06] Are his words getting through to you regularly, regularly? Often. The mark of a true disciple of Jesus, a true child of Abraham, a true child of God is a responsive heart to his word.

Let's continue on with what Jesus said. He said, I'm telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence. And as we come to the second statement here, there is a bit of a translation issue. I'm not going to go into all the details.

Some of you may have a footnote or have it in italics. But just be aware of that. I'm going to go with what most of the English translations say in verse 38.

Jesus says, I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence and you are doing what you have heard from your Father. It seems as if Jesus is saying, you know, you and I have something in common, but we also have something very different.

In the same way that I'm speaking to you the things that I have seen from my Father, you are doing the things that you have heard from your Father. But there's a suggestion that seems to be coming out of Jesus' words that we don't share the same Father.

[10 : 29] The things that I am doing and speaking are different than the things that you are doing and speaking is what Jesus seems to be implying here.

Now the people know that Jesus has been claiming that God is his Father. He's been claiming to be sent by God, to speak for God. But now, it seems as though he's saying they have a different Father other than God.

Jesus knows what's really going on in their hearts. He knows the ugliness and the hardness of their hearts. He knows that they are seeking to kill him.

And this is probably why the tension often goes through the roof between Jesus and the people because he knows that, he sees that, and he often brings it to the surface and exposes it.

In this case, he tells them where this ugliness, this hardness is coming from. He says, it's because you have a different Father.

[11 : 40] Now the people at this point, they seem to pick this up from Jesus' words. I don't think they liked it too much what he said. Abraham is our Father, they answered.

Verse 39. They seem to hear Jesus challenging whether they're true children of Abraham and they say the same thing that they said earlier.

We are Abraham's offspring. He is our Father. We are his descendants. And Jesus responds. He looks them in the eye and says this, which probably surprised them or shocked them.

He says, if you were Abraham's children, then you would do what Abraham did. As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the works of your own Father, says Jesus. And you have to know that at this point people's eyes are probably wide and there's probably some pretty telling expressions happening on people's faces.

[12 : 57] They just told Jesus for the second time, we are children of Abraham. We are his offspring and Jesus says, if you were Abraham's children, you got to know their thinking.

What do you mean if we were? Are you telling us that we might not be children of Abraham, children of the promise, children of the covenant, that we might have a different father?

What they're thinking kind of comes out in verse 41. They say, we are not illegitimate children. We are true children of Abraham. How dare you insinuate anything else?

Nevertheless, it seems pretty clear from Jesus' words that he is calling into question whether they are true children of Abraham. Not whether they're biologically descended from Abraham, but whether they are true children of Abraham.

And Jesus says in verse 39 that the mark of a true child of Abraham is that he or she does what Abraham did. If you were Abraham's children, then you would do what Abraham did.

[14 : 17] You would do the deeds, do the works that Abraham did. And as of right now, you are not, he says to them. It's evidence that you are not true children of Abraham.

You're looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. You're looking for a way to take out the messenger that God has sent to you to speak to you.

That's not the way that Abraham acted. And I think it's implied in Jesus' words. You know, long ago, God spoke to Abraham in a whole variety of ways.

And at least one of those ways was quite similar to the way that Jesus is speaking to them right now. And what did Abraham do in every case? He believed the words of God.

He responded to them. He obeyed them. That's what Abraham did. But here and now, you in the crowd, says Jesus, are responding in the opposite way.

[15 : 23] You have no room for my word. You're not receiving it. Instead, you're seeking to kill me. This is evidence that you are not true children of Abraham, but are instead children of a different father.

a true child of Abraham, a true disciple of Jesus, a true child of God, has a receptive and obedient heart to the word of God, just like Abraham did.

Again, the people try to defend themselves. This time they come at it from a different angle. Verse 41, they say the only father we have is God himself. Literally, one father we have, God.

And again, Jesus responds in a way that would have been utterly shocking. He says, if God were your father, you would love me.

For I have come from God. I have not come on my own. God sent me. Those words, if God were your father, father, in other words, he is not.

[16 : 43] But if he were, you would love me because I have come here from him. These words are so rich and so full.

Do you hear the heart of Jesus in them? He longs for the people there. He longs for you, for me, to accept the truth of who he is.

If God were your father, you would love me. You would recognize that I am the one sent from him. We get another mark of a true child of God here.

The second one, the mark of a true child of God is that he or she loves God's son, Jesus, the one God has sent.

And notice that Jesus says love. If God were your father, you would love me. Not just like, not just agree with or tolerate.

[17 : 59] Many people like Jesus. Lots of people agree with Jesus. and many more people tolerate Jesus.

But the mark of a true child of God is that he or she loves Jesus. So I want to ask you this morning, do you love Jesus?

Do you cherish Jesus? do you treasure him? If not, by Jesus' own word, you're not a child of God. Now, this doesn't mean I don't think that we should constantly measure whether we're in the family of God based on how we feel. In a fallen world, such as we live, feelings are fickle things.

They come and they go. They burn hot and they cool off. And we know that, right? I mean, we all have relationships with people who we love, yes, truly love, and yet it doesn't automatically mean that we feel that way at every moment of the day towards them.

[19 : 14] I think we need to remember that love is much more than just a feeling. Feelings are part of it, yes, generally, often, but there are times when love is better described as an action or a choice or a loyalty sworn rather than just a burning for a moment in the words of one musician.

Do you love Jesus? Have you made your choice to give yourself to him through the good times and the hard times? does he have the allegiance of your heart regardless of what you're going through today?

Are you committed to applying his words to your life and your life to his words day after day? Do you recognize that he is the one who has come from God and speaks for God?

And do you value him deeply because of that? There are many reasons to love him. Do you love Jesus? Love.

Every true child of God does according to Jesus and those who do not are children of a different father. And we'll look at what Jesus means by that next Sunday.

[20 : 39] So let me just recap. We've been kind of looking at some of the marks of a true child of God or a true disciple of Jesus. the first one that we saw a couple weeks back was that they remain in his word.

Verse 31. If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples. Today we saw two more. A true child of God has a responsive heart to the words of God which Jesus speaks.

And a true child of God loves the son of God Jesus. A true child of God loves his son Jesus and has a responsive heart to his word.

We're going to pray here in just a moment but before we do I just want to say if you're here this morning and you just need someone to talk to about your relationship with Jesus maybe you're not sure where it's at or you don't feel like it's where it should be maybe you have doubts or worries or concerns I want to encourage you just to feel free to come talk to me or to anyone else in the church that you trust we'll do our best to listen to you what's going on in your heart what you've been thinking to pray with you to offer encouragement and help however we can and of course none of us has all the answers I've always liked the way that C.S.

Lewis said it this is a loose paraphrase but he said in many ways the church of Jesus Christ is like a hospital and we're we're all patients that have been checked in to the care of Jesus some of us have been here a little longer and might know our way around some of the hallways a little better than others but we're all in need of the Lord's help and so if I or anyone else can be an encouragement or help to you I just want to encourage you don't hesitate to ask feel free to come talk to me or to someone else in the church who you trust let us know how you're doing and know that following Christ is not something that we're meant to figure out all by our self it's part of why the Lord has brought Lord Jesus thank you for speaking these words to us and we do pray and ask that we would have the responsive heart that you want us to

[23 : 27] Lord each day this week as we pick up our Bible to read we ask that you would cause us to hear help us to hear we know Lord that we are meant to make changes all along the way we are meant to make decisions all throughout life based on what we hear from you and so we ask that you would give us those ears that we need to hear day after day this week give us soft hearts increase our love for you help us to see more of the truth of who you are and why you are so worthy of our total devotion and allegiance we ask this a which can the the important show the one follow the this show whatever