

John 31-37

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[0:00] Good morning. It's great to be here this morning, working with God's church.! So it's great to have them back into full-time ministry, officially starting today.

So as we jump back into John's gospel, we're going to take a quick look, just for a moment, at where we've come from, and so where we're starting off today. In our context, so it's a five-chapter chunk, John 5, 1 to 10, 42.

We see Jewish opposition to Jesus and several of his miracles, which we've heard this term, in other words, known as the signs of the Messiah.

Signs of the Messiah. So that's the chunk of John that we're in. So if we narrow it down a little bit more, our narrowed context, we see rising tension in chapter 7, and seen clearly with several references to the Jews' desire to both arrest and kill Jesus.

stemming, perhaps, from his recent claims to be the bread of life and living water, in whom people ought to quench their hunger and thirst in. But along with this rising tension and opposition, we also see what looks like rising belief from many.

[1:41] And as Jim shared last week, Christ declared himself before the Jews to be the light of the world, the Son of Man sent from the Father, and that without belief in him, they would die in their sins.

It's John 8, 24. The result, as verse 30 of John 8 says, the last verse of last week, says that many believed in him.

But as plain as this language seems, it cannot be taken at face value. And there's no doubt that many did believe in Jesus.

We know this is true. But what we see in verse 30, and is clear in our passage today, we're going to see that that wasn't the case for most who did.

We're going to see why today this isn't true. The Jews' belief, we'll find out, is debunked as they show in their dialogue with Jesus traits of false disciples, not true ones.

[2:42] Theirs was not a belief leading to salvation. It was not saving faith, but a mere profession or an intellectual agreement with Jesus' message. Further, they were not interested in following the path of true discipleship.

Today's passage could appropriately be titled, Traits of True and False Disciples. And my hope for today is that we might be able to recognize and understand the traits of true and false disciples, and then use this understanding in our evangelism, relationships with other Christians, and personally as well.

And let's pray before we dive in. God, our Father, we are thankful and, Lord, hopeful and expectant that you will lead our hearts today, mine included, and that the words that come from my mouth would honor you, and that you would be exalted today, that our hearts would be humbled and changed, and that you would receive the glory that you're due.

Amen. Amen. We're going to start by reading our text today. This is a little bit of a tricky text. It's a dialogue or a debate almost, and so I think having it up on the screen, at least at the beginning, will help us to keep our bearings.

As he was saying these things, John chapter 8, verse 30, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

[4:14] They answered him, we're offspring of Abraham. We've never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free? Jesus

answered them, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices 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'll be free indeed. I know that you're offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.

Verse 38, I speak of what I've seen with my father, and you do what you have heard from yours, your father. They answered him, Abraham's our father. Jesus said to them, if you were Abraham's children, you'd be doing the works Abraham did.

But 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. You're doing the works of your father. They said to him, we were not born of sexual immorality.

We have one father, even God. Jesus said to them, if God were your father, you would love me, for I came from God, and I'm here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.

[5:19] Why do you not understand what I say? It's because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father, the devil, in your will, so do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there's no truth in him.

When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he's a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God. This is the word of the Lord. Our passage today begins with the two-verse discourse from Jesus on what genuine belief is followed by, the path of true discipleship.

Let's jump back into our text, verse 31. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. The first trait of true disciples, Jesus shares, is that true disciples abide in Christ's word.

If you're taking notes, you could write that down. True disciples abide in Christ's word. And I think this is arguably the foundation for the following two traits, which we'll see in verse 32.

[6:41] In regards to what it is to abide, one theologian says, it's easy enough to be superficially attracted to Jesus, but the test is abiding. Another says this, technically, Jesus is responding to the professor's professed belief with what is known as a third-class conditional sentence.

Can you repeat that? Third-class conditional sentence, which speaks of a potential action. In other words, the condition, you are truly my disciples, may or may not be fulfilled and depends on what choice the individual makes if you abide in my word.

As noted by the fact that the key verb continued, or abide, is in the active voice which describes the choice of one's will. Right? So it's not a guarantee. It's conditional and it's a choice of the will.

What Jesus is warning about is that the only way an individual who professes to believe in him can know that he or she is a genuine, born-again, heaven-bound believer is by the fact that he or she continues to abide in his word.

That's what Jesus says. So what is abiding? I found these definitions to be helpful. It is welcoming Christ's word, being at home with it and living with it so continuously that it becomes part of the believer's life, a permanent influence and stimulus and every fresh advance in goodness and holiness.

[8:24] To abide means to keep on believing the word, keep on following the word, and keep on ordering one's life according to the word. True disciples abide in Christ's word.

their life is shaped and formed in every way by it. But this is not something that just happens to true disciples after belief. It's something that must be pursued.

It's something that will be pursued for true disciples. So the next two traits of true disciple Jesus shares are that true disciples know the truth and are set free.

Verse 32, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Abiding in Christ's word means, I'm sorry, leads to knowing.

But the know here isn't simply the results of accumulated facts. It also means to know in a relational sense. Know the truth, a relationship with the truth.

[9:24] The truth, spoken of here, is the gospel and person of Jesus Christ. To know Christ is the result of abiding in Christ's words because Christ is the truth.

He says this of himself in John 14, 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me. Jesus Christ is both the content and goal of the gospel.

The content and goal of the gospel. So friends, what good news this is, right? It's a win-win. Those who would choose to abide, right? Remember, it's a choice of the will, or continue, in Christ's words, are able to have a relationship with Christ, the truth, and that leads to God and sets one free. This is good news. Now, if you're one of these Jews who had just declared belief in Christ, what would your next question be? Hopefully, something like, Lord, can you teach me how I can be set free?

I need to know the truth. I want to know. Teach me how I can abide. Reveal to me the truth. You told us just seven verses ago that we will die in our sin.

[10:43] Lord, help us. How can we be set free from certain death? That's not what happens, is it? The professing Jews jump into a defensive stance. Verse 33, they answer him, we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.

How is it that you say you will become free? So the people launch this defense. Whereas, we might expect to see the heart of one who's believed unto salvation be humbled, we see pride.

And it doesn't come without falsehood, too, because at one time the Jews were slaves in exile to the Babylonians. And even now they were under the oppressive rule of Rome, right?

Hardly free. But their response reveals something about their identity. One theologian said, the Jews set a tremendous value on freedom which they held to be the birthright of every Jew.

In the law it was laid out that no Jew, however poor, must descend to the level of being a slave. This can be found in Leviticus chapter 25. So in their hasty response they miss the point of what Jesus was saying, which he tries to help them understand in the next verses.

[12:06] Verse 34, Jesus answered them, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices 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. The freedom that Jesus says comes to true disciples who abide in his word comes in regards to a slavery to sin.

Not physical slavery, like they thought he was saying, but Jesus says freedom from spiritual slavery to sin. The phrase practices sin in this case is not anyone who commits a single sin, but engages in regular and habitual sin.

One who makes sin the delight in the pursuit of their soul, whose choices are bound by desire for sin and false promises of lasting pleasure.

True disciples are set free from this lifestyle of sin and what a promise. Amen? Amen? How marvelous. This is a promise you can take to the bank.

[13:19] You will be free indeed, Jesus says. There's no being re-enslaved to those who are freed. True freedom comes through the son, Jesus, and to the one who has acquired spiritual sonship apart from their physical lineage.

This is part of what verse 35 means, which is rooted in the story found in Genesis 21. Here's what verse 35 is getting at. In the same way that Isaac remained in the house of his earthly father, Abraham, because he was a true son of Abraham's wife, Sarah, so also true spiritual descendants in the household of God will remain in his household.

Sadly, just as Ishmael Abraham's illegitimate son, born of a slave woman, was cast out of Abraham's earthly home due to not being a true son, so also those who are not true spiritual offering of God will be cast out of God's spiritual house and are thus not part of his family.

You know, much to the Jews' chagrin, a descendant of Abraham such as themselves are not guaranteed admission or sonship in the spiritual house of God.

Only freedom from slavery given through the Son, Jesus, seals one as part of a permanent member of God's spiritual family, a member of his house.

[14:58] Christ says, in effect, actually, you're a slave to sin, but the good news, the hope, is that you don't have to remain that way. You could become a son in the house of God, friend, and find assured, lasting freedom from slavery as well.

Jesus tells them that spiritual sonship brings freedom from sin in a place in God's house. Amen to that. And although we see that he's answered their question about slavery that they asked in verse 33, he's actually not done making his point.

And so we see him press actually a little deeper, a little harder, and things get a little bit more tense as he calls them out. Let's look at verse 37. I know that you're offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.

I speak of what I've seen with my father, and you do what you've heard from your father. They answered him, Abraham's our father. Jesus said to them, if you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did.

But 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. You're doing the works your father did.

[16:24] So after acknowledging that indeed they are physical offspring of Abraham, he points to the fact that it's not a given that Abraham is their spiritual father, separating the family, the physical and the spiritual family.

Jews believe in the fact that being physically related to Abraham automatically ensured that they were spiritually right with God. Their mindset was righteousness by association.

but they were overlooking that the basis of his right standing before God was that Abraham believed and obeyed God, as Genesis 12 says.

Jesus points to him as the example of how those who claim to be in God's family ought to respond to God's messenger and message. But they missed the point.

See, they were looking at the DNA, if you will, but Jesus was looking at the objective evidence in their lives, which currently was their growing desire to kill him.

[17:33] Jesus didn't want them to be deceived by continuing to think that their physical lineage was related to their current spiritual state. How could they claim to be Abraham's spiritual descendants if they're not wanting sorry, if they're wanting to kill a messenger of God who offered entrance into God's true family and freedom from slavery?

The obvious conclusion was that based on the evidence, they were not spiritually like-minded descendants of Abraham and points to a different father.

A different father of theirs. But who is this father? The next chunk of verses tells us, verse 31, they said to him, we are not born of sexual morality, we have one father, even God.

Jesus 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. Why do you not understand what I say?

It's because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are not of your father, you are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

[18:54] He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

But because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. Whoa. Whoa. Once again, Jesus, sorry, once again, the Jews start off with a misunderstanding of the difference between their spiritual and physical father.

We were not born of fornication, they said. The response to Jesus questioning their father leads them to implying that it was actually Jesus who had a questionable father history, accusing him of being born because of an immoral relationship with Joseph and Mary, which was a bit of a circulating rumor at the time.

This actually shows that they didn't know anything about Jesus' true origin and were not aware of the supernatural events surrounding his birth. In their mind, they didn't have the father problem.

Jesus did. And once again, they stake their claim, we have one father, even God. And once again, Jesus pushes back. Just like in verse 39, if you were Abraham's sons, you would be doing Abraham's work.

[20:22] So also here, if God is your father, the evidence would be clear. This is how you'd be living. You'd be loving me, he says, for I was sent from God.

apart from showing that they were not from God and how they didn't love Christ, in verse 33, Jesus says, they couldn't understand or even listen.

Their ears were not capable of hearing the truth because they were of their father, the devil, in whom there is no truth. They were acting in a way that was consistent with how their spiritual father, the father of lies and the murderer would act.

They were surely not true disciples of Christ in that they not only didn't continue in his word but they challenged and rejected his words. For that reason, Christ put the final nail in the proverbial coffin in our next two verses, 46 and 47.

Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God.

[21:39] The reason why you do not hear them is that you're not of God. Jesus gives them one more chance to see clearly, to see the truth by asking them to point out his sin.

And this is significant because Jesus here actually points to his deity.! Lost my spot. Only the Son of God would be able to make a statement this bold, right?

Who else could say this? And only the Son of God would be met with silence after making this statement. after they say nothing about his sin he indicts them saying if you cannot hear my words you yourself prove that you are not of God.

So in the end the belief of the Jews from verse 30 shows to be not genuine belief. And as Jesus and the people dialogue back and forth we see that the Jews life and character stand in sharp contrast with what Christ declared in verses 31 and 32 as being traits of true disciples.

The Jews are exhibiting traits of false disciples. So now let's look at how and why they exhibited their false discipleship and see what we can do to avoid some of these same mistakes and what we can apply to our life from looking at their lives.

[23:25] Traits of true and false disciples. Trait number one. Whereas true disciples abide in Christ's word, false disciples fail to abide in Christ's word.

In verse 37 Jesus says my word finds no place in you. And I personally think that this is at the core of the professing Jews failure to choose to abide.

Something was already abiding.! Something was already there. Remember earlier we characterized abiding as living in a way wherein something has a permanent influence and stimulus on you ordering one's life around something.

For the professing believers in verse 30 something was already occupying that spot in their lives and they weren't willing to push it aside or remove it to abide in or even listen to what Jesus had to say.

Their lives and hearts were occupied by something else with no room for anything additional. But what was it? I think that it was their religion.

[24:46] You know what we've seen in the preceding chapters of John is that the Jewish people and their leaders had an unhealthy unshakable attachment to their religious culture and traditions.

In this passage they display a particular attachment to their Abrahamic heritage. So we see the Jews in verse 33 and 39 push back against Jesus truth with their being an offspring and children of Abraham.

They sense that they're spiritually safe because they're part of Abraham's line. And their identity as Jews has become the single greatest focus and source of identity in their lives.

They had no desire to reconsider or hear from the one who actually was sent from God, verse 42, who they claimed as their father.

And it's ironic because they fail to see how Jesus is the fulfillment and Messiah that Abraham's lineage was leading to.

[25:55] do. They don't need God's son to save them. They have religion as their savior and their functional God.

And they're happy to abide in that. No need to abide in something else. God's love. I wonder if as Christians we can fall into the same traps.

Do you fail to abide in Christ's words because something else occupies that spot? Something else has that influence on you.

Something else controls you. Something else is your aim. For the Jews, for the Jews, it's my wife's name, jewels, jewels. Anyway, for the Jews, it was their religion that dictated their lives, causing spiritual arrogance and deluded thinking.

Spiritual arrogance and deluded thinking. See, they missed the fact that their lineage had no bearing on their current spiritual state, or their spiritual destiny.

[27:16] So, what abides in your heart and life? What is your functional God? The thing or things which most dictate your life and direct you or pull you in this direction Christian or that day to day?

Listen to this. Do you feel as though because you grew up in this church or that Christian family with a certain upbringing or currently exhibit certain adherence to these or those Christian traditions that you're spiritually right with God?

God do not be mistaken friend. If you're not living in a way wherein Jesus Christ and his words have a permanent influence and stimulus on you or definition and you're ordering your life and you're not ordering your life around him and his word you're not abiding at all.

And if you're not abiding in Christ's words are you a true disciple? These words may be hard to hear.

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples. So trait number one whereas true disciples abide in Christ's word false disciples fail to abide in Christ's word.

[28:52] Let's look at trait two. Whereas true disciples know and receive the truth false disciples cannot hear or understand the truth.

Remember we talked earlier about the idea of knowing the truth and having a personal relationship with Christ. False disciples of Christ cannot get to that point because before we can have a relationship with Christ they must be able to understand have an understanding or knowledge of the biblical truth and truth about God.

And to get to that point we must be able to hear the truth about God and the truth about ourselves or themselves. This is something that professing Jews fail to do.

Verse 43 Jesus says that they could not hear the truth. not that they chose to not hear the truth but they could not right certainly they had ears that's not what's being said that's not what this means what it means is that their hearts and minds were unwilling and unable to process and comprehend the truth that Christ was speaking they had physical but not spiritual ears they were turned away and calloused from processing what Christ was saying evidence of not being a true disciple is the inability to hear Christ truth and not having a personal relationship not knowing Christ the truth because the Jews could not hear the truth and thus could not know Christ they continued to ignorantly hold tight to their deepest and most significant identity their religion and ties to Abraham this was their pattern throughout their discussion with Jesus here and as we've seen in the entire gospel of John ultimately their inability and lack of desire for truth will lead to their eventual!

[31:05] demise Christian be aware of your softness or callousness towards the truths of scripture does hearing the truth cause you to become defensive or proud like the professing Jews were in this scene does hearing truth cause you to turn away or does it draw you to Christ in his word perhaps maybe you purposefully resist hearing or turn away from or plug your ears to the truths of God's word especially when you're confronted and you know you need to hear the truth about something in your life that's not in alignment in right alignment with God also do you intentionally seek out truth as a means to spiritual growth as a means to a greater knowledge and knowing of

Christ the truth whereas true disciples know and receive the truth false disciples cannot hear or understand truth why is it important that we are able to hear and know the truth because that's where freedom is found let's look at our final trait of true disciples trait number three whereas true disciples are set free from sins prince and power false disciples remain as slaves the only future for

those who do not abide in Christ's word and cannot hear and understand the truth and thus do not know Christ personally is continued slavery knowing the truth both Christ and the truth of scripture leads the true disciple toward life change and the critical change that the scripture promises! is freedom from slavery to sin specifically sin's power and sin's prince the devil freedom from slavery to sin's power and prince is given to those who are in Christ to those who abide but the devil the evidence was clear that they were still under the power of the prince of this world seen by their inability to know and hear the truth and desire to kill him as a result but what choice did they have they were bound by their slavery whereas true disciples are set free from sin's prince and power false disciples remain as slaves a life that is free from the power and prince of sin is characteristic of true disciples of christ and although as christians indeed we will choose sin we will choose to submit to the evil one's temptation at times but the christian life is one of sanctification that is progression towards righteous and holy living living towards christ likeness christian what is the general trend of your life which way are you progressing towards or away from christ friend do you find that you are enslaved to sin and a master other than god if you do find yourself in this spot there's hope there's hope galatians 4 4 through 7 says when the fullness of time came god sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law so that he might redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons because you are sons god has sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts crying abba father therefore you are no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir through god if you sit here today and you have seen that um you have more false disciple traits than not i beg you be reconciled to god even today begin walking the path of true discipleship right now abide in christ know the truth and be set free today could be your day of salvation please come and talk to me about this after the service christian

be attentive and diligent in the way that you live your life be earnest to abide in christ's word and help others in this church do the same one of the memory verses this is totally off script from this from last week or a few weeks ago with our family uh is ephesians 2 11 and it says for we are his workmanship created in christ jesus for good works works which god has prepared before him that we would walk in them and um when you think about workmanship uh a long time ago a christian brother had made a song um and he used the word instead of workmanship he used the word masterpiece for you are god's masterpiece and we have this beautiful idea that um god has in ephesians 2 um up to verse 11 it says that god has rescued us from darkness and death and he has he has transferred us into something new and different um and he hasn't done that so that we would remain slaves he's done that ephesians 2 because um and he has made us uh his masterpiece and he has taken us a filthy and condemned without hope and he has totally changed our lives and he has made us into a glorious masterpiece christian you are a masterpiece you are god's handiwork and we need to remind each other that is the way we are called to live live as the person that god has made you into and let's help others do the same you are god's masterpiece let's soak up the truths of scripture that we would know our savior better be controlled and led by him christian and live not as false disciples but as true disciples that you are as those who have been adopted into god's spiritual family set free from sin's power and prince and brought into new life through jesus christ our lord let's pray oh god would you do a work in us spirit we we need your help um to help us abide in christ's words um to reveal a truth to us on the truth um the knowledge and understanding but also the truth who is christ the son and lord we need to be reminded that we've been set free god we are a your handcrafted masterpiece that you have set aside for the works that you have ordained your good works god would you receive nothing but glory from our lives amen we're going to turn now to the lord's table the communion service is a time of remembrance for those that are in christ for those that have professed belief and chosen to walk in the path of true discipleship for those who have tasted and seen his goodness and his mercy and forgiveness of sins

and who have turned from their lives of vain glory towards following christ and pursuing god's glory with their lives if you don't know christ in this way um don't partake of the communion elements today um because they won't serve a purpose for you instead use this time to deeply consider a white might be hint what might be hindering you from christ from receiving christ as your lord and savior even today that you might know the truth and find lasting freedom from slavery to sins prince and power pray with me almighty god we come to you this morning admitting our unworthiness to partake of this holy meal and yet with confidence sincerity truth and joy we come to this supper through this sacred blood of jesus our lord and savior we praise you for your mercy and grace and ask you through this bread and cup to commune with us now as we commune with you and one

another heavenly father as we now create celebrate this meal that you've prepared for us a heavenly meal that reminds us of earthly realities this bread and this cup are tangible invisible reminders of our sin and also the supreme sacrifice of your son his body broken and blood shed for us and our salvation so lord as we meditate on the realities of our sin and your salvation we ask for your help in fully confessing our sins in the silence as we prepare to solemnly partake of the body and blood of your son father in heaven we bow our heads now because jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit we bow in reverence and respect and awe and in adoration for the person of christ the words of christ and today for the cross of christ and today for the cross of christ