

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) In John 8:31-32, you get the sense that Jesus smells something rotten amongst those who were professing to “believe.” Have you ever sensed this in someone who was claiming to be a Christian, but you thought wasn’t?
- B) How can you tell when someone is a genuine Christian? Should we be concerned about whether someone else’s faith is genuine? Why or why not?
- C) The Jews (John 8:31-32) believed they were disciples of Jesus Christ. But they were fooling themselves. Sin is so powerful that sometimes people fool themselves into thinking they are something (a Christian) that they really aren’t! How can a person know for sure they are a genuine Christian?
- D) Usually, when a conversation like the one we are having here occurs, many of us go crazy trying to “prove” to ourselves that we really are Christians. It brings up the sins in our lives with which we struggle and still feel “enslaved.” Is there such a thing as “victorious” Christian living?
- E) In Roman culture (Jesus’ time), being adopted was common. Those children who were adopted became a part of the family with all the rights and privileges of being part of the family, including inheritance. It’s very much like Christ choosing a person to be adopted into His family. All the rights, privileges and inheritance of being a child of God become yours! Often though, like adopted children, we become rebellious to our adoptive parent and “go our own way.” Being adopted is a great blessing, but it also means that our original parent rejected us. As is natural in all children, an adopted child wants to be accepted and receive the love and pleasure that comes from the natural parent. Spiritually we are no different. We go back to our original “father” (the devil -- John 8:44) and begin to serve him, hoping it can work out. Of course, it won’t, which is exactly why God has adopted us. Is there rebelliousness toward your adoptive Heavenly Father? Take some time to share and pray for one another... Be honest!!

Know The Truth

Long Beach Alliance Church • December 19th, 2004 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**SO JESUS WAS SAYING TO THOSE
JEWS WHO HAD BELIEVED HIM, “IF
YOU CONTINUE IN MY WORD, THEN
YOU ARE TRULY DISCIPLES OF MINE;
AND YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND
THE TRUTH WILL MAKE YOU FREE.”
~JOHN 8:31-32 (NASB)**

1) Count The Cost Of Discipleship

- A) Jesus Christ knew the hearts of men (John 2:24-25), and sensed something was missing in the “faith” of the Jews who had believed (John 8:30).
- B) Jesus Christ draws two requirements for genuine discipleship:
- i) Perseverance -- “If you continue...” (8:31).
 - ii) Unity with truth -- “know the truth...” (8:32).
- C) Jesus clearly points to the reality that there are two kinds of “faith.” There is genuine faith which leads to perseverance and a lifestyle marked by truth and freedom, and there is spurious faith which lacks a change of lifestyle and rejects Christ’s person and message (8:31-32).

2) Hearts Of Darkness

- A) Confirming Christ's suspicions, the Jews* in the crowd begin to show their faith is not in Christ alone, but in their heritage/lineage (8:33).

- B) The self-assertion that the Jews have "never been enslaved to anyone" may seem rather odd, given that the Jews are under Roman authority (and have been emancipated by God from slavery to Egypt (twice), Assyria, Babylon and Persia). The reference seems to mean that their hearts, the "spirit of the Jews," has never been enslaved (8:33).

- C) The significant point of John 8:33 is not the idea of slave vs. free, but that the Jews believed that they were already free because of their lineage. The point? People who believe they are free have no need for a Savior and don't genuinely believe in the Savior, Jesus Christ.

3) Slave or Son?

- A) Jesus' words about slavery to sin are clearly meant to say that anyone who sins (including you and me) is in slavery to a lifestyle of sin which is inescapable (8:34).

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* The more I study this passage, the more convinced I become that the crowd to which Jesus is addressing in this passage (8:31-59) is a younger (both in age and in Jewish faith) crowd of Jews. Clearly they are a crowd which has responded in some way to Christ (8:30-31), so they are not the religious leadership -- who do not respond (at least publicly) to Christ (cf. 7:48, with the notable exceptions of Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, and Nicodemus, a Pharisee (19:38-39). However, they are noted much later in the John's Gospel). This alone indicates a younger and less experienced individual. Further, their aggressive zeal, fixation on their lineage in "father Abraham" and their rather base accusations toward Christ's lineage and supposed Samaritanism are all marks of impetuous arguments filled with vitriolic venom but lacking in the testing and clever trapping techniques of the religious leaders of the day (cf. 8:1-11). This passage seems particularly tailored for those who are young in their followership of Jesus Christ, or are perhaps "checking out" the claims of Christ for themselves. The passage answers some of the more "radical" accusations of Jesus Christ's day, and some of the more "fringe" estimations of the person of Jesus Christ in our culture.

- B) Those who sin, reasons Jesus Christ, are slaves to sin and cannot escape its clutches. Christ's idea is clear, if you have EVER sinned, you are not free (8:34).

- C) Jesus goes further to point out that the slave of sin is not part of the family of God. The slave of sin is on the outside of the family, looking in, helpless in his slavery (8:35).

- D) How can ANY man be free?! "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (8:36). D.A. Carson notes, "True liberty is not the liberty to do anything we please, but the liberty to do what we ought; and it is genuine liberty because doing what we ought now pleases us."

- E) Note that it is the Son who "makes" a person free (8:36). The only route to become free from sin is to be chosen by the Son. Freedom is a free gift from God (Ephesians 2:8) and simultaneously it is the gracious "adoption" of a sinner into the family of God (Romans 8:15-17).

- F) Where did the Jews go wrong? They were depending on their own flesh ("we are Abraham's descendents") for salvation. But your pedigree cannot "get you into the family." Only the Son can get you in! Have you confessed your slavery to sin to God (8:32), responded to Christ's offer to believe (8:24), and been adopted into the family (8:35-36)?

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† Aurelius Augustinus, known more commonly as St. Augustine (early church father (354-430 AD), Bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa, forerunner of medieval theology and broadly considered one of the greatest theological minds of the church age), comments on John 8:34, "at times a man's slave, worn out by the commands of an unfeeling master, finds rest in flight. Wither can the servant of sin flee? Himself he carries with him wherever he flees. An evil conscience flees not from itself; it has no place to go to; it follows itself. Yea, he cannot withdraw from himself, for the sin he commits is within. He has committed sin to obtain some bodily pleasure. The pleasure passes away; the sin remains. What delighted is gone; the sting has remained behind. Evil bondage!" (Saint Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, and Soliloquies*, 41.4; p. 231).