

The Truth Will Set You Free John 8:30-36

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Because of Jesus' teaching, many people were attracted to Him. Yet, Jesus didn't treat their belief in Him as genuine. Listen to what Jesus tells the crowd in John 8.

John 8:30-36, "Even as he spoke, many believed in him. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Even though in verse 30 where it said, *"Even as he spoke, many believed in him,"* it looked as if Jesus was speaking about real believers. But their faith actually oscillated between hero worship and discontentment.

In verse 31, Jesus told them *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."* Yet later, these same believers were described as:

- slaves to sin
- indifferent to His words
- children of the devil
- liars
- people who attempt to kill Jesus by stoning Him

If all those descriptions were not telling enough, Jesus' opinion of their faith was stated matter-of-factly later in John 8:45, *"Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!"*

In this passage, Jesus suggested there were not two kinds of people in the world: disciples of Christ and non-disciples, but three kinds of people: non-Christians, real Christians, and fake Christians.

So, don't assume that all belief in Jesus is real, because not all belief is. Therefore, the question for today is... *"Is your faith real or are you a phony?"*

Now, it's not good if you've never questioned your Christianity. Every once and awhile you need to check the validity of your faith.

2 Peter 1:10-11, "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

If your faith were a ship, you'd check to see if the hull was seaworthy before sailing off into the ocean. So too, Jesus wants you to check your faith, which is something Satan doesn't want you to do.

Satan wants the counterfeit Christian to go to his grave with the confidence that he was saved. But this doesn't mean we're to constantly question our salvation.

Any Christian who incessantly questions their experience with Christ will find no confidence to witness, pray, or live the Bible. This is why Jesus doesn't assume that all belief is real.

Do you want real faith? Well, it's easy to know if your faith is real because in John 8:30-36, Jesus gave us a simple test that we can use to assess whether our faith is real or not.

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But, before I launch into these, let me say a word about small faith because Jesus takes notice of even the smallest amount of real faith.

In Luke 18:8b, Jesus asked a rhetorical question, *“However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”* The answer is “Yes!”

If anyone can find it, He can. Jesus has remarkable eyes to see all. Out of weak and imperfect faith, Jesus recognizes that something greater can arise from it.

Though you may have insufficient faith now, Jesus watches over it in hopes that your “thread” of faith will turn into a “rope.” And while God deserves the highest form of faith, your faith can grow from the smallest embers.

Some of you may relate to the father of the son possessed by an impure spirit in Mark 9.

After Jesus healed his son, the exclaimed, *“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”* So don’t disparage, if your faith is small it can grow by hearing the Word.

Now, let’s turn our attention to three marks of real faith. The first mark of a real faith is found in verse 31, *“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”*

Jesus attached a condition for all those who wished to follow Him – you must stay in the pages of the Bible and the pages of the Bible must stay in you. *“My teaching”* is the sum total of all that Jesus taught.

John 15:7-8, *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

If you stay in the pages of the Bible, you’ll prove to be a disciple of Jesus. The time you spend in God’s Word is evidence of real faith.

Stay in God's Word like it's a lifeboat. Think about it. You get in a lifeboat to be safe. Once you're in a lifeboat, you stay inside it. You don't get out.

You need to stay in the lifeboat in order to ride out the storms of doubt that will assail you. This kind of Bible study is not only informational, but it's transformational.

Transformational Bible study doesn't simply know facts and information about the Bible, though that's a start, but Transformational Bible study is having God's Word live inside of you.

The Word transforms your character. Bible study isn't optional. If you wish to be a certified disciple, then stay in His Word. The first mark of those with genuine faith is staying in God's Word.

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The second mark of a real faith is "staying power." John 8:31, *"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.'"*

It's easy to be superficially attracted to Jesus, but the test is continuing with Jesus. Real faith is a life-long act.

Albert Einstein's fingerprints are all over today's technologies. Photoelectric cells and lasers, nuclear power and fiber optics, space travel, and even semi-conductors all trace back to Einstein's theories.

It was Einstein who warned then-President Franklin Delano Roosevelt via a letter that building an atom bomb may be possible.

When Albert Einstein was but nine years of age, he developed a passionate zeal for Judaism. His parents, Jewish by race, were largely secular.

So, when Einstein decided to eat no pork, keep kosher dietary laws, and observe the Sabbath, it was difficult on the entire family.

Einstein's fervency even caused him to compose his own hymns, which he sang to himself as he walked home from school.

Yet, his religious enthusiasm did not last. Just as other boys his age were preparing for their bar mitzvah, Einstein's exposure to science produced an aversion to religion at the young age of twelve.

His friend, Phillip Frank, later noted, *"There arose in Einstein an aversion to the orthodox practice of the Jewish or any traditional religion, as well as to attendance at religious services, and this he never lost."*

And while Einstein's early religious enthusiasm wasn't based on Jesus, it serves to illustrate temporary faith.

Again, real faith is a life-long act. The shout of *"I believe"* is too often over when the excitement is over.

The keyword in verse 31b is the word *"hold"*, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."* Therefore, a key ingredient of real faith is staying power.

This word "hold" used here is also translated "abide" in other versions of the Bible.

The original Greek word means, *"to stay in one place."* Your faith in Christ must *"stay"* on Jesus. Your faith doesn't float around; it stays for a lifetime.

Your faith is real when it holds tight to Jesus. Your faith is real when it perseveres through difficulty and continues to hold tight to Him.

You're not a follower of Christ if you follow Jesus only for a season. It's only those who continue who are genuine disciples.

Matthew 10:22, *"You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

Staying power is where the heart leans, with all its weight, on Christ. Real faith rests on God's Word. Real faith has staying power.

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The third mark of genuine faith is to see if your faith rests on Jesus. John 8:32, *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

This phrase, "The Truth," is a synonym for Jesus. You spell this Truth with a capital "T." Knowing the Truth will set you free. Knowing Christ will set you free.

Therefore ask, *"Does my faith rest on Jesus Himself?"* If faith is a rope, then the rope must be tied to Jesus for only the Son can set you free.

John 8:35, *"Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever."*

In this verse, when Jesus spoke of two kinds of people, slaves and sons, He wanted you to see the difference between the two.

A son doesn't stay in the family house forever, but a slave does. A slave can be sold or given away, but a son can never be given away or sold.

The genuine Son is Jesus Himself. Because He has an intimate relationship with His Father, He has the authority to forgive sinners.

The reason why all religions don't lead to God is that only the Son has the authority to forgive sins. Only He can set you free.

The words in verse 32, "*the truth will set you free*" are another way of saying, "*The Son will set you free.*" If your faith is a thread, then secure it tightly to Christ's death and resurrection.

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Conclusion

Let's look at verse 31 again, "*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.*" It's this verse that tells us that we can truly know if we're a real follower of Christ or not.

This verse affirms that we can know for certain that we love Christ and will spend an eternity with Him. One of the benefits of knowing if our faith is real is we'll have confidence in our faith.

We'll no longer have to guess at the truth. We won't have to think on a sliding scale of probability, instead, we can know the truth.

John would later write about this confidence in 1 John 5:13, "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*"

The first benefit of knowing if you are a real follower of Christ is that you won't have to live life with uncertainty. You won't have to die with the uncertainty of your eternity.

Another benefit is freedom. John 8:36, "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*"

The reason you need freedom isn't because of political tyranny. You're not citizens of Russia looking for freedom from a political tyrant. Instead, your tyranny is of a different kind.

John 8:34, *“Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”*

Earlier, in verse 24, Jesus had issued a death threat, *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

The reason Jesus brought up the subject of freedom was that the tyranny of death looms over everyone.

The ultimate bondage isn't enslavement to a political or economic system but slavery to moral failure, slavery to shameful self-centeredness.

It wasn't just Jewish people who were given a death threat but everyone. Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, spiritual none's, homosexuals, Baptists, materialists, Catholics. ALL die in our sins.

Even if you feel spiritually confident in something other than Jesus, a sincere belief in Christ leads to emancipation. The question is, *“Are you safe without Jesus?”*

Don't assume all belief in Jesus is real for not all belief in Christ is real. Is your faith real or are you a phony? Are you authentic or fake?