



LIFE NOTES

For the Week of May 27, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
slave or free

Life Notes for Missional Communities

for your personal growth

The debate between the Pharisees and Jesus continues in this week's passage. Jesus reaches out with truth, the Pharisees avoid the truth and seek to trap him. Jesus exposes the reality of their unbelief.

Remember that the questions are here to help you move Scripture into your heart and life - to help you hear from the Holy Spirit as you read and study the Bible. Journal - a word, a phrase, a paragraph, a page. You'll see God at work in specific, life-changing ways.

the Word: John 8:31-47

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus spoke.

Jesus: *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

The Jews who had believed: *"We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"*

Jesus: *"I tell you the truth, 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. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."*

The Jews who had believed: *"Abraham is our father."*

Jesus: *"If you were Abraham's children, then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined 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 things your own father does."*

The Jews who had believed: *"We are not illegitimate children. The only Father we have is God himself."*

Jesus: *"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."*

missional community suggestion

Facilitators: if possible, ask your community members to come prepared to the meeting by doing the following sections before they arrive. For some who meet on Sundays or Monday, this will not be possible. As facilitators, come with an overview for those who are unable to do the work ahead of time - and know that the questions simply offer ideas and suggestions. Follow the Spirit's leading.

truth

Slavery is a difficult topic to address - particularly when you're the slave and you've convinced yourself you're free.

This passage in John 8 opens with a description of the audience and a simple statement made by Jesus.

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." (John 8:31,32)

So, let's begin with some thinking, praying, discovering.

Questions to consider:

What are some of the things we are slave to in our society today?

Why do you think we're slave to these things?

To what specific teaching does Jesus want the Jews to hold? Do you think he wants us to hold the same teaching?

What do you believe "the truth" is and how would the truth set those specific people free? (Try to stick with the context of John 1-8 for this question.)

How can the truth set us free? Set you free?

slave vs free

Read John 8:31-47 at least three times. Read aloud if possible.

When we think of slavery, we generally think in terms of human relationship - one person serving as slave to another or, in the case of the Israelites for much of their history, one people serving as slave to another people. When the Jewish leaders responded in denial to Jesus' claim that they were enslaved, they were thinking only of this bondage between people or nations. They weren't thinking of their own personal bondage to sin.

Ryan highlighted a story of slavery to sin - a dad whose tie to alcohol was more powerful than his love for himself or his son. That kind of slavery is personal.

If you experienced a situation similar to Ryan's, where your life was directly impacted by someone else's ongoing sin, please journal that experience.

While none of us likes to dwell on the sin aspects of our lives, let's look at the results of sin so that we can welcome the words of Jesus to transform us.

Where have you experienced an ongoing relationship with sin, either in your personal life, your family life or the life of someone you care deeply about?

How do you feel about calling habits or sins in your life, "slavery?"

Can you identify some of your specific sins - some of those habits that Ryan told us are enjoyable at first and then enslaving as they gain traction?

Where do these specific sins take you? What's at the end of this road?

What kind of help do you need from Father, Son and Spirit to release the hold of sin on your life?

Paint a personal picture of freedom: what does freedom look like for you today?

What one step can you take this week toward the freedom Jesus welcomes us into?

for missional communities not doing life notes

Spend a few moments at the beginning or ending of your time responding to the following question:

Pastor Ryan shared about Jesus's statement to the Jews who were with him, "the truth will set you free."

*Examen: What spiritual truth has given you the greatest freedom recently?
 What spiritual truth has been the most difficult to grasp recently?*

next week

To prepare for next week's sermon, read John 8:48-59 and pages 116-122 in Metzger's *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*.

Don't forget to email questions you might have on these passages in John to Pastor Mark at markc@mission68.org.

see next page for facilitator suggestions

Begin with a conversation about “slavery” and us. Just as the Jewish leaders didn’t see themselves as enslaved, we rarely see ourselves that way - particularly in the United States. We see ourselves as “free” in our society. But what if we’re not as free as we like to think?

Brainstorm a bit: what are some of the things we are slave to in our society today?

Why do you think we’re slave to these things?

Ryan showed us a sin-graph. We begin with temptation and actually enjoy sin until the joy starts to fade, we need “more” to satisfy and sin becomes our master.

What are some of those sins people face in our society that please us before they reveal us as slaves?

It is easy to focus on the other person’s sin and completely overlook our own. It is easy to be confronted with the truth but turn the other way instead.

Examen: *What subjects are easiest for us to speak truthfully about?*
What subjects are most difficult for us to speak truthfully about?

Why do we hide? What purpose does hiding serve?

Is Jesus challenging any of your personal truths or traditions? If so, can you identify?

What do you think Jesus is asking you to release or examine in your life?

What truth(s) do you need to know so that you can be free?

Examen: *What’s the greatest gift of the freedom Jesus offers us today?*
What’s the most difficult thing about the freedom Jesus offers us today?