

CHURCH.

LESSON 20

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> 1 THESSALONIANS 2 - 5
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (1 Thessalonians 2 - 5).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[KEY VERSES IN JOHN]</i> (7) JOHN 6:37
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Review two by two.

(7) John 6:37. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) <i>[THE GOSPEL OF JOHN]</i> JOHN 8:1-59
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study John 8:1-59 together. John 8:1-59 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the woman caught in adultery. He gives a testimony about himself and warns people that whoever rejects his testimony (his claim) would go to hell. Finally he teaches who the genuine children of Abraham are.

<u>STEP 1. READ.</u>	GOD'S WORD
Read. LET US READ John 8:1-59 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

<u>STEP 2. DISCOVER.</u>	OBSERVATIONS
Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

8:30

Discovery 1. People who call themselves Christians (nominal Christians) can become enemies of Jesus Christ.

Notes.

(1) Nominal Christians who became enemies of Christ.

In John 8:30-32 we read about many Jews who put their faith in Jesus. Jesus then said to them that only when they hold to his teaching, they are truly his disciples and the truth will set them free.

However, it becomes very clear in this passage, that these same people who believed in him were the people who vehemently opposed him in the verses that follow. They verbally opposed Jesus by saying that they have never been anyone's slaves and that they are not illegitimate children (born from sexual immorality) (John 8:33,41). They verbally abused Jesus by saying that Jesus was probably an illegitimate child, a despised Samaritan and demon-possessed (John 8:48). In this passage there is a transition of attitude towards Jesus. First people are favourable towards him and then they change their attitude and become hostile against him.

(2) The difference between superficial faith and saving faith.

This passage shows that it is possible for people to first "believe" in Jesus Christ and afterwards stop believing, backslide, fall away or actually become enemies of Jesus Christ. However, there is a big difference between *superficial faith* and *saving faith*. Superficial faith is merely a mental persuasion. It is a temporary faith that believes certain facts to be true for a period of time. Superficial faith does not involve any commitment. However saving faith (the faith that

leads to eternal life) is a wholehearted personal surrender to Jesus Christ. It involves the thoughts of your mind, the emotions of your heart, the decisions and choices of your will and the deeds in your behaviour. Saving faith involves a commitment of your whole life to Jesus Christ.

Whenever the verb “to believe” stands in the present continuous tense, it indicates genuine saving faith! For example, John 3:16 literally says, “Whoever *continues* (not stop) to believe in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life”. The present continuous tense is also used in John 3:18: “Whoever *continues* to believe in him is not condemned, but whoever does *not continue to believe*, stands condemned already, because he did not believe (and did not keep on believing) in the name of God’s one and only Son” (Also John 6:35,40,47; 7:38; 11:25-26; 12:44,46; 14:12; 17:20).

Therefore, it is very important for us Christians to realise that people with a superficial faith are not really saved, but can back-slide at any time. On the other hand, when people have *saving faith*, they will keep on believing. They cannot back-slide, because God himself will complete the good work that he began in them (Philippians 1:6)

8:31

Discovery 2. The meaning of true freedom.

Notes.

In John 8:31-36 Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, ... then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. ... If the Son has set you free, you will be free indeed.” Jesus is teaching the character of true freedom as well as the way to acquire true freedom.

(1) Freedom according to the world is freedom to do what you like.

In the world in which we live, many people say that “freedom” is to be able to do what you want. It is a freedom to be the captain of your own ship, the master of your own destiny and the king of your own soul. Then people should not tell you what to believe or what to do. There should be no boundaries that limit your freedom. Everybody should make his own decisions and choices how he lives.

But Jesus says that this freedom according to the world is no freedom at all! The freedom of the world is in reality slavery to themselves!

(2) Freedom according to the Jews is freedom from idolatry.

The Jews maintained that they had never been slaves of anybody. They were not thinking of their slavery in Egypt, but meant that they have never been bound to idols as the Gentiles. They believed that the Jews had always served the Living God.

However, the Jews conveniently forgot all their rebellion against God and their sin in their past history. And even now they were still living in their sins. Jesus says that the freedom according to the Jews is no freedom at all, because they were slaves to sin! Jesus was not speaking of the freedom from idolatry, but about the freedom from sin!

(3) Freedom according to Jesus Christ is freedom from sin.

“Sin” is not simply doing certain wrong and bad things. “Sin” is independence from the God who revealed himself in the Bible. “Sin” is missing God’s goal (intension), transgressing God’s commandments and twisting God’s truth. “Sin” is what the God of the Bible forbids and *not doing* what he commands. See manual 1, lesson 3.

In John 8:34, Jesus teaches that everyone who sins is a slave to sin! With this statement, Jesus immediately wipes out the distinction between Jew and Gentile (non-Jew)! All people have sinned and are slaves to certain sins in their lives. They cannot say “no” to certain sins in their lives! Knowledge of God and his Word and still continuing to sin, only makes the sin of the Jews stand out more clearly! As long as a Jew or a Gentile continues to sin and does not want to or cannot stop to sin, he is a slave of sin and not free at all!

There are two consequences that follow slavery of sin.

- A slave is a prisoner of his master (called “sin”), and he is unable to deliver himself from his bondage!
- A slave has no permanent place in the family, because he is usually sold to other masters again.

Slavery to sin is a hopeless experience, because a person is unable to free himself from his own sin. Slavery to sin leads to greater slavery: bondage to one particular sin leads to bondage to other kinds of sin. For example, a person who is a slave of sexual immorality often also becomes a slave of spiritual false teachings! A person who is a slave to eating too much also becomes a slave of watching videos. A person who is a slave to drinking too much alcohol easily becomes a slave to using drugs and criminality.

Jesus teaches that true freedom only happens when a person becomes bound to Jesus Christ. True freedom is being bound to Jesus Christ! He says, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!” Thus, whoever is bound to Jesus Christ, is set free from the bondage and slavery to sin! But whoever desires to remain free from Jesus Christ, remains bound to sin! Whoever wants to have the freedom according to the world, without boundaries and limitations, remains a slave to the boundaries and limitations of his own sin!

Therefore, true freedom is not the ability to do what you wish to do, but the ability to do what you should do! Freedom is actually doing what the God of the Bible wants you to do! Therefore true freedom cannot be found in practising any

religion or practising religious exercises as meditation or yoga etc., because all these religions and religious techniques do not deal with the problem (“sin”)(Romans 3:23) and also do not deal with the consequences of the problem (called: separation from the living God) (Isaiah 59:1-2)! They *cannot* deal with these two problems! True freedom cannot be found outside Jesus Christ, because only Jesus Christ died for sins (1 Peter 2:24) and only Jesus Christ brings people back to the living God (1 Peter 3:18). True freedom can only be found by becoming bound to Jesus Christ! Only when you are bound to Jesus Christ, do you want to do what you should do and are you able to do what you should do. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 8:1-59 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

8:3-5

Question 1. How must Christians view the death penalty to sexual offenders?

Notes.

Adultery is certainly a very serious offence. In the Old Testament Law, both the men and the women that were caught in adultery were killed. However after Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice of atonement for sins, the penal laws (part of the civil law in Israel) have been *fulfilled* (Matthew 5:17) and *changed* (Hebrew 7:12) by Jesus. If a person truly repents and confesses his sin to Jesus Christ, Jesus forgives him and cleanses him from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

However, there are still some religious leaders and teachers today who are only interested to catch offenders of the law (including their own man-made laws) and then kill them. That is because they do not know Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation and his grace and forgiveness in the New Testament. They still live “under the law” (Romans 6:14). They not only fail to keep the whole law of God themselves, but also replace God as the Judge by killing those they think transgress God’s law. In the New Testament only the government has the authority to execute the death penalty (Romans 13:4; cf. Genesis 9:6).

Christians must always interpret the Old Testament laws in the light of the first coming of Jesus Christ and in the light of the New Testament teachings.

8:21-24

Question 2. What does Jesus mean when he says that people will die in their sins if they do not believe in Jesus?

Notes.

In John 8:24 Jesus says, “If you do not believe that “I AM” (Greek: egó eimi), then you will indeed die in your sins”. The words “I am” means: “I AM THE ONE I CLAIM TO BE”.

This refers to the following statements in the Old Testament: In Exodus 3:14, the LORD (Hebrew: JaHWeH) says, “I AM WHO I AM”, meaning, “I WAS, I AM AND I ALWAYS WILL BE THE ONE I REVEALED MYSELF TO BE”. In Deuteronomy 32:39, the Lord says, “I myself, I AM! There is no God besides me”. And in Isaiah 43:10, the LORD says, “You are my witnesses ... so that you may know and believe me and understand that I AM HE. Before me no God was formed, nor will there be one after me”. All the gods of the other religions are not God at all! They are only the inventions of religious people.

The same expression is used several times in the Gospel of John. Jesus says, “I AM (the Messiah)” (John 4:26). The former blind man says, “I AM (the former blind man who used to sit and beg)” (John 9:9). Jesus says, “I AM (Jesus of Nazareth)” (John 18:5-8). Here in John 8:24, Jesus says, “I AM (all that I claim to be): the One sent by God the Father, the One who is from above, the Son of Man, the only-begotten Son of God, equal with God the Father, the One who has life-in-himself, the very essence of the Scriptures. I AM the Bread of life (John 6:35), I AM the Light of the world (John 8:12), I AM the gate for the sheep (John 10:7), I AM the good shepherd (John 10:11), I AM the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-26), I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6), and I AM the true vine (John 15:1).”

Jesus claimed the following: “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me” (John 12:44-45).

No one can remain neutral with respect to Jesus Christ! You either believe in Jesus Christ or you don’t. Whoever does not believe all that Jesus claimed about himself, will die in their sins! “Death” here does not simply mean *physical death*, but it means *eternal death*, being thrown into hell. Whoever rejects Jesus Christ will not experience peace or

comfort when he dies physically, but only dark despair. The One he rejects will not be present to help him in his need and despair. He will only experience the wrath of God and he will go to the place of everlasting perdition, the lake of fire or hell. He can never go to the place where Jesus is going, that is, paradise or to heaven, where God the Father is (Hebrews 12:22-24).

In verse 21, the sin (singular) of the Jews who rejected him, is viewed collectively and in verse 24 the sins (plural) of the Jews are viewed separately. If someone does not “know” Jesus Christ in the sense of “having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ”, he also does not know the only God that exists! If someone does not believe the claims of Jesus Christ, he also rejects God, because God sent Jesus! Whoever rejects Jesus Christ as Son of God goes to hell.

8:37-45

Question 3. Who are the true children of Abraham?

Notes.

(1) The Jews as a natural race are not the true children of Abraham.

In verse 37, Jesus acknowledges that the Jews are the physical descendants (literally: seed) of Abraham. But in verse 39, he says, that if they were truly the spiritual descendants (literally: children) of Abraham, then they would have also done the works that Abraham did. Abraham *welcomed* the messengers of God, *obeyed* the commandments of God and he fully *trusted* that God would do what he had promised. Finally, according to verse 56, Abraham *rejoiced* at seeing the day of the future Messiah, Jesus Christ (cf. Genesis 12:3; 22:18). However, the Jews did not do the works that Abraham did. Instead, they opposed the Messiah, rejected his word and finally plotted to kill him (Matthew 12:14)!

Jesus concluded that the Jewish religious leaders and teachers were NOT the children of Abraham, but rather the children of the devil! The devil was the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning (in paradise). Now also the Jewish religious leaders and teachers were liars and murderers. Therefore the devil is their true father! Their attitude, words and actions show who their true father is!

(2) The Christians from every nation in the world (including the Jewish nation) are the true children of Abraham.

The true children of Abraham are not nominal Christians, but genuine (born-again) Christians. The apostle Paul teaches that Abraham is the father of all believers (Christians)(Romans 4:11-16). He teaches that the blessings and promises of God were not given to Abraham’s physical descendants (the Jews)¹, but to Abraham’s “seed” (Hebrew: zera), namely: Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:14-29)!

Therefore, whoever believes² in the claims of Jesus Christ, is a spiritual child of Abraham. Claiming to be a physical descendent of Abraham has no value whatsoever! Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ (and his claims), is a spiritual child of Abraham and will do the works of Abraham: he will believe in and obey Jesus Christ and rejoice in Jesus Christ!

8:51

Question 4. What does Jesus mean when he says, “If anyone keeps my word he will never see death”.

Notes.

The words “keep my word” means: to believe and accept the words of Jesus Christ, holding on to it so that no one takes it away and obeying them. They do not simply mean to a single act: for example, “to confess your faith once”. It refers to obeying his words continually. A single gesture like: “believing that God is one” or “saying that Jesus is a prophet” will make no impression on Jesus. The demons also believe that God is one and they shudder” (James 2:19), because they know that will go to hell (Matthew 25:41)! Jesus Christ only takes people serious when they have made a commitment to do (Greek: present continuous tense) the will of God as revealed in the Bible *continuously* (Matthew 7:21-27).

Jesus promises that those who keep his word will never see death. The Jews again failed to understand that Jesus was speaking about *spiritual* death. They took everything Jesus said *literally* and therefore could not understand the teachings of Jesus. The Jews were thinking of *physical* death only. Jesus was speaking of *death in relationship to God*. He was speaking of being separated from the presence and loving care of God and experiencing the anger and condemnation of God forever (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Jesus promised that whoever keeps his word will never be separated from the presence and loving care of God and will never experience the righteous and holy wrath and condemnation (damnation) of God!

¹ The Jews, the nominal Christians and Muslims all claim to be descendants of Abraham.

² Including Jews, Christians and Muslims who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ and his claims in the Bible!

Question 5. How did Abraham actually see the day of Jesus Christ?**Notes.**

In John 8:56, Jesus says, “Abraham rejoiced at seeing my day; he saw it and was glad”. It does not necessarily mean that Abraham saw Jesus Christ with physical eyes (however also see Genesis 18:1-15), but that he saw *the day of Jesus*. When God promised to give to Abraham a son, he rejoiced exceedingly. For twenty-five years he believed God’s promise and then only his son was born. He named his son “Isaac”, which means “laughter” (Genesis 21:5-6).

In Genesis 12:3,7 and 22:18, God promised, “In your seed (descendant) (Hebrew: zera) all the families of the earth will be blessed”. Thus, he rejoiced in the birth of a physical son (Isaac), but also in one of his descendants (seed) (Galatians 3:16) in whom all the families on earth would be blessed. Abraham understood that this one descendant would be the future Messiah, the Hope of all mankind, the Saviour of the world! Hebrews 11:13 says that the believers during the Old Testament period did not see the promise with regard to the seed with their physical eyes! All true believers in the Old Testament “were living by faith when they died. They did not receive what had been promised, but only saw them and welcomed them from a distance (from the early history of salvation they saw him with their spiritual eyes). It was in this sense that Abraham “saw the day of Jesus Christ” He saw Jesus Christ (the seed) (Galatians 3:16) in faith and welcomed him from the very early history of salvation. Abraham rejoiced in the coming of Jesus Christ.

STEP 4. APPLY.**APPLICATIONS**

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 8:1-59.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 8:1-59.

- 8:6. “Write on the ground with his finger”. There are people who ask questions only to trap you and to get a basis to accuse you before the religious and civil authorities. You do not have to answer all their questions. Sometimes silence is the best answer.
- 8:7. But at other times a probing answer is the best answer. Jesus made a very probing statement, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” The fact that no one threw a stone at the woman proves that everyone was guilty of committing the sin of adultery (with his thoughts, words or deeds) at some stage in his life. Read Matthew 5:27-30. Remove the plank from your own eye before you try to remove a splinter from someone else’s eye (Luke 6:41-42).
- 8:11. After Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins, leave your life of sin! “Go now and *leave your life of sin!*” Read Proverbs 28:13. “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses *and renounces* them finds mercy”.
- 8:12. Follow Jesus Christ and you will always have the light of salvation, satisfaction, renewal and blessing.
- 8:15. Do not judge. To judge is the task of Jesus Christ (John 5:22). Jesus did not come to condemn the world for their sins, because the world already stands condemned. Jesus came to save the lost and condemned people in the world (John 3:17-18). Even though Jesus Christ has much to say about the religious leaders and teachers and even judge them (John 8:26), he judged them not with human standards (John 8:15; Matthew 7:1-2). He condemned people who thought that they had no sin and believed that they were righteous (John 9:39).
- 8:31. Obey the teachings of Jesus and this will show that you are really a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- 8:32. Obey the teachings of Jesus and this will set you completely free.
- 8:42. Love Jesus Christ and this will show that God is your Father.
- 8:44. People who continue to spread lies (about Jesus Christ, the Bible and Christians) and murder other people (like murderers, war criminals, jihadists, drug lords, etc.) have the devil as their father. They certainly do not have the God of the Bible as their (spiritual) Father!

2. Examples of personal applications from John 8:1-59.

I want to make sure that I have abiding faith and not simply superficial faith. Whenever I read or study the Bible, I want to make sure that I not simply believe the truths with my mind, but also commit my whole life to these truths. I want to continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will make me wholeheartedly obedient and devoted to the truths of the Bible.

I want to live in real freedom and not just in the so-called “freedom” according to the world. The freedom that people around me claim is a freedom without boundaries and limits. But the freedom in Christ does what should be done. True freedom shows respect to the boundaries and limits which God has set.

STEP 5. PRAY.**RESPONSE**

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 8:1-59.
 (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences.
 Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

[INTERCESSION]
 PRAY FOR OTHERS

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

[ASSIGNMENT]
 FOR NEXT LESSON

(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 8 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of 2 Thessalonians 1 - 3 each day.
 Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (8) John 7:38. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.