

# COMMUNITY GROUPS

Living out the gospel with  
one another in our homes

Continuing through the book of John, this week Ted preached on John 8:31-59. In this passage, Jesus continues to teach those who “believed” his message in the first part of the chapter. However, what Jesus says and how the people react shows that they didn’t truly believe and weren’t really interested in following after Jesus. First, they underestimate the power of sin by denying the fact that they were slaves to sin and could only be set free by abiding in Christ. Second, they overestimate themselves, claiming they couldn’t possibly be slaves to sin or children of the devil because they were descendants of Abraham. They believed that their security and salvation rested on who they were instead of wholly on Jesus. Third, they didn’t display any outward evidence of the Spirit. Jesus tells them in verse 42, “if God were your father, you would love me,” and that instead they act like their real father, the devil, who “was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Fourth, they give one final rejection of Jesus in verse 48, asking Jesus if he was a Samaritan (the Jews believed the Samaritans worshiped wrong and didn’t follow God’s Word. See 2 Kings 17:24-41 for more context) or if he was possessed by a demon. Jesus answers that he does not have a demon, but comes from God and that anyone who keeps his Word will never see death, including Abraham who “believed and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6) and who “rejoiced that he would see my [Jesus] day” (John 8:56) This naturally infuriated the Jews, since Jesus was claiming to do something that Abraham and the prophets couldn’t and since Jesus said that he had seen Abraham, who had died thousands of years before Jesus was born. The final reply Jesus gives in this passage is one of the clearest examples of Jesus claiming to be God himself. He tells them in verse 58, “truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” Jesus is not simply saying that he was older than Abraham, but he is claiming to be Yahweh, the name that God gives to Moses on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 3:14, and which translates to “I am” (or “I am being,” or “I am who I always was,” or “I will always be who I am,” etc. Tenses work a little differently in Hebrew). Their rejection in this passage is not simply of another prophet, but of God himself.

- 1) What does it mean to be “a slave to sin?” As Christians, who have been freed from this slavery, how can we help each other not to fall prey to sin and instead to abide in the Word of Christ (John 8:31)?
- 2) Most of us probably can’t trace our lineage back to Abraham like the Jews in this passage, but what are ways that we also overestimate ourselves and rely on our merit and who we are rather than on Christ?
- 3) What does it mean in this passage to be a “child of God” or a “child of the devil?” What is John’s (the author’s) intent here? Why does he make this contrast (so that we point fingers and try to figure out who’s really a child of the Devil, so that we doubt our salvation whenever we mess up, as a warning against spiritual laziness, etc.) In other words, how do we apply this truth from the passage?

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- 4) Read Exodus 3:7-15, which is part of God's speech to Moses on Mt. Sinai before he led Israel out of Egypt. Why is it important that Jesus identifies himself as "I am" in John 8:58?