

- I. Knowledge, wisdom, insight
  - A. John 8:31-32 . . . So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
  - B. As I have stated several times during our study of John, the first eleven chapters contain stories about Jesus that verify His deity. And though John 7-8 contain some of those stories, these two chapters also contain some profound statements, life-effecting truths, and guiding principles – from Jesus himself – that teach us about living the Christ-like life, and that teach us about God's nature, God's wisdom, man's nature, and man's foolishness.
    1. Therefore, to gain the most from these two chapters, it is best to read them and ponder what they say over a period of several weeks. And when I say "gain the most from them," I am speaking about gaining knowledge, wisdom, and insight from them.
      - a. Of course, to gain whatever knowledge is contained in these two chapters, you have to learn what the words mean, what the different messages teach, how the messages in these two chapters relate to other parts of the Bible, and the implications of each message for your life, the life of the church, and the life of those around you.
      - b. To gain whatever wisdom is contained in these two chapters, you must apply – in practical ways and to as many areas of your life as possible – the knowledge you are gaining from reading and pondering. In other words, wisdom grows from working out how to apply and then applying the knowledge gained to how you think, what you value, what you say, and how you behave.
    2. But there is something more to be gained from these two chapters than knowledge and wisdom, and that is insight – insight into God and His ways, insight into His word, and insight into the whys of God's ways and the whys of what He says in His word.
      - a. Now you may be wondering why insight is so important if you already have knowledge and wisdom.
      - b. Let me explain it this way. It is knowledge that teaches you what you need to know. It is wisdom that enables you to make proper

use of what you know. And it is insight that looks into knowledge, wisdom, and the outcome of living according to what you know and convinces you that God is perfectly good, that His ways are completely trustworthy, that His word reveals the one and only path to a sensible, emotionally healthy, responsible, and loving abundant life – here and hereafter. And it is insight that convinces you that when you live according to God’s word, you are safe in His hands.

- C. For example, I can teach you all that these two chapters say about God, His character, and His providential activities in Jesus’ life and the lives of those interacting with Jesus. This is knowledge.
1. Then, I can tell you how to apply this knowledge in specific ways to your life so that you not only learn the truths in these two chapters, you learn how to live according to these truths. This is wisdom.
    - a. However, I cannot make you wise. The best I can do is to impart wisdom to you.
    - b. If you accept the wisdom imparted, you must then use that wisdom to help you live according to what you know. When you do this, you will see the wisdom in the wisdom and hopefully make the wisdom imparted your own, which in turn makes you wise.
    - c. You see, knowledge by itself is simply knowledge. Figuring out how to properly apply knowledge and then applying it is wisdom.
  2. And that brings us to insight. Insight grows out of knowledge, the application of that knowledge (*wisdom*), and seeing the outcome of living according to the knowledge you have. However, though you can be taught knowledge and shown the way of wisdom, no one can give you insight. You have to want it, you have to seek it and pray for it and do what is required to gain it for it yourself.
    - a. For example, I can teach you all there is to know about God’s character and why He is worthy to be trusted implicitly.
    - b. I can share whatever wisdom I have about thinking, speaking, choosing, and living in ways enable you to work toward trusting God implicitly.
    - c. But I cannot teach you to be convinced that God is completely trustworthy and that you are safe in His hands.
    - d. Such a conviction can only arise from within you, and when it does, it is the result of seeing and understanding – for yourself – why God is worthy of your implicit trust, why you are safe in His hands, and why His ways and His word form the only path

that brings you to a good end – in this world and in the next. And insight is this kind of seeing and understanding.

3. Therefore, I am encouraging you to gain all the knowledge and godly wisdom you can. But don't stop there. Go beyond knowledge and wisdom, and seek for and pray for and spend the time necessary to gain insight.

#### D. Pray

## II. Genuine disciples

- A. John 8:31 . . . So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."
  1. These words of Jesus point to the truth that knowledge and wisdom can get you far enough to live according to what He says, but insight is needed to accept these words as completely true while properly balancing them with other truths spoken by Jesus that seem, on the surface, to contradict what He is saying here.
    - a. For example, Jesus seems to be setting a condition on discipleship. In this context, discipleship seems to be the natural and expected outcome of believing in Jesus. In the larger context of the NT, believing in Jesus is most often understood as the point at which we enter into God's saving grace.
    - b. But there is within the church the well-developed and strongly promoted teaching that God's saving grace has no conditions – which implies salvation is separate from discipleship. And if salvation is separate from discipleship, that implies we have to have salvation but we don't have to have discipleship.
    - c. However, in this context, Jesus is contrasting the religious leaders who were rejecting His authority and His teaching, with those who believed Him, and in believing accepted His authority and His teaching. These He called disciples.
    - d. My point is that according to the context, Jesus is not separating believing in Him from discipleship. In fact, He is saying that you cannot believe in Him without becoming a disciple. With this in mind, let's consider the condition Jesus places on discipleship.
  2. To convey His conditions of discipleship, Jesus uses what is commonly known as the conditional if. Therefore, Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, that is, if you abide in or dwell in or persevere in studying and learning what God's word has to teach you, and if you continue applying that knowledge so as to live according to God's word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."

3. This is not the only time Jesus used the conditional if.. He used it a number of other times – either in a straight forward way – like here in vs 31, or in an implied way.
  - a. An example of another straight-forward way comes from Matthew 6:14-15, “If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”
  - b. An example of an implied conditional if comes from Matthew 16:24, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”
  - c. In John 14:15, we have another implied conditional if when Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” In other words, the conditional proof of loving Jesus is doing what He says, that is, keeping His commandments.
  - d. And one more example comes from John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” What is the conditional if for bearing much fruit? Abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in you.
4. John carried this use of the conditional if into his epistles, and one well recognized example is found in 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
5. The writer of Hebrews used the conditional if a number of times. For example, he wrote that we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end (Hebrews 3:14).
6. And even Paul used the conditional if as shown in I Corinthians 15:1-2, “Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [2] by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
7. Therefore, we ought not think it strange that God’s word contains these conditional if’s – even when they are used in relation to our relationship to God and receiving gifts from Him.
  - a. After all, what we are is not determined by what we are at any one moment in time, but rather by what we are over an extended period of time.

- b. This is why we differentiate between a label and a reputation. You can gain a label by one act, but you gain a reputation by many acts over an extended period of time.
- B. Now it is important to see that Jesus words in vs 32 are built on His words in vs 31, so I will read both verses together, “If you continue in My word, that is, if you persevere in studying and learning what God’s word has to teach you, and if you continue applying that knowledge so as to live according to God’s word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
1. In other words, as you continue learning and increasing in the knowledge of God’s word, and as you continue applying what you are learning, you will come to know the truth of God and His word in a way that will set you free.
    - a. Now I want to emphasize that it isn’t Bible knowledge alone that sets you free, it is Bible knowledge linked to applying that knowledge that leads to being convinced that God’s truth is indeed true which in turn sets you free.
    - b. Jesus confirmed this process back in John 7:17, “If anyone is willing to do [God’s] will, he will know of the teaching (*know the truth about whose teaching it is*), whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.”
  2. You see, knowledge begins the process of understanding what the truth is. Applying the knowledge continues the process so that you come to know why the truth is true, and why it is only God’s truth that is able to bring you to the abundant life in this world and eternal life in the next. And once you come this far, the truth begins to penetrate and produce changes to everything that you have held and believed and valued and thought and did that enslaved. And this is true freedom.
  3. You see, when the truth sets us free,
    - a. it sets us free from whatever enslaves or imprisons or overpowers and controls us;
    - b. it sets us free from the devil and his minions;
    - c. it sets us free from our sinful passions and selfish desires;
    - d. it sets us free from doubt and irrational distrust;
    - e. it sets us free from fear and anxiety;
    - f. it sets us free from anger and abusive speech;
    - g. it sets us free from depression and the drugs we use to suppress our depression;

- h. and it sets us free from whatever other falsehood, deceptions, lies, and manipulations that war against the truth.
4. For example, the drug addict or hoarder or the one who seeks to control others or the angry person is enslaved to their sin. In this condition of slavery, they are not testing their sinful ways against the truth, and they are not trying to love their neighbor as themselves. Instead, they are invested in a lie and an ungodly way of life that gets them what they want.
- a. But should they begin to fight against the lie and begin clinging to the truth, they can begin gaining sufficient control over themselves to use their reasoning abilities to see why their behavior is sinful, why it is a rejection of God – at least in this area, and why it is a rejection of the truth.
  - b. If they can get this far, they can go further and begin considering the long-term consequences on themselves, their character, their relationship with God, and their relationships with others of continuing in their sin.
  - c. If they get this far, they can go further by using this knowledge to motivate themselves to use all the promises and provisions of God to break the hold this sin has over them, drive the sin out, and replace it with godliness.
  - d. And if they persevere in doing this, they will gain freedom, not only from the specific sin itself, but also from all the other sinful, irrational, prideful, and selfish parts of their being that helped drive their desire and commitment to the sin.
  - e. And when they gain this level of freedom, they will become convinced that God's truth is truly true, and that God's truth has set them truly free.
  - f. You cannot gain any greater amount of freedom in this life than this kind of freedom.
5. Now the marvelous truth here is that the truth that sets us free not only frees us from the evil that enslaves us, it also frees us to be able to do what is right and godly.
- a. And the benefit of this is that the more you persevere in living as God says to live, the more you grow in trusting God to be your primary source of security and your primary source of provision and protection.
  - b. And the more you grow in this kind of faith, the more you experience inner peace, contentment, and joy, regardless of the circumstances.

- c. And the more you grow in this kind of faith, the freer you become in loving others as you want to be loved and as God says to love them, regardless of how they behave.
  - d. And the more you grow in this kind of faith, the more intimacy you enjoy with God and the more you live convinced that He is your all in all, regardless of the circumstances.
6. How blessed we are that we have the privilege and the means to know the truth and have the truth set us this free.

### III. Conclusion

- A. In summary – true freedom, godly freedom, is freedom from whatever prevents you or impedes you or discourages you from living a godly, loving, inwardly peaceful, joy-filled life at all times, including times of trial and tribulation. And it is this freedom that leads to the abundant life where God alone is enough regardless of the circumstances.
- B. Now by God's gracious doing, this freedom is available to anyone and everyone who will persevere in learning what they can from the Word of God, and who will persevere in applying what they learn to what they believe, value, think, feel, desire, speak, and behave.
- C. And if you seek this freedom, and I urge you to, then along the way, consider seeking and praying for insight so that your freedom results in the most meaningful, intimate relationship with God possible in this life.