

Reading the Bible and, in particular, the Gospels can lead to all sorts of confusion. It shouldn't, but the more often I read the more confused I get. This isn't because the message is difficult, rather the opposite. It seems as if it is too simple, too easy and for something as important as the message Jesus brings I am always trying to see if I am missing something.

Slavery is an abomination that has existed for thousands of years, even including nowadays, albeit a bit less visible. Back in New Testament times slavery was a part of everyday life, rich people would own slaves much like today rich people will own a Rolex or Cartier jewelry. It was simply a commonplace thing, so common as to be invisible, almost, unless you were the one being enslaved.

Perversely, there were different standards of slave, from those sent to mines, to be literally worked to death. Or those who had to do menial jobs, stoking fires, cleaning things, up to house slaves, who may be cooks, grooms, bodyguards or maids etc.

Sometimes a slave would be granted 'manumission' a certificate of freedom. That would often mean leaving the house where they had served. Sadly, many would then starve to death as they may not have had any skills with which to earn a living. Freedom didn't always make life better.

What does 'Freedom' mean to you?

Read John 8:31-38

1. What do you understand Jesus to mean in Verses 31-32?
2. Why is the reply in verse 33 completely missing the point Jesus was making?
3. What is the conflict between 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves' and the reality of their own history? Why would they wish to ignore that?
4. What is the truth that sets people free? [See verse 34] Why is the truth, sometimes, so dangerous?
5. Were 'the 'descendants of Abraham' only Jews? Who else may have claimed that title? What arguments might be used as justification to substantiate one side or another?
6. What makes someone a 'slave to sin'? [Verse 34]. Why a slave?
7. Read verse 35 again. Compare the behaviour of the two sons in the story of the 'Prodigal Son' [Luke 15:11-32] and this verse. What can you discover?
8. Verse 36 states that 'if the Son sets you free you are free indeed'. What do you understand that to mean? What, if any, differences are there between that statement and a legalistic argument? [Clue: who owns what?]
9. Compare verses 31 and 37. What problems do you find and how could you answer them?
10. Verse 38 is almost a playground debate, 'My Dad's bigger than your Dad', or is it? If you were hearing Jesus say this, what would you have understood Him to mean?
11. We learn from our parents, and teachers, and that could be called History. What happens when we don't learn and why is this important in relation to the Gospels?

Prayer Points

Please pray for the current vacancies in Beulah's leadership team, that the Lord will speak to our hearts and that we'll be open to His voice.

Also for the children and young adults starting their end-of-year exams, for clarity, guidance and calm.

Pray for stability in Chad and the wider Sahel region. There is a lot of unrest in neighbouring countries. Pray for the refugees crossing into Chad as they flee civil war in Sudan.

Sermon Notes



BIBLE STUDY

May 3rd 2026

Who the Son Sets Free.

John 8:31-38

In the Gospel of John, Jesus progressively reveals His divine identity while confronting deep unbelief. He is presented as the light who exposes spiritual darkness, showing that true blindness is not physical but a refusal to recognise truth. As the Good Shepherd, He embodies sacrificial love, intimate care, and secure belonging for His people. This part of the gospel also emphasises faith as trust in His person rather than mere signs. These passages highlight themes of revelation, belief versus rejection, abundant life, and the growing tension between divine truth and human resistance.

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001