

# The Gospel of John

## Knowing Our True Identity

John 8:37-47

### INTRODUCTION:

We live in a world that is constantly trying to define our identity based on achievement, financial standing, appearance, or popularity. Many of us struggle under the force of these worldly identities. Too often we end up believing false impressions about ourselves.

What I would like for you to understand is that **identity** precedes **action**. Identity (who you are) precedes action (what you do).

### ILLUSTRATION:

If you are a firefighter, we would expect you to fight fires. Right? If you are a farmer, we would expect you to plant and harvest crops or work with cattle. **Identity precedes action**. It is **not** hard to understand the concept, but it is really hard for us, at times, to apply it in our own lives.

This is a simple concept, but it is one that we do not always live out, as is the case of the Pharisees in our text this morning. If your identity is based upon a lie about yourself, you start to live out of that lie. You end up in a false reality. But if your identity is based upon the truth revealed from God, guess what? You will live the life He has planned for you.

This morning I would like to compare our text to a passage in Matthew 16. Our text from John shows how the Pharisees had a mistaken identity. The passage from Matthew reveals a true identity in Christ.

### ILLUSTRATION:

Shane Wood, in one of his weekly devotionals, talked about taking his kids to school. Robert was, at the time of this story, five years old and in kindergarten. He was the last one to be dropped off, so Shane always had some one on one time with him. Shane would often remind him, "Who are we?"

We are the Wood family".

"OK. Who is the Wood family?"

"The Wood family are Christians"

"And what do Christians do?"

"Christians help people and don't hurt people, Christians listen and obey."

Robert, that is awesome, dude! Always remember who you are!"

Although we may have several identities in our life, knowing our true identity gives us direction in our life. It defines what is expected of us. It will even reshape what you do in your other identities. You can reduce the whole discussion of true identity down to two families. You are either in God's family or you are in Satan's family. And that is exactly what Jesus tells us in this text.

Stewart Briscoe has a daily broadcast called "Telling the Truth". He once said, "The more you tell someone **who** they are, the less you have to tell them **what** to do."

But typically in the church we tend to flip this around. We spend most of our time telling people what to do and fail to remind them who they are. So this morning, I would like for each of us to consider, **What is your True Identity?**

## All Stand and Read Scripture

### **John 8:37-47 (NASB)**

<sup>37</sup> I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. <sup>38</sup> I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father."

<sup>39</sup> They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus \*said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. <sup>40</sup> But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. <sup>41</sup> You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. <sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. <sup>44</sup> You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup> But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup> He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God."

## Prayer

In reality there are only two families, two fathers, two lines of descent. You're either from God, or from the devil. I would assume that almost everybody in the world who believe in God, would consider themselves to be children of God. Because people, especially religious people, want to think the best about themselves.

This would be especially true of the Pharisees that Jesus was talking to in our text. They thought they were the experts on how to live according to the law of God. They considered themselves the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They **knew**, according to Old Testament scripture, that they were the people of God.

To be told candidly by Jesus that they actually children of the devil would be something they had never, ever heard. The Jewish leaders are so infuriated that, by the time you arrive at the last verse in this chapter, they are picking up rocks to stone Him.

The Jewish leaders have three claims they want to make.

- **First**, they claim to be the physical seed of Abraham.
- **Secondly**, they claim to be the spiritual seed of Abraham.
- And **thirdly**, they claim to be the children of God.

Jesus agrees with their first claim. But He devastates them on the next two, stripping them of all their false security. Let's look at their first claim.

## **BODY:**

### **I. THE CLAIM TO BE THE PHYSICAL SEED OF ABRAHAM.**

First they claim to be Abraham's physical children. Just prior to our passage, Jesus was having a conversation with the same people. He told them that the truth will set you free. If you continue in My word, you are My true disciples.

I want you to notice how they responded.

#### **John 8:33 (NASB)**

<sup>33</sup> They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free?'"

They believe they already know the truth. They are Abraham's descendants and they are already free. So in their mind that ends the discussion.

But Jesus says, "No. The fact that you are not enslaved by men is not the problem. Mankind is enslaved to sin. It is only through Me that you can be set free. **"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."**

Then He picks up on their first claim from verse 33.

#### **John 8:37a (NASB)**

<sup>37</sup> I know that you are Abraham's descendants;...

So, He acknowledges that they did come from Abraham physically. I grant you that in a **physical** sense. You are actually the seed of Abraham. As the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 promised, He would have a great nation that numbered as the sands of the sea and the stars of the heaven.

You have all the privileges of being Jewish people descendant from Abraham. You have the law, the prophets, the covenants, and the adoption as sons. But your physical ties to Abraham does not save you because no man can be justified by the deeds of the law. All men have sinned according to the law and you need to be set free from that sin.

Then Jesus says, something is wrong here.

#### **John 8:37 (NASB)**

<sup>37</sup> I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

You claim to be Abraham's descendants and live by his writings. Yet you are not doing as Abraham did. When a messenger from heaven came and spoke the word of God to Abraham, he listened and believed. I am the same messenger from heaven, but instead of listening and believing, your desire is to kill me.

You are a physical descendant from Abraham, but, spiritually speaking, that means absolutely nothing.

For them, this is shocking and beyond offensive. We cannot claim Abrahamic descent spiritually, even though we can claim it physically? We are not true sons of Abraham, or heirs of salvation, or possessors of the kingdom. Why?

It is because of their actions based upon a false identity.

**John 8:38 (NASB)**

*<sup>38</sup> I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."*

In reality, you have no interest in what comes from My Father, who is God. You only have interest in the things that come from your father.

**John 8:39 (NASB)**

*<sup>39</sup> They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus \*said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.*

What are the deeds of Abraham?

**John 8:56 (NASB)**

*<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."*

Bound up in the very Abrahamic covenant itself was the promise of a seed, right? That seed was Christ Himself. Galatians says that. Abraham was looking forward to the one true sacrifice that was symbolized in the ram that was caught in the thicket. Abraham was looking ahead to the day when a final, full, and acceptable sacrifice would come.

Do you remember in Genesis chapter 18 when Abraham and Sarah were at home one evening, and some angels showed up? And one of those angels turned out to be an angel of the Lord that was Christ Himself. And what did Abraham do when the Christ appeared? He received Him and embraced Him. They made a dinner. They had fellowship together. Abraham actually received God into his house when God came down to earth. You have rejected Me, I am God who came down to earth.

## **II. THE CLAIM TO BE THE SPIRITUAL CHILD OF ABRAHAM.**

Jesus is now going to transition from a physical son of Abraham to a spiritual son of Abraham. **That's the second point.** You are not Abraham's spiritual children.

**John 8: 40-41a (NASB)**

*<sup>39</sup> They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus \*said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. <sup>40</sup> But as it is, you are seeking to kill*

Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.  
<sup>41</sup> You are doing the deeds of your father.”

He is warning them that they do not know their true identity. Jesus asks "How can it be that you are trying to kill Me, when I am the One Who has brought you the truth from God? Abraham would never do that." He then shifts them away from thinking that Abraham is their father to thinking somebody else is their father and says, "You're doing the deeds of your father, and your father is not Abraham, and your father is not God."

### III. THE CLAIM TO BE A CHILD OF GOD.

#### **John 8:41b-42 (NASB)**

...They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

Their response is very interesting. They said to Him,

"We were not born of fornication." And here's where they make the final claim: "We have one Father: God." Not only are we the **physical** children of Abraham and the **spiritual** children of Abraham, but we are also the spiritual **children of God**. Why? Because we're not born of fornication.

They are still depending on their good works and morality. We are not pagan like the Gentiles. They are connected with every form of idolatry. We're not involved in the immorality of paganism. We're monotheists. We worship one God. God is our Father.

How do you know when God is somebody's Father?

Jesus tells them that if they were true children of God, they have an eagerness to hear His Word and embrace His Son.

You can't possibly have the same father as Abraham, who believed God's word to such a complete degree that it was counted to him as righteousness. Righteousness was credited to Abraham because he believed the word of God. Furthermore, God is not your Father, because unlike Abraham, you want to kill the messenger from heaven. You don't love Me. "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God. And I haven't come on My own initiative; He sent Me."

They had a false identity and it caused them to take the wrong action.

Jesus poses a question:

#### **John 8:43 (NASB)**

<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is because you cannot hear My word.*

What has prevented you from hearing? The natural man does not understand the things of God because to him they are what? They are **foolishness**. So, unbelief leads to ignorance. You don't understand because you will not believe.

Then Jesus drops the bomb.

### **John 8:44 (NASB)**

<sup>44</sup> You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan is a murderer and a liar. You are not very far into the Bible before you find that out, right? He shows up in the garden of Eden, and what is the first thing he does? **LIE!** And the second thing he does is kill. He causes the entire human race to die. How extensive is the murderous power of Satan? Hebrews says he has the power of death, and he exercised it in one act that literally killed the human race in the garden.

### **John 8:45 (NASB)**

<sup>45</sup> But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

There is a way to diagnose a child of the devil: he doesn't believe the truth and doesn't love Christ. A child of God loves the truth and loves Christ. Right?

### **John 8:46 (NASB)**

<sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup> He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God."

Is there something I've done that makes you not believe Me? Do you know something about Me? Is there some corruption in Me? The reason you do not believe is because you are not of God! Believe me, they were desperately seeking for a flaw in Christ, but they couldn't find one.

### **CONCLUSION:**

I would like to compare the identity of the Pharisees against the identity of Peter.

### **Matthew 16:15-17 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> He \*said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona (which means son of Jonah), because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Peter knew the true identity of Jesus. And because of that understanding, he also understood his own true identity. We receive our identity by understanding clearly who Jesus is. Peter believed, obeyed, and loved Jesus. He will preach on Pentecost and share the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Identity (who you are) precedes action (what you do).

**Go Tell it on the Mountain.**