

Session 9: John 8:1–59

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Everyone who believes Jesus is the light of the world, the sole source of redeeming truth in a world of darkness, find freedom from their enslavement to sin.

Head Change

To know that Jesus offers forgiveness for and freedom from our sin.

Heart Change

To feel patient and compassionate towards those who do not know Jesus.

Life Change

To live as a disciple of Jesus, following and obeying his teaching.

OPEN

When was the last time you were lost? How did you find your way back to where you needed to be?

In this session, Jesus divides humanity into two categories: those who have the light of life and those who walk in darkness. If we do not trust in Jesus, we are lost in darkness. But he does not leave us in darkness to find our own way. Instead, he offers himself as our light, life, and true freedom.

READ

John 8:1–59 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 8:2–20, 28–38, 48–59.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why does it seem like the Pharisees don't care about justice with the woman caught in adultery?

Can a person believe in God while rejecting Jesus? Why not?

In what ways does Jesus express his divinity in this chapter?

Show Session 9: *John 8:1–59* (8 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 8:1–11.

You may have noticed that the formatting around John 8:1–11 is a little different than the rest of Scripture. That's because it probably wasn't originally in the Gospel of John. Most ancient biblical manuscripts dating before the sixth century don't contain it and no church fathers or early commentators refer to it in their writings. This story may be a part of the oral tradition of Christ that scribes later added to the Gospel. We do know that Jesus did many things not recorded in the Scriptures (John 21:25) and this may be one of them, but most historians and theologians agree that John did not include this passage in his Gospel.

While teaching in the temple courts, Jesus was again confronted by the Pharisees. But this time, they were not alone. They brought a woman caught in adultery in front of Jesus and his audience, exposed her sin, and asked Jesus if she should be stoned to death. They didn't appear to be concerned with the woman's dignity or, as Dr. Evans pointed out, the justice of God's law. **What do you think mattered most to the Pharisees? What do we learn about the Pharisees' compassion towards people in this situation?**

The Pharisees were trying to entrap Jesus by putting him in a no-win situation. In their minds, he was being forced to decide between following his own teaching or the teaching of God's law. In either situation, he would have publicly proven himself to be a false teacher. **What would you have done in this situation?**

Jesus did not have to choose between following the law and showing compassion to the woman caught in adultery. He came to fulfill the law and to show compassion to sinners. This wasn't a no-win situation—it was the perfect way for Jesus to show the Pharisees and his audience what he was all about. **In what ways does Jesus acknowledge her sin and show her compassion?**

Dr. Evans pointed out that Jesus forgave the woman before telling her how to live, adding, "It's a lot easier to obey when you have been set free." God does the same for you. **In what ways has Jesus set you free to follow him?**

Note: To learn more about Jesus's relationship to the law, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.

Read John 8:12–30.

Verse 12 introduces us to Jesus's second "I am" statement. Just like when he called himself the bread of life, Jesus calls himself the "light of the world," using a natural illustration to reveal supernatural truth. **Based on verse 12, what do you think it means for Jesus to be the light of the world?**

Jesus says the one who follows him will have "the light of life"—the same phrase John used in John 1:4 to describe Jesus—and the one who does not follow him walks in darkness. **In what ways have you felt the light of life**

while following Jesus? In what ways have you experienced the “darkness” of not following Jesus?

When the Pharisees reject Jesus’s claim, he doesn’t get angry. He doesn’t fight or dismiss the Pharisees. Rather, he calmly explains his identity is rooted in what the Father says about him. **In what ways does rejection threaten you? How do you react when people reject you?**

Note: To learn more about Christian identity, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

In verses 20–27, the Pharisees prove that they are walking in darkness. They are lost, unable to understand Jesus or the hope he is offering to them. Their ignorance, ultimately, is a terrible tragedy. It can be easy to vilify people who reject us, but we must remember that, apart from Christ, people are walking in darkness. **How do you think you would you treat a Pharisee if you met one today?**

What can you do to show compassion and love to those who are walking in darkness, even when they oppose or insult you?

Even though the Pharisees, the loudest voices in the temple courts, rejected Jesus, we learn in verse 30 that many believed in Jesus. We often focus on the people who reject Jesus and miss the quieter stories of those who trust Christ. **Why do you think we tend to focus on the loud opposition to Jesus rather than the quiet acceptance of him?**

How might our evangelism change if we focused on who might trust Jesus rather than those that might reject Jesus?

Read John 8:31–38.

In verse 31, Jesus tells us what it means to walk in the light. If we follow his teaching, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. **What teaching have we learned from Jesus so far in John? What can you do this week to follow Jesus’s teaching?**

We don’t often think of obedience as freedom. Many today think that obedience to a set of rules keeps us from being free. But according to Jesus, we have it backward: his way is freedom, and living in sin is true bondage. **In**

what ways has obedience to Jesus set you free from sin?

Note: To learn more about what it means to be a disciple, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

Read John 8:39–59.

The Judeans who did not trust Jesus rejected him instead of admitting they were sinful. Despite their rejection, Jesus endures with the crowd and answers their questions, even when the questions are meant as insults, like in verse 48. **What can you learn from Jesus's behavior towards a hostile crowd?**

In what ways can you be like Jesus when you are rejected and insulted for following him?

Jesus's goal was to convince the crowd to trust and believe in him. He was laser-focused on their salvation and God's glory. But when people reject us, we can easily change the conversation from Jesus to self-justification. **How might have you responded to the question in verse 48?**

What are some ways you can remind yourself to be laser-focused on Jesus and God's glory as you tell others about him?

Note: To learn more about Jesus's claim, "I am!" go to **Go Deeper Section 4** at the end of this study

There are people who are walking in darkness and Jesus offers them the light of life. That's good news! **What can you do this week to be an eager messenger of the light of life?** [SD1]Make this a box.

LAST WORD

Without Jesus, we are enslaved to sin and walk in darkness. But he is eager to forgive us, to give us the light of life, and to set us free. Even when he was insulted, rejected, and assaulted, Jesus did not push sinners away. Instead, he drew closer to them, endured their questions and insults, and patiently tried to convince them of the truth.

When we meet people who do not trust Jesus, we should follow his example as kind, compassionate, and patient ambassadors of truth. In the face of rejection and insults, we should never get mad or try to get even. Instead, we must live like Christ, drawing near to people who walk in darkness so that they might meet the light of the world.

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

1. Jesus and the Law

In the first section of John 8, the Pharisees thought they had trapped Jesus, but they gave him the perfect way to show us his purpose on earth. When they put a woman caught in adultery in front of Jesus, they essentially ask him to choose between following the law or showing her grace. What they did not know is that Jesus came to do both.

What do you think of when you think about “the Law”?

Read Matthew 5:17–19.

What did Jesus come to do with the law?

What is Jesus's view of the law?

In what ways does this passage shape your view of God's law?

Jesus never taught that the law was evil or worthless. He did just the opposite. We need the law to understand that we are sinners.

Read 1 Timothy 1:8–10.

Paul writes that the law is good but is not for righteous people. The law is intended for the unrighteous. **What does the law teach sinners?**

The law is God's standard for holiness. When we read it, we see that we are not holy, that we are sinful and separated from God. The law is good because it reveals our brokenness and need for a savior. **In what ways has God's Word made you more aware of your sin?**

Read Mark 2:17 and John 1:17, 29.

What did Jesus come to do for sinners?

What is Jesus's view of sinners?

When Jesus talks about the sick and sinners, he's talking about normal people; people just like us. Sometimes, we can tend to think that we aren't so bad apart from Jesus, but without him, we are just as lost as anyone else you can think of. **What can make it difficult for you to remember you were once a sinner, a sick person in need of healing?**

Even after we know Jesus, we still will wrestle with sin.

What are some ways that you can continually seek Jesus when you are tempted by sin?

The Pharisees did not understand that Jesus is the God of law and grace. Jesus not only came to fulfill the law, but he also came to save sinners. The law shows us our need for Jesus, and Jesus offers himself freely to anyone who asks for his forgiveness. His love and forgiveness are for all of us. That's good news!

2. Christian Identity

The Pharisees and Judeans were obsessed with figuring out who *exactly* Jesus was. They thought he might be a false prophet, a blasphemer, demon-possessed, or simply a liar. But none of these false claims ever stuck to Jesus. When he was insulted, he never flinched. How is that possible?

What is your first reaction when you are insulted or misunderstood?

We want people to see us in a positive light. We want to be liked. When people are nasty and don't like us, we can feel like we need to fight for our reputation. When our identity feels threatened, we snap into defense mode.

How do you treat people who insult or misunderstand you?

Instead of fighting or writing people off, Jesus pointed to what God said about him when he was insulted and misunderstood. His identity was not rooted in what people said about him, but in what God said about him. It made his identity unassailable.

Read 1 John 3:1–2, Ephesians 1:3–4, and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21.

There are many more verses than these that remind us of our identity in Christ. But these verses are a good place to start. **What do they teach you about your identity in Christ?**

What can you do to remind yourself of what God says about you when people insult or misunderstand you?

3. A Disciple

A disciple is, in short, a follower and a student. When we say we are disciples of Jesus, we are telling the world that we are students of his teachings and followers of his commands. But we are all shaped and defined by multiple influences. How we spend our time, energy, thoughts, and daydreams will inform us of how we should live.

Whatever we pay attention to will disciple us.

What personalities are you most excited to hear from (musicians, influencers, authors, thought leaders, etc.)?

What pursuits take up most of your free time and thought?

How might these influences be shaping you?

Whatever we give our time, thoughts, and affection will change us. Therefore, everything we are involved with must be filtered through the lens of Christ.

Take some time right now to consider your influences. Are they leading you toward Christ or away from him? Do you filter what they teach you through God's Word, or does your view of God's Word change based on what your influences tell you?

In what ways can you use every one of your influences to become a better disciple of Jesus?

4. I AM

"I am" seems like a strange name for Jesus to call himself. It's not even a complete sentence. But this title carries a lot of significance.

But before we jump into the Old Testament, what do you think Jesus is saying about himself in John 8:58?

Read Exodus 3:14–15.

This passage reveals God’s holy name to us. God calls himself *ehyeh*, meaning “I will be.” That may seem strange, but God is saying that he is the one who is, was, and always will be. His existence does not depend on anyone else; he simply *is*.

In response, God’s people called him *Yahweh*, meaning “He will be.” This name appears over 6,500 times in the Old Testament, noted by the word “lord” written in capital letters. Anytime, you see “LORD” in your English Bible, you know that behind the English translation is the holy name of God, Yahweh.

Now, go back and read John 8:57–59.

What is Jesus claiming when he tells the Judeans, “Before Abraham was born, I am”?

How does this compare to what you thought Jesus was saying at the beginning of this “Going Deeper” section?

When the Judeans ask Jesus who he is, he uses the same answer God gave to Moses. He could not have given a clearer answer to the Judeans. He could not have given us a clearer answer of who he is. If you are a follower of Jesus, the God of the universe has invited you to learn from him, to grow to be like him, and to serve him for the benefit of the world.

What can you do to be devoted to Yahweh today?