

## Discussion Guide | John 8:31-59

### Gathering Question:

What is one way you've experienced God in your life this week?

### Gathering Prayer:

*Father, by Your Spirit, would You guide us into all truth. Help us to hear and be attentive to Your voice as we work through this study. In the name of Jesus, Your Son, we pray, Amen.*

### Opening Questions

- What stood out to you in the sermon?
- What insights did you gain?
- What questions did it raise?

### Read John 8:31-59

### Why do I need to be set free?

- Read v.33–34. The crowd didn't think they needed freedom. Why do you think people resist the idea that they are enslaved?

Reflect on this quote from Fleming Rutledge:

"Sin is an exclusively biblical concept. The word is used, of course, in various nonbiblical contexts by people who know nothing of the Bible, but outside the biblical matrix it simply comes to mean wrongdoing of some sort, defined by whoever happens to be using it – almost always with reference to someone other than themselves.

To be in sin, biblically speaking, means something very much more consequential than wrongdoing; it means being catastrophically separated from the eternal love of God. It means to be on the other side of an impassable barrier of exclusion from God's heavenly banquet. It means to be helplessly trapped inside one's own worst self, miserably aware of the chasm between the way we are and the way God intends us to be. It means the continuation of the reign of greed, cruelty, rapacity, and violence throughout the world. In view of God's nature, it is impossible that this state of affairs would be allowed to continue forever. ...

Sin is not so much a collection of individual misdeeds as it is an active, malevolent agency bent upon despoiling, imprisonment, and death – the utter undoing of God's purpose. Misdeeds are signs of that agency at work; they are not the thing itself. It is 'the thing itself' that is our cosmic Enemy. (Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*)

- Rutledge says that sin is not just "wrongdoing" but being "catastrophically separated from the eternal love of God"— how does that deepen or change the way you normally think about sin?
- She also describes sin as "an active, malevolent agency bent upon despoiling, imprisonment, and death — the utter undoing of God's purpose." Where do you see evidence of this "undoing of God's purpose" in the world today? How do you see signs of it in your own heart or life?

### **How does the truth set me free?**

- Read John 14:6. What does it mean that truth is not just information, but a Person (Jesus)?
- In what ways can we be tempted to treat truth as ideas or rules instead of a relationship?
- Read v.35–36. How is belonging to the Son different from slavery?
- How is freedom in Christ different from the world's definition of freedom (doing whatever we want)?

### **How do I come to know the truth?**

- Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you really are my disciples.” Other translations might be “If you abide in my word...”
  - What do you think it means to “abide” (remain, dwell, continue) in His word?
  - How is that different from just occasionally reading the Bible or admiring Jesus’ teaching?
- Can someone admire Jesus’ teaching without actually abiding in it? What’s the difference?
- Many people today talk about “finding their truth.” How is Jesus’ definition of truth different?
- Think about your own rhythms — what helps you abide in Jesus’ word? What makes it difficult?

### **Closing Prayer**