

**If .... then**  
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC  
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr  
May 10, 2026

Text            John 8:31-54

Purpose:    Jesus clearly linked two ideas of being and doing together. If we are -----, then we will do -----.

One day a man hopped in a taxi and they took off for the airport. As they were driving in the right lane, suddenly a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of them.



The taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded, and missed the other car by just inches! The driver of the other car whipped his head around and started yelling at them. The taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. He was really friendly.

The man asked, "Why did you just do that? That guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!"

This is when the taxi driver taught the man what he now calls, "**The Law of the Garbage Truck.**"



The taxi driver explained that many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage -- frustration,

anger, disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it and sometimes they'll dump it on you.

He said, Don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well, and move on. Don't take their garbage and spread it to other people at work, at home, or on the streets.

The bottom line is that successful people do not let garbage trucks take over their day. Love the people who treat you right. Pray for the ones who don't.<sup>1</sup>

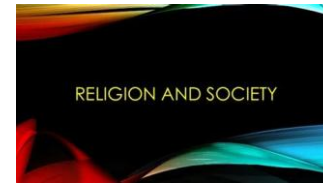
Do You Know  
JESUS  
as Your  
LORD &  
SAVIOR?

At a revival about 25 years ago, Phil Huffman was the guest musician one night. His son, Jacob, who was about 10 at the time, came up to me after the service and asked me a very important question and I wanted to share it with you this morning. He asked, “DO YOU KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR?”

I must admit, for a ten-year-old boy to ask me such a bold question and with such conviction, I was slightly startled. I told him, “Without a doubt! Jesus is my Lord and Savior.” I am glad to report to you this morning, that young man is still faithfully serving the Lord in his local church in Princeton. About five years ago, Sharon and I were invited to come and hear him preach one Sunday night. We were amazed to see what God is doing in and through that young man's life now.

It is Jacob's question I would like us to think about this morning. Maybe this past week, someone spoke to your heart about your walk with the Lord and you felt a need to

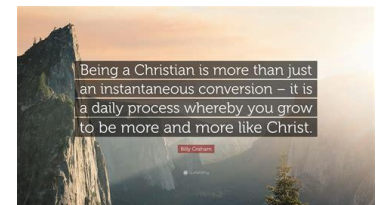
respond. Today could be the day you step out and share your decision with me.



For me, every week is an opportunity to ponder and consider the things of God. While I was a student at Campbell University, I had the opportunity to take a class taught by Dr. Jerry Wallace, who was the president of the University at that time. Dr. Wallace also served as an interim here at Spilman many years ago. The class was named, “Religion and Society.” In that class, we read a book by Johnston titled “Religion and Society.”

There was one particular section in that book that caught my attention and gave some statistics I had never thought about before. The topic was about conversion. How and when someone converts to a particular faith. The chapter said most individuals that accept the teaching of their faith are 14 to 16 years old.

When we think of conversion, we think of a **dramatic life changing** event that occurs. We think that God will spring from heaven and a bright flash of light will be cast upon our path just as it was with Saul, later named Paul. Many of us have heard testimonies of people that were strung out on drugs, or involved with a lifestyle that was not compatible with Christian principles, or they rebelled from their parents and ran away for years. Yet if the truth was known, and this book by Johnstone confirms this, we would find that only 16% of those that come to Christ come through that kind of dramatic conversion.<sup>2</sup>



Many individuals are converted through a **sudden role identification**, or realization of truth. That is when a person has been undergoing socialization or interaction in a group and suddenly feels certain of their salvation. There are no bells, whistles, or flashing lights. But there is a sudden certainty or realization that what they have heard, is true and they are ready to place their faith and trust in it.

Others go through a process called **role assimilation**. Over time, some people gradually become sure of their salvation. They know God loves them, they know they have confessed their sin, they know in their head and heart that they are forgiven. From that point forward, they live as accepted, adopted, and a part of the “Family of God.”

I think it is important to look back on our own conversion story to know how we came to belong to the family of God. If you are not certain, maybe today you can examine your heart and take that step of affirming your faith in Jesus Christ.



In the Gospel of John, the writer begins to present several “**If ... Then**” statements for us to consider. Let us explore them as we consider our salvation.

There was a woman named Mary who was the church gossip and self-appointed supervisor of the church’s morals. She was always sticking her nose into other people’s business. (Have you ever met some one like that?) Several church members were unappreciative of her activities, but feared her enough to maintain their silence.



She made a mistake, however, when she accused George, a new member of the church, of being an alcoholic after she saw his pickup parked in front of the town’s only bar one afternoon.

She commented to George and others that everyone seeing it there would know that he was an alcoholic. George, a man of few words, stared at her for a moment and just walked away. He said nothing.

Later that evening, George quietly parked his old green pickup in front of Mary’s house .... AND he left it there all night.



How many of us have judged another before we knew all the facts? How many of us even have the right to sit as judge over others? I am sure you may have been guilty a time or two just as I have been.

In the first part of John chapter eight, we find that Jesus is thrust into a situation where he is forced to make a judgment upon a woman caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees and Sadducees have caught this woman and now they want to put her to death.

But what they wanted more than that, was to put Jesus in what some would call the “horns of a dilemma” If Jesus said, stone her, then He would not have exhibited mercy. If Jesus said set her free, then they could say He did not obey the Law. It was a case of “If ---



Then.” Jesus just knelt down into the sand and wrote something for everyone there to see. The scripture does not tell us what was written, but it was enough to turn these angry, stone toting men into quiet, rock droppers.

In that story, Jesus said, *“If you do not have any sin in your life, then you may throw the first stone.”* Another “If --- Then”

Rule	Form	Set Theory
Modus Ponendo Ponens	$\frac{P \rightarrow Q, P}{Q}$	if $x \in P$ then $x \in Q, x \in P, x \in Q$
Modus tollendo Tollens	$\frac{P \rightarrow Q, \neg Q}{\neg P}$	$P \subset Q, x \notin Q, x \notin P$
Modus tollendo Ponens	$\frac{P \rightarrow Q, P, \neg Q}{\neg P}$	$x \in P$ or $x \in Q, x \notin P, x \in Q$
Exportation	$\frac{P \rightarrow (Q \wedge R)}{P \rightarrow Q, P \rightarrow R}$	
Importation	$\frac{P \rightarrow Q, P \rightarrow R}{P \rightarrow (Q \wedge R)}$	
Hypothetical syllogism	$\frac{P \rightarrow Q, Q \rightarrow R}{P \rightarrow R}$	$P \subset Q, Q \subset R, x \in P, x \in Q$
Absurdity	$\frac{P \rightarrow (Q \wedge \neg Q)}{\neg P}$	
principium tertii exclusi	$\frac{P \vee \neg P}{P \vee \neg P}$	
Simplification	$\frac{P \wedge Q}{P}$	
Addition	$\frac{P}{P \vee Q}$	

I remember taking a class at Mars Hill College called, **“Symbolic Logic.”** This was a required class to graduate. In that class, you learn to understand words like, Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens. Before you can graduate, you must master the KEY understanding of **“If --- Then.”**

When you encounter this phrase, you have to look at the first part of the phrase, **“IF.”** If the first part of the if is true, then the second part must also be true.

Take for example,

If it is raining outside, then the ground will get wet.

If a nurse sticks you with a needle, it will hurt.

If you spend all your money, you will be broke.

The opposite of these statements is also true.

If it does not rain, then the ground will not be wet.

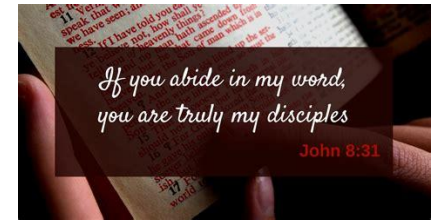
If a nurse does not give you a shot, your arm will not hurt.

If you don’t spend all your money, then you will not be broke.

In chapter eight, Jesus gives us at least six, **“If --- Then”** statements. Let us look over these for a few moments this morning. <sup>3</sup>

## I. The IF of Discipleship

In verse 31 Jesus said, **“If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed.”**



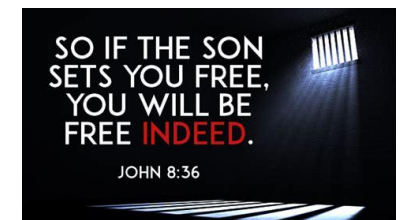
The clear meaning of this is that we as individuals need to spend time studying the word and message of Christ. Many of you can remember back to the time you used to get Love Letters. You would read those letters over and over trying to understand what they were saying and what they were not saying. You study the words and try hard to read between the lines.

We need to do the same with God’s word. We need to hide it in our heart. We need to let it permeate our thoughts, and in doing so, we become more Christ like. Not Perfect, but more and more each day, Christ like.

The flip side of this “If ... then” statement is also true. “If you do not spend time in my word, then you are not my disciple.” The question for us to consider is, “Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?”

## II. The IF of Freedom

In verse 36, Jesus said, **“If the Son therefore makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”**



The freedom that comes from Christ is beyond any kind of freedom that this world has to offer.

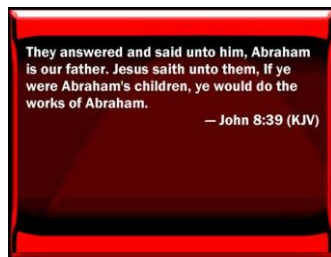
Christ gives us freedom from ...

- The curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10)
- The Guilt of Sin (Romans 8:33)
- The power of sin (Romans 6:14)
- The fear of death (Hebrews 2:15)
- The fear of men (Acts 4:18-20)

Christ has provided us freedom to live life free of these items that seem to beset mankind so frequently.

### III. The IF of Service

In verse 39, Jesus said, ***“If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.”***



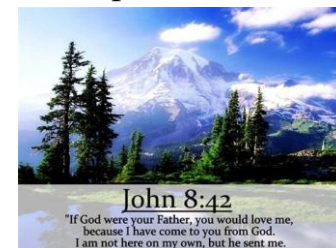
Abraham is probably the most notable person in the Old Testament that walked by faith and not by sight. He left his homeland to go to a place that God would show him. He trusted God for a son even when he was almost 100 years old. He trusted God with his first son, Hagar, to care for him in the desert. He trusted God when he was asked to place Isaac upon the altar and kill him as a sacrifice unto God. God spared Isaac’s life by providing a sacrifice in his place.

Abraham was a mighty man of faith in action. He did not just trust God with his words, he placed his wealth, family, wife, and children into God’s providential care.

If we are to live our lives, we need to be **DOING** something for God, not just **SITTING** here for God. If you were Abraham’s children, then you would be doing the things of Abraham. The implication is that since you do not operate in the areas of faith, then you must not be the children of Abraham. The Pharisees did not like that implication.

### IV. The IF of Sonship

In verse 42, Jesus said, ***“If God were your father, then you would love me.”***



Jesus continues to press the importance of how our love and actions should match each other. Jesus said to the religious leaders, since you seek to kill me, then you really hate me. If you hate me, then God is not your Father. Jesus even went so far to say that their Father was Satan. To me this is the ultimate insult. To say you are of the devil. Jesus was confronting the true reality of the Pharisees heart. A few weeks ago, we delved into the relationship between God and Jesus. To me it was the most powerful text in John. Jesus is **OPENLY** declaring who he is. God and Jesus are so intricately woven together, that they are one. When you have seen the Son, you have seen the Father. If you say you love God, and do not love the Son, then you must not **REALLY** love the Father.

I think it is so important for us to realize every person is a child of God. If we love God, we need to love those that He created. Each of us are special in the eyes of God. Each of us need to treat others as if we were doing it unto Jesus. It is hard at times. We want to marginalize others. We have a tendency to consider other people as not being on the same

level as ourselves. We say, “They are not like us.” But if we REALLY love God, we should love others.

## V. The IF of Responsibility

In verse 46, Jesus said, ***“If I say the truth, why do you not believe me.”***

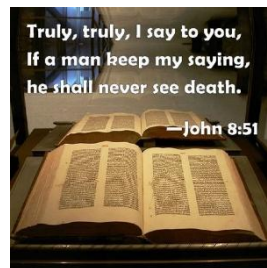
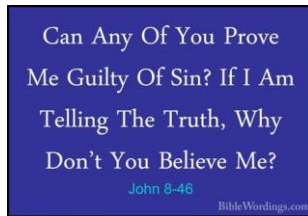
Do you remember the television show called the Gong Show? It seems that this show was really one of the first talent shows on television. There was a panel of “experts” that would listen as contestants displayed their talent or skill. Occasionally they were so bad, that one of the “experts” would get up and crash this great big cymbal.

When Jesus says the word why in this verse, it is like the big Gong being sounded. If I tell you the truth, WHY don’t you believe me? Jesus said, *“I am the way the truth and the life.”* He said, *“I am the light of the world.”* He said, *“I am the bread of life.”* He said, *“If any man come unto me I will in no wise cast him out.”*

WHY don’t you believe? The responsibility of believing rests upon us. He has given us this small spark within us to hear it, accept it, and respond to it. But WHY don’t we respond?

## VI. The IF of Assurance

Lastly, in verse 51, Jesus said, ***“If a man keeps my sayings, he will never see death.”***



Eternal life and salvation is in that word. To keep the words of Jesus is like a vaccine against darkness and death. Death can have no power over one that has hidden their life in Christ.

If you are to keep God’s word, you need to clothe yourself with it like an overcoat. It protects from the wind, rain, and elements. If you abide in Christ, you will have salvation and everlasting life. John 11:26 says, *“And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

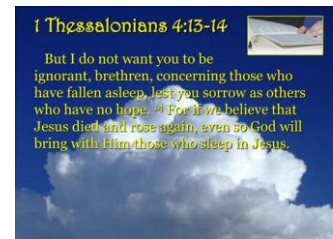
Death is an awful thing. It takes those that we love away from us. It separates us from our family. It seems eternal. Yet, the only hope I can find in this world is found in Christ. Standing outside Christ, one finds hopelessness. Refuting the teachings of Christ only brings despair in the end.

Christ has gone to prepare us a place. I often share I Thessalonians 4:13 with families at the graveside. It says,

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”*

*(Here is another IF --- Then)*

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”*



Do You Know  
**JESUS**  
as Your  
**LORD &  
SAVIOR?**

“DO YOU KNOW JESUS CHRIST  
AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR?”

Today, if you are not in Christ, hear the  
words of Christ and respond before the  
day of deciding has passed.

**LET US PRAY**

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Mickey’s Funnies, A Garbage Funny, April 24, 2026  
(forwarded by Don Brownell)

<sup>2</sup> Religion in Society, Johnstone, Page 73.

<sup>3</sup> Handfuls on Purpose, Vol. VI, page 232-235.