

Introduction: We all want lasting internal fulfillment

Jesus' claims:

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10b

But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.

John 4:14a

How can we know that Jesus' radical claims are true?

Three basic evidence categories:

1. **ANCIENT** evidence – historical writers (Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, etc.)
2. **EXTERNAL** evidence – an objective human record of Christ's impact on humanity.
3. **INTERNAL** evidence – this is evidence that can only be known through experience.

The power of “currents”

- In life we get carried along by different currents:
 - Popularity
 - Achievement
 - Material possessions
 - Relationships
- These currents while alluring and momentarily satisfying, actually make us unhappy in the long run.
- You'll never know for sure if the 'current' of Jesus will carry you to fulfillment unless you get into it.

The “current” available to everyone

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

This “current” is the only one that brings salvation to anyone who **BELIEVES**.

You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

The fulfillment of Jesus is found in the space between **RELIGION** and **RELATIONSHIP**.

Discussion Questions:

1. What idea, illustration, application, or Scripture most spoke to you in this message?
2. Where, if at all, did you initially struggle with Jesus when you were a skeptic? What evidence of Jesus' existence is most compelling to you (ancient, external, internal)?
3. Pastor John provides examples of people trying to find fulfillment in other means (power, property, or prestige) outside of Jesus. Where are you currently seeking fulfillment? Share a time or experience when you saw Jesus fulfill your needs in an unexpected way.
4. Read Matthew 11:28-30. Where has your soul been restless and full of anxiety rather than at peace? How does Jesus help us handle our burdens differently than the world does?
5. Read Jeremiah 29:12-14. What is one new action you can take this week, to help you draw closer to God with a full and purposeful heart?
6. In the message, Pastor John said, "the fulfillment of Jesus is found in the space between religion and relationship." What's the difference between religion and relationship? Have you been committed to a religion or a relationship when it comes to God?

Introduction: We all want the best for the people we care about

How can you be a force for good in a world that is broken and hurting?

Heroes of history who read Jesus' words and did what it says:

- Mary Moes
- Founders of Massachusetts General Hospital
- Johns Hopkins

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

A challenge to non-Christians:

Look for the people who actually do what Jesus said, not cultural Christians.

A challenge to Christians:

Do others know who you serve? What deeds are you doing that point to Jesus?

Followers of Jesus throughout history:

Devout followers of Jesus who led anti-slavery movements in history:

- Harriet Tubman
- Frederick Douglass
- Elijah Lovejoy

Ten out of ten leading universities were started by Christians for the purpose of teaching the Bible.

The Scientific Revolution was birthed by Christian scientists:

- Isaac Newton
- Blaise Pascal
- Johannes Kepler
- Robert Boyle

Did Jesus actually live?

For more evidence see the book, *Jesus Skeptic: A Journalist Explores the credibility and Impact of Christianity* by John S. Dickerson

How do we know what Jesus actually said?

There are more ancient manuscripts of the Bible than any other ancient literature in the world.

What did Jesus say?

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Jesus started with only 120 followers yet the Gospel was spread to every corner of the world.

Why does Jesus' movement keep growing?

Jesus is the only one who can:

- Change human nature from the inside out.
- Transform hearts.
- Reconnect us to God.

Christians were a radical group that looked out for orphans and widows, accepted ethnicities of every kind, and took care of the sick.

God uses **ORDINARY** people who truly **BELIEVE** the words of Jesus to do **EXTRAORDINARY** things.

Discussion Questions:

1. Share about someone you know who has made a positive impact on the world, whether small or large. What was the motivation behind what they did, and what was the result?
2. What keeps people from making a difference when they see trouble or brokenness? As a Jesus follower, how can you step out to be a person who makes a difference for the good of others?
3. Read Matthew 5:14-16. According to this passage, what should the motivation be to “let your good deeds shine?” What are some practical good deeds you can do to help point people to God?
4. Acts 1:8 says that “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Describe a situation where you felt the Holy Spirit working or speaking in you or through you.

Introduction:

There's physical light and darkness, there's moral light and darkness, and there's spiritual light and darkness.

What moral darkness grieves you the most?

Where do you wish 'the light' would shine in our world?

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life."

John 8:12

Jesus claims to be the only LIGHT that can fully extinguish evil.

Context on slavery throughout history:

- Slavery has sadly been a norm in every major civilization up until the last 200 years.
- In Jesus' era, about 40% of the population were slaves.
- Various forms of slavery and servitude existed long before they were systematized by law and legal codes.
- Human rights in general (as we know them) were not the norm throughout history.
- Worldwide, slavery has been a plague on human existence, a spiritual and moral darkness, all through human history.

Jesus' claim to set the prisoners and oppressed free:

¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:

*¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me,
because He has anointed Me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free..."*

... ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:16-18, 21

The literal fulfillment of Jesus' prediction:

- The *Liberator* publication was one of the most influential publications to sway people's opinions on slavery in America.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Matthew 22:39b

- Quaker Christians in 1688 wrote the first universal declaration of equal human rights.

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Luke 6:31

- The Quakers actively campaigned for the end of slavery in England.

no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Philemon 1:16

- The declaration of the anti-slavery convention was written by mostly reverends who were riling up their congregations to overthrow slavery. Their whole justification was from Scripture.
- John Rankin, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglas are a few notable Christian abolitionists who risked their lives for others.
- Following events of the U.S. Civil War, some of the wealthiest countries in the world gathered to sign 'The Brussels Act of 1840' – declaring slavery evil and illegal.
- The majority of Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches were sermons that he delivered in churches on Sunday mornings.

⁴ In Him was life, and that life was the Light of all mankind. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁹ The true Light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him.

John 1:4-5, 9-10

Discussion Questions:

1. In the United States, open and legalized slavery created generations of hurt and destruction among families. Today, many of us experience situations where we are captives to habits that are hurtful and destructive to ourselves and others. Where do you need Jesus' help to live a life free of bondage?
2. Read Luke 6:31. Consider a time when you have seen (or experienced) someone treat another person like Jesus tells us we should treat others. How did that impact you?
3. Frederick Douglass once said, "Between the Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference." How should you deal with Christians whose words and actions don't necessarily align with the beliefs they claim to possess?
4. Like slavery, what's one continuing issue of injustice today that God has addressed through His Word? How do you see Christians changing society on this issue to better reflect God's heart?
5. John 1:4-5 says that Jesus's life "brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it." What's one area of "darkness" in our world where you want Jesus to shine His light and bring new life?

Introduction: What can you do to set the people you love up for freedom?

³¹ Jesus said, “If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 8:31b-32

Jesus gives unrivaled freedom to those who FOLLOW His Teaching.

Jesus can set any captive free by the power of the truth, but it’s dependent on willful, intentional, and consistent obedience to Him.

When society followed Jesus' Words:

- We live at a time where, yes, society's imperfect, but we've inherited some fruits of freedom, prosperity, and even longevity of our lifespan that are unusual in history.
- The university system began in church cathedrals 1000 years ago at Oxford.
- Some of the most influential scientists in the scientific revolution were Christians who wrote passionately about their faith in God.

When society discarded Jesus' Words:

- In the late 1800s, prosperity and success convinced people around the world that they didn't need God.
- Around the late 1800s Frederick Nietzsche said, "God is dead. We can build a better society without God. Let's keep the progress and the success and the technology, but get rid of the Bible."
- The 'post-truth' world has since caused some of the greatest human atrocities.

Summary:

When societies **FOLLOW** the words of Jesus, those societies lead the way in freedom.

When societies **DISCARD** the words of Jesus, they lose those freedoms.

Keep following Jesus, He's the path to freedom.

Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor John references the impact of Jesus' followers on literacy, education, and science. What surprised you about the connection between faith and those ideas?
2. Read John 8:32. What part of Jesus's teaching do you find easy to follow? What parts do you find more challenging to follow?
3. Where do you see Jesus' followers impacting others in your community? How are you sharing the light of Jesus with others in your family, work, school or neighborhood?
4. In John 14:6, Jesus claims that He is the Truth. What does it mean that Jesus is the Truth? In what ways do you need to reorder your life based on the truth of Jesus?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. How does the New Covenant, which brings freedom through Christ, compare to the Old Covenant?
6. Read Matthew 5:13-16. What would our society be like without faithful Christians? How are you acting as the salt and the light?