



SERIES: Walking with Jesus
SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD
Monday, December 18, 2023
Scripture: John 8:31-36
TITLE: Notional or True Believer?

This Halloween, two of my kids got some of those inflatable costumes. Back in my day, it was a thin plastic mask and a paper-thin suit. Today you need an instruction manual and unlimited batteries.

Well, my kids were excited to try on these souped-up costumes. So they threw them on and went to the junk drawer and put in the batteries they could find. The problem was these batteries had no power. They needed charged batteries to do the job.

Jesus taught something quite similar regarding real versus superficial faith. What did Jesus say? This is what Jesus said in John 8:31-36, (CSB).

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“We are descendants of Abraham,” they answered him, “and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free’?”

Jesus responded, “Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever. So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.”

One of the questions I ask people I disciple is, “Is Christianity for you?” I want people to carefully understand what Christianity is and is not. I want them to walk with Jesus for a while to determine if He is worth committing to. Well, Jesus’ words today are important for us today. Jesus had many fickle followers. He had many disciples but only a few faithful till the end.

Well, what’s a distinguishing mark of a true believer? Jesus says, “If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Many people quote verse 32 but leave out the important piece, “If you continue in my word.”

This is what theologian D.A. Carson said about true faith.

“A genuine believer remains in Jesus’ ‘word’ (*logos*), his teaching: *i.e.* such a person obeys it, seeks to understand it better, and finds it more precious, more controlling, precisely when other

forces flatly oppose it. It is the one who continues in the teaching who has both the Father and the Son.”¹

You see, friend, Jesus is never interested in multiplying numbers of notional converts if they are not genuine believers, and therefore He demands would-be disciples to count the cost.

I recently saw a friend’s social media post. This person celebrated the rejection of God’s Word and embraced the world’s value system. But she rejected the truth and has given up on obeying Jesus’ Word.

So here’s my challenge for you today: recommit to Jesus and His teaching. Many of us never counted the cost and considered how life-transforming God’s grace is. So this is a chance to commit to walking with Jesus and following, abiding, and loving His Word.

And if you’re brave, put in the comments below why it is hard to commit. What teaching of Jesus or the Bible is hard for you to accept, believe, or follow.

Commit to follow and obey each and every day. When we do, we will win the day.

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (p. 348). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.