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JOHN 8:38-47

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, we know that the celebration of Christmas is all about you and so we draw our attention to you right now. We do worship and adore you. We thank you for being Emmanuel, God with us. Each one of those worship songs, Christmas songs, some of them traditional, some of them new, have a meaning that reminds us of who we are in you because of Christmas. Lord, we know that that one event changed the calendar, changed history, but it also did something very personal in our own lives and gave us relationship with you. Lord, I thank you with my relationship with you and the closeness that I can experience with you in the course of the week. I thank you for the interaction that I have with the Holy Spirit as I'm interacting with your word and just trying to be sensitive to you during the week. As we come now to you and listen to your word and to read it together and then talk about it, I pray that you'd bless each of us. I want to pray especially for the young people here today that you would teach them from your word and give them the ability to look at your word and draw applications from it that will apply to their lives and bless them in a particular way. Lord, I know this particular message is a touching one, so I ask that your Spirit would be ever-present just holding us and working with our hearts as we look at your word now. In Jesus' name, amen.

I grew up in a Christian home. I grew up in a pretty cool home. My parents were very involved in my life, both my mom and my dad. Christmas was always a really special time for us. This week I've been pondering in particular my relationship with my dad. My mom is still very involved in my life. My dad passed away several years ago. I've been thinking about him this week because of our passage today, which uses the term Father.

I'm convinced that our earthly father has a very important role in our lives. I'm grateful for the positive relationship I had with my dad. But as I was thinking about fatherhood this week, I realize that a number of people that I've been sharing with today, a number of you had poor examples of fatherhood or difficult experiences with your parents. I realize that a very important thing about that. That every father is imperfect, every mother is imperfect. I think that God has designed us in a way that we all have a father hole in our hearts. There's only one father that can fill that and that's God Himself. So God as the Father wants to come in to fill that hole and I think the imperfections of our parents or imperfections of our dads in particular make us long or something more, make us long for this Father that we so desperately need inside of us. So we're on the search, we're on the hunt.

Now some people will take a relationship and try to fill that hole. If you try to take a marriage relationship and try to fill the father hole with a mate, a wife or a husband, then what happens is you become demanding or controlling or you have expectations that are unrealistic because no

one can fill that hole except God the Father. But when you have that Father hole filled with God, then there's this ability you have to manage other relationships without being so needy and dramatic about those things and it compromises that relationship.

In our story today Jesus is going to use the term 'Father' several times. You'll see it in the passage as we read it. I want to draw attention to this idea of fatherhood and in particular what Jesus is trying to teach the Jews. So we're going to look at the passage because our goal is to look at God's word and try to understand what God is saying to those people back then as it was written and from that draw some applications that apply to our lives today. Those applications are real and relevant and practical, things that we can use this week as we're living life.

The story that we're going to look at today comes from John 8. We're just taking this verse by verse and we happen to arrive at the passage in John 8:38-47.

So before I start elaborating on what I'm seeing in the passage and how I'm trying to apply it to my life, I'd like to read the passage together with you. So I'd like to read it for us. If you would stand with me in honor of God's word. It would be great if you had your own Bible. If you'd bring your own Bible to church each week, that would be great because you can highlight in your Bible or view your electronic Bible. Some of them have places to put notes. You can have them perpetually. But all of that is a great way for you to keep track of what God is doing in your life through His word.

Verse 38 starts this way. Jesus is speaking and He says – *I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.*”

“Abraham is our father,” they answered.

“If you were Abraham's children,” said Jesus, “then you would do what Abraham did. As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the works of your own father.”

“We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

You may be seated.

I think sometimes we underestimate the role of the father in a person's life. I like the story of a mom who was looking at a photo of her family – Dad, Mom, and two girls (nine and six years

old) – and she was looking at the photo with the nine year old and the six year old. The nine year old says, “I think my mouth and my nose look like Dad’s.” And Mom says, “I think that’s true. And in fact,” she says to the six year old, “I think your eyes look like Dad’s.” And the six year old turns to mom a little bit puzzled and says, “What does Dad have to do with this anyway? I thought I came from your tummy.” And the nine year old pipes in and says, “Oh don’t be silly. Dad’s the one who drove her to the hospital.”

Now I think sometimes we underestimate the importance and the role of a father in a person’s life. We get it confused sometimes. But God has a purpose, He has a design that people be born in a family. It becomes so valuable because when you understand this spiritually, you understand that God the Father is represented as father and that we then are represented as brothers and sisters in a family. It takes on this new dimension.

I think some of you would even say this: You have closer relationships with the people in your church family than you might even have with your earthly family. That’s not uncommon because there’s this spiritual bond that we share that God as our Father is doing something in the midst of all of that relationship.

For some it’s a challenge because fatherhood was not something that was very pleasant. As they think about fathers they don’t have a lot of pleasant memories. And so sometimes people have a hard time thinking about God as Father. Because their earthly Father was a void there or it didn’t turn out too well. So they have a hard time thinking about God as Father. I think that person is making a mistake. Here’s the mistake they’re making. They’re looking at an earthly model of fatherhood and using that to imagine what God is like. It won’t work. It doesn’t happen.

Here’s what we need to do. We need to look at God as our Father, the one who disciplines us, creates for us, provides us with an inheritance, a new name, all these things that He does for us. We’d understand what the fatherhood of God is and we’d use a model to compare to every earthly model of parenthood. When we find that, all parents are imperfect people. It’s God’s design that we have this hole and we have this need for some bigger understanding of fatherhood and God wants to fill that.

I just want to say today that if you come to this idea of fatherhood with some longings, this is going to be a good day. Because you come to this understanding of God as Father and He just satisfies that and He fills that in ways that no one else can do. Once you have that satisfaction, that resolution takes place through the fatherhood of God then something very good happens in your life. When we understand God as Father then we have more powers than we had before. If we understand God as Father then He’s able to help us overcome some of the pains. Pains of childhood, pains of relationships that are broken. Even some of the internal struggles that we have. I think we’re going to see some of that today as we look at our passage.

Let’s take the passage apart and look at it verse by verse and try to understand what’s happening here.

He says – *I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.*” There’s a particular aspect of fatherhood that Jesus is

emphasizing here. It's the aspect of passing on of truth, values, convictions, morals. And that's what dads do. The role of a dad is in part to pass on the faith to the next generation, to pass on the truth of life to a son or a daughter. Now Jesus is going to take on that aspect of fatherhood and draw that out here as He compares the Father to truth versus lies, as we already read. You're going to see more of that as we go.

But the point is there's this part of fatherhood is what we're looking at. Where do you get your information? Because the Father is the one who provides this information as truth. Now this idea of fatherhood has different meanings. Or not different meanings, but different aspects I should say in God's word. As I already alluded to the fact that sometimes it talks about that we are theirs because we are sons and daughters of God instead of slaves. We have a Father. That's a whole other message, a whole other Sunday that we'll spend talking about that.

There's the other aspect of God's forgiveness. We come before God and He forgives us for our sins, as in the story of the prodigal son's father. We like that story because the father is waiting there with his open arms and it gives us this picture of a father who's ready to forgive, welcomes, and re-establish, restores us in our understanding of life. When Jesus was teaching the disciples how to pray, you remember how He started the prayer, right? *Our Father which art in heaven*. He wants us to understand God as Father and 100 times in the gospel of John that we have the word Father referring to God the Father.

There's a message here we need to understand. I like one verse. Let me just take a brief tangent and show you another verse that talks about fatherhood that describes closeness that we can enjoy with Him. Paul says in Galatians 4:6 – *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."* Abba means daddy.

There's a closeness that we experience with God that's very special and very much appreciated, I think, by us. In fact I would just suggest if you don't have that closeness that today is really good day for you to understand more about that personal relationship with God that He wants to have. He's not the dad on a business trip. He's the one who's right there with you all the time caring for you and loving you.

That idea is going to be helpful for you I think in this passage especially as we continue on to the end of the passage. But let's go back to the defense, what the Jews said. Because Jesus said to them – *"I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father."* Now that's a little bit disconcerting for them, so they become defensive and they say this. *"Abraham is our father," they answered.* So they go back to their Jewish tradition.

Now, see, Abraham couldn't have been anybody's father there because he's way back in history. We're talking about years and years and years back. Great-grand father. Great-great-great-grandfather of them. That's their relationship. He's not their father, but what they're saying is we have this tradition.

Now Jesus says to them – *"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham did."* In order to get this, we've got to understand more about Abraham and what

he was. I know father Abraham, you've heard the song, but there's much more than that. Here's an actual guy, Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. And if we go back in this story and we get the picture of who he is, it makes this more real and we can understand it better.

Abraham was known to be a guy who heard God's voice (listen to that – he hears God's voice) and he does something that seems unusual. That seems what Abraham is doing often in his life. He hears God's voice and God is telling him to do something that's out of the box. Something that doesn't fit with what everybody else is doing. First time we have record of God speaking to him, God spoke to him when he was in Ur. That's near Baghdad, Iraq. Ur. And He says I want you to leave your family and I want you to go and I'm going to give you a land that you're going to possess. He's going to take him to the Promised Land. Sixteen hundred miles he's going to travel by foot. That's like walking from here to Denver. That's a long way for him to go all the way up around the desert are, called the Fertile Crescent. He goes up and down and then down into Israel. And he gets there. And then the word of the Lord comes to Abraham giant and says, "Abraham, I want you to go to Egypt." So he hears God and then he does something different.

You know the story of Abraham and Isaac. God said to Abraham, "I want you to sacrifice your son Isaac," that's totally different than what was going on at the time, what was expected, what his family life is like. He's saying, "You want me to sacrifice him?" You see Abraham was very sensitive to listen to God's voice. He heard Him and then he did something about it.

We're going to see those two ideas in the passage. Watch the words 'hearing' and 'doing' as we go through the passage because that's what's taking place with Jesus and these Jewish people. They need to hear rightly and they need to do the right thing.

Now that's Abraham, so He says to them notice in verse 38 doing and hearing. But in verse 39 it says – "*If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did.*" You would be able to see that he's doing something. They didn't recognize Jesus. They were going to kill Jesus. They didn't recognize Him as the Son of God. God was doing something special and these people were not getting it. What were they doing there? They're relying on their kind of heritage of some kind.

There's some people who look at their heritage and say, "Well I was Baptist. I grew up in a Baptist church." And maybe they sang hymns in your Baptist church when you were growing up and that was part of what your religious experience was all about. There was this kind of Baptist heritage that you have. There's nothing wrong with that. It's rich. There's richness in religious heritage. But that's not the same as being connected to God right now and listening to what He has to say right now.

There's some people who say, "Well I grew up Catholic. I went through the Catholic school." That's great. You learn a lot of things in an environment, but there's something about being connected with God right now. Listening to what He's doing in this moment. Having a personal talk with Him. The Jews weren't having that. They're relying on some history of some kind. Some kind of tradition. He says to them if you were Abraham's children, if you really were really a good Baptist, Catholic, Jew, if you really understood what that means, you would be

having a personal relationship with God right now, and relying on what He's doing in your life and in your heart right now. You'd be listening to Him.

“As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the works of your own father.”

Now He's back to this idea your own father. Which I think must be confusing them. Because they're saying what's He talking about Father here? So they say to Him – *“We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”* Now this is interesting because this is where Jesus wants to go in the conversation anyway. He wants to take it to spiritual things. Right? He's going to talk about God and in a moment we saw that verse He's going to talk about the devil and the lies of Satan. So He's taking this to a spiritual level, which I think is a very good thing for us to be thinking about as well. As much is going on in our lives, it's much bigger this idea of spiritual truth and the lies that are out there. That's where the conversation is going. And they said the only Father we have is God Himself.

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.”

Now why couldn't they hear what he said? I think they can't hear what He's saying because the lies out there are crowding in. Now it's getting very personal.

If we look at our culture today, there are a lot of lies out there. There are things that are contradictory to what the Bible says or even about who Jesus is. So if you come to faith, for example, and you say, “Well here's lots of ways to get to God,” I just want you to know that's a lie. It's those kinds of things that are perpetuated in our understanding about it that confuse us. And so we have these lies out there and it makes it hard for us to hear the truth. That's what the word says here.

Verse 43 – *You are unable to hear what I say.* Why can't they hear what He's saying? Because the lies out here are too great. He's talking primarily about salvation, but let's take this a step further. Let's talk about our own personal lives. Because I think we hear lies. Don't we? We hear the lies that say things like oh you're no good, you're never going to make it, you're not as good as the next person over here. I'm unhappy with my life. I'm angry with this person. Whatever it is, we've got these lies that start to affect us. And the lies crowd out the truth. You are unable to hear what I say.

Well I want to be really careful in my own life. I need this message. Because if I'm feeling either a sense of inadequacy or discouragement or maybe my ego is really high sometimes, I'm feeling like I'm really great or something, then I'm missing sometimes the real message that God wants for me. We have to be really careful about these lies that are out there. Sometimes directly from Satan. Sometimes they're directly a part of the world system that Satan is directing, but just part of our culture that we're hearing. Those lies are out there all the time. They're making personal statements about us and our relationships with other people and how we interact and so on. So if you buy into the lie, it's really hard to tell the truth. I think that's what he's saying here.

So if you have a problem with addiction of some kind, then you end up saying things to yourself. “I need this. I’ve got to have this. I can’t overcome this.” Those are lies. Whether you have a problem with anger or bitterness or materialism or pornography or sexual addiction or whatever it might be. Those kinds of things are problems and the lies perpetuate them. So we have to be really careful about those lies. He says you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father the devil. In other words, the source of these lies, this information that you’re getting is because who you’re connected to. And if you’re not connected to the Father, you’re really in dangerous territory. You need to see that. There’s only two choices He’s giving. You’re either connected to the Father or you open yourself up to the enemy.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?”

Now notice the truth results in this belief. And beliefs exist in the heart of a person. So those beliefs help you address the challenges that you face. If you’re plagued by some negative thinking that relies that say oh I’ve got to be really concerned about what other people think, or people don’t like me or I’m right and that person is wrong and therefore I’m justified in letting them have it. If we start making those kind of statements, we find ourselves lacking the truth, and then we get ourselves into trouble. But if we have beliefs that come from the truth, those beliefs help us to address those things.

Here’s what I think happens in some people’s lives. They get to this place where there’s some lies that are going on and they try to deal with them just with logic. I think logic is good and I think we logically can deal with some of the arguments that are going inside in our hearts. We all have them going on, wrestling inside. I think logic can be helpful. But something much stronger than the logic is the belief that God has given to us that help us know who we are in our identity and those then can help us withstand any of these beliefs that get us off track.

Jesus is trying to make a contrast here to these people to get a message across to them. He wants them to understand that they’re allowing the lies that are out there in the world that come ultimately from the devil to influence their thinking in ways that are productive and what they need is the truth. Remember in our last sermon we talked about the truth. If you hold on to my teaching you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. So He’s talking about this whole idea of the freedom they can have in regards to this if they can understand the truth. But they have to be careful to the lies. The lies get us into trouble.

Now notice the last statement in verse 47. Because I think this is the key of getting these truths into our lives so that the lies are not controlling us. I think this is the idea. Because I think this is His concluding remark and this paragraph gives them this lesson that they need. He says to them – *“Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”*

So the key to hearing the truth and the true messages in your life, the truth of that is going to come where? It's going to come from this belonging to God. Belonging to God. This is the idea that right now I'm connected to God in a way that allows me to have this ability to listen to Him now. I'm not just reading history about God, I'm listening to Him right now in my life like Abraham did to take me where He wants me to be and to do what He needs to do.

Sometimes that voice of God in our lives prompts us to deal with some problem that we have. "You need to do this. You need to get this straight." Sometimes it helps us deal with a problem in someone else's life. Right? We hear it and we go oh I need to go help this person do something. But there's this voice of God that we hear and sharing comes with this connectedness. You have to understand that connectedness because that's really the ticket here that Jesus is saying to be able to hear the voice of God. And of course hearing the voice of God allows us to hear the truth spoken into our hearts so we can have greater confidence and not be so easily subdued by the lies that we tell ourselves or that are out there in our world today.

Let's try to apply this whole idea carefully to our own lives. Let's just take ourselves. I know that some of you could tell the stories of how you're feeling discouraged or you're feeling upset or you're feeling really stressed, but you knew there was something going on. You didn't know what it was, so you talked to someone. Sometimes that's a biblical counselor or sometimes it's a friend or a small group that you have in church. Someone in the midst of that you realize the truths and the lies.

Sometimes we don't even know what the lies are. Right? Sometimes you just feel upset. Sometimes we have the feeling. If you want to find the lies? Follow the emotion. Okay, follow the emotion and there you are. There's a lie going on that causes you to feel so upset when somebody does something like this. There's a lie that's feeding that emotion, that negative emotion is bothering you and plaguing you, there's a lie there. Follow the emotion, get to the lie, and be able to deal with that. So in one aspect I think this idea of truth versus lies helps us understand our own personal lies and what that looks like. Because we're not just dealing with logic.

Let me just show you a verse of scripture. In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 it says – *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.* These are different. That statement in itself ought to cause you to ponder for a moment. Because if you look at the message of the world, just google one of these self-help kind of things or get ideas about who to be a better person. You can come up with all kinds of ideas that the world has for how to deal that, how to maximize your life.

On the contrary, these weapons that we fight with have divine power to demolish strongholds. Now strongholds are these places in your life where lies have kind of taken hold. I've got to do this. I've got to do that. I'm upset about this or I'm this and not that. So when those things start happening inside of you, those become strongholds. What do we do? We demolish arguments and every pretention sets itself up against the knowledge of God. And what do we do? We take every thought captive to make it obedience to Christ.

I think this is the same idea that Jesus is trying to say to the Jewish people that He's talking about. You guys are stuck. You're listening to the lies. They're hindering your ability to move

forward. You're not being like Abraham because Abraham wouldn't do this. Abraham was willing to flow with what God was doing because he could hear God speak and move forward. You can do the same thing in your life. That's the same idea. But you have to take the thoughts captive and you have to allow God to do something in your life.

The lies that we have inside of us is just one of the areas. But sometimes there are lies in other people's lives. Surely you must know someone that's making bad decisions in their lives. You know someone who is being hurtful or mean or just getting themselves in trouble or just missing out on life because they're making bad decisions. Right? Why is that? Because there's lies going on inside.

Now when we come to the lies that we're talking about, we could argue with these people. And we could just argue them into doing the right thing. But the real issue isn't so much about the logic of the things they're doing is wrong, it's more about their connectedness with God.

I would suggest the greatest thing we could do is help someone who is making bad decisions get to know God. If they could get to know God better, the lies will disappear because the truth will be present. The person who's just doing wrong things or doing bad things, they're so caught up in their lies. You know what happens with those lies? The lies feed off of each other and then the lies get bigger, and so people develop a whole worldview based on the lies that they believe. And sometimes you can't do anything about that. I'm just saying as a root problem in those lies is that the person is not connected to the Lord. If a person would get more connected and belong to God as the passage says. If they would do that, then they could hear God speak and they would change the lies into truth. But that's the reality. If someone's not doing what's right, you could argue till you're blue in the face, but the real solution for a person's life is to be connected to God, to belong to Him in a better way.

Let me just show you one more verse. I just want you understand this. The rule of the devil here. The devil is a real person mentioned by Jesus here and Jesus refers to him into the next two chapters. So we're in John 8 right now, two chapters later in chapter 10 He refers to him as the thief. And this is the thief's job description. If you just look at your life, the lives of people around you and you see the brokenness, you got to know that Satan is on a mission. His goal is to *steal, to kill, and to destroy*. That is his goal. He wants to steal your joy, he wants to kill your relationships, he wants to destroy any part of you that could stand up with confidence. That's what he wants to do and he does it with lies. And we want to know the truth and Jesus offers an alternative to that. He's going to describe it and we'll talk about this in chapter 10. He says – *I have come that they might have life and have it to the full*. Full life is based on truth and it's based on all the things we've talked about up to that point.

So when we get to chapter 10, I'll be referring back to the truth to chapter 8 so that we can grasp this idea. If we have the truth, this truth makes us free, as we've already learned. That Jesus is the light of the world (we saw earlier in chapter 8) and then in the beginning of chapter 8 we saw Jesus forgiving the woman who was caught in adultery. All of this passage is leading up to something here.

The point is, be connected to God. Don't let the lies crowd out the truth because if you can't hear the truth, it's because of those lies that are out here. The solution isn't just to get logic for all of those lies. The solution is a new relationship with Christ. Allow Him to empower you and the lies just disappear. Because you don't have to respond to that person every time they annoy you because you've got a truth about your identity that doesn't require defensiveness. And right down the line, this truth that happens inside of you is powerful and it comes from knowing Jesus Christ and belonging to God.

Let's pray together. Would you stand with me?

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we need your Holy Spirit right now in our lives to convict us of the areas where those lies are getting in the way. We need breakthroughs. I know there's some people here that are just really struggling in their lies, feeling helpless, hopeless, disappointed, and they really need your touch to break through. So I'm asking that your Holy Spirit would do that work now or show us what it means to belong to you, to connect with you. Lord, we thank you so much for Jesus Christ and the power that we have because of that personal relationship. Teach us what that means and empower us today. Make your truth reign in our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.