

Summer of Personal Worship

WEEK 2 - FREEDOM

Our military community serves as the defender and protector of civil liberties. They serve to ensure our freedom from physical and political oppressions. They bump up against those outside our nation who want to interfere with our civil liberties and when the dust settles they expect our civil authorities to offer justice and freedom to all. The basis for civil rights is grounded in the impartiality of God by which all persons are made in the image of God. Throughout the Bible we can see that one of God's primary purposes for His people is to free them from physical oppression and hardship, and to liberate them from spiritual bondage.

This week we will focus on freedom from that which keeps us bound to a life that can separate us from God for all eternity. Freedom is the state that emerges after God has acted to remove all hindrances—social, spiritual (sin and death), economic, and institutional—that blocks our creational purpose. This purpose is to know, love, worship, and enjoy God forever. This is a freedom that has been won for us by the death and resurrection of the Messiah. By the power of the Spirit, the Christian seeks to live into this freedom and to join with God in freeing others. Reading scripture is important but it is not meant just for reading but as the Psalmist say “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer” Psalm 19:14. We must take time to mediate on what we read. To help you understand the practice of meditation on God's works download this document called **Lectio Divina**

Day 1

The gospel of John records a conversation Jesus had with a group of Jewish listeners, including some who believed in His message. He made this statement to those followers: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). Others who were listening to this conversation spoke up and said they have never been slaves to anyone and Jesus shared how sin make us slaves to behaviour and decisions that offend God.

Jesus made it clear that holding to His teachings is essential in order to claim to be one of His disciples. Further, Jesus said His teachings should be accepted as absolute truth. This truth, and no other, has the power to set a person free. Many philosophies and ideologies make the claim for truth, but all truth is God's truth, and therefore all claims for truth must be judged in light of God's revealed truth and knowledge. To adhere to a false view of reality is to be held captive to ignorance. To live a life apart from God's rule is to be held captive to sin. The truth of Jesus sets individuals free from all such bondage. The Jews refused to listen to the truth of Jesus, instead insisting on clinging to their own understandings.

A very successful addiction recovery organization identified twelve steps to recovery and teaches that the individual must take certain actions to overcome their addiction and change their lives. Jesus offers steps to freedom from the things that bind us. This week's reading will identify some of those steps so as to point you in the right direction.

Summer of Personal Worship

Review the material below (scripture, reflection video, praise song and prayer) to prepare yourself for the upcoming week. Reflect on each item and speak with God about your relationship with Him. Ask Him to reveal areas where you can grow this week.

SCRIPTURE - Galatians 5:1 New International Version (NIV):

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery”

REFLECTION VIDEO - *Freedom in Christ*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kl2ZJWSBok>

PRAISE SONG - *Amazing Grace*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYMLMj-SibU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-4NFvI5U9w> (Chris Tomlin version)

PRAYER - Consider adopting this as your daily prayer for the week.

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I acknowledge that I have sinned and that I cannot save myself. I believe that Jesus came to give me life, and by faith I now choose to receive you into my life as my Lord and Saviour. By the power of your indwelling presence enable me to be the person you created me to be. I pray that you would grant me repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth so that I can experience my freedom in Christ and be transformed by the renewing of my mind. In Jesus’ precious name I pray. Amen. “

Day 2 - Submission

In order to have peace with God there is a need for us to admit that we are powerless over things that could separate us from God; that are lives are unmanageable without God. We need to accept that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to a relationship with God and help us overcome the things that bind us. Anything that fastens or restrains us is considered bondage.

The basic concept in the Hebrew and Greek words translated “bond” or “bondage” is “loss of freedom.” The concept connotes servitude to another or something else.

Read today’s scripture and after your first reading will you consider the Lectio Divina meditation practice or some other practices that causes you to reflect on these words. Think about things you do that you don’t want to do and bring them to God. Recognize He can free you from them.

*“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it”. **Romans 7:14-20(NIV)***

Summer of Personal Worship

Day 3 - Conversion

Yesterday, we were asked to admit that we are powerless to live life as God desires when we seek to do it within our own means. When we realize we are powerless and that our life is unmanageable, we may have felt very empty. You may have asked yourself “if I am powerless and cannot manage my life who can?”: the answer is God. We need to make a decision to turn over our will and our lives to the care of God. We can admit that we may not understand who He is or what this action requires but don’t overthink it, ask Him to take control.

Read the following scripture and meditate on it and then speak with God.

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose”. **Romans 7:14-20**

Day 4 - Confession

Just as any business will take an inventory of their stock to understand their holdings and ability to function in the marketplace, so must we take an inventory of our lives. We need to walk down the aisles of our lives and take note of areas of strengths and weakness. We also need to look at our relationships with others and not only recognize those where we hold grudges and resentments, but those that are healthy and loving. We must recognize where change is necessary and possible.

Read the following scripture and reflect on it. Know that God wants to hear our self-revelation because when we admit our status we enter into an honest relationship with Him. Listen to this week’s song again. Listen to the truth that God’s amazing grace can set us free but, unless we confess we need it, we will not recognize when God offers His grace.

“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD”
Lamentations 3:40

Day 5 - Repentance

When farmers work their fields they do all they can to prepare them to accept new crops; new life. When watching from afar you will see them busily working and then all activity stops for a while. They have planted their seeds and need to give them time to grow and so they wait. We recognize who God is and what He wants to do with us, and we must trust Him to do so.

Repentance calls us to tell God, we are willing to have our character and our lives change. We acknowledge that we have done things that have offended Him and even harmed our own lives and want Him to change us.

Read the two scripture passages below, meditate on them, and then talk with God and repent.

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” **James 4:10**
“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” **1 John 1:9**

Summer of Personal Worship

Day 6 - Maintenance

Many of us have a garden or lawn and in order to maintain their beauty we make effort to remove weeds and other potential risks. Once a danger takes a foothold, it takes more effort to remove it. Satan wants to remove our freedom and will constantly put temptation in our path to trip us up. He knows our former areas of weakness and will poke at them. We must have practices in place to prevent the loss of the freedom God offers us. One of the greatest acts of Christ's death and resurrection is that sin no longer must bind us and make us slaves to them.

Read today's verse and meditate on it. It requires action on your part on that you should have some sort of plan to keep you connected to God.

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

1 Corinthians 10:12

Day 7 - Ministry

Christian freedom is a life changing experience that is not meant to be experienced alone. Being free means allowing the change and growth in our lives to be shared with others. We must step outside our own area of comfort and reach out to others.

Take some time to think about your journey with God. What was your life and experience like before you chose to follow Jesus? Why and how did you choose to be His follower? What is your life like now that you have chosen to be Christ's follower? The answers to these questions are the key points to a freedom story that you are asked by God to share with others.

Read today's passage, meditate on it, reflect on your freedom and pray God helps you share it with someone who needs to hear it. .

"Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done" Psalm 105:1