

Session 10: Walking in Freedom

Romans 12:2: Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Objective: To help people understand that taking hold of their freedom in Christ is not a one-off experience—it needs to become a way of life—and to provide them with tools to help.

Truth: Our success in continuing to walk in freedom and grow in maturity depends on the extent to which we continue to renew our minds and train ourselves to distinguish good from evil.

Review last session:

1. How did it go as you worked through the Steps to Forgiveness? Did God reveal anything new to you?
2. Were you able to tell the story of the unforgiving servant to anyone? If so, how did it go?

New Material:

1. Read Romans 12:2, the objective and the truth together.
2. How has God been changing your thinking over the course of this discipleship time? Do you have any examples of patterns in your behaviour that you see changing?
3. As you read or listen to the following stories, think about what was changing in Peter's life / how he was growing in maturity between each story. (Stories based on NLT)

Peter's Denial (John 18:15-26)

After Jesus was arrested... Peter followed Jesus...*into* the high priest's courtyard....A woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not." Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself. *After some time...* Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "No, I am not." But one of the household slaves of the high priest...asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" Again Peter denied it...

Pentecost (Acts 2)

Jesus was sentenced to death in an unjust trial, and he died and rose from the dead. He forgave Peter for denying him, and he told Peter and the other disciples that he would send them God's Spirit. On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!... They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other. But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. No, what you see was predicted long ago...

"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus...by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of *others*, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip..."So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and *Promised King!*"

Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." Those who believed what Peter said were baptised and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:8-33)

Peter was filled with God's Spirit and he continued to share the Good News of Jesus, but only to the Jews. However, sometime later (probably about 2 years) showed Peter new things. Here's Peter's story:

"I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.' 'No, Lord,' I replied. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.' But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.' This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven."

"Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us. He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, 'Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!' 'As I began to speak,' Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?" When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

Now retell this story in your own words...Use one of the ideas for 'internalising the passage'

If you're in a group, split the group up into three and have each group learn or read one part of the story and present it to the others one after the other. If you're one-on-one, either tell or read the stories together. Ask

1. How did Peter change between the first and second stories? What made the difference?

2. How did Peter change between the second and third stories? What made the difference?

Questions for Discussion: (Just ask the questions that didn't get covered when you 'retold' the story. Feel free to omit any questions that don't seem relevant to your situation or that feel redundant.)

1. *What do you like about these stories?*
2. *Is there anything that bothered you about these stories?*
3. *What do these stories show you about God?*
4. *What do these stories show you about people?*
 - a. *Trace Peter's change over time. At what point in his walk with Jesus did he become 'free'? How did he continue to grow in maturity after that? Does he become mature all at once? Why not? What kinds of things do you think may have happened in his life, or what steps might he have taken in order to grow in maturity?*
5. *How do the truths in this story apply to your life?*
 - a. *Freedom is a position we hold that we gain in one moment and that lasts forever. Maturity is a state that we grow into overtime. Do you agree or disagree with this statement and why? (You are already free just by virtue of being a daughter of God, but in what areas do you still need to grow into maturity?)*
 - b. *Read Philippians 4:6-9. What steps do you need to take in order to grow in maturity?*
 - c. *Remember some of the things God has been telling you that you need to work on. Plan out your own 'Freedom Plan'...*
 - i. *Determine the lie you have been believing. (that's any way you have been thinking that is not in line with God's truth)*
 - ii. *Find as many bible verses as you can that state the truth and write them down.*
 - iii. *Write a prayer based on the following:*
 1. *I renounce the lie that...*
 2. *I announce the truth that...*
 - iv. *Read the bible verses and say the prayer/declaration every day for 40 days.*
6. *If you have time as a group, practice working out a real 'Freedom Plan' together based on a real lie that someone in the group is believing or based on a common lie that many people believe.*

To Take Away

1. If you have not already done so, plan out your own 'Freedom Plan.' Start working through it.
2. Meditate on the following Scripture passages, which address common barriers to maturity:
 - a. 2 Peter 1:3 (Take hold of your spiritual freedom!)
 - b. Galatians 5:1 (Take personal responsibility for your maturity)
 - c. Hebrews 5:12-14 (Learn basic biblical truths, and train yourself to distinguish good from evil.)
 - d. Philippians 3:13-15 (Take the long-term view)