



WORDS MATTER: Freedom

What the words we use truly mean.

Opening Prayer:

Loving Father, for freedom you have set us free. Help us to stand firm that we may not submit again to the yoke of slavery to sin. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Q: How is the word “freedom” used in daily life? What do people refer to when they use the word “freedom”?

A: The word “freedom” is often used in connection to our calling as citizens. In America, freedom is talked about in terms of liberty and independence. Americans talk about free speech or the freedom of religion. Another context for the word freedom involves talk about financial freedom. Still another is freedom from addiction (i.e. inappropriate visual images, particular foods, alcohol and drugs).

Q: What is your definition of freedom?

A: Answers will vary.

Q: What is our culture’s definition(s) of freedom?

A: As has been said, Americans use the word freedom in terms of liberty. As a result, often freedom is thought of as being able to do what you want without somebody else telling you what to do. The result of this is that freedom is defined or expressed in terms of what you want. While that can be good, it is also dangerous. You know that if you freely followed your desires you would do many things that you shouldn't. This study will go on to show how this is a problem.

Q: What’s the dictionary definition of freedom?

A: Part of the first definition for freedom at Merriam-Webster online is:

- *the quality or state of being free: such as*
 - *the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action*
 - *liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another : INDEPENDENCE*
 - *the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous - freedom from care*
 - *unrestricted use - gave him the freedom of their home*

Q: What does God's Word teach us about freedom? Read Galatians 5:1 and 5:13.

A: In Galatians 5: 1 and 13 God says, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery...For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." God teaches us that freedom involves the opportunity to do the things that benefit our neighbors, rather than just to serve our own fleshly desires.

Q: What's the problem with using our freedom as an opportunity for the flesh? Read John 8:34 and consider 2 Samuel 11.

A: John 8:34 says, "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.' Not only is misusing this liberty contrary to God's will, it will also make us a slave once again and can cause us to completely lose our freedom in Christ. Jesus says that sin is slavery. This can be seen in the case of some of the addictions mentioned above. Also, consider how one sin leads to others for David in 2 Samuel 11.

Q: What's the answer when it comes to enslavement to sin? Read John 8:35-36.

A: John 8:35-36 says, "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Jesus is the answer. Especially in our context, we must first understand that freedom as it is spoken of in the Scriptures is given by God. Freedom does not come from our own ability to stop sinning, but from God as He forgives us and makes us new.

Q: According to the Scriptures, how do we understand freedom differently from how the world perceives it? Read Romans 6:15-19.

A: Romans 6:15-19 says, "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification." This freedom is not primarily about doing what we want according to the flesh, but it is about God enabling us to serve others with acts of righteousness.

Closing Prayer:

Almighty God, You have set us free through your Son's death and resurrection. Grant that we might use this freedom as You desire in service to others. Amen.