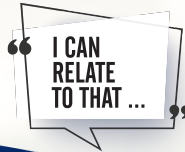


Week Beginning: 27<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Worship Series: #5 in series



living sharing growing



**lifegroups**  
live life abundantly

### Theme Verse

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Romans 6:22

### Remember This Week

Confessing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master means you belong totally to him - absolute ownership, absolute control, absolute subjection, absolute obedience, absolute loyalty, absolute dependence. That changes everything for it means that you need nothing other than what he commands and gives in his grace and mercy. That's when true freedom is found.



**The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.**

**Isaiah 61:1**

Almighty God, pour your Holy Spirit out on us as we gather around your word. Let it take root in our hearts so that we too may receive the promise of freedom and release through Jesus, and proclaim that freedom and release to others. In Jesus name, Amen



1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *Have there ever been times you have had your freedom restricted? How did it feel?*
4. *Share a memory of the time you have felt most free? What made it feel like that?*
5. *Do you ever feel paralyzed when faced with making decisions? Is it possible to have too much freedom?*

Slavery." The very word causes a gut level revulsion for most of us. It's a dark part of our history; the forced slavery of Aborigines, and the "blackbirds" or "sugar slaves" that came on boats from Melanesia. It's a dark part of our present with an estimated 40.3 million people caught up in modern day slavery. In a world that values independence, freedom and autonomy, the whole notion of being a slave and having a master is abhorrent. But our early Christian ancestors gladly, willingly and boldly named themselves "slaves of Christ." They lived and died, completely bought and sold into Christ's life, death and resurrection. They held no other allegiance, offered no other devotion, and answered to no other master than Christ. In being "slaves of Christ" they found a freedom like nowhere else on earth, a power no earthly ruler could match, and a fullness of life and joy that no-one else could offer. So as we celebrate the Reformation this week, we discover the radical freedom that comes in being a slave to the master, Jesus Christ.

Read Romans 6:14-24

6. *What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?*
7. *How do you feel about the idea of being a slave to sin?*
8. *Why would someone 'offer themselves' as a slave?*

In the New Testament the word 'doulos' is used both for slave and servant. Today, our idea of slavery is usually associated with the mistreatment and exploitation of indigenous people and cultures during the colonial era. But slavery has a much longer history and, certainly for the Israelites, there were strict rules regarding the care that masters were supposed to offer to their servants or slaves. In the absence of a prison system, servitude or slavery was one way





for criminals to 'pay-off' their debt to society or those they had wronged, but others would offer themselves into slavery in order to pay of debts that they had no other way of paying back. It was a way to work your way out of poverty, not be forced into it. Matthew 6:24a says, **'No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to one and despise the other'**. We can not be servants of Jesus and also seek to serve our own greed, selfishness and sinfulness.

9. *Jesus paid for our release from sin with his death on the cross. How do you experience that freedom?*
10. *Some people understand Christianity (following Jesus) to simply be a whole bunch of rules we have to follow. They see it as slavishly following a religion. To what degree are they right or wrong about this?*

In the Romans 6 passage, Paul says, 'When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

11. *Why do you think we are still attracted to things that lead to death? What benefit do we think we receive from returning to sinful practices?*
12. *It has been said that our freedom is expressed in our ability to make choices. Would you agree? Is this still true if our choices lead to death?*

We possibly have more choices to make on a daily basis than at any other time in history. Yet we see increasing rates of anxiety disorders and other mental health problems. We have rising suicide rates and increased reports of people feeling isolated and alone. This does not sound like a picture of freedom. Martin Luther experienced this 'false freedom' acutely in his early years as an Augustinian monk as he worked tirelessly to work off the guilt of his sin, only to discover that Jesus had taken care of all his guilt on the cross. This is when he started to experience real freedom.

13. *Martin Luther possibly experienced more persecution after rediscovering the truth of the gospel, than he ever had as a monk, yet he experienced a greater freedom than he had ever before. Where did this freedom come from?*
14. *Jesus promises eternal life for those who follow/serve him. Paul says this comes through being a slave of God, which leads to righteousness. What is the role of righteousness in our freedom in Christ?*



Our enemy does not want us to be aware of the freedom we have in Jesus. If we believe that we are still slaves to sin and have to earn our freedom, then we will not be effective witnesses of what Christ has done. If we learn to live, completely free in service to Christ, then we become powerful agents of God's will in this world. All of this is only possible because God lives in us by the Holy Spirit. We are born in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. It is Christ, alive in us that makes us free and righteous.

16. *Imagine that tomorrow is your first day of freedom from a life of service to an oppressive master. What would you want to do first?*
17. *Tomorrow is a new beginning. Each day Jesus offers you freedom from whatever might be trying to lay claim on you from the day before. How would your life look different if you lived each day as your first day of freedom?*

- \* Thank God for releasing you from your sin and offering you another way to live.
- \* Pray for those who are both physically and spiritually living in captivity or slavery. Ask God to break into their lives and to bring them his freedom.
- \* Pray for each other - for courage to live each day as free people, free to serve Jesus, free to live fully and completely for him.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

**Name, you are free in Christ. Amen.**

