
CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES



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FEBRUARY 23, 2025
COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
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I. SERMON RECAP

In his sermon, Pastor Gary shared a personal struggle with backing up trailers, humorously detailing experiences that highlighted his reliance on God's guidance during these challenges. He used his anecdote about a kind stranger helping him during a car breakdown to illustrate the concept of freedom and interdependence among people, emphasizing the idea of freedom found not just in circumstances, but in relationships and the favor of God. This story transitioned into the broader theme of true freedom in Christ, which Pastor Gary argued is not dependent on external situations, but on internal realities and spiritual liberation.

Pastor Gary then delved into two scriptures: Jeremiah 40:1-6 and John 8:31-36. He explained how Jeremiah's physical freedom from captivity symbolized the spiritual liberation believers can experience when they abide in Christ's teachings. He warned of the deceptive nature of "Babylon," representing worldly illusions that promise freedom but entrap people in false beliefs. By abiding in God's word, Pastor Gary stressed, believers could experience true freedom—a freedom that transcends geographic or societal contexts and offers emotional, intellectual, and spiritual liberation through Christ.

Concluding his sermon, Pastor Gary invited the congregation to build a deep, personal relationship with the Word, likening it to creating a childhood fort—a haven where one is enveloped in truth and grace. He urged the congregation to become more childlike in their faith, allowing the Word to empower them with freedom and maturity. Pastor Gary challenged the members to identify and release their own "shackles," both personal and spiritual, and invited them to find liberation by deepening their relationship with Christ and with each other, highlighting that true freedom results in a life lived in the grace and truth of God's Word.

Chapters

Chapter 1: The Illusion of Freedom in Babylon

We explore the concept of Babylon as a world system and the deceptive freedom it offers.

Chapter 2: Abiding in the Word for True Freedom

We learn about the importance of abiding in God's Word to experience true freedom.

Chapter 3: The Church's Responsibility in Cultivating Freedom

We discuss the role of the church in helping people find freedom in Christ.

Chapter 4: Identifying and Breaking Free from Our Shackles

We are encouraged to identify areas of constriction in our lives and seek God's freedom.

II. STUDY GUIDE

Key Points

- True freedom in Christ is an internal reality, not dependent on external circumstances
- Abiding in God's Word is crucial for experiencing freedom and spiritual growth
- The world (Babylon) offers a deceptive form of freedom that leads to bondage
- Believers need to create a "fort" or safe space to immerse themselves in God's Word
- Spiritual maturity involves nuanced growth and subtle refinement
- Christians should identify and address areas of spiritual constriction in their lives
- Freedom comes from taking the focus off oneself and placing it on Christ

Key Scripture

Jeremiah 40:1-6 The word came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard had released him at Ramah. He had found Jeremiah bound in chains among all the captives from Jerusalem and Judah who were being carried into exile to Babylon. When the commander of the guard found Jeremiah, he said to him, "The LORD your God decreed this disaster for this place. And now the LORD has brought it about; he has done just as he said he would. All this happened because you people sinned against the LORD and did not obey him. But today I am freeing you from the chains on your wrists. Come with me to Babylon, if you like, and I will look after you; but if you do not want to, then don't come. Look, the whole country lies before you; go wherever you please." However, before Jeremiah turned to go, Nebuzaradan added, "Go back to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the towns of Judah, and live with him among the people, or go anywhere else you please." Then the commander gave him provisions and a present and let him go. So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and stayed with him among the people who were left behind in the land.

John 8:31-36 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Scripture References

Referenced

Acts 16:25-26 (Reference to Paul and Silas worshipping in prison.) About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

Genesis 32:22-32 (The story of Jacob wrestling with God is discussed.) That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

Psalms 119:11 (Alluded to with the phrase "If you have hidden your word in my heart, I will not sin against you.") I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Revelation 1:3 (Alluded to when discussing seeing and hearing the words of prophecy.) Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Romans 10:17 (Alluded to with "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.") Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Hebrews 4:12 (Alluded to when describing the Word as piercing and judging the heart.) For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Jeremiah 23:29 (Alluded to with "It's the hammer that breaks the rock.") "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Hebrews 4:16 (Alluded to with "boldly running to the throne of grace.") Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Additional Relevant Verses

Galatians 5:1 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.

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

James 1:25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it they will be blessed in what they do.

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Matthew 18:3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

III. DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

Day 1: Freedom in Christ

Question: Pastor Gary mentions that 'true freedom in Christ is an internal reality.' How does this challenge our conventional understanding of freedom?

Reading: John 8:31-36

Devotional: Jesus speaks of a profound freedom that comes from abiding in His word. This isn't just intellectual assent, but a deep, transformative engagement with God's truth. Reflect on areas of your life where you feel bound or restricted. How might truly abiding in God's Word - immersing yourself in it like a child in a blanket fort - bring freedom to those areas?

Today, choose a short passage of Scripture and spend time "abiding" in it, allowing God's truth to envelop you and speak to your heart.

Day 2: Unmasking Before God

Question: How might the concept of 'masklessness' in our faith challenge the way we present ourselves to others and to God?

Reading: Psalm 139:1-24

Devotional: The psalmist invites God to search his heart, laying himself bare before his Creator. In a world of facades, God calls us to authenticity. Consider the "masks" you wear in different aspects of your life. What parts of yourself do you hide from others, or even try to hide from God? Remember that true freedom and growth come when we allow ourselves to be fully known by God.

Take time today to pray honestly, sharing your deepest thoughts and feelings with your Heavenly Father who already knows and loves you completely.

Day 3: Wrestling with God

Question: How does Jacob's wrestling with God and demand for a blessing relate to our own struggles and desires in our relationship with God?

Reading: Genesis 32:22-32

Devotional: Jacob's wrestling match with God is a powerful image of persistence in seeking God's blessing. Like Jacob, we all have areas where we struggle with God - questions, doubts, or areas of stubborn self-will. What are you wrestling with God about right now? Instead of avoiding the struggle, engage with it.

Bring your questions and struggles to God, holding on in prayer until you experience His blessing. Remember, even our "limps" can become reminders of God's touch on our lives.

Day 4: Breaking Free from "Babylon"

Question: The sermon discusses the pull of 'Babylon' in our lives. What modern-day 'Babylons' tempt us away from true freedom in Christ?

Reading: Revelation 18:1-8

Devotional: "Babylon" in Scripture often represents worldly systems opposed to God. In our lives, "Babylon" can be anything that enslaves us - materialism, approval-seeking, addictions, or false ideologies. What "Babylonian" influences threaten to captivate your heart?

Ask God to show you areas where you've become entangled in worldly thinking. Commit to replacing those influences with time spent abiding in God's Word and presence.

Day 5: Childlike Faith and Maturity

Question: How might adopting a more 'childlike' approach to faith, as suggested in the sermon, lead to greater spiritual maturity?

Reading: Matthew 18:1-5, Ephesians 4:11-16

Devotional: Jesus calls us to childlike faith, while Paul encourages growth to spiritual maturity. This seeming paradox reminds us that spiritual growth often involves becoming more trusting and dependent on God, not less. Reflect on your spiritual journey. Have you lost some of the wonder, trust, or enthusiasm you once had?

Ask God to renew a childlike faith in you, while also deepening your understanding and application of His truth. Consider how you can nurture both childlike trust and mature wisdom in your walk with God.

IV. SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Small Group Guide: Freedom in Christ

Key Takeaways:

1. True freedom in Christ is an internal reality, not dependent on external circumstances.
2. Abiding in God's Word is essential for experiencing true freedom.
3. Many believers may not yet be experiencing the full freedom available in Christ.
4. Freedom comes from engaging deeply with Scripture, not just surface-level reading.
5. Maturity in faith involves becoming more childlike and nuancing our walk with God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Gary mentions that "Babylon calls the new believer back." What are some ways you've experienced the pull of worldly influences in your faith journey?
2. How would you describe the difference between simply reading the Bible and "abiding" in God's Word as the pastor describes?
3. The sermon talks about creating a "fort" with God's Word. What practical steps can you take to create a space for deeper engagement with Scripture in your daily life?
4. Pastor Gary says, "Freedom comes from engaging deeply with Scripture, not just surface-level reading." Share an experience where deeper engagement with a Bible passage led to greater understanding or freedom in your life.
5. How does the idea of becoming more "childlike" in faith challenge your current approach to spiritual growth?

6. The sermon mentions "nuancing" our walk with God as we mature. What areas of your faith do you feel need refining or subtle changes?

7. Reflect on the story of Jacob wrestling with God. How does Jacob's persistence relate to our pursuit of freedom and blessing from God?

Practical Applications:

1. This week, choose a short passage of Scripture and spend 15-20 minutes "abiding" in it each day. Journal your insights and how this deeper engagement impacts your sense of freedom in Christ.

2. Identify one area of your life where you feel "shackled" or restricted. Commit to praying specifically about this area, asking God to reveal any truths from His Word that can lead to greater freedom.

3. Practice childlike faith by approaching God with simple, honest prayers this week. Share with the group next time how this approach affected your relationship with God.

4. Choose a trusted friend or family member and have an honest conversation about an area where you struggle to feel free in Christ. Ask them to pray for you and hold you accountable in pursuing freedom in this area.

5. Reflect on ways you can create a "fort-like" environment (physically or mentally) to engage more deeply with God's Word. Implement one of these ideas this week and share the results with the group.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

-The CBC youth left this morning for a mission trip to Asheville. Please lift them up in prayers as they minister to those rebuilding from Hurricane Helene.

-Girls Craft Camp is next week, August 4th-8th. This is a day camp for girls ages 10-17. This is going to be a fun week!

-The Lee University Singers are leading CBC in worship on August the 24th. We need families to host the students from Friday the 22nd- Sunday the 24th. If this is something you would like to help out with, please reach out to the church.

Have a great week in The Lord!