

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

September 24, 2023 "30 days to freedom ... How to keep it going"

I Intro.

It's fall 'y'all. Ready for some cooler weather? Things have cranked back up and we want you to be a part of this great community. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

We're on the final Sunday of the series **"30 Days to Freedom"**. A 30 day commitment to establishing a few practices and habits that would free us from all the things we allow to creep into our lives. If we learn to do these things well, we could experience true freedom as Jesus promised. Not just the ability to choose our preferences like the world defines freedom, but real freedom. The first week we began with the first step towards freedom. And we began to flesh out an understanding of freedom that isn't controlled or determined by things outside of us. It's an internal groundedness that holds us in place no matter what is happening in our world around us. The second week we talked about identifying the things inside of us, idols, that limit our freedom. These things may feel like freedom, the ability to choose, but they typically begin to trap us. Last week we talked about being an icon. A representation of something greater, and of the nature of the artist that created us. And if we embrace that we are the "spittin' image" of our God, lived that way, then we would also see it in others. Today, we finish this series talking about how to keep this going.

III Sunday.

This is it. The final cap on putting all the pieces together to live a life of freedom. As with anything else, the most difficult challenge in living this life is keeping it going. Sustaining it. And we run into that while living this life towards freedom. We can have the best intentions, start strong, and even have a decent run at it. But life happens, it just gets in the way. Other responsibilities take our time, energy, and will power. So we just fade in our commitment. So, let's talk about that tendency first.

Where do you struggle sustaining habits and practices that are good for you?

Do you have any habits that you've been able to practice over a long stretch of time?

What's helped you maintain your commitment?

The scripture we used Sunday is a pretty intense teaching Paul was giving the church at Corinth. That church had some pretty significant struggles. Most historians say that Paul wrote a total of four letters to them. Couple that with Paul's default nature towards action, and you get this teaching. Read **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** and will pull some specifics from it.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What did you pull from it about sustaining the life we're called to live?

What do you need mentally and spiritually to live this life?

There are two elements that make sustainability happen.

1. There is a mental component to committing to the long game.

Paul asked, ***“Don’t you realize?”*** This is something that’s true, but you have to mentally embrace this. Which fits what we asked you on the very first Sunday. **Do you want to be free?** We told the story of the Montgomery bus boycott in the service, and their driving motivation was this truth. **“They became aware of the tendency to accept that not having freedom is okay.”** This was their WHY? So we have to ask; **What is our “Why?”**? We all know the; how we do this and what we do. Sometimes I have frustrating conversations with people that are really good at what needs to be done. **Answers to fix our society. “If people would just...”** YES!! That’s all true. But have you given them a **“Why?”**, that is compelling and will help them mentally commit to the long game work. It’s embracing the truth that we can’t live like this anymore. It’s not okay that not being free becomes okay. Or: ***“I’m sick and tired of being ... sick and tired.”*** Which leads to Paul’s statement; ***“I run with purpose.”*** There has to be an intentional understanding and mental commitment to this. To be able to sustain this movement towards freedom, you have to mentally commit to the work...for a reason.

2. There is a physical component to committing to action.

Paul said; ***“I discipline my body.”*** This is working into your life the sustainable practices and habits that will get you to where you want to go. In the Montgomery bus boycott the workers had to commit to an intentional process of action steps to get where they wanted to go. If we are beginning to realize it’s not okay to not be free, what do we have to do, put into place, that’s sustainable, that can get us closer to what we want? And this involves ***“Training.”*** By now we’ve probably all heard the difference between ‘trying’ and ‘training’. For some big challenges, like running a marathon, most of us couldn’t do it no matter how hard we ‘tried’. However, if we started training today. Small incremental improvements over time would add up. And this time next year, after committing ourselves to ‘training’, many of us could finish a marathon.

As intense as this teaching from Paul felt. And most likely his level of actual work would probably be more than ours, his life situation was different. The truths that he practiced, both mentally and physically, allowed him to live a life of freedom even though he often found himself not physically free.

IV Challenge.

In finishing this series ***“30 Days to Freedom”***, we want to challenge you to commit to the steps we talked about. Uncovering your idols, considering yourself a unique sacred representation of God, and doing the work of creating a sustaining lifestyle that would lead towards freedom we want to ask you these.

What practices and habits could you incorporate into your life that would help lead you towards freedom? What idols need to be identified and addressed? What do you need to do regularly to remind you that you are an icon? A representation of the living God.

God wants us to experience the joy of being free. Not being controlled by every little thing around us.

What would that look like in your life?