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## WORSHIP

Suggested worship songs: The Joy/Joy to the World, This is Amazing Grace, Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me, Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)

## WELCOME

What's the best definition of freedom can you come up with?

## WORD

### **GALATIANS 5:16-26 (Read the verses 1-15 as well)**

<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. <sup>19</sup> Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

Different people will have different ideas of what true freedom is. For some, it is political freedom, or personal freedom and the freedom to do anything you want. But what is true freedom?

True freedom is not the ability to do whatever you feel like doing; it is the ability to do what is right. It is the power to say "no" to sin and "yes" to God – to do what is pleasing to Him. Doing everything you feel like doing doesn't lead to freedom but to slavery. Smoking, drinking and other vices feels like freedom at first, but eventually enslave you. Some people don't want to sin they cannot stop sinning. The happiest people are those who have victory over sin. "True freedom is not the absence of constraints but choosing the right constraints." (Tim Keller). To be truly free we need to be...

### FREE IN CHRIST

If you are a believer in Christ, you have been set free by Jesus (**Galatians 5:1**). However, you may not be experiencing that freedom; that's why the verse has a command included in it. Believers are to stand firm and persevere, don't go back to your old ways that enslaved you. Jesus defined slavery as committing sin. We need Jesus to set us free from sin (**John 8:34,36, Romans 7:19, 24-25**). Every true Christian who commits sin feels miserable! Because of what Jesus did for us, there's no more condemnation for believers (**Romans 8:1-2**). Before coming to Christ, you were under the law of sin so that you keep on sinning. Once you have the Holy Spirit, another law takes effect that overcomes the law of sin. Just like an airplane, a butterfly or a bird can take flight because the law of aerodynamics overcomes the law of gravity. To truly experience freedom from sin and guilt, we need to know the truth of being free in Christ (**John 8:32**). If you don't read the Bible, you won't know the truth, and you'll be deceived by Satan's lies.

Paul gives the Galatian believers two warnings: if they wrongly believe that they need circumcision for their salvation, then "Christ will be of no benefit" to them. This makes them obligated to keep the whole Law and they have been severed from Christ and fallen from grace (**Galatians 5:2-4**). This means that if you depend on legalism to save you, how can Christ benefit you since we are saved by grace? Legalism is relying on human effort to earn God's acceptance and merit salvation by rules or performance rather than by grace through faith in Christ. This makes you enslaved to legalism since there's no way anyone can fulfill the law (**James 2:10**). Don't go back to this system because you have already been set free. We are saved by grace, not by legalism (**Acts 15:10-11**). A distorted gospel teaches that faith in Jesus is not enough, that you need to add "circumcision", good works,

rituals and following laws to be saved. We are saved by grace, not because of good works (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). The Bible teaches that faith in Jesus is what saves us, and it results in good works. So, once we are saved, how do we behave?

### FREE TO LOVE

"A Christian is a truly free person because he is free to do God's will and wants to do it." (A.W. Tozer). If you are a child of God, we live by faith through the Holy Spirit waiting for the certainty of becoming more like Christ (**Galatians 5:5-6**). We are to serve one another through love (**Galatians 5:13-14**). The Law can only tell us what not to do, but it cannot compel us to do the right thing. The Law of Christ is the highest standard, that's why we are to love others as we love ourselves. When people love the Lord, they will want to do the right thing to obey Him (**Romans 13:9-10**). We are free to love one another because Jesus has set us free! But Paul also warns that a little compromise (sin) will destroy your life (**Galatians 5:7-9**). Don't let anyone tell you that you need to do (or avoid) certain things to go to heaven (**Colossians 2:16-17, Romans 14:1-2**). Some Christians who are not yet mature in their faith have a lot of "do's" and "don'ts" that they live by, but the most important thing is your relationship with Christ (**Romans 14:5-6**). The essence of Christianity is that you are set free from legalism.

### FREE TO LIVE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Christian life is not hard; it is impossible. It is not easy; it is supernatural. That's why we are commanded to "walk by the Spirit" (**Galatians 5:16**). True freedom comes when you obey and follow the Holy Spirit moment by moment. Walk by the Spirit day by day and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. Your new nature is at war with your old nature (**Galatians 5:17-18**). So feed your new nature with God's word and worship, and "starve" your sinful nature by staying away from temptation and avoiding sin.

Paul warned that those who practice sin (living in sin) will not inherit God's kingdom (**Galatians 5:19-21**). Committing sin and practicing a sinful lifestyle are not the same. True Christians will be miserable when they commit sin, they will not continue in it because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Those who are truly surrendered to the Holy Spirit will bear the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). True Christianity is not religion; it is a life fully surrendered to Christ and filled by the Holy Spirit. Be truly free, surrender everything to the Lord and live by the Holy Spirit!

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. How will you define true freedom?
2. What can you do to keep standing firm so that you will not forfeit the freedom secured by Christ for you?
3. How will you walk in freedom this week and influence others to do the same?

# WORKS

## PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray that more people in our country will find true freedom in Christ. Be a shining light of God 's grace and truth wherever you are. Live out godly convictions and demonstrate God's grace in relationships. Share the gospel especially during this Christmas season as you celebrate with family and friends.

## WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- For legislators to promote and support bills and laws aligned with God's Word.
- PRAY for the protection, safety and release of kidnapped American Christian missionary, Kevin, serving in Niger (West Africa). For God to turn the hearts of the kidnappers to repentance and salvation. Peace and comfort for Kevin's family.
- Pray for persecuted Christians in Sudan and Nigeria) --- many have been beheaded and murdered; earnestly seek God's intervention to stop the bloodshed. Pray for freedom from oppression, that God's word and His people bring them comfort and hope.
- PRAISE God that the rest of the living Israeli hostages have been restored to their families safely! Continue to pray that the last remaining dead hostage will be returned to his family for burial.
- For Israel's war with terrorists to end according to God's purpose and for His glory. For Jewish people worldwide who are experiencing a surge of antisemitism; may this lead them to the Messiah, Jesus as they turn to God for help and comfort.
- For protection of Iranian, Syrian and Lebanese Christians and other minorities, and freedom from oppression. Pray for the gospel to spread rapidly throughout their region.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented.
  - Fire victims and their families in Hong Kong.

### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God, and make disciples
- For elders, pastors, deacons, and families to become holy, humble, harmonious, happy, and heart-working)
- For ministries and church expansions worldwide.

### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain (MMRC)

### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper and intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends

## MEMORY VERSE

### Galatians 5:16

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.