

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for July 17: Personal relationship

July 6, 2011

What does freedom mean to each of us? What is the first thing that comes mind when we think of the word “freedom?” Due to our recent celebration of Independence Day, this certainly is a topic many have reflected on the past few weeks.

Some of us may think about political freedom and our troops that fight for that freedom every day. For others, it is financial freedom as we dream of a day when we will not feel the burden and worry of overdue bills or mortgage payments.

Most of us probably do not immediately think of the freedom we find in salvation when we hear the word “freedom.” Yet as we have discussed over the past two weeks, this freedom is the most important and only true freedom we can gain.

In our discussions these past couple of weeks, hopefully we have come to the understanding that we cannot gain freedom through ways of self-indulgence or by following the law. We can only receive true freedom and salvation through our faith in and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Let’s explore what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ.

In Galatians 4:1-7, the Apostle Paul tells us we are sons and daughters of God. God sent his one and only Son to die for all of humanity so we could be called sons and daughters of God. How amazing and humbling is that? To go further, because we are sons and daughters of God, we are made heirs to his kingdom, and because we are heirs to his kingdom, we are no

longer slaves to this world.

It is in this truth that we find our true freedom, and it is because God calls us his children that we can have a personal relationship with him. Despite our relationship with our earthly fathers, we are told God is perfect, which means he is our perfect, heavenly Father.

We can trust our heavenly Father fully and know his unconditional love for us never will end. He never will leave us or forsake us; our relationship with him is an eternal one. What a wonderful promise and assurance from God. But there is more.

Once we have gained the understanding that we are children of God and understand the freedom that entails, we must make the decision to receive this truth and decide daily to walk beside him. We are children of God because of Christ's death on the cross and the forgiveness bestowed on us because of his death.

This amazing gift entails responsibility though. The decision to be a child of God requires us to accept this forgiveness by admitting we are not perfect, have sinned and must turn from that sin. We must choose to change the way we live our lives; we must choose to walk alongside God, following his ways, rather than walk alongside the world.

Although this may seem huge, this responsibility is incredibly freeing when we know that by walking with him, God will lead us in the ways of righteousness and peace. We cannot go wrong when we decide to let him lead us. Paul tells us "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

1 John 3:1 states, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God." As I think back to my childhood, I can remember times when I suspect my parents would have liked to trade me in for a more obedient or less messy model.

Then I read 1 John 3:1, and I am astounded to think God chose to not only adopt humanity despite our disobedient and messy nature, but he also chose to, for lack of a better phrase, spoil us rotten with his unconditional love. That term “lavish” is important and must be remembered. What God has done—and does—for us, he does not do reluctantly nor scantily with barely enough to get the job done. Rather, he does it extravagantly and bountifully. That means there always is more for each of us. And there is enough for more of us.

Without the salvation God has offered us through Christ, we would be doomed to our own sin and desperation. The freedom we find in Christ gives us a future in heaven and gives us a hope to sustain us. This is the greatest freedom and the greatest relationship of all. It is boundless, infinite and eternal.

Questions for discussion

- What does it mean to walk alongside God? What would that look like in your life right now?
- Think about any close relationship you are in right now. You enjoy spending time with that person and doing things that please them. How can we relate this to our relationship with Christ?
- Are there any decisions or relationships you are walking through right now in which you need to invite God along for the journey?