

Living Free in Christ

Bible study

This Bible study can be used in home groups or on your own. It helps us to reflect on God's gift of freedom and how to live it out day by day, and also to pray for ourselves and our Christian family in the MENA as we all continue to face restrictions on our activities.

If you are leading a group you may find helpful the brief notes for leaders on the next page, which provide a few comments on the passages.

STARTER QUESTION

1. What do you think of when you hear the word "freedom"? What kinds of freedom do you value most?

READ: ROMANS 6:16-20

2. Paul says that before we were Christians we were slaves to sin (vv.17,20). What do you think that means? Do you remember what it felt like?

3. How does Paul say our lives have changed since we became believers (v.18)? How has this been your own experience?

4. How are we encouraged to respond to our liberation by Christ (vv.16,19)? What might this look like for you in everyday life?

5. So what does this passage tell us about how Paul understands freedom? How do you respond to this view?

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:21-24

6. What attitude to their slavery does Paul commend to slaves (v.21)? And what should they do if they can get their freedom? Check out some different Bible versions on this!

7. What reason does Paul give for these recommendations (v.22)? How might it help you to respond to limitations on your personal liberties and freedom to worship?

8. So what does Paul advise his readers to do about their circumstances (vv.23-24)? How do you react to this advice, especially at this time when your own freedom is restricted?

9. How can you focus more on your calling as a slave of Christ? How can you serve Him better in this Christmas season?

AND FINALLY...

10. How has this study confirmed / clarified / changed your view of Christian freedom? What will you do about it?

PRAY

Pray for Christians in the MENA who will be unable to gather for worship or fellowship this Christmas. Pray that they can rejoice in their freedom in Christ.

Pray for yourselves under whatever restrictions you may be facing at this time. Ask God to use you for His glory as you live for Christ.

Give thanks to God for the birth of His Son, who has set us free from slavery to sin so that we might live for righteousness, and commit yourself to Him afresh.

LEADERS' NOTES FOR BIBLE STUDY

Q2. According to Paul, **before we became Christians** we were enslaved to sin, under compulsion to sin; we were unable consistently to resist our natural impulses when these were opposed to the will of God. For Paul, this inability to live for God is the ultimate enslavement.

Q3. Paul says that **believers have now been set free** from slavery to sin, such that it no longer controls what we do. We have now become instead slaves of righteousness; our lives are under God's control, and we are able to obey Him.

Q4. Paul suggests that **believers have a choice of two masters**, sin or righteousness; they can hand themselves over to either, and then they will have to obey it. To be free from slavery to sin, they must offer themselves as slaves to righteousness instead.

Q5. Paul's view of freedom might be summed up as **the liberty to live righteously**, i.e. in accordance with God's will, and from the sinful impulses that compel us to do otherwise.

Q6. **Paul is not suggesting that slavery is easy**; in the first century it could be horrible. He means that outward enslavement, however dreadful, should not disturb a person who is inwardly free, i.e. free from the control of sin. It is this kind of freedom that really matters.

Some Bibles translate the second instruction as "take the opportunity to become free", while others say something like, "make more use of your slavery". Paul probably means that it does not matter if someone is slave or free; s/he is free to serve God just the same either way.

Q7. Again, Paul's key point is that **a slave and a free person are equally able to serve the Lord**, who has set them both free from sin and called them both into His service. Restrictions on our civil liberties make no difference to that and so should not concern us.

Q8. Because **we are free to serve God in whatever condition we were called to faith** – or now find ourselves – Paul does not want us to be distracted by trying to change it at others' behest. Instead we should devote ourselves to our calling to be slaves of Christ.