

Truth: God LOVES you despite what you think of yourself.

Truth: In Christ, you already meet all of God's EXPECTATIONS.

Truth: God CHANGES you to be like him.

What do these statements have in common?

"That's just the way I am. Deal with it!"

"I can't help myself."

"You can't teach old dogs new tricks."

"That's how I've always done it."

"I can't do it!" or "I could never do that."

Each statement declares that I am the way that I am and I cannot change.

What is wrong with each of these statements?

These excuse or justify our limitations and failings. They trap us in our present state and do not allow us to move forward or grow as a person. They say that we cannot choose our behaviour and that we are limited by our failings.

Each statement chooses to ignore that Christ has set us free to choose what we do and how we relate to people.

Does not our personality dictate to some degree how we relate to people? How are we to understand the difference between a personality-based response to someone and a lie-based response?

Our personality is our natural way of relating to others, but it does not override our choice to determine how to relate to someone. We are always to choose a response that has the other person's best interests in mind.

Our personality is not an excuse for personal shortcomings or for not being respectful to others. To simply claim that we have only one way to relate to people is to deny love, our ability to choose and God's Holy Spirit at work through us to build up others.

Why are we always responsible to adjust how we relate to others?

If all our needs are met in Christ and we are fully accepted by God, then we are free to be whatever we need to be to minister to and love the other person. Because Jesus was confident in his relationship with the Father and his own identity, he was free to become a man and take the role of a servant. He did not merely change his way of relating, he even changed his very physical nature.

Why do we sometimes feel like we're stuck and can't move forward in freedom?

- We tried something before and couldn't do it.
- We have an addiction that we cannot break.
- There is a sin in our life that we keep repeating.
- We fear failure or rejection.
- We don't know how to change or move forward.
- Etc.

In what ways might believing we cannot change hinder our lives?

We might not take risks due to fear of failure when confronted with life stretching opportunities

We might continue with abrasive behaviours that we excuse as personality style.

We will not have victory over areas of sin if we believe it is unavailable.

We might become depressed and experience ill health.

We will resent life/others whenever change is forced on us.

As you consider your life, is there anything you feel you could never do?

Public speaking, missions, sharing your faith, praying out loud, confronting certain fears, etc.

What are we saying about God at these times?

We limit God because of the things we feel we cannot do. All the great events of scripture describe situations where God did more through a person than they could have ever believed possible.

When we limit ourselves we are also saying that we believe God expects us to live with fear and insecurities, never able to move forward.

Can any of you relate to the following tension Paul writes about?

Romans 7:15-19 (NIV)

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.

In what ways do you relate to this tension?



Romans 7:24-25 (NIV)

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

²⁵ Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!

What does it take to become free of sin's grip?

In the Freedom circle, write down everything you can think of that describes your position in Christ and the implications that has for your life.

In the Trapped circle, write down everything you can think of that describes your life under the lies.

FREEDOM

KINGDOM OF LIGHT

Example:

Loved, Forgiven, Declared Righteous,
Reconciled, Accepted, Embraced
Don't have to sin anymore,
Servant of God, Citizen of heaven, Priest
of God, Friend of God, Adopted into God's
Family, Heir, Body of Christ, Invited into the
Godhead itself,
Safe, secure, provided for, future taken care
of, enjoyable to God, celebrated, significant,
status, role to play,

TRAPPED

DOMINION OF DARKNESS

Example:

Unlovable, Condemned, Guilty, Apart from
God, Unaccepted, Rejected
Can only do wrong, Failure, Ashamed,
Always striving – never reaching,
Always trying to please, Stuck,
Can't move forward, Nightmares, Angry,
Hurt, Worried, Fearful, Uncertain, Not
respected, Outcast, Sad

What determines which circle you will live in from day to day?

CHOICE: Which statements will you "value" most - God's Truth or Satan's lies?

Whenever we find ourselves experiencing life in the Trapped circle, it is simply because we have chosen to believe one of Satan's lies.

Can you identify any past failures or lies that you bought into in the past that are trapping you in the present? Are there any you can share with the group?

When you think about these past hurts, how does it make you feel in the present?

Why is that? How does something that happened long ago still affect us many years later?

If we choose to still embrace the same lie we bought into many years ago, the same pain will stay with us. That is why many of us are hampered by childhood experiences. We relive the lie every time we think of it. We even carry it around with us in our subconscious when we are not actively thinking about it. The lie continues to trap us unaware and we continue to live hindered lives.

If we go back to that lie and reject it, fully embracing God's truth, we will become free from the guilt and pain of that lie. We will be free to experience God's forgiveness and acceptance. We will also then be free to stop judging those who have wronged us so that we are no longer bound by their actions.

No event has a right to rob us of life unless we give it permission.

Sin was a Slave Master. We had to obey him; all we could do was sin.

Romans 6:6-7 (NIV)

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Romans 6:11-14 (NIV)

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

If we have been freed from sin's grasp, why do you think we still do it?

1) Sin tells us it is still in control and we must do as it says.

We have listened to Sin for so long, we still buy into it as if we are still its slave. We act as though we are still in bondage despite the fact we are free. It is a matter of choice for us now, through Christ.

2) We enjoy the immediate "blessings" of sin.

We sometimes excuse sin and minimize its severity because we want to embrace it. We know we will always struggle with sin and we know that we are forgiven, so what's the problem with giving in every now and then? After all, I'm already forgiven.

BUT, we forget that every sin is an outright rejection of the Lordship of Jesus Christ at that point in our lives. Sin embraces evil and places us under the rule and influence of Satan's kingdom. We are re-submitting to the slave master, Sin, all over again. If we fully understood the implications of sin we

would never return to it. We would never want to reject the rule of Jesus in our lives. Jesus gave his life to set us free from sin; how can we be content to live in it any longer?

Romans 6:16-18 (NIV)

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

What does it mean to become a slave to righteousness?

All we should do now is what righteousness tells us to do. Obeying Sin should no longer be an option for us – we have a new master.

Romans 6:19-23 (NIV)

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If we are set free from the controls and effects of sin, how can we live differently this week as compared to last week?

You may have areas in your life where you have accepted “that’s just the way I am”. Are there any of those areas that God is now saying he wants to change in you and set you free?

Have there been ways you been relating to others in a sinful way, using the excuse of personality, which needs to change?

What is most exciting about the fact that God is changing you?