

# Lesson 2: Freedom in Jesus

## Understanding Your Freedom

As a follower of Jesus, you're experiencing freedom you've never had before. Whether you knew it or not, you were a slave—bound by your old way of living that didn't please God and was leading you into darkness.

**Read: Galatians 5:1** *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*

While Jesus has set you free, it's your choice whether to walk in that freedom. The only way to stay free is by following His example—by following Him.

**Key insight:** Freedom is the ability to do what you ought to do, not just what you want to do.

**MENTOR/DISCIPLER:** Share what walking in freedom in Jesus has looked like in your life. What areas has God set you free from? How do you experience that freedom daily?

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## Freedom From Sin's Consequences

### The Wages of Sin

**Read: Romans 6:23** *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

- You were living under a death sentence, but Jesus paid the price. You've been pardoned because Jesus died in your place. You've never received a larger, more loving gift.
- **Discussion:** How does understanding that Jesus took your death sentence change the way you view your sin and His sacrifice?

### All Have Sinned

**Read: Romans 3:23** *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

- Everyone needs God's grace—including you. Even as a believer, you still struggle with sin. Because God is holy (meaning without sin), this creates a barrier between you and

God. Jesus removed that barrier for salvation, but you won't have a joy-filled life following Him until you choose to please God by choosing holiness.

- **Discussion:** Think of a time you experienced authentic, sustained happiness. **Was that time fueled by what comes with holiness** (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) **or what comes with sin** (anger, hatred, despair, selfishness, addiction, betrayal)?

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## **Freedom From Slavery to Sin**

Before meeting Jesus, you were literally enslaved by sin. It had a grip you couldn't break because sin is both addictive and destructive. Without Jesus, you had to rely only on self-discipline and willpower to do what's right—which rarely works, and is always incomplete.

**Read: Titus 3:3** *"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."*

Sin offers momentary pleasure with eternal consequences. When enslaved by sin, you lived for the present. Now that you're following Jesus, you're living for the future—including eternity in heaven. Even so- you still *contend* with sin daily. Because of your sin nature, temptation is still part of your life—and every other Jesus-follower's life.

**Discuss:** What's the difference between being a slave to sin and dealing with temptation to sin?

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## **Understanding the War Within**

As a believer, you now have a new nature in Christ, but your old nature (what the Bible calls "the flesh") is still present. This creates an internal conflict that every Christian experiences.

### **The Conflict Between Flesh and Spirit**

**Read: Galatians 5:16-17** *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want."*

This passage reveals a crucial truth: following Jesus doesn't mean you won't sin or face temptation. Instead, you now have two natures at war within you:

- **The Spirit** (your new nature in Christ) desires what pleases God
- **The flesh** (your old sinful nature) still desires what opposes God

**Read: Galatians 5:19-21** (*works of the flesh*) and **Galatians 5:22-23** (*fruit of the Spirit*)

The flesh is always trying to woo you back into sin—back into living like a slave to sin. It promises pleasure but delivers bondage. The Spirit leads you toward true freedom and joy.

**Key insight:** This battle is normal and happens in every believer. You're not failing as a Christian when you experience this conflict—you're experiencing what it means to be human and redeemed but not yet glorified.

However, you must choose which nature to feed and follow. Paul's instruction is clear: "walk by the Spirit." This means:

- Deliberately choosing to follow the Spirit's leading
- Standing firm against the flesh's desires
- Recognizing that you have power through Christ to resist temptation

**Discussion:** Can you identify this battle between flesh and Spirit in your own life? How does understanding this conflict help you approach your struggles with sin?

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## How to Battle Temptation

The battle with temptation is fought on two fronts:

### **The First Battleground: The Mind**

**Read: James 1:13-15** *"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death."*

- You find yourself enticed by an evil desire. With God's power, you can stop sin here. While you may not control an initial attraction, you can control what you think about, what content you consume, where you allow your imagination to go. The easiest place to battle temptation is always at the "evil desire" stage.
- **Discussion:** What helps you take control of your thoughts when you're tempted? What makes it harder?

## The Second Battleground: Actions

- Sinful thoughts become "full-grown" sin when they become actions—deeds that can result in the death of integrity, relationships, and well-being. Once sin moves from thought to action, the consequences multiply.
- **Discussion:** Where do you most often struggle with temptation—in your mind, or has it progressed to actions? (*Be honest; we all struggle*)

**Key truth:** Though Jesus has set you free from sin, it's a freedom requiring you to do your part to stay free. You have to decide your freedom is worth defending when temptation appears.

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## Freedom to Become Like Jesus

You don't become Jesus, but you become more like Him—reflecting His priorities and loving what He loves. The process of becoming holy like Jesus is called sanctification—a lifelong process that won't be complete until you're in heaven.

**Read: 1 Peter 1:14-16** *"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"*

Because of God's grace, through Jesus' sacrifice, you're already forgiven. The Bible calls Jesus-followers "saints" (meaning "holy") more than 40 times. So because of grace, you're already holy. Yet you still keep sinning.

**Read: Philippians 2:12-13** *"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."*

**Discuss:** What are ways you can embrace His holiness and become more like Jesus? (resist sin, chose to do what Jesus says, pray, read the Word)

Making a choice to follow Christ is what Jesus-followers do. We may stumble along the way, but our hearts desire to follow Jesus. His path takes us to places of greater obedience, deeper friendship with Him, and greater joy.

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## Freedom to Be God's Friend

You have a relationship with God because of grace—forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice. You don't have to earn God's favor; He's given it to you. When you're in relationship with God, it changes you:

- You lose your taste for sin
- Your love for God motivates you to obey Him—not from fear, but because you want to please Him
- It's easier to cope with temptation because your friendship with God matters more than anything that would damage it

**Love motivates your actions, not legalism, fear, or guilt.** Once you come to love God, you'll be naturally pulled toward pleasing Him. Such a Spirit-powered relationship with God results in a disciple who can resist temptation because the love of God far surpasses the attraction of sinful behavior.

**Discussion:** When you think about why you obey God, is it more from fear or love? Why do you answer as you do?

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## Freedom Through the Holy Spirit

Don't try to become holy on your own. If you could **make** yourself be holy, you wouldn't need Jesus! It's the Holy Spirit who transforms you as you choose to embrace your friendship with God.

**Read: 2 Corinthians 3:18** *"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

### **The Holy Spirit:**

- **Convicts you of sin** (helping you see where you need forgiveness and transformation, but never condemns). Conviction leads to repentance and hope of change. Condemnation leads to discouragement and defeat. Conviction comes from God through His Spirit. Condemnation comes from the devil.
- **Empowers change** (not by building walls around temptation, but by giving you power to choose). The Holy Spirit doesn't remove temptation from your life—He gives you the power to resist it and grow through it.

- **Creates a new reality** (grace disrupts the normal "cause and effect" of sin leading to death). The Holy Spirit ushers you into God's Kingdom, where His grace and power transform you.

**Discussion:** In what area of your life have you been trying to “become holy” through your own effort, and what might it look like to instead trust the Holy Spirit to transform you from the inside out?

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## **Practical Steps for Walking in Freedom**

**Choose to be prepared:** Recognize places and people that cause you to stumble. Guard your heart and mind. Build these four basic spiritual practices into your life: prayer, Bible study, sharing your faith/discipling others, and fellowship with other believers.

**Choose radical changes when necessary:** If an addiction or sinful habit has you by the throat, admit it and get help. Jesus said it's better to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (Matthew 5:29)—meaning holiness is a big deal. Be ready to do whatever it takes.

**Choose to walk in faith:** Daily ask Jesus, "Where to today, Lord?" You won't make the journey alone.

**Choose to resist the devil:** Yes, there really is an evil entity whose goal is to take as much away from God as possible. But the power in you because of Jesus is greater. As you draw closer to God, the devil's influence fades.

**Choose to control your thoughts:** Accept responsibility for what you think. You can turn off the channel luring you toward sin. When tempted, take your mind off the temptation and place it on Jesus.

**Choose to accept God's discipline:** You haven't arrived yet, so expect help from God—sometimes tough love from a caring Father helping a child avoid dangerous ground.

**Discussion:** Which one of the six choices—being prepared, making radical changes, walking in faith, resisting the devil, controlling your thoughts, or accepting God's discipline—do you sense God calling you to focus on right now, and what's one concrete step you can take this week to live it out?

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## **Living as a Sacrifice**

**Read: Romans 12:1** *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

Being a disciple means saying "Yes, God," no matter what. It's inviting God to do what He wants with you and submitting to His direction and will.

**Discussion:** What would it look like for you to live as a "living sacrifice" this week? What's one area where you sense God asking you to say "Yes"?

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## **Closing**

### **Memory verse to consider**

*"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh"* (Romans 13:14)

### **This Week's Action**

During the next week, when you're tempted:

1. Remember Romans 13:14
2. Look to heaven and pray, "Jesus, I love you more than this temptation"
3. If you do sin, remember, "Jesus, even though I sinned, you still love me"

### **Final Prayer**

#### **How can I pray for you?**

Pray for each other about specific areas where you want to grow in freedom in Jesus—areas of struggle, temptation, or where you want to experience more of the Spirit's power to resist sin and walk in holiness.