



Live. Free | Shawn Johnson | 1.07.18

LG Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

Did you set a New Year's Resolution this year? Why or why not? Share these with your group!

SHARE

As we set sail into the new year, we all have hopes and dreams for how this year is going to be different than the last. Some of us start this year apprehensive of what is to come since last year was full of difficulty and trouble, while others are optimistic and driven to make the most of what's next. What do you think God thinks of your plans, aspirations and resolutions? What do you think His hopes and plans are for your life?

At Red Rocks Church, each year we seriously pray that God would give us a very specific verse which would encourage every person towards living a more full, rich and surrendered life to God; a timely word that would spark a fire and ignite the body of Christ to live to its fullest potential.

The apostle Paul challenged and encouraged the church in Galatia with this, "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." Galatians 5:1

Red Rocks Church, we need to stand firm and not allow ourselves to go back to what once enslaved us. Jesus set us free to live in freedom with him. The boundaries God has put in our lives through God's word is for the sake of our freedom. Though it seems counter-intuitive,

God puts boundaries in our lives to keep us free. He is not trying to hold something back from us, but wants to give us abundant life here in the present!

We all desire freedom and we all need it. God promises freedom and wants all of us to experience it in and through Him. Freedom from addiction. Freedom from selfishness. Freedom from fear. Freedom from anxiety. Freedom from comparison. But it will take courage to trust God at his word and in the leading of our lives. It will take self-discipline and accountability to take on that which wants to enslave us. It will take a willingness to trust God who perfectly provides all we need to live a holy life through him.

We can live free through Christ who set us free!

Read Galatians 5:1-15

Paul warns the people of Galatia to remember the importance of their freedom in Christ and to not go back to being enslaved in the very same things from which Christ came to free them. In this case, Paul refers to the law regarding circumcision under the Old covenant as something the people would use to gain God's favor. He urges them, then, to stop justifying themselves by law keeping. Not only did they fall short because of the rigorous demands of the law (the yolk of slavery), they forgot they were saved by grace and Christ's work on the cross. It is this very grace that would embolden their love for Jesus and give them power to live out what the good law requires. But they had to be careful not to turn that around and try to complete all the religious checkboxes, or they would completely lose sight of the freedom Christ wanted to bring.

God wants to encourage us today, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be enslaved by those sins that brought such torment (Galatians 5:13) or to be enslaved by trying to qualify for God's approval by a cold-dead religiosity.

How do you think we can allow the freedom we experience in Christ to morph into a license to sin? Have you ever found yourself compromising or going places you are free to go, but takes a toll on your life in Christ?

If we tend towards the other direction of cold-dead religiosity, how have you observed the destructive nature of trying to earn God's approval without grace? How does such an approach affect you and those around you?

GROW

Read and compare the story of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52 with the conversation between Jesus and the disciples in Mark 10:35-40.

In this week's message, Shawn encouraged us to look at Bartimaeus in Mark 10 as an example of someone who first, identified what he needed to be set free from and second, asked Jesus to set him free from it. His short appearance in the gospel of Mark is miniscule compared to the responsibility of the disciples, yet in comparing these two passages, we see completely different understandings of Jesus' power to set people free.

Did you notice in both passages, Jesus asks James, John and the blind man the same question, "What do you want me to do for you?" In James and John's answer, all he got was a request for prestige and glory. The disciples, like the church in Galatia, were caught up in justifying their own merit based on works they've done and what they thought they deserved.

Blind Bartimaeus, however, makes a specific request to be able to see. Though his plight was obvious and his burden public, Mark is making the point that though Bartimaeus was blind, it was he, rather than the disciples, who could really see who Jesus is. Bartimaeus stood on the promises of God, relied on his power, and sought Jesus' presence to obtain freedom he never would have experienced on his own.

N.T. Wright in his book, *Mark for Everyone*, writes, "unlike the disciples, who hadn't really understood what Jesus was about, Bartimaeus is already a man of faith, courage and true discipleship. He recognizes who Jesus is ('son of David'); he clearly believes Jesus can help him ('your faith has saved you'); he leaves his begging... and he follows Jesus on the way ('the way' was the early Christian's word for what we call 'Christianity')."

Bartimaeus knew he would never be set free from blindness without encountering the power of the living God. His healing is a picture of how Jesus wants to open all of our eyes to the salvation and freedom his power brings.

Looking at your life and the start of 2018, from what do you need to be set free? (If you feel comfortable, share with your group what you wrote on your card in this weekend's services.)

As we consider our responsibility to stand firm in our freedom, which of the three encouragements Shawn gave, 1) stand on his promise, 2) rely on his power, or 3) seek his presence, is the biggest obstacle for you and your prayer for freedom today?

M O V E

As we see in scripture, the Apostle Paul charges us to live this radical life as Christ followers and invites us to live free! In Ephesians 3:20, Paul writes, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” Experiencing freedom in Christ is only possible according to God’s power and work within us! We must first confess that we have no power on our own to set ourselves free, and it is only through him we are able.

As Christ promises in John 10:10, we are able to live a life of abundance in the present. Yet we cannot experience this freedom and the abundant life Jesus promised until we confess our desperate need for him to set us free. And this is where we can take a deep breath--because the work has already been finished on the cross. God’s power is more than enough to break the chains of slavery and allow us to begin to living freely and abundantly. We do not have to live in slavery! God’s power is greater and the abundant life is more full than we can begin to imagine. Our God is good, his promises are good, and freedom in Christ is possible!

Where in your life can you identify your desperate need for God’s power to break through so that you may experience this abundant life through Jesus?

If you were to wake up tomorrow and be completely free from the bondage in your life, what would be different about the way you live?

Is there anything keeping you from taking that first step toward freedom and asking for God’s power to change your life?

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. If you are in a coed group, consider breaking up into men and women’s groups to share more freely.

TO GO

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may
rest on me.

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