



FREEDOM
MINISTRY TRAINING

YOUR FOUNDATION — THEIR FREEDOM



FREEDOM MINISTRY TRAINING

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THEIR FREEDOM

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FREEDOM MINISTRY TRAINING

Welcome! We are so glad you have joined us on this journey of personal freedom and ministry development. Below you will find the session layout. Please allow at least two hours per session for reading and answering discussion questions.

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INTRODUCTION

If you have been involved with FICM for any time, you are familiar with the concept of “*being*” before “*doing*.” “*Being*” represents the essence of who we are, our innermost world, our soul, spirit, and union with God. “*Doing*” represents all our ministry activity and service—the outward effects of our inward heart. The book, *Victory over the Darkness*, highlights a scriptural order that’s important to remember. “The scriptural order is ‘being’ before ‘doing’, character before career, and maturity before ministry.” This concept did not originate with Neil T. Anderson. We see it modeled beautifully in the gospels through the life and language of Christ.

The gospels are filled with descriptions of Christ’s relationship with God as He walked the earth. Many times, we are told that Jesus went to a solitary place and spent time in prayer. In several instances, Jesus’ time in prayer is immediately followed by action. It is an engaging illustration of “being” before “doing”:

In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles (LUKE 6:12-13)

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” ... And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ... Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done.” And again he came and found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (MATTHEW 26:36, 39, 42-45).

While Christ’s example clearly shows that our personal relationship with God is what fuels ministry, Jesus’ teaching in John 15 clarifies this point:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ... As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. ...This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (JOHN 15:5, 9-10, 12).

Abide is such a unique word. You may not fully understand what it means, but you probably know what it is not. Abiding in Christ is not about striving, struggling, being frenzied, or exhausted. Abiding in Christ brings peace, confidence, and stability. When I abide in Christ and He in me, I recognize that He is the Source of all wisdom, power, and accomplishment. I trust that He will produce fruit through me. When I focus on abiding in Christ, I learn to put my "being" before "doing."

So, let's see how our "being" is doing!!

As we begin this section, we can easily reduce the lessons to a list of "to-dos" and miss how these practices form our beings and lead to our maturity. **Maybe the following thoughts are running through your head—even now:**



We need to change our perspective and ask different questions:

- How well do I know God's Word and what it says about me?
- Am I a person of prayer?
- Would those who know me best say that rest marks my life?
- Do I live in a state of spiritual readiness, actively aware of and standing against the devil's schemes?
- Does my life reflect healthy relationships grounded in grace and love?

These first five sessions take on deeper beauty and meaning as we grow in understanding our identity. The goal is not to know more about God; the ultimate goal is to know God and myself in relation to Him.

- *I live daily by the truth of God's Word. It is a lamp for my feet and a filter for my every thought.*
- *Prayer has become an ongoing dialogue between me and God, and I enjoy His friendship and guidance.*
- *Daily stress and anxiety are reduced because I live from a place of rest, grounded in trusting God with my outcomes.*
- *I am vigilant in standing against the enemy, knowing Christ is our Good Shepherd and protects those in His charge.*
- *My relationships are thriving. I live in the light, aware of my own issues while I respond relationally with love, grace, and gentleness.*

Keeping these things in mind, we no longer engage in spiritual practices out of duty. We are motivated by relationships! Freedom in Christ focuses on “being” before “doing” because this way of life leads to maturity, and as we said above, **maturity before ministry**.

In Texas, there is a vivid illustration of this concept. Deep South Texas is extremely arid, and the hardiest tree in this area is the Mesquite Tree. Mesquites are drought-tolerant due to their long tap root and ferny foliage. They are also covered with ridiculous thorns. This made a wonderful tree almost impossible to use in residential settings. Texas A&M, the agricultural college in the area, went to work hybridizing the perfect mesquite tree. Eventually, A&M unveiled the “Thornless Mesquite.” It was the wonder tree—no thorns and grew 30% faster than the original Mesquite tree. Texans were living the dream... for about five years. That is about the time a big wind blew through the south.



Not a horrible wind, just stronger than usual, and all the big, beautiful Thornless Mesquites began to topple. Upon investigation, people realized that although the foliage grew 30% faster than the original trees, the root system did not. While the trees looked beautiful when all was calm, inclement weather revealed the disastrous issues with a shallow root system. A deep root system is critical in supporting a lush, fast-growing tree. In the same way, a solid foundation is crucial to sustaining you and your ministry.

As you embark on this journey, we pray that you keep this perspective in mind. When you are tempted to spend all your time doing, be sure to plan time to just be with God. When you are tempted to spend all your time growing your ministry, pay close attention to your maturity. Don't get captivated by the lush foliage and overlook the shallow root system.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (EPHESIANS 3:14-19).

Enjoy the journey!



SESSION 1

GROUNDING IN THE TRUTH

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first session of Freedom Ministry Training! The message and methods of Freedom in Christ Ministries are grounded in the Word of God. Jesus is the Truth, and so is His Word. The Bible is God's revelation to humanity, a divinely inspired and authoritative guidebook for life. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV), "All Scripture is God-breathed," affirming that the Bible is more than a collection of ancient texts; it is a living and active communication from God. This powerful truth underscores the profound role Scripture plays in the lives of believers. From offering wisdom for daily living to transforming our character and equipping us for good works, the Bible is indispensable in spiritual growth. It is an authoritative resource for spiritual nourishment, conviction, correction, and hope.

This session explores the multifaceted purposes of the Bible, showing how it provides truth, wisdom, and the training necessary for a life that honors God. While some aspects of Scripture require faith, the accuracy and reliability of the Bible reinforce the trustworthiness of its message. We also examine the importance of applying God's Word in a practical, intentional way to foster personal spiritual growth. With these insights in mind, the session offers practical suggestions for engaging with the Bible daily, creating habits that lead to deeper intimacy with God and a more Christlike character.



PERSONAL REFLECTION:

What is your current practice of spending time in the Bible? How often do you seek and search the truths of the Scriptures? What have you found helpful for getting the most out of your time in God's Word?

WHAT IS ABSOLUTE TRUTH?

At a time when we hear advice to “live your truth,” the idea of objective truth is under increasing fire. In many societies and cultures today, “anything goes.” Those who hold absolute standards are viewed with suspicion.

In the material world, denying some level of absolute reality is difficult. If we step off a cliff, we will plunge to the bottom of the canyon. No one gets an exemption, regardless of height, weight, age, gender, or nationality. The law of gravity will drag everyone to the canyon floor. There are countless other examples of these indisputable truths. If we jump into the water, we will get wet. If we stick our hand in a fire, we will get burned. If we stop eating, we will die of starvation. There is no wiggle room in these expressions of truth. They are universally and absolutely true.

In today's world, truth is accepted as relative to personal feelings and ideas. Many believe there are diverse truths and multiple paths to enlightenment and deny the idea of universal truth. Everyone's individual beliefs are treated as equally valid, so long as they don't directly harm another person. And many of them can be expressed as some version of the golden rule. We should treat one another with kindness and respect.

However, an overview of the major world religions will reveal that they each make claims that are incompatible with the others, even on such fundamental issues as the nature of God, the nature of reality, the purpose of our existence, and our destiny after death. These cannot be smoothed over as simply different perspectives. They are in direct contradiction and cannot all be equally true, any more than 2+2 could equal 4 and 5. Review the examples in the following charts below:

THE NATURE OF GOD		
RELIGION	CLAIM	INCOMPATIBILITY
Christianity	God is a personal, omnipotent, triune being (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), creator of the universe, and separate from it.	Incompatible with non-theistic or pantheistic views.
Islam	God (Allah) is absolutely one (tawhid), not triune, and cannot incarnate. Jesus is a prophet, not God.	In direct conflict with Christianity's Trinity and the divinity of Jesus.
Hinduism	Brahman is the ultimate, impersonal reality. Everything is a manifestation of Brahman. The self (Atman) is identical to Brahman.	Denies a personal, creator God. Incompatible with monotheistic theism.

RELIGION	CLAIM	INCOMPATIBILITY
Buddhism	No creator god; the universe is uncreated and governed by karma. Reality is marked by impermanence (anicca), no-self (anattā), and suffering (dukkha).	Rejects both theism and an eternal soul. Incompatible with Christian, Islamic, or Hindu theistic doctrines
Judaism	God is one, indivisible, personal, and beyond human form. Jesus is not divine. The Messiah is a future human leader.	Rejects the Trinity and divinity of Jesus, contradicting Christianity.

DESTINY AFTER DEATH		
RELIGION	CLAIM	INCOMPATIBILITY
Christianity	Eternal heaven or hell based on a relationship with Christ and judgment by God.	Contradicts reincarnation and non-eternal concepts of the afterlife.
Islam	Eternal heaven (Jannah) or hell (Jahannam) based on deeds and faith in Allah.	Jesus' divinity and redemptive death are denied.
Hinduism	Rebirth (samsara) until liberation (moksha); the individual soul (Atman) merges with Brahman.	Conflicts with eternal judgment models and an eternal hell.
Buddhism	Rebirth continues until nirvana; no eternal soul; no heaven or hell as an eternal destination.	Rejects both theism and an eternal soul. Incompatible with Christian, Islamic, or Hindu theistic doctrines
Judaism	Eternal heaven and hell based on obeying God's Law and a final judgment.	Contradicts reincarnation and non-eternal concepts of the afterlife.

When someone claims that there is no absolute truth or that truth cannot be known, they oppose their own argument—they are making an absolute truth claim themselves! In asserting an absolute, they nullify their own opposition to absolutes.

As reasonable and rational people, how can we know what is true? Any claim of truth must be evaluated by what can be objectively demonstrated. One source of truth that many people have espoused throughout generations is the Bible, which we will cover in the next section.



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. Have you encountered people who argue that truth is relative? How do you respond to these claims?
2. Why do you think people are so eager to promote the subjectivity of truth in areas of morality and ethics?

THE BIBLE AS TRUTH

AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHORITY

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

When Paul says that Scripture is “breathed out by God,” he means that the things recorded in the books of the Bible are God’s words, breathed from his mouth. Therefore, they are authoritative and infallible. This does not mean that these books were directly dictated. The Apostle Peter explains that Scripture was written by men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). The personality and writing styles of the individual authors shine through in each book, but God ensures that everything written is accurate and trustworthy.

“The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times” (Psalm 12:6). “For the word of the Lord is upright” (Psalm 33:4). “Your word is truth” (John 17:17). In these and many other passages, Scripture asserts its own authority.

Unlike many of the holy books of other religions, the Bible’s accuracy can be confirmed externally due to many verifiable details within it. Some examples include the accuracy of historical figures, geographical place names, historical events, and cultural customs. In some cases, things that were initially questioned were later verified by subsequent discoveries.

From the opposite perspective, the facts recorded in Scripture have not been proven definitively false. Even where there are uncertainties and seeming contradictions, reasonable explanations are always available.

This doesn't mean that everything in the Bible can be verified. Many of the Bible's claims must be taken by faith. *However, the reliability of things that can be verified gives us good reason to be confident in the things that must be accepted by faith.*

TRUTH AS WISDOM

The Bible is also full of wisdom that aligns with experience. Wisdom is realistic and sensible. It demonstrates good judgment and deep insight into how best to live in this world. We need wisdom to navigate life successfully, and God's Word is an authoritative record of that wisdom.

In Deuteronomy, Moses urges the people to obey the statutes and laws of God. "Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" (Deuteronomy 4:6) The Bible is full of principles useful for guiding us in our day-to-day lives. When we pattern our lives on those principles, the wisdom we demonstrate will be evident to those around us.

Psalms 119, an extended acrostic poem celebrating the Word of God, includes many expressions of the wisdom contained in Scripture. "Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me." (Psalm 119:98) "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130). Scripture itself tells us that the purpose of this revelation is so that "the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). God intends to transform us into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 15:49).

TRUTH TO TRANSFORM

Spiritual growth is the process of reflecting Christ's image as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). God uses His Word to accomplish this. It begins with recognizing our sinfulness and need for Jesus to bear our guilt on the cross. We are declared righteous in Christ and then made righteous in practical ways as we grow spiritually through a process known as progressive sanctification.

The Apostle Peter writes that God's power has given believers "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (1 Peter 1:3). In other words, all that we need to live a godly life is found in our knowledge of and personal relationship with God. Since God has revealed Himself most clearly in the Bible, it is there that we find the insight we need to live a life that honors God.

The power of God's Word to transform us is seen in its comparison to a sword. In Ephesians 6:17, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," is the one weapon for spiritual warfare that is included in the armor of God. Hebrews 4:12 describes Scripture as "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." It is a sharp instrument that cuts deep into our souls and exposes our most intimate components. To describe it as "living and active" means that it is powerful and effective. It is fully capable of accomplishing its purpose of transforming us. Isaiah assures us that God's word does not return void and will accomplish its purpose (Isaiah 55:11). The truth found within Scripture is not dull, irrelevant information. It contains viable, life-transforming directives that have the power to mold us into people who increasingly reflect Christ.

TRUTH AS SPIRITUAL FOOD

The Word of God is also considered spiritual nourishment. When Satan tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread after forty days of fasting, Jesus responds by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3: “Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” Just as we need bread to feed our bodies, the Word of God is the spiritual nourishment we need to feed our souls. Jesus even implicitly suggests that our need for spiritual nourishment takes precedence over our need for physical nourishment.

The Apostle Peter urges believers, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:2-3). In Isaiah 55, God invites the thirsty and the hungry to come to him, but the food he offers is His Word. While using the language of eating and drinking, he says more plainly, “Listen diligently; incline your ear; hear, that your soul may live” (Isaiah 55:1-3).

We need God’s revelation to sustain our souls. If our physical diet is out of balance, it will affect our energy level and attitude. This is also true of our spiritual engine, which is fueled by Scripture. Without a nutrient-rich diet of Scriptural truth, our spiritual life will be weak and unstable. Our souls need to be “nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed” (1 Timothy 4:6, NIV).

With that kind of nourishment feeding our souls, we discover hope. As the Apostle Paul explained in Romans 15:4, “Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope.” In a world full of people searching for truth and meaning, many have found a robust source of hope and purpose in patterning their lives after the truth revealed in the Bible.



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. The last sentence in the section on Authorship and Authority states, “The reliability of things that can be verified gives us good reason to be confident in the things that must be accepted by faith.” Do you agree or disagree? Should we expect the Bible to be historically and culturally accurate if it is to be accepted as a spiritual guide?
2. How have you seen the wisdom of God’s Word affirmed in your life?
In your culture?
3. What is the impact of referring to God’s Word as a sword and as spiritual food?
What other biblical images of God’s Word have been helpful to you?

THE TRUTH APPLIED

Truth does little good if we do not listen and apply the Word of God in practical ways in our lives.

James 1:22-25 warns us to

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

We would never look into a mirror and then just ignore what we see. We use what we see as a guide to correct what is out of place, unhealthy, or distracting through attentive grooming. It would be equally ridiculous to look at God's Word and ignore what it points out in our character. Like a mirror, God's Word is not intended to merely reflect our image; it is intended to beckon us toward growth. We are to act on what we see in Scripture.

Because of this, we need a process of regularly reading, studying, and interacting with Scripture and allowing it to transform us. There may be no more powerful spiritual discipline than developing the habit of consistent and meaningful time in God's Word. *Because each person is unique, there is no onesize-fits-all system that will be effective for everyone. Through practice and experience, we discover things that are helpful for us as we engage God's Word. Modify or disregard any of the following suggestions according to what you find helpful on your unique spiritual journey.*

PRAY for understanding before you start, asking God to reveal Himself to you. To begin with, prayer shows an understanding that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to help us interpret Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). Without divine illumination, the truth of Scripture appears foolish. In prayer, we invite God to speak to us through his revealed Word, asking for ears to hear.

READ slowly, carefully, and repeatedly. As much as possible, get away from distractions and avoid rushing through. Read the passage a second or third time and be attuned to God's message for you. We approach our time in God's Word differently than we approach reading a novel or a blog. Our true goal is to hear God's voice in the text on a personal and practical level. Understanding what the passage says, important as that is, is still one step shy of discovering what God is saying to me in the passage. The reading itself is a means to an end. Allow God to speak to you personally through the passage.

FOCUS on what you understand. Don't get bogged down in what confuses you. It's okay to have unanswered questions. Every passage has multiple layers of depth. There is a place for deep study and consulting scholars on questions that surface while you read, but as much as possible, allow the passage to speak for itself and focus on the clear message the Lord has for you. You want to hear God speaking through His Word, not commentators and scholars.

FIND one thing in the passage to focus on for the day. Sometimes the challenge is finding that one thing, which may require persistence to hear from God. Like Jacob wrestling with the angel and refusing to let go until he is blessed (Gen 32:22-32), we may have to wrestle with the passage and not give up until we have heard God's voice. Other times, it may seem like every line is relevant and vying for our attention. In that case, we may have to narrow our focus and invite God to elevate one point to focus on above all the others. It's better to allow one point to penetrate deep into your heart than to have numerous points skim the surface.

REFLECT on how this point applies to your life circumstances. What is it that made this particular point stand out to you? Why is this relevant to your life? What is God trying to show you? This is all part of meditating on Scripture. It is more than just reading; it is thinking and reflecting on how the truth God has revealed applies in your life. Sometimes, application is something practical you must do. Other times, God is refining your perspective, or providing some encouragement, or stirring up wonder and worship, or reminding you of truth you already know. All of these are valid application points.

JOURNAL about what you have learned. It doesn't have to be complex. A few sentences about what God revealed to you from the scriptures are sufficient. Developing the practice of recording truths learned on paper, in phone notes, voice recordings, or videos. This helps reinforce the truth and stamp it into your memory, which will, in turn, help you practice it in your life.

REVIEW previous journal entries regularly to remind yourself of recent lessons God has taught you and how His Word has impacted your life.



GROUP DISCUSSION 3

1. Which of the seven suggestions do you find most helpful? Is there anything you would like to incorporate into your time in God's Word today? What other methods do you use?
2. We are often quick to apply God's Word directly to our behavior, but what other appropriate applications may exist?

CONCLUSION

A PASTOR'S TESTIMONY

As a teenager, I had a youth pastor whose consistent theme was urging us to develop a habit of spending time in God's Word daily. He gave us a reading program, provided us with journals, and structured a weekly discipleship group around the opportunity to talk about what we were learning

from our reading. Based on his influence, I established a habit that has lasted decades. I have often said that this one practice had the single most significant impact on my spiritual development. Each day, that small dose of Scripture has slowly changed me. Something I read might provide me direction, give me perspective, challenge my thinking, convict me of selfishness, stir up gratitude, or remind me of God's sovereignty. It is molding me bit by bit. Over time, these small bits accumulate. I am being transformed.

I recently reconnected with this man, and we were reminiscing about his ministry to me 35 years ago. At the time, he was a young and enthusiastic youth pastor. In hindsight, he was lamenting that he was also naive. With the seasoning of many years of ministry, he could see how he had grown in his understanding and regretted some of the things he had taught us. But the thing that he wouldn't change is that he knows he has always pointed us to the Word. Even then, as a young minister, he knew that the authority was not his teaching. It was Scripture. And the more faithfully he pointed us to that truth, the more likely its impact would be lasting.

Honestly, I don't remember the particulars of his teaching that he worried might have steered me wrong. His legacy is that even now, I spend time each day inviting God to speak to me from His Word. Over the years, this habit has made me into the person I am today. I never want to stop learning and growing by being molded by the truth of God's Word.

—PHIL HUBER, *Inlet Community Church, Inlet, NY*



SESSION 2

BUILDING ON PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Prayer is key to growing and deepening our relationship with God. It is like making a path through a field. The more we use the path and the more established the trail becomes, the smoother the connection to our destination. But prayer is also like a two-lane highway between us and God. We reach out to communicate with Him, and He reaches out to communicate with us.

There is no question that God wants to communicate with us. John 1 speaks of Jesus being the Word. In verse 14, John writes, “The Word became flesh (Jesus) and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Later in the same book, Jesus says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is who bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you... As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love” (John 15:5,7,9).

Jesus left heaven, put on a human body, and hung out with us, and He still wants to hang out with us today. It’s like being with a group of close friends. We enjoy their presence whether we are talking, listening, or everyone is quiet. That is what prayer is meant to be with Jesus. We are with Him. Sometimes, we talk. Sometimes, He talks. Sometimes, we are quiet, but we are together, communicating in the Spirit. Time with Jesus can be so deep and beautiful. That’s the thing with prayer. It takes time and practice. We will not be experts on our first day. The best way to grow our prayer life is to learn more about the prayer relationship and then spend time doing it.

We hope this session on prayer is a time for you to reflect on your current prayer relationship with God so that it can grow firmer and deeper. It is through your times with Jesus that you will find your deepest satisfaction in Him.

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Pause for several minutes to write down an accurate assessment of your prayer life. When do you pray? How often? What for? Alone or with others? Do you use a journal or other prayer helps? These notes will help you as you progress through this module.

PERSONAL PRAYER

A 2021 survey by the Pew Research Center found that less than half of adults in the U.S. pray daily. Of those who do pray, Crossway reported that only 2% of them are very satisfied with their prayer lives.

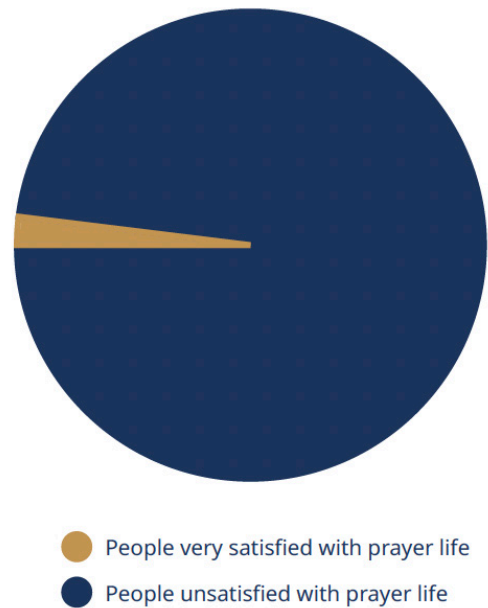
Based on those statistics, it is likely that most of us have struggled to find enjoyment and connection with Jesus in our prayer times. Prayer becomes a chore instead of a joy; a task to check off instead of a relationship to relish.

Prayer is so much more than asking God for things. It is listening, singing, being quiet, reading, crying, rejoicing, dancing, smiling, imagining, and much, much more!

Jesus points out in John 4:24 that those who worship God (prayer is part of worship) must do so in spirit and in truth.

The goal of prayer is to connect our spirit with the Spirit of God to deepen our relationship with Him and understand and embrace His truths. The Bible teaches that we have a special unity with the Father and the Son. Jesus says, "I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me" (John 17:22-23). We are also taught that as believers, the Holy Spirit helps us connect to all God is doing in us and understand spiritual things because we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

Having the mind of Christ means we have a beautiful invitation to step into a spiritual journey with our Savior, the God of the universe, and share a spiritual and mental relationship with Him. Jesus stands at the door with His hand out, waiting for us to take it, step through the door, and enter into a relationship with Him. This can happen at any moment all day long. Brother Lawrence, in his short book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, is an excellent example of 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." The Practice of the Presence of God recounts Brother Lawrence's spiritual growth and experience as he determined to cultivate a constant, conscious awareness of God's presence in all moments. Every small daily task became an act of devotion and love toward God. The result was a deep, intimate relationship with God, filled with joy, peace, and purpose. He lived in a continuous, humble conversation with God throughout the day.



If this is a new concept for you, please consider devoting your daily tasks to the Lord and talking to Him throughout the day, whether out loud or in your spirit. This simple practice holds great potential to radically impact your relationship with your Savior.

Practicing God's presence and continually conversing with Him showers our lives with grace. Many have been taught that prayer is only thanking Him for meals and asking Him to answer lists of requests. When we sit down to do this, we often end up distracted, sleepy, and not accomplishing much of anything. People have used prayer journals to keep them on task or pads of paper to write down distractions. These can be helpful at times, but prayer flows out of our inner relationship with Jesus. Like a human friend, the more time we spend with them—getting to know what they think, feel, and would say about something—the better we can converse with them, relate to them, and grow in a deeper, more intimate relationship with them. This is prayer: a growing, intimate friendship with God.

In gymnastics, gymnasts use a small springboard to add power and height to their jumps. The same happens with diving. The diver walks out on the spring-loaded diving board, performs a high-knee jump, and launches off the end of the board into a beautifully choreographed dive. Consider the Word of God as a springboard. The more familiar we are with the verses, stories, and themes of the Bible, the more loaded our springboard will be for prayer. Scripture empowers your conversation with God because He wrote the Bible. We already know His words, and we can talk to Him about them, or He can remind us of what we read or who He is. Scripture also shows us the depth of God's character. The Bible contains multiple forms of literature, including history, law, poetry, instruction, wisdom, prophecy, and correspondence. God speaks to us through His Word, and prayer conversations often help us process and understand what we read.

Consider what we already know about prayer. Is there any emotion or situation we cannot bring to God in prayer? The Psalms and many other Scriptures are full of personal accounts where people cried out to God with deep emotion while in very precarious situations. There are accounts of vengeful anger amid battle, passionate love in the context of marriage, and euphoric joy during worship and victory. No matter how we feel or where we are, we can approach Jesus in prayer. He wants us to come as we are, tearful and curled up in bed, pumping our fists in anger, or on our faces, pleading through broken hearts. He will meet us there. He wants to hear our hearts. He wants to walk the journey with us.

When we come to Him as we are, we need no special words or prayer formulas. There are many prayer plans and acronyms out there that can be helpful, but for personal prayer, we come as we are. Maybe this super-personal, all-day-long conversation with God is novel to you, and you don't know where to start. Start right where you are with whatever is pressing on your heart at this moment. You may say one sentence to Him or paragraphs. You may have a few private moments to whisper up a cry for help, or you may have a whole quiet afternoon to sit and ponder his written Word and what He is saying to you. One thing is certain: prayer is a growth process. We are not experts overnight. Prayer is a lifelong journey with your best friend; He will show you and walk with you. It just gets better and better!



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. Have you ever heard of practicing the presence of God? What are your thoughts about or experiences with it?
2. Explain what it means to have the mind of Christ. How do we get to that point?
3. How have you used scripture as a springboard for your prayer life? If this is not your usual practice, how can you implement more scripture into your prayer time?

THE LORD'S PRAYER

In a portion of The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:5-13), Jesus instructs his disciples on prayer.

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

The Lord's prayer holds many gems and can serve as a framework for our prayers. Martin Luther, one of the most influential figures in Christian history, used this Matthew 6 prayer structure in his personal prayers.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" establishes both intimacy and awe. Together, those two aspects help us gain perspective on our lives in this world. It is so comforting to know we are not alone. We have a God who is our Father and calls us His children. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God: and so we are" (1 John 3:1a). This puts our thinking and our souls in alignment with God's reality. A lot of time can be spent in this silent, worshipful place, reflecting on our relationship with our heavenly Father.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" broadens perspective and emphasizes the final outcome that all of earth will reflect the perfection, order, and beauty that is

currently found in heaven. It is the longing of our souls for life on earth to come under His authority and align with His righteous ways. Through prayer, you can put words to these desires for God to make things right.

After this, you can call on God to bring forth His power and understanding into your personal needs. **“Give us this day our daily bread”** means asking for what we need. Of course, He has intimate knowledge of our circumstances and knows our needs better than we do. Still, God teaches us to ask. In so doing, God may make our true needs clearer to us by how He answers our prayers.

“...and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors,” encourages us to forgive others following the Lord’s example. “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Colossians 3:12-13). Forgiveness is a foundational teaching of our ministry and is covered more fully in *The Freedom in Christ Course* and *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*.

Finally, **“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”** is an awareness of the spiritual battle around us and a call for God’s protection. “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9). For many cultures, the unseen world is very obvious, but in First World cultures, it is typically explained away or ignored. According to Ephesians 6:10-20, the battle is spiritual, and the Word of God and prayer are our sharpest and most effective weapons.

The Lord’s prayer has transformed lives through the centuries. Scripture is the foundation. “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, Lord, do I seek’” (Psalm 27:8). If we seek the face of God, we will never miss the hand of God.

We need to pray. It is God’s relational design for us. It is our main connection to the work of God and what He is doing around us. It is our means of accessing God’s desires, strategies, and strength. And it is our foundation in ministry. God has called us to be workers with Him. This is strikingly evident in the disciples’ commissioning found in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus says He has all authority in heaven and on earth and then commissions His disciples to teach and baptize all around the world. He also reminds them that He will be with them always. We are co-workers with God, just as the disciples were. Much of this work is done through prayer.

Our advice: guard your personal prayer time. Reserve space to renew your relationship with God daily because your personal time with God is food and water for your soul (Psalm 42:1-2).



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. What impacted you the most in this section?
2. How do you see The Lord’s Prayer becoming a framework for your own prayer times?

LISTENING & SILENCE

Imagine having a friend who always talks and never lets you get a word in. They always share about their problems, plans, and pleasures. Whenever they are actually quiet, they are either eating, sleeping, or so distracted that they are not paying attention to anything but themselves. Sounds like a lopsided relationship, doesn't it? Does the friend really know you or even care about you? I wonder if you have ever had a friend like that. Or have you been a friend like that?

Many of us are guilty of this kind of lopsided relationship when it comes to prayer. We successfully turn prayer into a one-way street, not a two-lane highway. It is easy to go to God with our needs and wants. We end up spending all our fleeting time with Him talking. How often do we ask Him what He thinks or if He has something to share with us? How often do we stop talking long enough to sit still and listen?

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**" JOHN 10:14-16, 27

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." REVELATION 3:20

In several passages, the Bible makes it clear that God spoke in the past and still speaks to His people today. As believers and followers of Christ, we have been promised the gift of the "Helper," the Holy Spirit, to assist us in our spiritual growth, which includes hearing from God (John 14:26, Acts 13:2, Romans 8:14).

God certainly speaks through His written Word to "those who have ears to hear" (Matthew 11, Mark 4, Luke 8, Revelation 3). He speaks to us first, before salvation, to draw us to Himself. After we believe and accept His forgiveness, He speaks through the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit and sometimes through friends, sermons, or books. We hear His voice more clearly as we grow in our relationship with Him and develop a close walk with Him. The more we walk in step with the Spirit, the more we are like Him and have the mind of Christ (Galatians 5:16-26).

A simple question to start with is, "What do you want me to pray about, Lord?" Ask the question, then sit quietly in expectation for the answer. You may need to ask the question again and continue to beseech the throne until you have heard from God.

Another wonderful prayer question is "What is going on here, Lord?" This question can be used when there is confusion in a situation or guidance is needed. Again, ask the question and sit quietly listening for what the Lord may say to you.

Do not be afraid of silence between you and the Lord during prayer. Often it takes us several minutes to settle and focus our minds on Christ during prayer. Silence can be calming and refreshing as we begin to hear from Him. This is what we call "communing" with Him. Like an elderly couple seasoned in marriage, neither one needs to speak, but both are enjoying one another's presence and comfort. Much can be communicated, even without words. It is truly beautiful.

Listening may not come easily, especially if your first prayer experiences were more about talking to God and asking things of God. Be patient with yourself and the process. There is no need to pressure

yourself to hear answers. If you don't receive an answer, just enjoy sitting with Him or take a break and ask again later. As you become more accustomed to hearing your Shepherd's voice, you will find listening prayer goes hand in hand with Brother Lawrence's practicing the presence of God. You will find it easy to carry on a continual conversation of sharing, questioning, and listening throughout your day.

Richard Foster, a Quaker theologian and author, dedicated a whole year of his life to learning how to practice the presence of God and hear His voice. "That year did many things for me, but it especially heightened my sense of expectancy. We work and play and eat and sleep, yet we are listening, ever listening, to our Teacher. I found it increasingly easier to distinguish his voice from the blare of everyday life."

In this chaotic, overly stimulated world, learning to quiet and settle your heart and mind so you can hear God will take practice, but it is possible. Ask the Lord to show you and teach you.

STAFF TESTIMONY

My early prayer life was rigid and depressing. Motivated by fear, I was afraid of saying the wrong words or getting too emotional. I was afraid that if I forgot to pray for someone, something bad would happen to them. And I was afraid that God would punish me if I didn't "pray without ceasing".

I once created a meticulous prayer system, complete with daily checklists of what and who to pray for. It looked great on the outside. My pastor at the time praised me for it, which only deepened my pain. Scripture was perceived through a filter of condemnation. I felt inadequate and miserable.

A few years later, I couldn't keep up the charade. One day, I finally snapped, threw my Bible down, and YELLED at God. I accused Him of leading me somewhere and then abandoning me. I told Him I was done with Him. Then I broke down on the floor, crying.

Right after that, I had this overwhelming sense of his presence. Shockingly, I didn't hear Him say anything. There was no rebuke. There was no lightning strike. There was no "How dare you talk to me that way?" I felt his yearning to be even closer to me in my pain, instead of being repelled by my angry words. He knew that underneath it all, I felt terrified and alone. That was the first time I experienced true intimacy with God. That was the turning point for me.

Over time, I discovered the truth about God's nature and how trustworthy he is. Nowadays, prayer is a source of joy and fun. I know my Shepherd's voice now! He is gentle, welcoming, and curious with me. I don't hold back what I'm really feeling or thinking anymore.

I believe He speaks to us in our own language. For me, I've always loved asking and being asked questions, and that's how I most often receive direction from God. He always gives me space and grace to process and ask about stuff without rushing. It is through those casual conversations that I get to know his heart and perspective.

I now have the pleasure of being completely uninhibited before my Father, while also growing in that sense of wonder and awe at who He is as our Creator.

—AUTUMN WINTERS, *FICM-USA Office Staff*



GROUP DISCUSSION 3

1. What was your experience with prayer growing up?
2. In your current prayer journey, do you find yourself more of a talker or a listener?
Where do you want to go from here?

RESOURCES

- **Neil T. Anderson**
 - *Liberating Prayer*
 - *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*
 - *Freedom in Christ Course*



SESSION 3

LIVING FROM REST

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' command to come to Him and accept His yoke so we may find rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-30) is almost entirely absent in today's world. Our email dings, our phones buzz, and breaking news beckons. Busyness is seen as a badge of importance and achievement. As our never-ending task lists grow, our souls ache with the pace and pressure. At what point can we jump out of the hamster wheel? Is this what life is supposed to be like?

Not at all! God designed us for rest, and He instituted the Sabbath as a beautiful gift of provision.

In this session, we will explore the Biblical origins and practice of Sabbath rest, what rest looks like today, and how the quality of each leader's ministry is dependent on regular rhythms of rest.

BIBLICAL ORIGINS OF REST

God established a rhythm of rest with His people while in the wilderness, citing His creation rest as an example. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:8-11).

In Deuteronomy 5, Moses reiterates the Ten Commandments to the Israelites just before they cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. This time, instead of referring to God resting on the seventh day of creation, He highlights the importance of rest this way: "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy... On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant... that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out

from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

In Egypt, the Hebrews were enslaved by harsh taskmasters who demanded more and provided less (see Exodus 5:6-19). If we are not careful, ministry can become a demanding taskmaster, expecting more but not fulfilling our deepest needs.

We used to be slaves to sin and the enemy of our souls. As believers in Christ, the Lord God bought us out of slavery and set us free, making us sons and daughters of God (Romans 6)! We are no longer slaves to a harsh taskmaster, but we serve alongside our loving Heavenly Father, who has already gone before us and is at work (John 5:19-20). Resting in Christ includes an attitude of trust in which we serve with our Father, yoked to Him.

God also reminded us of rest in the New Testament. “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from His. **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest**” (Hebrews 4:11a).

Strive to enter His rest. This passage indicates rest is available for us, and responsibility falls on us to enter the rest of God.

WHAT IS REST FOR OUR SOULS?

Rest is the heart relinquishing control to God, so anxiety, restlessness, the pressure to perform, and being driven to try and ‘make things happen’ are reduced and increasingly replaced by a lifestyle of deep reliance on God. This gives way to much more joy and inner peace and results in more fruitfulness.

—SUE LINDSAY, *The Prayer Manual*

How can the heart relinquish control to God so that anxiety, restlessness, and drivenness can be replaced with joy, peace, and fruitfulness?

The ability to let go and let God is a direct result of understanding our identity in Christ. It’s trusting that our God-given needs to be *accepted*, *secure*, and *significant* are only found in Christ. Until these critical needs are discovered and fully met through Christ, our souls are rest-less. Grasping the truth that there is nothing we can **do** to be *accepted*, feel *secure*, or increase our *significance* allows us to just **be** and rest in God.

THE INVITATION TO REST

Rest has both a starting point and a growth process. Jesus shows us how to embrace both in His invitation to rest found in Matthew 11:28-30. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Notice that the word rest occurs twice. Both occurrences are significant. The first is a call to everyone in distress. The second shows what occurs when we fully embrace our life in Christ. Jesus calls us to go beyond the initial release of burdens. He calls us to the deeper fellowship we can only enjoy through growth and maturity in Christ.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This is a simple promise calling everyone into rest. The invitation is open for unbelievers and Christians alike. For unbelievers, it is an invitation into a new life through Christ. For Christians, it is a daily choice to abide in His relational rest. Jesus knows we can be distracted and overwhelmed at times. Consider the great prophet, Elijah. His escape from Jezebel after the mighty victory on Mt. Carmel is a perfect example (1 Kings 19). If Elijah can get lost in doubt, self-pity, and suicidal thoughts, so can we! But Elijah was not left to die there, and we don’t need to stay there either. Jesus invites us back into rest.

Why are we weary and heavy-laden? Whether we realize it or not, maybe we’ve been searching for our acceptance, security, and significance outside of Jesus’ finished work on the cross. Working and striving for these basic needs is exhausting and creates burdens of anxiety, perfectionism, drivenness, and sadness, feeling like we don’t measure up. When we lay down our burdens and stop trying to meet our own needs in our own ways, we feel a sense of rest and well-being. This is what Jesus offers with the first occurrence of the word “rest” in Matthew 11.

The next phrase says, **“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart.”** The yoke Jesus speaks of is a training yoke used to harness an experienced draft animal with an inexperienced animal that needs training. The two animals pulling alongside each other in rhythm make the entire load easier to bear. If we take up Jesus’s yoke, we agree to submit to Him and follow His lead. If each animal tries to carry the load at their own pace in their own direction with their own measure of strength, it would create chaos, and nothing would get accomplished. This is often what happens until the inexperienced animal yields to the leader. This is a beautiful picture of our walk with Jesus. Choose His yoke. It fits perfectly.

This invitation is for rest that grows from deeper fellowship and joy as we spend time with Him. Accepting this invitation is a choice to surrender our will to His so we can learn from Him. But it’s first necessary to lay down our own “yoke.” If we attempt to carry two yokes (which we often try to do), our lives will be full of pushing and pulling, resulting in the chaos mentioned above. This inner battle is familiar to all of us. When we pick up Jesus’ yoke, we commit to humbling ourselves before God.

In farming, in order to put the yoke on an animal, the animal has to bow its head. Wow. That cuts to the heart of our arrogance, pride, self-centeredness, and self-importance. The passage finishes with the encouragement, **“and you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

What a great promise! Each of us can choose to grow into this rest. God created us to be at rest. It is how we were made to function.



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. Take time to meditate on the Scripture passages shared so far. What are your thoughts on rest?
2. What are you currently searching for and striving for?
3. What conversations could you have with the Lord about your burdens?

WHAT DOES REST LOOK LIKE?

Jesus is our perfect example of how one remains in God's rest—especially in ministry leadership. In only three years, Jesus changed the world by establishing the complete foundation of Christianity, yet He took time to rest in God. What can we learn from the way Jesus rested amid a life of ministry?

- Jesus, being the **Truth**, exemplified living by and within the truth.
- Jesus had meaningful and extended times of **prayer** and connection with God, His Father.
- Jesus knew and **depended** on God.
 - Jesus lived an unhurried lifestyle. He knew that His Father would give Him all the time He needed to finish His work (Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, Mark 6:31-32, John 11:1-44).
 - Jesus relied deeply on the Father's directions (John 8:28) and on the Holy Spirit's empowerment.
- Jesus **trusted and obeyed** the Father's will (John 17:4-6).
- Jesus practiced **Sabbath** and rest according to His Father's direction.
 - Jesus went to the temple and worshiped.
 - Jesus enjoyed life with good company, good friends, and good food.

All this resulted in a balanced lifestyle of meaningful work and soul rest. This is what He calls us to. These practices build joy and peace in our lives.

Jesus' lifestyle and dedication to the Father sustained Him. His call to us in Matthew 11:29 is an invitation to learn from Him and live the life He created us to live. Jesus shows us that a life of rest is essential in the middle of an active ministry and mission.

What does rest look like for us? We are not Jesus. Is real rest possible? Yes, it is.

Our human rhythm of rest doesn't have to be complicated; in fact, the simpler our rhythm, the more likely we will actually rest. No matter what amount of time we set aside for our rhythm, rest is attainable.

Truth: Because Jesus is Truth and exemplified living by that truth, we learn what rest can look like for us as we get to know Him through His Word. Knowing the Truth of God's Word brings freedom. Reading and internalizing God's Word enables us to recognize lies and false beliefs. John 8:31-32 says, "...If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free."

Prayer: As Jesus had meaningful and extended times of prayer connecting with the Father, we too can come to the Father in prayer (Hebrews 4:16; John 16:23). Intentionally carving out space to spend time with God brings peace to our souls (Philippians 4:6-7).

Dependence: Jesus depended on God for every outcome (John 17:1-5), which allowed Him to live an unhurried lifestyle. We, too, can rest in the God who brings all things to completion (Phil 1:6), realizing it's not up to us to make things happen.

Trust and Obey: The more we regularly spend time with God, the more we learn to depend on Him and let go of our will to submit to His ways in trust and obedience (Proverbs 3:5-6, John 14:23-24, James 4:7).

Sabbath: Jesus obeyed God in every way, including practicing Sabbath rest. Practicing Sabbath strengthens our "trust and obey" muscles as we decide to stop working and trust that God will provide for all of our needs (Hebrews 4:1-2).

Eugene Peterson, in his book *Working with Angles*, said, "One of the ways God has provided for us to stay aware of and responsive to Him as the determining and centering reality of our lives in a world that doesn't care about this is by sabbath-keeping. At regular intervals, we all need to quit our work and contemplate His, quit talking to each other, and listen to Him. God knows we need this and has given us a means in Sabbath—a day for praying and playing, simply enjoying what is, what He is."

PRAYING AND PLAYING.

Sabbath rest is not a day or afternoon off to get things done around the house or yard, but it is a time to enjoy God by remembering He is holding the world together, not us. He has showered us with blessings in a myriad of little ways. Practicing Sabbath rest can look like:

- A long, slow walk alone or with others.
- Going out for ice cream (coffee, dinner, a movie, to the beach, etc.) with family or friends.
- Taking a nap.
- Reading a novel all afternoon.
- A cup of tea in your favorite mug.
- Enjoying a sunrise or sunset.
- Singing.
- Exercising.
- Finishing a creative project.
- Playing with your pet.
- Sitting and doing nothing but enjoying the moment.

These don't sound super spiritual, do they? Of course, we could also add reading His Word and talking to Him.

But are these activities a break from our rhythm of work toward our rhythm of play? Can we listen, praise, and thank our heavenly Father for these things while we are experiencing them? Absolutely!

ESTABLISHING A RHYTHM OF REST

Remember Sue Lindsay's definition of rest shared earlier? "Rest is the heart relinquishing control to God, so anxiety, restlessness, the pressure to perform, and being driven to try and 'make things happen' are reduced and increasingly replaced by a lifestyle of deep reliance on God. This gives way to much more joy and inner peace and results in more fruitfulness."

After reading that definition several times, you may conclude that true rest has much to do with your level of trust in God. You are right!

Psalm 131 is a wonderful poem about resting deeply in the Lord. The psalmist arrived at this deep rest by recognizing his own pride and urge to control his life. After humbling himself and turning his hope and trust toward God, he found genuine rest—like an infant content in his mother's arms.

Oh LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD. from this time forth and forevermore.

Where do we start on the journey toward soul rest?

We start right where we are.

It may help to take an honest self-assessment using the following questions:

- What areas of identity (acceptance, security, and significance) do I continue to struggle with?
- What level of trust do I have with God right now?
- What areas of my life am I still holding back or hiding from God?
- What am I doing now that gives me rest?
- What do I find restful and refreshing?
- What do I enjoy and wish I took more time to do?
- What do I do that tends to steal my rest?

Spend some time in quiet listening prayer, asking the Lord about the current status of your rhythm of rest. Last week's session on prayer gave many ideas on how to meet with Jesus, sit in His presence, and find rest for your soul.

The following exercises and activities may enhance your rest experience. These are only a small fraction of what is available. Pray, experiment, and use them as the Lord leads.

BREATHING

This is one of the only bodily functions we can control. We tend to hold our breath or take shallow breaths when we are anxious or stressed. There are many calming and meditative breathing exercises available, from deep breathing to counted breathing exercises, holding and releasing your breath. The science behind controlled deep breathing shows it activates calm throughout the body's systems and cells, which contributes toward physical and spiritual rest.

SCRIPTURE + BREATHING EXERCISES

Add a simple prayer as you control your breathing. Repeat the same phrase or use multiple phrases or scriptures.

Inhale: Jesus, I love you. Exhale: Jesus, I love you. Repeat.

Inhale: Have mercy, Lord. Exhale: Be near me, Lord. Repeat.

Inhale: The Lord is my shepherd. Exhale: I shall not want. Repeat or carry through the psalm.

Rest quietly, letting your breathing return to normal as you reflect on the prayers or psalms.

ADD SILENT REFLECTION TO SCRIPTURE BREATHING

Use the breathing and prayer exercise above, but add 2-3 minutes of reflection afterward.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION AND REPETITION

Use a single verse or passage. Memorization helps internalize the scripture. Pairing this with calm breathing is extremely restful and nourishing to the soul.

NATURE SOOTHES THE SOUL

Scientific research supports the holistic benefits of soaking in God's wonderful creation. Get outside and enjoy whatever forms of nature feed your soul, and you will not only reduce stress and quiet your mind, but you will also experience one of God's tremendous gifts to you, His beautiful, intricate Earth.

USE OF POSTURE TO QUIET

How you think and feel may be related to your body position. Consider how you feel after sitting for several hours in an uncomfortable chair. Change your body position. Lie on your back, kneel, sit quietly in an empty room, or look out a window. Changing posture, paired or tripled with deep breathing and reflecting on the goodness of God, will draw you into His calming rest.

A LEADER'S TESTIMONY

"Before 2016, I was a go-getter, get-it-done type of person. I grew up in a non-Christian, dysfunctional family, and I felt "invisible," so I became a performer, people pleaser, and perfectionist. I strove to be

noticed, not invisible. This need defined my adult life and was true even after I accepted Jesus as my LORD and Savior.

I performed for the LORD. I desperately wanted Him to see me! I sang in the choir; I directed youth ministry, and founded one of the only church-based ministries for individuals with disabilities in our city. I taught a women's Sunday school class for years. These were all great "God things," but inside I was spiritually dry and empty. However, I continued to strive. I truly did not know how to rest. I had heard about the discipline of having a daily "quiet" time, but the need to strive prevented it. I prayed and studied the bible, but I never "sat with God" to rest in His presence and listen.

I gained my freedom in 2006 after reading two of Dr. Neil Anderson's books and completing *The Steps to Freedom*, but the striving did not disappear, and the rest did not come.

As I was attending a women's conference in 2014, the speaker mentioned how she always asked God to give her a "word" for the year. I quietly asked, "What is your word for me, God?" I instantly heard Him say "Steadfast," which I thought was odd because I was being steadfast. I went as far as to look up the definition for additional insight, but it meant exactly what I had thought, "dutifully firm, unwavering." Sadly, to me, that meant continuing to do what I had been doing.

In February 2016, my life changed dramatically. I had three trusted doctors tell me that back surgery was imperative to prevent disability. On Leap Day, I walked into the OR and five and a half hours later, I woke up paralyzed. My life would never be the same. Over the next year, through intensive daily rehab, I regained the function of my left leg, but below my right knee and foot, there was little feeling or function. I also experienced more daily nerve pain than I could ever have imagined in both legs.

I questioned, "Why, God! I trusted you!" I was tormented with thoughts that He was punishing me for something I had done wrong. According to Psalm 84:11, He withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly. Day and night, I tried to discover the hidden sin, until my dear Pastor friend prayed with me and told me that, in my vulnerability of trauma and pain, the enemy had convinced me of a lie. He told me that Christ took the punishment I deserved.

In my pain-riddled haze, though, this did not take away the fact that I was now 90% disabled and could no longer walk independently. I became convinced I was of no earthly good to God!

My "get it done" days were over, and so was life as I had known it. I now had a lot more time to rest. One of my favorite Scriptures is Matthew 11:28-30, where God welcomes us to come to Him and He will give us rest. I so desperately needed this!

My thoughts began to shift as I spent more time in prayer and "sitting with God, listening for His voice and reflecting on Scripture.

He corrected the thinking that I was being punished... I heard Him say, "You thought the "good thing" that I withheld from you was healing, but I never withheld myself from you. I had completely missed this precious truth! I also "heard" Him say that "steadfast" had nothing to do with what I could do but rather about His steadfast love that would carry me through the trauma! The rest and peace that I now felt was unlike any other I had ever experienced! He also dismantled the lie that I was no longer any earthly good to Him. He revealed to me that I still had a brain, a voice, and a deep, caring love for others. He revealed to me that His plan for me was to mentor other hurting women so they could find healing, freedom, and purpose that comes only from the Father's heart.

I have now developed a moment-by-moment “presence” with Him in worship, praise, fellowship, and conversation. This is the daily treasure of “rest” that He has given me. I no longer must strive for it. It is His gift of rest for my soul.”

—LORY MATTHEWS, *National Member Care FICM, USA*

CONCLUSION

We have explored the profound concept of rest for our souls. In today’s world, true soul rest seems elusive, yet God’s design for humanity includes rest. It is a rest that goes deeper than physical relaxation, meeting our core needs of acceptance, security, and significance.

Jesus invites us to come to Him and find a lifetime of rest. This journey into soul rest is not instant, but it is transformative. It requires honest reflection, surrender, and a willingness to let go of false beliefs and practices that keep us from God’s peace. As we grow in our relationship with God, we will find that our souls are increasingly satisfied in His presence.

May we each seek this rest in the arms of our Creator, knowing that it is through Him, and only through Him, that we can truly find rest for our souls. Let’s take time to reflect, meditate, and intentionally pursue God’s rest, knowing that He offers us the peace our hearts long for.



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. Assess the status of Biblical rest in your life. How are you doing?
2. What experiences have you already had with a rhythm of rest?
3. After considering several options in prayer, what timeframes and practices do you need to implement or amend in your rhythm?

RESOURCES

- **Neil T. Anderson**
 - *Liberating Prayer*
 - *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*



SESSION 4

WINNING THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

INTRODUCTION

John Eldredge said, “You live in a love story, but it is set in a very dangerous war.” Spiritual warfare is a reality that every believer faces, yet it is often misunderstood or overlooked. Many Christians in the Western world go about their daily lives without fully realizing that we also exist in a spiritual realm where unseen battles occur.—a dimension beyond what we perceive with our five senses. The Bible teaches that these battles are not fought with physical weapons but with spiritual ones, rooted in God’s truth and empowered by His Spirit.

Scripture provides compelling glimpses into this unseen realm. In Daniel 10, we see angelic forces delayed by a “prince of Persia,” illustrating how heavenly messengers can encounter resistance from demonic powers. In Mark 5, Jesus confronts a demon-possessed man whose supernatural strength reveals the reality of evil spirits at work. While it’s crucial to acknowledge the spiritual warfare described in the Bible, we should also guard against devil-centric thinking. *True spiritual discernment involves recognizing demonic influences without attributing every trial or challenge to the devil’s activity. We rely on sound doctrine and the Holy Spirit’s guidance rather than sensationalism, ensuring our focus remains grounded in Christ’s victory.*

Our goal in this session is twofold: first, to establish a Biblical worldview of spiritual warfare by addressing the nature of the battlefield, our position in Christ, and the weapons we’ve been given; and second, to offer practical strategies for daily victory. We will draw heavily on Scripture and insights from trusted resources to equip you for a life of freedom and confidence in Christ. The victory is already won through Jesus’ death and resurrection; our responsibility is to stand in that victory, walk in faith, and apply Biblical truth to our daily lives.

THE NATURE OF OUR BATTLE

When the Scriptures speak of warfare and battles, they are not merely using poetic imagery or metaphor. The authors of the Bible describe real conflicts in an invisible realm that profoundly impacts our thoughts, emotions, and actions. In Ephesians 6:12, the Apostle Paul says: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” This verse highlights that our chief enemies are not physical. Instead, they are demonic powers and principalities aligned under Satan’s influence.

KEY BATTLEGROUND

In engaging this spiritual struggle, the Bible describes three primary arenas, or “battlegrounds,” that can trip us up: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The World

The world refers to the broad system of thought, culture, philosophies, and values that contradict God’s ways. The Bible often refers to this world system as “Babylon.” The values of Babylon not only ignore God but are in direct opposition to His truth. From the Old Testament onward, we see repeated warnings about the lure of idolatry, unjust power structures, and societal norms that tempt believers to conform to these forces. In our modern setting, the world bombards us with messages that exalt self over God and elevate personal preference above divine guidance. Examples include glorifying fame and status, an obsession with material wealth, and the normalization of moral relativism—where “right” and “wrong” become fluid concepts dictated by cultural trends.

Paul writes in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” This exhortation highlights every Christian’s tension: either absorb the world’s mindset or submit our thought life to Biblical truth. Suppose we adopt the world’s perspective and method of obtaining acceptance, security, and significance. In that case, we risk becoming ensnared by spiritual confusion. Christians, therefore, must carefully discern cultural messages through the lens of Scripture. This does not mean isolating ourselves from society or rejecting all culture. We are to stay

THE WORLD: KEY SCRIPTURE

- **John 15:18–19**—“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you...”
- **John 16:33**— “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
- **Romans 12:2**—“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”
- **1 John 2:15–17**—“Do not love the world or the things in the world...”
- **James 4:4**—“Friendship with the world is enmity with God...”
- **Galatians 1:4**—Christ “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age...”
- **2 Corinthians 4:3–4**—“...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers...”
- Ephesians 2:1–2—“...following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air...”
- **1 Corinthians 1:20–21**—“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

spiritually alert, engage responsibly, and bring the light of Christ into every sphere while resisting any influences that undermine our faith.

The Flesh

The flesh represents our fallen human nature inherited from Adam—a nature inclined toward sin, self-gratification, and independence from God. Even after accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, Christians are not exempt from these fleshly impulses. Galatians 5:17 teaches that the Spirit of God within us actively conflicts with the flesh, indicating an ongoing internal battle. If we fail to address this clash, the flesh can reassert its dominance, undermining the Holy Spirit's transforming work in our lives.

The flesh reveals itself in various ways through our mind, emotions, and will. Some examples include pride, lust, jealousy, selfishness, and bitterness. When we give in to these impulses, we align with the enemy's objective of diverting our love and devotion away from God. Each Christian faces a daily choice to yield to the flesh or walk in the Spirit. It is like a spiritual tug-of-war. The Spirit beckons us toward holiness, maturity, and dependence on Christ, while the flesh pulls us toward destructive or self-centered behavior. By intentionally "crucifying the flesh" (Galatians 5:24) and renewing our minds through prayer, Scripture meditation, and obedience, we can weaken the flesh's grip. But this process is not instantaneous; it is a lifelong discipline of learning to respond to the Spirit's leading rather than our old, sinful instincts. Another challenge arises when well-meaning Christians either deny the existence of this inner struggle or rationalize fleshly behavior, perhaps by labeling it as mere "personality traits" or "natural reactions." In doing so, we subvert opportunities for true growth and freedom. Acknowledging the reality of the flesh helps us recognize our daily need for God's grace and power. As we yield more consistently to the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24) becomes increasingly evident in our lives, diminishing the flesh's influence.

THE FLESH: KEY SCRIPTURE

- **Romans 7:18–25**—Paul's struggle with indwelling sin ("nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh...").
- **Romans 8:5–8**—"Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh..."
- **Galatians 5:16–17**—"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh..."
- **Galatians 5:19–21**—Works of the flesh enumerated (sexual immorality, impurity, etc.).
- **Galatians 5:22–25**—Contrasts the fruit of the Spirit with the flesh.
- **1 Peter 2:11**—"...abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul."
- **Ephesians 2:3**—"...we all once lived in the passions of our flesh..."
- **James 1:14–15**—"Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire..."
- **Mark 14:38**—"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- **Romans 13:14**—"Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."
- **Colossians 3:5**—"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you..."
- **2 Peter 1:4**—We have escaped "the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

The Devil

The third battleground is the demonic realm, led by the devil (Satan). Scripture portrays the devil as a rebellious angelic being who seeks to corrupt and destroy God's creation. He is neither an omnipotent nor an omnipresent force; rather, he is finite and must rely on a network of demonic spirits to carry out his schemes. 1 Peter 5:8 describes him as a prowling lion looking for someone to devour, symbolizing both his cunning and predatory intent.

Though Colossians 2:15 makes clear that Satan's ultimate defeat was sealed through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the devil still exerts significant influence in our present age. His overarching mission is to "steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). One way he accomplishes this is by sowing seeds of doubt about God's goodness, challenging our identity as children of God, or luring us into sin that fractures our fellowship with the Lord. Satan is also called the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10), ever seeking to accuse believers before God.

The believer's main defense against the devil is understanding and exercising the authority given to us through Jesus. Following His resurrection, Jesus proclaims His authority over heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). In Luke 10:19, Jesus shares His authority with other believers when he states, "I have given you authority... over all the power of the enemy." We stand in that authority, wielding the Word of God and the name of Jesus against demonic attacks. When we neglect to exercise our authority or harbor unrepentant sin, we can inadvertently give opportunity to the devil, offering him footholds to exploit.

It is essential to recognize that the devil has no real authority over Christians; his power depends solely on deception, temptation, and accusation. Scripture highlights this: "We know that anyone born of God does not keep on sinning, but He who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him." (1 John 5:18). This verse points out the devil's inability to "touch," meaning he can not attach, cling, or possess those who belong to Christ. Instead, his chief strategies are to sow doubt, fear, and lies, hoping to exploit weakness and erode a believer's confidence in God.

THE DEVIL: KEY SCRIPTURE

- **1 Peter 5:8-9**—"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour..."
- **James 4:7**—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
- **John 8:44**—Jesus refers to the devil as "a liar and the father of lies."
- **Matthew 4:1-11**—The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.
- **2 Corinthians 11:14**—"Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."
- **2 Corinthians 4:4**—"...the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers..."
- **Revelation 12:9-10**—Describes Satan as the accuser and deceiver of the whole world.
- **John 10:10**—Satan's desire to "steal, kill, and destroy," contrasted with Jesus' giving of abundant life.
- **Luke 10:17-20**—Jesus gives authority to the seventy-two to tread on serpents and scorpions, signifying authority over demonic forces.
- **2 Timothy 2:25-26**—"...that they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil..."
- **1 John 3:8**—"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

By identifying these three battlegrounds—the world, the flesh, and the devil—we prepare ourselves for a comprehensive defense against spiritual attacks:

- Refusing conformity to the world protects us from godless ideas and practices.
- Overcoming the flesh helps us avoid internal compromise.
- Resisting the devil's schemes allows us to experience victory in Christ.

When all three fronts are addressed, the believer can “withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Ephesians 6:13).

PRIMARY BATTLE: INFLUENCE OVER OUR MINDS

A crucial concept in spiritual warfare is recognizing that the mind is the central arena of conflict. Neil T. Anderson emphasizes that the devil's primary tactic is deception. If he can persuade us to believe a lie—whether about God's character, our identity, or the hopelessness of our situation—he gains the opportunity to manipulate our thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Scripture emphasizes the importance of renewing the mind so that we can discern God's will (Romans 12:2). It also instructs us to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

When we fail to guard our minds, we may unknowingly adopt beliefs that conflict with Scripture. These subtle lies often show up in statements we say to ourselves, like “God could never forgive me,” “I'm worthless,” or “I need to earn God's love.” Such thoughts undermine confidence in Christ's finished work, drive us toward self-sufficiency, and erode our trust in God's promises.

FOOTHOLDS AND OPPRESSION

Ephesians 4:27 warns us against giving the devil a “foothold” or opportunity. Footholds develop when we persist in sin. For example, harboring unforgiveness, refusing to repent of destructive behavior, or believing lies. Giving the devil a foothold does not mean believers are demonically possessed or that they lose their salvation; rather, it means that these areas can give demonic forces room to harass, tempt, and oppress a follower of Christ, crippling their walk with Jesus and hampering their purpose. The most common ones include

- Unconfessed Sin: Whether sexual immorality, dishonesty, or secret addictions, unrepented sin can keep us spiritually bound. Confession breaks those chains and restores fellowship with God (1 John 1:9, Proverbs 28:13, James 5:16).
- Unforgiveness: Jesus repeatedly warns that if we do not forgive others, our Father will not forgive us (Matthew 6:15), and we may be subject to spiritual torment and oppression (Matthew 18:21-35). Holding onto bitterness not only damages relationships but also leaves us open to the enemy's destructive schemes of anger and resentment.
- Pride: Self-reliance and self-defense are sins. We must give our lives to God and allow Him to be our defender. Unrepentant pride gives the devil a foothold in our lives, keeping us locked in bondage (Proverbs 16:18, Mark 7:20-23, James 4:6).

Oppression is a heavier form of spiritual attack in which the enemy exerts external pressure on a believer's life—physically, mentally, or emotionally. It can present itself as persistent fear, nightmares, overwhelming anxiety, or even shadowy demonic apparitions. Distinct from possession, which implies ownership, oppression can be overcome by submitting to God and using our authority in Christ to stand against the enemy, renouncing his influence on us (Luke 10:19 and James 4:7).

UNDERSTANDING THE DEVIL'S TACTICS

Scripture portrays the devil as highly strategic, employing a range of methods designed to undermine our faith and distort our understanding of God.

First, consider the power of **lies**. In John 8:44, the devil is referred to as the "father of lies," signaling that deception lies at the heart of his strategy. Through distorted truths, seeds of fear or self-condemnation, and attacks on our assurance of salvation, he endeavors to shake our confidence in God's Word. Discerning truth from deception requires a thorough knowledge of Scripture and a willingness to test every message or prompting against Biblical teaching (1 John 4:1).

A second strategy the devil employs is **altering our beliefs about God and ourselves**. This began as early as Genesis 3, when the serpent cast doubt on God's goodness by asking, "Did God really say?" Today, Satan twists the truth about God's character, painting Him as harsh, distant, or unloving. He also warps our self-perception, instilling thoughts like "I'm useless to God." Such distortions can suffocate faith and impede spiritual growth.

Another prominent scheme is **the inversion of truth**, whereby Satan cunningly reframes righteousness as a burden and sin as a harmless or even desirable alternative. In Matthew 4:1-11, he notoriously misused Scripture to tempt Jesus, exemplifying how adeptly he can manipulate divine truth. Righteousness may be portrayed as a rigid legalism, while disobedience seems appealing, painless, or even harmless.

A next tactic involves **isolation**. The Apostle Peter warns in 1 Peter 5:8 that the devil prowls like a lion seeking whom he may devour, and such predators usually target prey that is separated from the herd. When believers cut themselves off from fellowship, accountability, or strong Biblical community, they are vulnerable to discouragement, temptation, and distortions of the truth. By distancing themselves from spiritual support, they become targets for the devil's attacks.

Finally, the devil frequently weaponizes **fear and emotional reactions**. When we make decisions out of fear, we often stop trusting God and start relying on ourselves and our emotions, reacting with things like anger, panic, or overwhelming sadness. These can cause believers to "flip their lid" with others, reacting from the flesh instead of seeking help and wisdom from the Holy Spirit to respond with self-control.

The spiritual battlefield encompasses external influences (the world), internal struggles (the flesh), and demonic opposition (the devil). The mind stands at the center of this conflict, where lies and distortions seek to undermine our faith and identity in Christ. Believers can remain vigilant against footholds that grant the enemy a base of operation. By recognizing how the devil uses lies, isolation, and fear, we are better equipped to respond with Biblical truth.



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. Which of the three battlegrounds—the world, flesh, or devil—tends to challenge you most in your spiritual walk, and why?
2. Have you experienced any “footholds” that made you more vulnerable to spiritual oppression? What steps did (or can) you take to close these doors?
3. In what ways do fear and emotional reactions sometimes influence your decisions, and how can you bring these areas under God’s control?

OUR BATTLE POSITION & WEAPONS

Having explored the nature of the battlefield and the enemy’s tactics, we must now turn our attention to the glorious truth of our position in Christ and the divine weapons He provides. The Scriptures state that we are not defenseless victims but “more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST

The Bible teaches that at the moment an individual trusts in Jesus for salvation, a profound transformation occurs. Second Corinthians 5:17 states that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation—the old has gone, and the new has come. This means the believer has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son, as described in Colossians 1:13–14. No longer under sin’s power or the enemy’s rule, the Christian becomes a child of God, sealed by the Holy Spirit and granted a new status before the throne of heaven. Scripture lists several new names for the believer, such as chosen, light, salt, workmanship, belong, redeemed, adopted, saint, and friend. As believers, we are renewing our minds and walking in the truth of our identity in Christ when we accept these new positions and titles.

OUR AUTHORITY IN CHRIST

Foundational to this transformation is an awareness of the authority we have in Christ. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus declares that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, and since we are united with Him, we share in that authority. Luke 10:19 reinforces this point by showing how Jesus granted His disciples power over the enemy’s works. Ephesians 2:6 further describes believers as seated with Christ in the heavenly places—suggesting a spiritual position of victory. This is not an invitation to pride; instead, it underscores our humble dependence on the Lord, whose rule triumphs over darkness.

Before a person comes to Christ, they live under sin’s dominion and remain largely ignorant of the spiritual battle. Once that person is born again, they become aware of how the enemy attacks in an attempt to hinder spiritual growth and steal joy.. Acknowledging our new authority and position in

Christ empowers believers to stand firm, lean on the Holy Spirit, and reject every lie the devil sows in heart and mind. The moment we place our faith in Jesus, Scripture calls us saints. From this position, we face spiritual warfare with confidence and hope using the weapons given to us by God in Christ Jesus.

OUR PROTECTION IN CHRIST

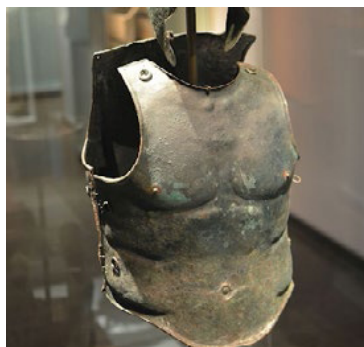
In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul draws on the image of a Roman soldier to illustrate the various ways Christians must clothe themselves in divine resources. This “armor” highlights both defensive and offensive facets of our spiritual protection. When fully embraced, it enables believers to stand firm against the devil’s schemes.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”

Paul begins with the **Belt of Truth**, drawing from the Roman soldier’s belt that secured vital pieces of armor and prevented loose clothing from becoming a hindrance. Truth is foundational for every believer. The first thing we are called to do is anchor ourselves in Jesus, who is the Truth, and in God’s unchanging Word, which defines what is true. A Biblical worldview enables us to spot “untruths”—the devil’s lies.



Beyond knowing truth, we must live truthfully—pursuing integrity and authenticity in our speech and actions. When we practice integrity and honesty before God and others, we remove footholds the enemy might exploit. As Jesus declared Himself “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), our commitment to truth always involves walking closely with Him, allowing His Spirit to guide us into all truth. Without the Belt of Truth, the rest of our spiritual armor risks slipping out of place, leaving us vulnerable in battle.



The Breastplate of Righteousness echoes the Roman chest armor that guarded vital organs. Because of our relationship with Christ, we are ascribed His righteousness—a covering that shields our hearts from condemnation (Romans 8:1). Since this gift doesn’t rest on our own performance, we no longer fear accusations from the enemy because our acceptance before God depends on what Christ has already done.

The Breastplate of Righteousness keeps us from sliding into shame and condemnation when we stumble. Instead of drowning in guilt,

we repent quickly and trust in Jesus' unchanging righteousness. As the heart is physically protected by a sturdy breastplate, our spiritual "heart"—our identity and inner core—remains safe under the righteousness Jesus imparts and the consistent obedience we endeavor to show.

The breastplate of righteousness reminds us that God's law is designed to guard us from sin and its effects. Wearing this armor means allowing God to heal the wounds in our hearts caused by the Fall and living in a sinful world. Living righteously is not about rigid rule-following but about recognizing that His loving commands are for our good and shield us from sin. By embracing His righteousness, we allow Him to restore us, enabling us to walk in freedom and peace.

Roman soldiers wore hobnailed footwear to keep their footing on rugged terrain. In Ephesians 6, these are likened to the **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace**—the firm grounding we find in our reconciliation with God. Once estranged by sin, we are now at peace with Him through Christ's sacrifice (Romans 5:1). Such peace is an objective, unbreakable status of being right with God and following His ways.



Wearing these shoes means we stand confidently, refusing to be toppled by the enemy's attacks. These shoes also equip us to carry the message of salvation to those around us. As Isaiah 52:7 notes, blessed are the feet of those who bring good news. Our experience of peace transforms into an invitation to others: "Come and be reconciled to God."

Finally, these shoes remind us that our security comes from the finished work of Jesus. Even when storms rage, the peace of God anchors our steps, ensuring we do not slip into anxiety or despair.



The **Shield of Faith** corresponds to the Roman shield, large enough to cover much of a soldier's body. Ephesians 6:16 notes this shield extinguishes the enemy's flaming arrows—temptations, lies, or doubts that seek to inflame fear or shame. In this sense, faith is our trust in God's power and promises, even when circumstances appear dire. Like Roman soldiers who soaked the hide that covered their wooden shields in oil to quench fiery missiles, we must daily immerse our faith in worship and prayer.

Additionally, the shield was most effective when interlocked with other soldiers' shields to form an impenetrable, moving fortress. Similarly, our faith thrives in community. We gather with believers to encourage, intercede, and remind one another of God's truth, ensuring weak spots are reinforced.

Raising the shield demands an active stance. Passive faith that never confronts challenges remains vulnerable. Instead, we counter discouragement, condemnation, or anxiety by proclaiming and believing God's Word. Each time we say, "Lord, I trust You, even now," we lift the Shield of Faith, deflecting incoming attacks. In so doing, we partner with the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to stand.

Similar to the Roman helmet, which was designed to protect a soldier's head, the **Helmet of Salvation** secures the believer's mind against doubt, fear, lies, and defeat. Scripture portrays salvation as a completed work, yet we remain in a world where the enemy attempts to undermine that assurance. When the devil whispers, "You're not saved" or "Your sins are unforgivable," believers can confidently respond, "My life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). The helmet affirms that our eternal standing is not at stake because we are held firmly in God's hands (John 10:28–29), and it guards our mental processes from spiraling into hopelessness, worthlessness, or shame.



Moreover, this helmet invites us to align our thought patterns with Biblical truth. Colossians 3:2 exhorts us to set our minds on things above. Instead of fixating on failures or the world's standards, we meditate on Scripture's promises—God's fatherly love, the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for us, and the Spirit's work. Thus, the Helmet of Salvation is not only about security; it fosters a mindset that anticipates the fullness of God's kingdom. Confidence in salvation fortifies our sense of purpose and direction.

Paul concludes Ephesians 6 with the **Sword of the Spirit**, explicitly identified as the Word of God. The personal Roman sword was a short, double-edged sword designed for close, precise combat. Unlike the later broadswords, this small sword was agile, lethal, and required intense training to wield effectively. By likening Scripture to this small sword, Paul emphasizes that a single, well-aimed truth from God's Word can demolish an entire web of deception.



However, possessing this sword alone is not enough. It must be drawn and used. A sheathed sword offers no threat to an advancing enemy, just as Biblical knowledge unspoken or unapplied provides little defense. To fully harness the Sword of the Spirit, believers must study, memorize, and internalize Scripture, then employ it with confidence whenever darkness encroaches. Each time we confront a falsehood, whether about God's nature, our identity, or a temptation to sin with a Spirit-led declaration of God's Word, we strike a decisive blow against the enemy.. Thus, the Sword of the Spirit is both offensive and transformative, empowering believers to stand firm in Christ's victory and drive back the forces of evil through the Word of God.

OUR PROTECTION IS CHRIST

The armor of God, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, was poignant to the time and culture within which it was written, and it still holds powerful imagery and exhortation for us today. However, throughout Scripture, we see evidence that Jesus Christ is our true armor and protection as He represents all the pieces of the Ephesians armor:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the **Belt of Truth**. "Jesus answered, I am the way and the *truth* and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our **Breastplate of Righteousness**. “It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our *righteousness*, holiness and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace**. We already know He is the “good news” of the gospel, and the Bible says, “For he himself is our *peace*, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.” (Ephesians 2:14-15a).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our **Shield of Faith**. “His faithfulness will be your shield.” Psalm 91:4b “Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our *faith*...” (Hebrews 12:2a).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our **Helmet of Salvation**. “*Salvation* is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our **Sword of the Spirit** because He is the Word of God. “In the beginning was the *Word*, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

There is also clear instruction in Scripture for us to clothe ourselves in Christ. “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Romans 13:14). “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

Colossians 3:5-17 contains a beautiful description of how those who are in Christ can dispose of their old sin-driven selves and put on Christ.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in Word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Putting on truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God is not a one-time event but a continuous daily discipline, rooted in prayerful dependence on God.

It is not a surprise that immediately following the armor imagery in Ephesians 6, Paul instructs his readers on prayer. As we have already discussed in a previous session, prayer is crucial to our relationship with God and vital to our spiritual life. To stand firm in the battle and clothe ourselves with Christ we must practice a regular rhythm of prayer with our heavenly Father.

Our identity in Christ is the bedrock of spiritual warfare. At salvation, we are fundamentally changed and share in Christ's authority. We no longer fight from a place of defeat but from a place of victory. The full armor of God—Christ Himself—equips us for every spiritual battle as we stand victorious in Christ's strength.



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. Which aspect of your new identity in Christ do you find most comforting or empowering, and why?
2. Of the six pieces of armor in Ephesians 6, which do you think you need to cultivate more intentionally?
3. How does knowing you have been given authority over your spiritual enemies (Luke 10:19, Ephesians 2:6) change your perspective on spiritual attacks and daily challenges?
4. Why do we fight if the victory has already been won?

OUR BATTLE PLAN

We've examined the nature of the spiritual battlefield, our triumphant position in Christ, and the weapons at our disposal. However, information alone is not enough; we need practical ways to put these truths into action. Let's consider how we can submit to God, resist the devil, and walk in the Spirit daily.

SUBMITTING TO GOD AND RESISTING THE DEVIL

James 4:7 combines two crucial commands: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Submission to God acknowledges His Lordship, meaning we consciously yield our desires, ambitions, and impulses to His leadership. We do this through:

1. **Humility:** We cannot fight spiritual battles through our own power, intelligence, or effort. Humility bows the knee before Christ, acknowledging our dependence on the Holy Spirit. All our confidence is in Him, not ourselves.

2. **Repentance:** The Holy Spirit convicts us, and we grieve over our sin, which causes a change of mind. We move away from deception and lies and toward genuine submission through regular confession (2 Corinthians 7:10). This includes both sins of commission (things we do that are wrong) and sins of omission (things we fail to do that are right). Repentance restores our union with Christ and removes any opportunity the enemy could exploit.
3. **Obedience:** Submitting to God also means walking in alignment with His revealed will in Scripture. We choose to obey Biblical commandments, trusting that God's ways are higher and better for us than our own.

When we submit to God, we can confidently resist the devil. The devil flees not because we're inherently strong but because he recognizes God's authority in us (Read about the Seven Sons of Sceva in Acts 19 to see what happens when we use the name of Jesus without the authority of Christ). Resistance requires an active stance: proclaiming the truth of Scripture, refusing to dwell on tempting or condemning thoughts, and standing firm.

RENEWING THE MIND WITH SCRIPTURE

A significant aspect of practical spiritual warfare is renewing our mind. The enemy's primary tactic is deception; thus, the more we immerse ourselves in the truth of God's Word, the better equipped we are to distinguish truth from lies.

1. **Scripture Memorization:** Hiding God's Word in our heart (Psalm 119:11) builds a foundation of His promises and commands that the Holy Spirit can use in moments of temptation, despair, or encouragement. Memorization may take a concerted effort to incorporate, but the reward is well worth it!
2. **Biblical Meditation:** Beyond memorization, Biblical meditation involves pondering and internalizing passages, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape our worldview and define our actions and decisions. We can use physical movement to engage our bodies while we meditate. Simple activities, such as taking a walk, doing the dishes, or gardening, can allow our mind to quietly process in the background.
3. **Worship:** Scripture memorization and meditation will expand our knowledge of God and our relationship with Him. This often results in awe and wonder at all He is doing in our lives and the world around us. We sing and pray scripture back to the Lord in worship as our minds are renewed (Colossians 3:16-17).
4. **Christlikeness:** The Apostle James warns against merely hearing the Word and not doing it (James 1:22-25, Phil. 4:9). We should approach Scripture not just as an academic exercise but with a heart to apply it in everyday life. For every action we take, our question should be: Is this something Christ would do?

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

In the Christian life, we constantly face choices between following our old nature (the flesh) and submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In times of temptation or stress, the flesh urges us to

seek vengeance, self-preservation, or instant gratification. The Spirit, however, calls us to imitate Christ—offering a path to lasting freedom and transformation. Embracing the Spirit is a deliberate decision that involves uncovering the lies we’ve believed, replacing them with Biblical truth, and intentionally acting upon that truth.

THE CHOICE BEFORE US

Every believer encounters situations that trigger emotional or behavioral responses. While the flesh tempts us to protect ourselves through anger, resentment, or withdrawal, the Holy Spirit invites us to step out in faith, love, and self-control. Galatians 5:16 exhorts us to “walk by the Spirit,” meaning we consistently yield to His guidance rather than being driven by impulsive reactions.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO CHOOSE THE SPIRIT OVER FLESH

1. **Identify the Lie:** Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal underlying lies behind negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviors (John 16:13). Recognizing these strongholds is the first step in breaking their hold and inviting spiritual truth to reshape your perspective.
2. **Find the Truth:** Once lies are exposed, look to Scripture for truths that counter the lies and affirm God’s promises and your identity in Christ. Reflecting on God’s Word dispels lies and renews your mind.
3. **Practice Awareness:** Stay alert to negative emotional cues such as anger, shame, depression, or anxiety. These sensations can indicate areas of spiritual vulnerability. With awareness, you create opportunities to respond according to the Spirit’s guidance rather than react impulsively with sin.
4. **Pause and Breathe:** When you detect a potential trigger, pause briefly. A deep breath can help calm the body’s stress response and refocus your thoughts. This conscious moment of stillness fosters submission to God’s presence and aligns you with His peace (James 4:7).
5. **Pray and Seek Truth:** In that moment of clarity, recall or recite the Scripture to combat the lie that triggered you, and offer a quick prayer for direction. Engaging God’s Word and inviting His wisdom strengthens your defense against any falsehoods seeking to take root.
6. **Act in Faith:** Replace self-protective or fleshly instincts with faith in God’s truth. Stepping forward in alignment with God’s promises often challenges your comfort zone, yet it affirms your dependence on the Spirit.
7. **Allow the Holy Spirit to Reveal Truth:** As you act on Biblical principles, the Spirit confirms His truth in your experience. This validation goes beyond mental assent, producing real peace and assurance that come from living in obedience. God is teaching you that He is trustworthy in your obedience.
8. **Reflect on the Outcome:** Afterward, compare your Spirit-led actions to how you might have responded in the past. This intentional review builds trust in the Holy Spirit’s

transformative work, empowering you to continue walking in the freedom and growth found in Christ.

THE FRUIT OF CHOOSING THE SPIRIT

As you consistently opt for the Spirit over the flesh, strongholds of deceit weaken. The result is the fruit Paul describes in Galatians 5:22–23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These attributes display God’s character and signal your release from sin’s bondage. Rather than reacting impulsively, you learn to respond thoughtfully under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, experiencing the profound freedom that comes from living in God’s truth. You then witness the devil fleeing from you in terror because you rely on Christ.

OVERCOMING ISOLATION

Isolation is a prime strategy of the enemy. When we withdraw, we lose the support, wisdom, and prayer covering of fellow believers. Overcoming isolation involves proactively seeking meaningful relationships in the body of Christ:

- **Small Groups/Mentorship:** Joining a small group fosters deeper conversation, prayer support, and accountability. A trusted mentor can speak wisdom into our lives and model godly living.
- **Accountability Partners:** Sharing struggles, temptations, and victories with someone who is committed to our spiritual growth can prevent hidden sins from festering and encourage us during challenging times.

ASSESSING FOOTHOLDS AND CLOSING DOORS

Practical application also means consistent self-examination:

1. **Regular Repentance:** We keep short accounts with God, not allowing guilt or shame to fester. 1 John 1:9 promises forgiveness and cleansing when we confess our sins.
2. **Forgiveness of Others:** Harboring resentment impairs our spiritual life. Choose to forgive promptly, releasing those who have wronged you to God.
3. **Renouncing Past Ties:** Occultic involvement or vows made in ignorance can continue to influence us if left unaddressed. Publicly renouncing and praying through these areas with mature believers or spiritual leaders can sever any remaining spiritual entanglements.
4. **Steps to Freedom in Christ:** Neil T. Anderson’s *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* is a guided process of confession, forgiveness, and declaration of truth. We recommend you regularly use this as a tool for your own growth and discipleship.

By submitting to God through humility, repentance, and obedience, we are prepared to resist the enemy. Renewing our minds with Scripture helps us replace deception with Biblical truth, equipping us to think and act like Christ. Walking in the Spirit shifts us from impulse-driven habits to Spirit-led choices. This weakens strongholds and fosters lasting freedom. Additionally, overcoming isolation through Christian community and mentorship provides needed accountability and encouragement,

while continual self-examination closes any doors the enemy might exploit. Embracing these practical steps enables us to live out our identity in Christ.

Spiritual warfare is an ever-present reality. Yet as believers, we rest in the confidence that Christ has already won the victory (Colossians 2:15). Our responsibility is to stand in that victory through vigilantly guarding our minds, walking in our new identity, employing the armor of God, and practicing daily submission to the Holy Spirit. By understanding the nature of the battlefield, our position in Christ, and practical strategies for engaging the enemy, we can walk in ever-deepening freedom and fruitfulness.



GROUP DISCUSSION 3

1. How can having intentional community and regular self-examination safeguard you from spiritual isolation and keep you moving forward in spiritual growth?
2. How do humility, repentance, and obedience help you submit to God's authority, and how might this shape your response to spiritual attacks?
3. What methods have you found most effective for renewing your mind with Scripture, and how do they influence your behavior when facing temptation or stress?

RESOURCES

- **Neil T. Anderson**
 - *The Essential Guide to Spiritual Warfare*
 - *Bondage Breaker*
 - *Victory Over Darkness*
 - *Discipleship Counseling*
 - *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*



SESSION 5

GROWING IN EMOTIONAL HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Emotions are a powerful, God-given part of our humanity. They can serve as either channels for spiritual growth or, if left unchecked, stumbling blocks. The purpose of this session is to provide a Biblical framework for understanding and stewarding our emotions, and emphasize the importance of emotional maturity. Emotional maturity is indispensable for reflecting God's character, forming healthy relationships, and overcoming destructive habits or addictions.

We will explore how being made in God's image sets the standard for emotional maturity, examine the roots of emotional immaturity, and discover practical strategies for ongoing emotional transformation. Our ultimate model is Jesus, who exemplified what it means to feel deeply yet remain sinless (Hebrews 1:3). By aligning ourselves with Biblical truth and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can grow in our emotional health and freedom.

MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Emotions play a central role in our discipleship journey because they influence how we interact with God, ourselves, and others. Although some believers regard feelings as irrelevant or even problematic or sinful, Scripture presents emotions as an intrinsic part of the human experience—something God designed for His glory.

The first chapter of Genesis reveals that we are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27). The Hebrew term for "image" conveys the idea of a vessel that reflects or represents God. Being made in God's image includes the capacity for rational thought, moral judgment, creativity, and emotion. Unfortunately, sin distorted these capacities. Emotions meant to draw us deeper into relationships—like sorrow guiding

us to comfort or anger igniting a passion for justice—can be twisted into shame or bitterness. Yet God still intends to use our emotional life as a means to convey His presence.

Proverbs 4:23 admonishes us to guard our hearts because everything we do flows from them. In Mark 7:21-23, Jesus states, “For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.” Our “heart” is our emotional core; if it’s corrupted by pride or fear, it impedes our ability to reflect God’s character.

In John 10:10, Jesus contrasts His life-giving mission with the enemy’s goal to kill, steal, and destroy. Emotional immaturity can be a tool the enemy uses to sabotage our relationships, hinder growth, and derail God’s purposes. By contrast, emotional maturity fosters stronger marriages, healthier parenting, deeper friendships, elevated Christian witness, and greater resilience against sin.

In addition to being made in God’s image, Ephesians 5:1 commands us to be “imitators of God,” aligning our emotional responses with His. Jesus was humble and gentle at heart (Matthew 11:29), so His followers are called to be humble and gentle in our thoughts and emotions. Meanwhile, Hebrews 1:3 calls Jesus the radiance of God’s glory, the exact representation of His being. In His earthly ministry, Jesus shows us the perfect embodiment of emotional maturity because he was a perfect image bearer of God. He weeps over Jerusalem in sorrow, displays righteous anger in clearing the temple of the moneychangers, and feels compassion for those who are lost—all without sinning. If we are truly to bear God’s image, we must learn to handle emotions as Jesus did: felt fully, yet governed by love and truth.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

When emotions surface, they serve as **indicators** that something deeper is going on —perhaps an unhealed wound, a sinful attitude, or a vital boundary that needs to be established. Paying attention to these signals and addressing the root issues exemplifies true maturity. We embrace each emotion as part of God’s design, holding it up to Scripture and the Spirit’s guidance for discernment and a healthy response.

Emotional maturity is the capacity to experience the full range of human feelings while consistently responding to them in a manner that glorifies God and edifies others.

This involves a willingness to acknowledge our feelings without idolizing them or letting them run wild. This requires godly stewardship and self-control. For instance, experiencing anger might be natural, but we have a choice to allow the Spirit to direct that anger toward constructive, healthy ends or to explode or fester into bitterness.

Emotional maturity impacts not just our relationship with God but with our spouse, children, friends, church community, coworkers, and the world. Learning to listen compassionately, communicate clearly, and manage conflicts well fosters an environment in which love can flourish. This reflects John 13:35, where Jesus says the world will know we are His disciples by our love for one another.

EVIDENCE OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY:

1. **Self Awareness & Identity:** Emotionally mature people recognize their emotions and understand that emotions are temporary signals, not defining traits. “I feel angry” acknowledges a present emotion, whereas “I am an angry person” internalizes the emotion as part of one’s identity, which is Biblically incorrect. Recognizing the difference aligns with Scripture and allows for a more constructive emotional approach (Ephesians 4:20-24).
2. **Personal Responsibility:** Similar to awareness and identity, emotionally mature people own their feelings instead of blaming external forces. Rather than saying, “You make me sad,” they can say, “I am feeling sad.” This shows they recognize their feelings are part of their unique response to their circumstances and can be dealt with wholesomely. This fosters healthier communication, reducing relational conflict (Galatians 6:4-5).
3. **Emotional Regulation:** The ability to fully experience and manage a variety of emotions during difficult moments is crucial. Emotionally mature people acknowledge their feelings but choose constructive actions, such as pausing to reflect, praying, or seeking wisdom before responding, ensuring their actions align with Biblical principles (James 1:19-20, Ephesians 4:26). They do not allow their emotions to build and explode, causing unnecessary conflict (Colossians 4:6).
4. **Empathy:** By actively listening and respecting others’ feelings, mature individuals build trust and deeper connections in their relationships. They seek to understand situations from other perspectives before responding (Galatians 6:2). They recognize that everyone processes emotions differently and create safe spaces for expression without judgment (Ephesians 4:2).
5. **Resilience:** The ability to adapt, learn, and recover in the face of difficult situations and high emotions is a good sign of maturity. Emotional struggles or criticisms are viewed as challenges, not attacks. Mature people use them as opportunities for the Lord to work in and through them toward growth (2 Peter 1:3-11, Romans 5:3-5).

In addition to the emotional maturity Jesus modeled and the fact that we are made in God’s image, we see other examples of emotional maturity in the Apostle Paul and the authors of the Psalms. Paul handled many difficult situations with godliness and resilience. His life and ministry showcase a full spectrum of emotional experiences ranging from adversity to victory, hunger to fullness, poverty to wealth, and riots to peace. His walk was so exemplary that in Philippians 4, he exhorts his readers to model their lives after his. “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9).

The book of Psalms also allows us a close-up view of its authors processing deep emotions with the Lord. In many of the psalms, we can follow the emotional path from turmoil to peace as the author seeks the Lord. Other psalms are simply full of joy and praise.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest” (PSALM 22:1-2).

"I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes" (PSALM 6:6-7).

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations" (PSALM 100).

Emotions are woven into the fabric of humanity, given by God to enrich our relationships and help us mirror His nature. Being made in His image, we have a high calling to handle emotions in ways that showcase His holiness and compassion. Sin has introduced distortions, resulting in fear, pride, bitterness, and other forms of brokenness and bondage; yet through Christ, we have an example of how to feel deeply without succumbing to sin. When we develop emotional maturity, we reflect God's glory, clarifying rather than distorting the image of His character to the world around us.



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. What does it mean to you that you are made in the image of God, especially regarding your emotional life?
2. What emotional maturity do you see in your life? What areas do you sense need more work?

EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY

By contrast, emotional immaturity reveals itself when people struggle to handle emotions constructively and act out in ways that harm themselves and others. Such behavior hinders spiritual growth, strains relationships, and obscures the image of God we are meant to reflect. Recognizing these signs is the first step toward growth and transformation.

EVIDENCE OF EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY

1. **Ignoring or Stuffing Emotions:** Emotional immaturity is characterized by a lack of selfawareness and a tendency to suppress, ignore, or stuff down uncomfortable emotions instead of addressing them. Unaddressed emotions often exacerbate the underlying issues, leading to cycles of avoidance and deeper emotional stagnation (1 Peter 5:7).

2. **Blaming Others:** Emotionally immature people often attribute their feelings to the actions or words of others rather than taking personal responsibility for their emotional reactions. Statements like “You make me so angry!” or “If you didn’t nag me, I wouldn’t feel this way!” reflect an externalization of blame. This mindset not only creates conflict but also perpetuates a victim mentality, where the individual feels powerless to control their emotional state.
3. **Reacting Impulsively:** Individuals who struggle with self-regulation often respond to stress, disappointment, or conflict with impulsive reactions such as yelling, withdrawing, lashing out, or making rash decisions. These reactions serve only to escalate problems rather than resolve them.
4. **Dismissing Criticism or Differing Opinions:** Emotionally immature individuals often struggle to accept constructive feedback or engage with differing perspectives. This reaction typically stems from insecurity, fear of rejection, or a fragile sense of self-worth. Criticism, even when given kindly, can feel like a personal attack, leading to defensiveness or avoidance. Similarly, differing opinions may be perceived as threats rather than opportunities for growth or collaboration.
5. **Emotional Triggers and Coping Mechanisms:** When emotional immaturity takes root, individuals often turn to coping and addictive behaviors to manage inner turmoil. Stress, loneliness, shame, or resentment may trigger behaviors such as pornography, substance abuse, or overspending. These cycles of addictive behavior are evidence of strongholds.

Recognizing these emotional and behavioral patterns is not an exercise in self-condemnation but rather an invitation to transformation. Once we identify a recurring wound, such as a father’s harsh words in childhood or a painful betrayal, we can apply Biblical truths (for example, God’s unconditional love or the promise of His presence), allowing the Holy Spirit to rewrite false narratives with Scripture.



PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Take some time to pray through these questions. Use a journal to record your process.

- *Am I aware of what I’m feeling at any given time? Can I put a feeling word to the emotion?*
- *How am I inadvertently linking my emotional behavior with my identity?*
- *What triggers me to react angrily or to withdraw from others?*
- *How do I handle disagreement or criticism? Do I become defensive, or can I listen calmly?*
- *Am I an active listener, trying to see the situation from others’ point of view, or am I waiting for an opportunity to speak?*

ROOT CAUSES AND COMMON HINDRANCES TO EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Our emotional patterns are not formed in a vacuum. They result from genetic predisposition, family upbringing, cultural influences, and personal experiences of trauma or loss. Childhood attachment issues, in which caregivers are absent, overly critical, or inconsistent, can set a foundation for emotional instability that persists into adulthood. In some cases, generational behavioral patterns of addiction, anger, or fear pass from parent to child. Alternatively, negative modeling of conflict management, such as yelling or silent treatment, can lead to learned behavior. Identifying the root of emotional immaturity is the key to starting a journey toward health and maturity. Here are a few of the most common hindrances to emotional maturity:

1. **Unresolved Past Wounds:** Abuse, betrayal, or chronic neglect can lead to emotional scars that remain unaddressed. For instance, a childhood marked by harsh criticism may predispose someone to interpret any feedback as a personal attack or rejection, triggering disproportionate reactions. Arrested development can occur when trauma essentially “freezes” an individual’s emotional growth at a younger stage.

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (PROVERBS 12:18) .

2. **Family and Adult Modeling:** Even in adulthood, we might replicate unhealthy relational patterns observed in role models, whether parents, bosses, mentors, or peers, if we never challenge them with Biblical truth. For example, suppose you grew up watching your parents deal with conflict by slamming doors, yelling, giving a cold shoulder, or muttering angrily under their breath while never addressing the real problem. When you get older, you might unconsciously mirror those patterns in your own marriage.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (MATTHEW 5:16) .

3. **Cultural Narratives:** Western individualism can feed selfishness, while other cultures might downplay personal needs and emotions in favor of family or group needs. Both extremes can lead to emotional stunting if not balanced by Scripture. Societal messages like “Real men don’t cry” or “You should never be upset” can discourage healthy emotional expression, resulting in suppressed feelings that later manifest in destructive ways.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds (EPHESIANS 4:17).

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (ROMANS 12:2).

4. **Lack of Commitment:** Emotional growth requires perseverance, intentionality, and discipline, yet many believers see it as optional rather than essential to discipleship.

This mindset can lead to stagnation and the perpetuation of old, unhealthy patterns. Scripture calls us to pursue growth in all areas of life, including our emotional health.

Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come (1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8).

5. **Pride:** Pride can blind individuals to areas where growth is needed. When someone believes they are already emotionally mature despite being emotionally immature, it hinders their ability to be teachable. Additionally, pride fosters defensiveness when they are confronted, preventing opportunities for growth and healing.

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall
(PROVERBS 16:18).

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil
(PROVERBS 3:7).

6. **Shame:** Shame convinces individuals that they are unworthy of love, grace, or healing, leading them to hide or avoid seeking help. This reinforces cycles of pain, making it harder to break free from emotional wounds. God's Word assures us that shame has no place in the life of a believer. Emotional maturity involves acknowledging our brokenness and embracing God's grace, which sets us free from the bondage of shame.

Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame (PSALM 34:5).

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (ROMANS 8:1).

7. **Societal Pressures:** American Christian culture often dismisses vulnerability and emotional expression, labeling them as weak or toxic. This cultural narrative can deter believers from addressing emotional wounds, as they fear judgment or rejection. However, God calls us to a different standard, living as citizens of heaven, where vulnerability and honesty lead to healing and restoration.

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us (1 PETER 2:11-12).

But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ (PHILIPPIANS 3:20).

8. **Fear:** Fear, particularly the fear that one's beliefs may be attacked, can hinder emotional maturity. This fear often leads to anger and defensiveness toward those with differing views. Such reactions stem from insecurity and undermine Christ's call to love and humility. Mature believers trust God's truth, responding to disagreement with gentleness

and respect (1 Peter 3:15). By anchoring their identity in Christ, they face challenges with confidence, fostering understanding over division and love over the desire to be right.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 TIMOTHY 1:7).

Though common, these hindrances to emotional maturity are not permanent. All these damaging patterns can be confronted and replaced with healthy, Biblical patterns through *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. Additional support, counseling, and therapy may be necessary to fully develop new and sustainable patterns leading to maturity. With intentional effort, reliance on God, and a willingness to grow, individuals can cultivate emotional maturity.



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. Which signs of emotional immaturity resonate most with your personal experience, and why?
2. How has your family background, culture, or life events influenced your emotional habits or triggers?
3. On pages 50 and 51, circle the root causes and common hindrances you see in your own life. Find several scriptures that speak about those areas and meditate on them throughout the next week. Explore and listen to what the Lord may have for you there.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR LIFELONG EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Emotional maturity and spiritual maturity are closely intertwined. As we work to deepen our walk with the Lord, we develop new skills that lead to healthier emotional responses. Below is a list of tools you may find helpful. Experiment with them to see what helps you grow your awareness and maturity. Most importantly, dive deeper into the Word of God and engage in regular dialogue with your heavenly Father about your feelings and what they may be telling you.

TOOLS FOR PRACTICAL EMOTIONAL GROWTH

1. **Journal**—Write down your feelings to help reveal patterns, triggers, thought processes, and habitual responses. Reviewing entries can spot underlying lies or attitudes that appear repeatedly. These can be used to build a stronghold buster or find Bible verses to memorize to renew your mind.

2. **Emulate Jesus**—Study how Jesus and others in the Bible responded in emotionally charged situations, from confronting religious hypocrisy to weeping over Lazarus. Reflecting on His approach—strength under control, compassion without compromise—gives you a tangible model for your own life. 2 Peter 1:3-11 gives an amazing overview of how to become more emotionally mature like Jesus. Meditate on this passage and apply it to your own life.
3. **Be Practical**—View emotions as signals, not tyrants. Rather than letting anger, sadness, or anxiety dictate your actions, interpret them as messages: “Something here needs my attention.” Ask yourself the question, “Are my emotions in this circumstance revealing an idol in my heart?” Then you can address the core lie or issue rather than reacting impulsively.
4. **Learn About Emotions**—Resources like a “feelings wheel” can help you name and differentiate the nuances of your emotions. Several Christian counseling ministries offer exercises that foster greater emotional awareness.
5. **Listen to Your Body**—Physical cues, such as shoulder tension, upset stomach, chest tightness, tunnel vision, or clenched fists, often precede conscious recognition of an emotional state. Pausing when you notice these can halt escalation and encourage a Spirit-led response, rather than a flesh-driven one.
6. **Take Deep Breaths When Triggered**—This simple act helps calm the sympathetic nervous system, allowing your frontal lobe (the seat of reason and spiritual discernment) to reengage. Instead of snapping at a loved one or shutting down, you can choose a measured response guided by God’s truth.
7. **Ask Curious Questions**—Often, our negative reactions to what someone says, particularly a loved one, stem from emotional immaturity, which clouds our ability to see the situation. Instead of automatically assuming rejection or criticism, reflect on whether you fully understand the problem. Take a moment to assess the interaction by asking calm and curious questions, seeking clarity rather than reacting impulsively. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal the true nature of the situation. What may seem like criticism from a spouse or loved one could be an expression of care or helpful guidance that you’re misinterpreting due to unresolved emotional struggles. By stepping back and allowing God’s perspective to shape your understanding, you open the door to healthier communication and deeper connections.
8. **Guard Against Isolation**—Emotional maturity flourishes in community. Isolation allows harmful emotions to fester, leaving you vulnerable to the enemy’s accusations and deception. Regular fellowship, whether in a small group, through accountability partners, or with a spiritual mentor, provides support, prayer coverage, and outside perspective. Sometimes, another believer can see a destructive emotional pattern more clearly than we can ourselves.
9. **Assess Footholds and Deny Opportunities**—As you gain emotional stability, remain vigilant for any opportunities left open to the enemy. Persistent grudges, bitterness, unforgiveness, hidden sins, or habitual dishonesty can sabotage progress. Regular confession and repentance sever footholds, realign your relationship with the Lord, and

restore spiritual covering and peace. Forgiveness, in particular, remains a cornerstone of emotional and spiritual freedom. When you choose to release others from condemnation, you, too, become free.

SUSTAINING LIFELONG TRANSFORMATION

Emotional maturity is not passive; it requires **intentional effort** over time. 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us that God has given us a spirit of power, love, and self-control. This promise counters the notion that we are stuck with whatever temperament or emotional baggage we inherit. Instead, we have divine resources to change. The first step is deciding that we no longer want to be prisoners of old patterns. A firm resolution to honor God in our emotional life sets us on a path of consistent practice and reliance on the Spirit.

As emotional maturity takes root, you are positioned to **restore intimacy in strained relationships**. A spouse who once feared your outbursts may begin to trust your calm demeanor. Children, who previously felt the brunt of your impatience, might see a new gentleness and model it in their own interactions. In this way, emotional growth not only blesses your current generation but leaves a **legacy** for future generations. Your emotional maturity radiates outwards, shaping families, small groups, and entire church communities. Children raised under stable, empathetic parenting are more likely to replicate that. Congregations led by emotionally healthy leaders experience unity and fruitfulness. In these ways, your commitment to emotional transformation extends far beyond your personal sphere, echoing into future generations and advancing God's kingdom. The patterns you establish become an inheritance of emotional health that others can carry forward.

Emotional maturity is not a one-time milestone but a **continuous pursuit**. As you deepen your discipleship, the Holy Spirit may reveal new layers of wounds or immaturity that you were previously unaware of. Rather than becoming discouraged, celebrate each revelation as an opportunity for further growth. Over time, your default reactions can change. Godly responses become second nature, and your capacity for empathy, patience, and resilience expands. You begin to display a presence that is both grounded and gracious, offering hope to others struggling by becoming a peacemaker to the world around you.

CONCLUSION

Our culture often craves quick fixes, but emotional maturity is a **lifelong discipline** akin to sanctification—an ongoing process of becoming more like Christ through healing our hearts. Battles are won incrementally. Each time you respond patiently rather than exploding in anger, you reinforce a new pattern; each time you choose to trust God's promises rather than sinking into despair, you build spiritual resilience. Celebrating these small victories fosters motivation, and learning from missteps builds humility.

Over time, we can break free from destructive cycles and witness the profound effect of grace-filled emotional maturity on our families, friendships, and ministries. Ultimately, this journey bears witness to the **transforming power of Christ**, who reshapes our hearts to mirror His love and righteousness as we become true image bearers of God.



GROUP DISCUSSION 3

1. Which practical tool do you find most helpful for processing your emotions, and why?
2. In what ways can your emotional growth influence the relationships and communities you're part of, both now and for future generations?
3. Take time this week to review *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to any sections you need to revisit. What is the Lord teaching you? Are you ready to go deeper?

RESOURCES

- **Neil T. Anderson**
 - *The Essential Guide to Spiritual Warfare*
 - *Bondage Breaker*
 - *Victory Over Darkness*
 - *Discipleship Counseling*
 - *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*



SESSION 6

ESTABLISHING YOUR MINISTRY FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this session is to equip you to establish a “freedom presence” wherever God has placed you. We’ll refer to this “freedom presence” as a **Freedom Ministry**, and its foundation is the Three T’s: **Truth, Turning, and Transformation**.

Truth is delivered through teaching about who God is and who we are in Jesus Christ. We are accepted, significant, and secure in Him through our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We also teach the truth that we have three very real enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil); we can overcome them by standing firm in our position and authority in Christ and living a lifestyle of repentance.

Turning from sin and toward Jesus is a practical way of looking at repentance. In a Freedom Ministry, this often occurs when a person is taken through a facilitated prayer time called a Freedom Appointment using *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. Regularly submitting to God and resisting the devil through repentance, renunciation, and the proclamation of truth provides opportunities for a lifetime of transformation.

Transformation occurs when we maintain our freedom and grow in fruitfulness through Biblicallybased discipleship, practically applied within a Christian faith community.

The most common context for a Freedom Ministry is in the local church under the spiritual authority of church leadership. However, the Lord has seen fit to expand freedom ministries into schools, prisons, crisis centers, rehab facilities, and various other ministries. Life coaches, professors, therapists, Christian counselors, and doctors nationwide integrate Freedom in Christ principles into their practices and treatment plans. Sharing the truth of who we are in Christ—that we are loved, accepted, significant, and secure in Him—is a message that truly resonates in every context.

A Freedom Ministry usually starts small, but as more people are touched by the Spirit of grace, truth, and liberty, the ministry typically grows. Those who are set free are the ones most excited to help others and will often be eager to receive training to pass along the message and ministry of freedom to those feeling stuck.

START WITH “WHY”

When starting a Freedom Ministry, it's essential to be clear about the purpose. Knowing *why* you desire to start a Freedom Ministry and being able to communicate this to others clearly will go a long way toward its fruitfulness.

Why start with “*why*”?

Christian leader, pastor, and podcaster Carey Nieuwhof once said, “**Why** unites us. **How** often divides us.” When it comes to starting a Freedom Ministry within your sphere of influence, it's helpful to have this concept in mind: Start with the “why” because the “why” unites us. As for the “how,” you will want to be flexible with how your Freedom Ministry functions. We will learn about that later.

So, what is your “why”?

Most likely, it is the desire to see others find freedom in Christ, just as you have, through encountering the powerful truths of Scripture presented in the FICM resources. To delve into that more fully, let's focus on some key scriptures that highlight Jesus' desire for every believer.

In **Luke 4:18-19**, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

This wonderful pronouncement of Jesus' mission has cascaded down through time to include *you* in the divine process of bringing others to freedom in Christ.

In **John 10:10**, Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

Jesus said His purpose in coming to earth was to give us eternal life to its fullest here and now, not just in heaven. He didn't just come to be a perfect example of godliness and to die for our sins, as marvelous as those were. He came to share His eternal, abundant life with us. What an incredible promise!

However, Jesus also mentions a “thief” whose mission is diametrically and diabolically opposed to His. That thief—Satan, the devil—has plotted since the Garden of Eden to thwart God's ultimate plan for man with his evil schemes based on lies, accusations, and temptations.

This is where the cosmic struggle exists (and has for eons) in which the eternal destiny of mankind is in the balance. The result? We see Christ followers all around us in bondage, stuck, guilt-ridden, ashamed, fearful, feeling like failures, and ready to give up. The apostle Paul gave us a glimpse of

this in **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**, where he wrote to believers who were stuck and challenged them to overcome the barriers preventing them from living a full and abundant life in Christ.

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

For them, and for many Christians now, these barriers could be anything: fear, pride, selfishness, unforgiveness, anger, betrayal, abuse, lust, and more. These are all ways the enemy uses to steal and destroy people's lives. This is where your Freedom Ministry comes in, and this is most likely the basis of your "why."



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. In your ministry experience, what are some barriers that you believe are hindering relationships between people and God, spiritual growth, or spiritual fruitfulness?
2. Share with your group the context (people group) you feel called by God to bring a freedom presence.
3. Compose a unique Freedom Ministry mission statement that clearly articulates **why** and for **whom** your Freedom Ministry exists. Be ready to share with your group.

FOCUS ON THE "WHAT"?

To embrace the abundant and fruitful life Jesus is talking about, people need help overcoming the barriers that hinder their relationships with God and others.

Jesus' ministry of setting captives free enables God's people to lay aside every weight (or burden), and the sin that so easily entangles them, and then run the race set before them (Hebrews 12:1-2). It enables God's people to grow and go on to maturity, bearing fruit like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

The purpose of Freedom in Christ Ministries is to see every believer living free and fruitful in Jesus Christ through transforming discipleship that's focused on truth, turning, and transformation.

This is our "what."

TEACHING TRUTH

Freedom in Christ Ministries has several foundational teachings and practices:

- Living from our identity in Jesus Christ
- Choosing to believe the truth of God's Word
- Making the daily choice to abide in Christ/ walk in step with the Holy Spirit
- Overcoming the spiritual battle for our minds
- Handling emotions well
- Forgiving from the heart
- Being transformed by the renewing of our minds
- Relating well with others

We can equip you to teach these principles to others. Our ministry has an extensive library of books, courses, videos, and other resources for you to use as you launch and lead your Freedom Ministry.

We begin in much the same way the apostle Paul began his letters to churches—by focusing on the transforming power of the gospel and how our faith in the finished work of Jesus transforms our identity. This emphasis always preceded instruction about how we are to live and behave. For example, in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul reminds the new believers that they went from *being* “dead in their trespasses and sins” and “children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” to *being* God's “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

All of this was based on what God did and their new position in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-6). This truth was very important to the apostle Paul. Before getting into practical instruction on how to treat one another (Ephesians 4), live out our roles within marriages (Ephesians 5), raise our children (Ephesians 6), or conduct spiritual warfare (also Ephesians 6), Paul wanted us to understand what it means to be “in Christ Jesus.”

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:16-17, “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Who we believe we are changes how we behave. **Our *doing* flows from a belief about our *being*.** That's why believing the truth in the Bible that we are already saints, children of God, friends of Jesus, new creations, and so on is critical to our freedom in Christ, our spiritual growth (sanctification), and our fruitfulness in life and ministry.

TURNING FROM SIN AND TURNING TO JESUS

Sometimes, we think, say, and do things that are inconsistent with God's will for us and with who we really are in Christ. We sin (1 John 1:8, 10). Although this doesn't change the *status* of our relationship with God, it does impact the *quality* of our relationships with Him and others. God's desire for us is restoration and life, and part of experiencing both means removing any barriers that are hindering our relationships.

Ephesians 4:26-27 exhorts us, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” If we give the devil the opportunity to negatively impact our lives, he will. And if we give him many opportunities to negatively impact our lives, then we might experience intense spiritual oppression. But the good news is that dealing with our sin is straightforward and leads to freedom in Christ.

Paul taught, “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret” (2 Corinthians 7:10a). And the apostle John taught, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The Steps to Freedom in Christ is a discipleship tool that helps people gain their freedom in Jesus Christ through a gentle process of repentance, renunciation, and affirmation of truth so they can be fruitful. Most of our resources include a version of this process.

It’s important to remember that going through *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* does not set us free; Jesus sets us free. *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* provides a practical way to submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7). It also teaches a lifestyle of walking in the Spirit through repentance and faith. *The Steps* is a key component of a Freedom Ministry. In fact, this training designates five of the fourteen sessions to teach others how to facilitate a Freedom Appointment! If you are serious about starting a Freedom Ministry, then we believe you will greatly benefit from learning how to best use *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* within your context.

ONGOING TRANSFORMATION

Once freedom in Christ is gained, it needs to be maintained. It’s easy for us to slip back into old patterns. If we aren’t purposeful about maintaining our freedom, then we might find ourselves in a sin-confess-sin-confess cycle again.

Romans 12:2 teaches us, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 reads, “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ”.

Ongoing transformation occurs as we renew our minds in the truth. A key component in the Freedom in Christ discipleship process is equipping people in **Stronghold Busting**. This involves identifying root lies that have led to “ruts” in our thinking and resulted in some kind of *stronghold* over us. Once the root lie is identified, it is replaced by the truth of God’s Word. Then, we pray a prayer renouncing the lie and declaring the truth every day for as long as necessary until a release occurs. Once the stronghold falls, we’re back to having the Lord as our only Stronghold (Psalm 18:2). It’s a simple approach, but it takes time. We have found it helpful to encourage people to focus on one “rut” at a time, and to incorporate this kind of prayer into their regular walk with God.

Additionally, the following principles provide a strong foundation in launching and leading a Freedom Ministry.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

(*Based on a list from *Discipleship Counseling*, pp. 16-17):

1. **The Authority of Scripture**—Scripture is the only reliable source for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Truth sets people free. Therefore, we must have an uncompromising commitment to the Word of God.
2. **The Finished Work of Christ**—The message and method behind discipling others to find their freedom in Christ must be based on the finished work of Christ (Colossians 1:27-2:10). Christ in us is our hope of glory. We have been made new in Him.
3. **A Biblical Worldview**—Even though Western rationalism and naturalism have greatly influenced the church in America, we need to remember that our battle is spiritual and not physical (Ephesians 6:12). The whole world is under the power of evil and people are deceived (1 John 5:19, 1 Timothy 4:1). The church must acknowledge the kingdom of darkness and offer liberation to the body of Christ teaching them how to stand firm in their faith (James 4:7).
4. **Total Dependence on the Holy Spirit**—Throughout the discipleship process, we rely totally on the present ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-15). Without the Holy Spirit, we would have no power to live the Christian life. He is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), will lead us into all truth, and the truth will set us free!
5. **Faith to Accept the Truth Ourselves**—We are limited by the faith response of those we are discipling. We cannot believe or repent for them. We cannot help those who do not want to be helped. They need to accept that responsibility to choose the truth for themselves. We can, however, warn them of the consequences of not accepting the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-26).
6. **Community is Essential**—We all need the support of a believing faith community and the regular renewal of our walk with God, through reading His Word and prayer (Hebrews 10:19-25, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). We were made for relationships. Dr. Anderson said, “We absolutely need God, and we necessarily need each other.”



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. Share with your group how truth, turning, and transformation, as taught by Freedom in Christ Ministries, have been helpful to you and contributed to your spiritual growth (sanctification).
2. Describe the process of building a Stronghold Buster. If you are not actively involved in a Stronghold Buster, ask the Lord to show you a lie you believe. On a separate sheet of paper, write out the Stronghold Buster according to the instructions in this session and begin using it daily. If you are comfortable, share your Stronghold Buster with your group.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING UNDER SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

A critical aspect of launching and leading a Freedom Ministry is making sure that you are operating under spiritual authority. This is a big deal in the Bible!

In Step Four of *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*, we read, “It is an act of faith to trust God to work in our lives through leaders who are something less than perfect, but that is what God is asking us to do. ... God has set up specific lines of authority to protect us and give order to society. It is the position of authority that we respect. Without governing authorities, every society would be in chaos.”

Submission is not popular in society today. But in truth, voluntarily placing ourselves under proper authority is a protection to us and to others. When we submit to the worldly authorities God has placed in our lives, we are also submitting to Him and showing reverence to Christ (Ephesians 5:20-22).

The Bible exhorts us to submit to the following authorities in our lives:

- God (James 4:7a, among many other passages)
- Civil government (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17)
- Parents, stepparents, and legal guardians (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20)
- Teachers, coaches, school officials (Romans 13:1-4)
- Employers (1 Peter 2:18-23)
- Husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-4)
- Wives (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:7)
- Church leaders (see below)

Your Freedom Ministry may be under the authority of your local church leaders. If that’s the case, it’s going to be imperative that you voluntarily submit to those leaders. In part, the success of your Freedom Ministry is dependent on it.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (HEBREWS 13:17).

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you (1 PETER 5:5-7).

Once we’ve been transformed by the message and ministry of Freedom in Christ, it’s completely normal to want to share it with everyone. And nothing and no one can stop you from doing so, with the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit! However, if the Freedom Ministry is a ministry of a local church, it’s important to obey your leaders, submit to them, and pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1,2).

Likewise, if your Freedom Ministry is operating in a non-traditional context, it would be wise to voluntarily place yourself under some kind of spiritual authority, such as your pastor(s), a board of directors, officers of the organization/ministry if it's a 501(c)(3), or a decision-making committee. If you are doing freedom ministry outside the local church, we strongly encourage you to discuss your activity with your pastor(s) and request prayer support at the very least. Again, this is for your protection and the protection of the people you want to serve. We at Freedom in Christ Ministries are happy to discuss how best to do this if your situation feels complex. We caution you against starting a Freedom Ministry without a spiritual "covering."

WHEN YOUR SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY IS NOT SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR FREEDOM MINISTRY

Those who are experiencing freedom in their lives and who want to start a Freedom Ministry often make the mistake of allowing frustration, impatience, and spiritual pride to taint their view of their leaders.

We do *not* recommend these actions:

- Don't walk into your pastor/leader's office, plop a copy of The Bondage Breaker on his or her desk, and tell them they need to read it. *Given all the feedback, opinions, and unsolicited advice that ministry leaders receive, this approach is not often received well.*
- Don't tell your pastor/leader that they have been doing everything wrong and that nobody in the ministry/organization is free, and you have all the answers. *Consider how you would receive such advice delivered in this way. What would you think of the person and the material they are pushing on you? Evaluate your attitude and approach carefully.*
- Don't announce to your pastor/leader that you are going to start teaching a group. *You may be very excited and "rarin' to go," but asking permission in a gentle, respectful way is far more likely to gain the open door you seek.*
- Don't go around the leadership by starting some kind of Freedom in Christ study without letting them know. It's easy to rationalize your rebellion, saying to yourself, "This is what people need to hear, and our pastors/leaders are too blind to see it. I need to obey God rather than men!" *This is not acting in submission to their spiritual authority and is an act of deception as well.*

We recommend these responses instead:

- Do gently and respectfully share with pastors/leaders what the Lord Jesus has done in your life in terms of experiencing freedom. You can mention the role that Freedom in Christ resources played in the process, but make it clear it's what Jesus has done and is doing!
- Do recognize and verbalize that you are still a work in progress, and there are many areas in your life still needing God's transformation. Remain active and enthusiastic in your participation in church life, expressing your gratitude to teachers when you learn something helpful for your growth.

- Do pray diligently for your attitude and for the Lord to open doors in His time and in His way with pastors/leaders. Ask a friend or two to pray with you. Remember, it's not about you. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, and He will lead you.
- Do gently and humbly ask pastors/leaders if they are familiar with Freedom in Christ Ministries' material. If they are not, prayerfully consider setting up a meeting to share about your own journey and the resources that mean the most to you. You can also consider inviting them to join you for a Zoom meeting with a Regional Director of Ministry Relationships so that they can be introduced to the "why", "what", and "how" of Freedom in Christ Ministries' discipleship principles and practices. This allows them to ask questions and receive answers in a way that makes the best use of their time, and yours.
- Do know and understand the mission and vision of your church, ministry, or organization. Consider how a Freedom Ministry would support the ministry outcomes and bring that into the conversation with your leadership.
- Do welcome those in spiritual authority over you to attend a class that you've received permission to teach or review the content ahead of time. Perhaps the best course to start with is the 10-week *Freedom in Christ Course*.

Humility is also not popular in society.

God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). He is able to quickly knock the hot air out of any Freedom Ministry that has come to believe it is God's best gift to the church.

We are convinced Scripture teaches there is one place where the enemy cannot touch us, and that is the place of holiness and humility. Cultivate those qualities in the grace and truth of the Lord Jesus, and you'll be shielded from the schemes of the evil one.

Consider these two passages in the Bible:

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every

knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11).

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world (1 PETER 5:6-9).

As you can see, submission to church leadership and having a spirit of humility are very important to God, and therefore to us. Doesn't it make sense that the god of this world (who hates us and hates freedom) would seek to entice us with the very same sins that caused his fall...pride and rebellion? Be on your guard against them!

SUMMARY

We've just discussed many important principles, so let's take a moment to review.

1. **It's not about you!** God has a plan for you to accomplish that fulfills His will.
2. **Understand the culture of your church, ministry, or organization.** Culture could be defined as a people group's priorities, mission, rhythms, and theology. The best place to start is knowing and understanding the culture of the people group you're in. Consider the common language they speak regarding discipleship, evangelism, and missions, and join them in it.
3. **Be an "all-in" active and enthusiastic participant in your church, ministry, or organization!** Become a member if you're not one already.
4. **Submit yourself to leadership.** While this may feel uncomfortable to those who have experienced disappointments, it's still an important step in building (or rebuilding) a healthy relationship with the leaders God has placed in your life. Be intentional about saying it to them. It's powerful for both of you!
5. **Relationships matter!** Get to know the leadership and staff of your church, ministry, or organization. Invite them into your classes.
6. **Share your personal story of freedom.** Your story is more powerful than you may realize.
7. **Know and understand the established mission and vision of your church, ministry, or organization.** This is different than culture. What are its short-term and longterm goals? What people and organizational systems are already in place? Do they have a written mission or vision? Incorporate these statements into your strategy for developing your Freedom Ministry.

8. **Let time be your friend.** Ask God to set the pace and keep in step with Him.
9. **Check your heart posture.** Don't allow a competitive spirit or pride to take hold in your heart. Wrestle with the areas of your heart that resist submission and let humility prevail!
10. **Suit up in your spiritual armor and pray diligently with passion that the Lord has given you for freedom!** The battle is real. Don't go at it alone. Establish a prayer team now, and bathe every aspect of the ministry you hope to start in prayer. Stand firm!



GROUP DISCUSSION 3

1. Who would be the spiritual authority in your context, offering you a “covering” to launch a Freedom Ministry? If you don't know, maybe ask the group for some input after describing your context.
2. Share with your group how you would answer the following questions:
 - What is the culture of my church, ministry, or organization?
 - What are its short-term and long-term goals?
 - What people and organizational systems are already in place?
 - Does the church or ministry speak a common language regarding discipleship, evangelism, and missions that we can also utilize?
 - How can I become fluent in that common language?
3. Pick two or three of the following scenarios and discuss how you would navigate them from a heart posture of submission and humility.

Possible Scenarios:

Scenario #1: The spiritual leaders in your context aren't familiar with the message and discipleship methods of Freedom in Christ. Describe for the group how you plan to introduce your leaders to your desire to have a Freedom Ministry.

Scenario #2: You shared your vision of a Freedom Ministry with your spiritual leaders, and they don't share your excitement for the ministry at this time, but they continue to be encouraged by you and your zeal for discipleship. How could you respond in a way that is both healthy and helpful to the context that you're in?

Scenario #3: You shared your vision of a Freedom Ministry with your spiritual leaders, and they rejected the idea based on some wrong information they've read or heard somewhere else about Freedom in Christ Ministries. How could you respond in a way that is both healthy and helpful to the context that you're in?



Scenario #4: You have people involved in similar work in your context. Perhaps they've been trained by a different ministry and therefore have a somewhat different approach to setting captives free. They might use some FICM materials as part of their work (or they may not). They may even call themselves "Freedom in Christ" or identify what they do as "freedom ministry". How could you respond in a way that is both healthy and helpful to the context that you're in?

Scenario #5: You shared your vision of a Freedom Ministry with your spiritual leaders. They are excited about the message of Freedom in Christ, but have different ideas than you about how to "get the message out there." How could you respond in a way that is both healthy and helpful to the context that you're in?

"HOW" TO LAUNCH A FREEDOM MINISTRY?

We've previously discussed the "why" and the "what" of a Freedom Ministry. Finally, we will look at the "how." A Freedom Ministry will need to function a certain way within your context. Hopefully, it will function in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Just remember, "how" can be divisive and riddled with opportunity for the enemy to attack.

When beginning a Freedom Ministry, we do not seek to change the existing church or ministry's approach unless the leadership has discerned that it is needed. Instead, we are looking to integrate the Freedom Ministry in a way that *complements* everything already happening in the church or organizational context.

There is no singular "right" way to develop a Freedom Ministry. It's very important to be flexible, especially in non-church environments. However, many Freedom Ministries will have a basic framework that includes the following parts: Spiritual Authority, Freedom Ministry Team Leader/Coordinator, Trained Encouragers, Prayer Team and Prayer Partners, Small Group Leaders (or Table Hosts/Facilitators), and perhaps some administrative help. Additionally, Inquirers or Participants are what we call people who go through a Freedom Appointment and receive from the ministry. This organizational framework will become more apparent as we progress through this training. For now, it's simply important to know a framework exists, and that it's important to remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leadership and direction as you seek to develop it within your unique context.

As a Freedom Ministry Team Leader/Coordinator, you need to have a rock-solid assurance that developing a Freedom Ministry is God's idea and not your own. No matter how encouraging a situation you have, your call and faith in that call will be tested. The enemy will seek to discourage and dishearten you from persevering in setting captives free. He doesn't like to see people living a full and abundant life in Christ. He will oppose you, and things might become challenging. Sometimes the only thing you have to cling to is the solid assurance that "I know God has called me to this work and I will not give up."

Therefore, before you begin laying the groundwork for a Freedom Ministry, you need to be assured of God's call.

Proverbs 3:5-6 is likely familiar to you, but it provides a strong reminder that we dare not attempt to do God's work our way: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

These verses make it clear that we should not launch out with a good idea and expect God to bless it. Instead, we are to make sure that we are walking the path the Lord has laid out for us, acknowledging our dependence upon Him the whole way. If we do that, God will make our paths straight, bringing growth and fruitfulness to the ministry.

How can you be sure that the Lord has called you to begin a Freedom Ministry?

Though there is always an element of faith and risk in any new endeavor, the following should help you in your search for God's will.

1. **Pray.** The Lord promises we will receive answers to prayer when we ask Him. He promises that we will find His will when we seek it. And He promises to open doors as we persist (knock) in prayer (Matthew 7:7-8). God desires to show us His good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:2) – perhaps even more than we are to discover it!
2. **Surrender.** We must fully surrender to God's will, no matter what it might be. This means being willing to hear and obey God if He says, "No, this is not my will for you" or "Not right now, my child." Are you truly willing to obey Him no matter what He says? This may be the toughest test of all, but Philippians 2:12-13 gives us this exhortation and assurance:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Remember, a Freedom Ministry is all about Jesus and what He wants to do, not about you and what you want to do. If Jesus isn't in it, you don't want to be either!

3. **Read, meditate, and listen.** Ask the Lord to examine your heart and show you your motivation for wanting to start a Freedom Ministry. Hebrews 4:12 teaches us that God's word judges the thoughts and intentions of our hearts and divides between soul and spirit. As you read and study God's word, His Spirit uses it to clarify and purify the motives of our hearts. Be sensitive to what the Lord says to you while you spend time with Him in the Bible and prayer. It might be helpful to ask the Lord to show you the desires of your heart and journal why you want to start a Freedom Ministry. As you write the reasons down and review them, do they ring true in your heart? This exercise will also help you cast vision to others later on about why you believe a Freedom Ministry is God's will for you and your church/organization. If the Lord truly is calling you to do this, you will get increasingly excited about his call as you do this exercise. If He is not calling you to do it, you will likely develop a growing unrest and sense that maybe you are trying to manufacture the results on your own.

4. Enlist others. Ask for prayer support from other believers whom you trust. Tell them that you are seeking God's face about starting a Freedom Ministry. Ask them to pray for wisdom for you in this matter. James 1:5-8 promises that the Lord will generously give us wisdom as we ask in faith without doubting. Ask these people to turn up the volume of the Holy Spirit's voice in their lives and then have them give you feedback about any discernment.

Ultimately, this is your decision, but "a man's counsel is sweet to his friend" (Proverbs 27:9b). Good friends know you and can help you see things that you cannot see on your own. They can also encourage when they see you're on the right track. In addition to having strong prayer coverage, you also might find that God ends up "recruiting" some of them to join you in helping launch the Freedom Ministry!

5. Be grateful. Once you have discerned the Lord's will as best you can, thank Him for His guidance. If the answer is "no" or "wait," thank Him. Our Father knows best! If the answer is "yes" and "now," then move forward in faith and full dependence upon God.

A SHORT WORD ABOUT PRODUCTS, PROGRAMS, AND APPROACH

As you begin your Freedom Ministry, it might be beneficial to think in terms of:

- Products (the use of books and resources),
- Program (running courses on a schedule, including group Freedom Appointments)
- Approach (leading toward cultural saturation).

There is a growing level of commitment as you move from products to program to approach, with the greatest level of commitment being a holistic approach.

Early on, your leaders may not be at a point to change anything in their annual plans for the ministry. But it's possible that small groups and Bible studies are able to choose their own studies, so long as they align with the church or ministry's theological convictions. In this case, maybe a small group—or a men's or women's Bible study—would be willing to choose a **product**, such as a book or Bible study from Freedom in Christ Ministries. If this is the case, celebrate this as a significant opportunity!

Many churches like to function on a school-year calendar or according to semesters, and they welcome people offering Bible studies of various kinds that fit into this schedule. This is a **programmatic** approach to life in the church. If this is the case for you, consider proposing to offer the Freedom in Christ Course in one season and The Grace Course in another season. Both courses provide an opportunity to introduce more people to the teaching of Freedom in Christ. They also provide opportunities for group Freedom Appointments, allowing you to introduce the prayer process to more people.

The greatest level of commitment by a church or organization is to make Freedom in Christ part of the holistic discipleship **approach**. At this point, there will be some level of cultural saturation. It will become part of a common language among the people. You may hear in the hallways, "You

are who God says you are, even on your bad days,” and “Let’s see if we can identify the lie in what you’re thinking and then overcome it with the truth.” It will drip from the stage in how messages are delivered, worship is led, leaders run meetings, and people manage relationships. *At that point, freedom has become part of the culture.*

This cultural saturation takes time to develop. It usually happens after much Truth, Turning, and Transformation, so be patient and stick with it. You are doing great work!

Finally, celebrate whenever Freedom in Christ is taught or lived out within your context, whether through the Freedom Ministry or some other means.

TESTIMONY

“Once, I was in a full auditorium to hear a pastor give a message on forgiveness. This pastor had read Victory Over the Darkness and The Bondage Breaker. He had also been encouraged through The Steps and had experienced the Lord graciously peel back some layers in his life that needed to be removed. But I wouldn’t have called him zealous to build a Freedom Ministry in his context. Not yet, anyway.

However, he gave a thoroughly Biblical message on forgiveness that aligned with the teaching of Freedom in Christ Ministries. He didn’t mention the ministry or quote any of our resources. He didn’t point people to the ministry at that moment. It must not have been on his mind to do so. But I was able to celebrate that a room full of people were introduced – intentionally or unintentionally—to the importance of overcoming bitterness with forgiveness and how to forgive well.”

-SETH BROADHURST, *FICM National Director of Ministry Relationships*



GROUP DISCUSSION 4

1. Share with your group how you’ve come to discern that God is calling you to start a Freedom Ministry. Are there any steps listed above that you feel you’ve neglected? How can you begin applying them now?
2. After considering culture, calendar, systems, and alignment with your current church or organization, what do you believe is your next “right step” as you seek to apply what you’ve learned in this session?

RESOURCES

- **Neil T. Anderson**
 - *Restored*
 - *Freedom in Christ Course*
 - *Discipleship Counseling*
 - *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*
 - *Victory Over Darkness*
 - *Bondage Breaker*
- **Steve Goss**, *The Grace Course*



SESSION 7

DEVELOPING YOUR MINISTRY TEAM

INTRODUCTION

You are here because you feel a genuine call from the Holy Spirit to do the work of freedom. Walking with others as the Lord sets them free is blessed and holy work, and there is so much of it to do. Every person we meet is someone who needs Jesus to heal their hurts, bind their wounds, and set them free from their captivity. Remember, we are all on our own freedom journey, one that won't end until we are finally with Him face to face.

Starting a Freedom Ministry is a slow build process. As the leader, it's important for you to understand that it will likely take much more time than you expect to get established and gain momentum in this ministry. It is not your job to bring about the plans of the Lord or make things happen within a specific timetable; rather, your job is to trust the Lord to build and grow the ministry at the pace that He sees fit because He knows what He's doing. *If you, as the leader, are insecure or frantic about the time it takes to walk out His plans, you and the people you lead will suffer under that pressure.* Wherever you find yourself on the journey, remember, you are free in Him. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

PRAYER AS THE FOUNDATION

One of the most important elements of launching a Freedom Ministry is an ongoing, dedicated, Spiritled prayer ministry to undergird all that is being done. As discussed earlier, your ability to remain healthy and fruitful *as the leader* depends on your resolve to abide in Him. Jesus clearly tells us, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

Likewise, your Freedom Ministry needs to stay firmly attached to Jesus to bear much fruit. This area cannot be something that is thrown together at the last minute or handled haphazardly. If you take seriously the call to seek the Lord in all you do, you will enjoy the peace and joy that comes from hearing and following your Shepherd's voice. As we discussed in a previous session, we are living and ministering in the midst of a spiritual battle. Therefore, we must learn not to lean on our own understanding and abilities but submit ourselves to the source of our strength and victory, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we need to pray.

The power of a Spirit-led ministry begins with prayer. As a leader in your Freedom Ministry, you will first want to establish a foundation of prayer that covers yourself, your general Freedom Ministry, and Freedom Appointments.

PERSONAL PRAYER TEAM

Jesus had His inner circle of three: Peter, James, and John. You will need a handful of prayer warriors to continually go to battle with and for you.

- Who: Mature friends and mentors
- How: Pray at a moment's notice

GENERAL PRAYER TEAM

As prayer support moves outward to your team, you may have a larger group of prayer warriors for **general** and **Freedom Appointment prayer** according to the needs of your ministry.

- Who: People who are dedicated to the Freedom Ministry
- How: Gather to pray regularly for the Freedom Ministry

FREEDOM APPOINTMENT PRAYER TEAM

As part of your general prayer team, you may find individuals with a deep heart for Freedom Appointment intercession. These are people who:

- Want to pray during Freedom Appointments
- Are reliable to pray when sent emergency messages from leaders
- Are trustworthy with sensitive requests
- Are Prayer Partners or in training to become Prayer Partners

Having a band of brothers and sisters battling alongside you brings strength to continue in your calling, encouraging you "to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm" (Ephesians 6:13b).



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. Ask the Lord to bring to mind people you could ask to be on your inner circle, general, and Freedom Appointment prayer teams. Don't worry about overlap. In the following weeks of training, continue to ask the Lord to clarify your list.
2. How might you invite people to your prayer team and keep them engaged in the Freedom Ministry? Share your ideas with your group.

REFLECTION QUESTION

1. Revisit the "Building on Prayer" lesson from earlier in the Freedom Ministry Training. How has your prayer life developed since then? Are further adjustments needed before you focus on building a Freedom Ministry Team?

BUILDING A STRONG, HEALTHY FREEDOM MINISTRY TEAM

As previously mentioned, Freedom Ministries can start small, and you may find yourself building a Freedom Ministry alone until you've found the people the Lord brings to join your team. Initially, you will need small group leaders, trained Encouragers, and trained Prayer Partners. Once your team grows, additional team member roles could include administrative help, technology support, coleaders, and trainers. Training team members early on is important to build a healthy team. Though every Freedom Ministry will look different, growth happens best in community. Operating alone increases the risk of burnout and limits your ability to help others. Moses' ministry thrived when he followed Jethro's advice to build a team (Exodus 18:13-27). God works through relationships, and ministry is more effective when done together.

As we study the life and ministry of Jesus, we see He offers a relational discipleship model that will help you grow your Freedom Ministry team. Jesus used the following to ready Himself and equip others for future ministry.

PREPARE: He prepared Himself through prayer and the Word of God.

INVITE: He identified and invited people to follow Him.

DISCIPLE: He taught them truths and equipped them to follow His example.

NURTURE: He developed and nurtured personal relationships with His followers.

RELEASE: He sent them out to serve in ministry as the Lord directed.

PREPARE

Jesus prepared Himself by living a life marked by study and understanding of the Scriptures. He also lived His life in complete submission and obedience to the will of His Father in Heaven (John 5:19, 6:38). The Spirit sent Him into the desert where Satan tempted Him (Mark 1:12-13). This time of suffering and testing happened before Jesus invited anyone to follow Him. Jesus took the beginning of His public ministry seriously and was aware of the risks. He was sure of His calling, and proved His submission to His Father's will by enduring the desert trials of temptation. Hebrews 5:8 affirms, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."

Like our Savior, those who lead others to freedom are marked by a spirit of submission to Christ and His Word. They are sure of their calling to lead others, willing to invest in preparation for leadership, and able to stand firm in times of trial before they recruit others to join their ministry. Their spiritual maturity and commitment to walking in right relationship with Jesus Christ are the essential foundation for their leadership.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (EPHESIANS 3:14-19).

One of the core teachings in Freedom in Christ is **being** before **doing**. It is in knowing we are already as accepted, secure, and significant to Christ as we will ever be that we are able to live and lead in freedom. We do not lead to prove, win, or pay back anything to God or others. We simply walk in humble submission to Him before others as we believe in the truths of His Word and in Him who is the Truth.

It may be tempting to carry the full responsibility of establishing your Freedom Ministry and try to rush through these beginning stages to make it happen. Work according to God's timetable. Allow space for growing in the Lord and the freedom He has for you. Learn to listen and wait for His direction, letting Him open doors of opportunity for you. Be found faithful in the small things, trusting the Lord will bring the increase when He sees fit (Luke 16:10).

INVITE

One of the best environments in which to receive God's answer to your prayers for team members is in a group study. During group studies such as *Victory Over the Darkness*, *The Bondage Breaker*, or *The Freedom in Christ Course*, the participants' understanding, interest, and passion will become evident. Another source for finding team members is those who've experienced freedom through a Freedom Appointment and want to share it with others. The testimony of a changed life is one of the most compelling invitations to freedom!

Freedom Ministries often grow very organically. One person finds their freedom in Christ and wants to make sure that others find theirs as well! The good news is shared, and more lives are changed

as people are set free. A small group gathers to study the freedom message, and members begin to live out the Truths that they are learning in their daily lives. This change impacts their families, friends, and community. People around them begin to notice a difference in their attitudes, actions, outlook, and general love for others. And those people begin to ask questions and wonder if that same change is available for them as well.

We in Freedom in Christ often say that it's not our discipleship materials or *The Steps to Freedom* that set people free; Christ and His Truth set people free. Our resources are just tools to help people understand the freedom available to them. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31b-32).

When the Lord brings a potential team member to your attention, you can assess their potential by prayerfully asking these questions:

- **HUMILITY**—Is there evidence of growth and fruit produced from their close relationship with God? How do they handle or talk about the authorities in their ministry and life?
- **HONESTY**—Do they share openly about their spiritual journey? Do they come across as "real"? Can they be trusted to keep confidentiality?
- **COMPASSION**—Do they demonstrate genuine concern for the welfare of people? Do they listen well and take the initiative to reach out to others?
- **DISCERNMENT**—Do they have wisdom and insight concerning people and relationships? Can they find truth in delicate situations without becoming judgmental or prideful?
- **TEACHABILITY**—Are they eager to learn and grow? Do they handle constructive criticism well, or do they become defensive and angry?
- **COMPETENCE AND CHEMISTRY**—Do they have gifts and abilities that complement others on the team?

It may feel like we are suggesting you find perfect people for your team. You will surely want team members who are newly free and journeying toward greater freedom, but you will also want team members who are mature and growing in their maturity.

Freedom and maturity go hand-in-hand. Sometimes it can be easy to think freedom is the final goal in our spiritual journey. It is not. First, we accept Christ as our Savior and gain our new identity. Then we grow in understanding the freedom and new identity we have through our union in Christ. As we grow, we become more like Christ, resulting in maturity (Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 4:3a, Romans 8:28, 29).

The following chart will help you see some distinctions between initial freedom and maturity. It is not exhaustive, but it displays the differences between a believer new to their freedom and a believer who has grown in both freedom and maturity. Most likely, you'll have team members at many different places along the maturity spectrum.

INITIAL FREEDOM	MATURITY
Eyes freshly opened to the lies they have been believing	Quickly recognizes deception; they have trained themselves to distinguish their Shepherd's voice
Learning to take thoughts captive	Makes it a practice of daily taking thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ
Renewed desire for intimacy with God	A deep, intimate relationship with God, tested through trial over time
New zeal for serving Christ	Track record of fruitful ministry, utilizing spiritual gifts in a Biblically balanced way
New understanding of being a child of God, fully accepted, secure, and significant in Christ	Walks in a deep, abiding relationship with Christ. Has fully integrated the truths of acceptance, security, and significance into their beliefs
Beginning to learn how to wage spiritual battle and win	Experienced in fighting the spiritual battle and exercising spiritual authority while remaining humble and dependent on God
Brand new love for the Word of God	Disciplined student of God's Word, which keeps them in close fellowship with Christ and gives wisdom for life and ministry
Fresh surrender to God born out of brokenness	Life lived in daily submission to the Father with a deep, healthy fear of God
New capacity to love and forgive others	A loving, gracious spirit that is expressed in caring service and is appealing to others

In His ministry, Jesus sought out His team and asked them to follow Him. He gave a very specific invitation to each one. The invitation contained information about the nature of the call: “Come follow Me, said Jesus, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

In your ministry, we encourage you to present a clear invitation to those you feel are suitable candidates to serve on your team. Your invitation should include enough information for a potential team member to consider and take to God in prayer. *Asking them to pray about it is essential.* This invitation is most effective when a definite time and place are set aside to talk. Consider having coffee or lunch with the individual rather than simply chatting via text, email, or in passing.

Training up a group of people who believe God has called them to be a part of your Freedom Ministry is very exciting. On the other hand, trying to hold together a group of people who are not sure whether or not God has called them will be discouraging and unproductive. Just because team members feel “called” does not mean the road will be easy. Encourage them to stay, endure, learn, grow, and receive God’s blessings as they do the “good works which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

God will bring you team members with various abilities as needed during different seasons of your Freedom Ministry. Do not be discouraged if a team member serves for a while, helps with a specific task, and then moves on to another opportunity. Turnover is expected and healthy. God knows what you need when you need it and can provide other men and women of His choice for the tasks ahead.

It is vitally important that you do not pick people to be on your ministry team without considerable prayer. By taking time and effort to seek God in identifying and inviting people to join your team, you acknowledge that God must direct every aspect of your ministry. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. How do you see yourself preparing to lead your Freedom Ministry, especially in building a team?
2. Look back over the potential team member qualities/questions in the Invite section. Which of these questions do you find most helpful in discerning who is a good fit for your team?
3. As you consider different people for your team, what would you do if someone seems like a good fit according to some of the questions but not others?

DISCIPLE

Discipleship is the very heart of a Freedom Ministry. Discipleship happens as you train your team members and as you reach out to others to disciple them toward freedom.

Jesus, in the beginning of His public ministry, called His disciples to come and follow Him, and just before leaving this world, called them (and us) to go "...and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19). Discipleship is, at its core, relational. It is the equipping of a student to follow the example of their teacher. It requires closeness, interest, space, and time to question and practice. Jesus modeled this well in His relationships with those He called to follow Him. Freedom leaders strive to live like Jesus, a life that team members would want to imitate, a life that is pleasing to God. Paul advised Timothy to live an exemplary life to "...set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Once you have a team in place and have done preliminary teaching of the freedom message, you can begin more intentional, comprehensive teaching. Teaching is a gift from God intended to build your team for service and unity. Freedom in Christ Ministries offers a wide array of different studies on topics that are relevant to the issues we face today (We'll go into more depth on these materials in a future session). As you teach, your team will become more confident in who they are in Christ and better able to help others embrace their identity in Christ. Along the way, encourage your team to participate in targeted training opportunities, such as in-depth teaching in one or more of the seven "Steps to Freedom", techniques for facilitating fruitful discussion, being a good listener, and how to build and utilize Stronghold Busters.

Discipleship also involves equipping your team members for specific jobs within the ministry through modeling. One good way is to have trainees sit in on Freedom Appointments as Prayer Partners. Though you may only have one Encourager at the start of your ministry (most likely you), we recommend having trainees sit in as Prayer Partners as often as possible. By doing so, they will be able to see how God works through the Freedom Appointment process. Besides the appointment, it's good for the team to see God in action, working through various needs, issues, and people. This builds confidence that He will come through and be faithful to all who call on Him.

All of this requires time. Jesus spent a lot of time with His disciples. Time in this hectic world is a precious commodity, but God has given you all you will need to walk with others patiently. He is taking His time with you, and so you are free to follow His example and take your time with them. As the leader, He called you to "...equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" Ephesians 4:12-13.

NURTURE

The most endearing aspect of our Lord Jesus' team building was the way He nurtured relationships. To nurture means to give affectionate care and attention, supply with nourishment, and to further the development of someone. Jesus nurtured His disciples. He knew them intimately. Our Lord's interaction with Peter after His resurrection is a good indication of the degree of intimacy He had with them. After Peter denied Him, Jesus nurtured Peter's broken and discouraged heart back to health with His repeated question, "Do you truly love me more than these?", "Do you truly love me?", "Do you love me?" (see John 21:15-17). Jesus invited Peter to express his love three times in contrast to his three denials. Jesus knew Peter's heart. He knew that Peter was ashamed and felt inadequate

to love Jesus the way he should. So, Jesus assured Peter that He still loved him and intended to use him in spite of his failure.

When you really know the hearts of your team members, you will know how to nurture them. Getting to know their hearts requires that you spend individual time with them. Learn what makes them tick. What are they struggling with? What breaks their hearts? What brings them joy? What would they like you to pray for personally? In nurturing these relationships, we are free to practice Paul's call in Romans 12 to "let love be genuine... love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another..." (Romans 12:9a,10,12,15,16a).

While getting to know them, be sure you don't spend all your time together talking about ministry plans and ideas. Ask about their life, including their work and families. Be a safe person with whom they can share what's in their hearts without fear of judgment, criticism, or rejection. Learn about their passions, heart's desires, fears, and hopes. Most importantly, take time to discover their relationship and daily walk with Jesus, and wherever they are, encourage them to dive deeper into Him.

Find out how your team members see themselves fitting into the Freedom Ministry. You can also help them discover what roles best fit their spiritual gifts. For example, if they have a gift of hospitality, you could encourage them to provide their home as a location for a study or ministry event, or they could provide refreshments at a team meeting. If they have gifts of compassion and teaching, they may want to become Encouragers. Those passionate about prayer may become members of your prayer team or serve as Prayer Partners during Freedom Appointments. Those with administrative gifts could keep the necessary records, order and organize resources and materials, and schedule appointments. If they don't know their spiritual gifts, consider having them complete a Spiritual Gift Inventory!

Be creative in designing roles within the team that employ the spiritual gifts of individual members. A thriving Freedom Ministry may have a place for graphic designers, schedulers, discussion leaders, food preparers, greeters, speakers, and more. When everyone uses the gifts God gave them, there is a sense of significance and fulfillment. The Scriptural image of the body of Christ being composed of different parts can come alive in your ministry team if you are diligent to help each member discover and utilize their spiritual gifts.

RELEASE

At some point, there will come a time when the Lord encourages the hearts of your team members to step out boldly to walk in the way they've been taught. This is an exciting and uncertain time, but it is exactly what you've been working toward. They have been growing in their freedom and understanding of the message to go and share it with others in a real, impactful way. They will make mistakes at first, but assure them that they have access to the same grace that's been covering you this whole time!

As team members become confident of the principles and practices of a Freedom Ministry, release them to facilitate a Freedom in Christ one-on-one discipleship relationship or a small group study. After being trained as an Encourager, release them to begin taking others through The Steps to Freedom in Christ. Someone who is practiced in prayer could be released to host an in-person or online prayer meeting for team members.

Releasing, in many ways, is teaching your people to say yes to the uncomfortable call of Christ and to follow Him no matter what. They still have you to support them, but they know enough and are strong enough to walk in the way He is leading.

Following Christ's example in relationship with others is absolutely what you're aiming for in your Freedom Ministry leadership. He is both the strong and sure foundation under you, and the plumbline that will keep everything in alignment. You won't always get everything right. You may fail more often than you would like, and progress may be slower than you hoped, but don't give up. This work that He's called you to—your own freedom journey and partnering with others in theirs—will grow your faith in Him stronger and more fruitful than you could've imagined. No matter what you face, the Lord is and will continue to be with you. You already have all you will ever need.



GROUP DISCUSSION 3

1. As you consider these different aspects of team building (Prepare, Invite, Disciple, Nurture, and Release), what stage do you think your Freedom Ministry is in, and why?
2. Do you resonate with any particular stage? Do you find one easier or more exciting than another? What challenges might this present as you set up your ministry team?
3. As the task list grows for establishing a Freedom Ministry, it is normal to feel overwhelmed at times. Take the initiative to make a list of resources or mentors you can turn to for wise counsel or assistance. Along with FICM-USA, what other leaders, friends, or pastors might you turn to?

TEAM MEMBER CONFLICT—BIBLICAL RESOLUTION

As you build your team, you will inevitably encounter relational conflict at some point. If it's not handled well, it can drain you and your people of energy and motivation. We must deal with conflict Biblically and with a pure heart if we want to maintain a strong team. Trials are to be expected since we are working to free people held captive in enemy territory. God desires to see His children living in freedom from sin and dwelling together in unity with the Godhead and with one another (John 17). Satan does not want us to succeed, but "...greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4b). Our part is to be diligent in maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by living obediently before Him (Ephesians 4:3).

The wisest way to deal with conflict is to build a foundation that will form a strong, preemptive shield before it even begins. This may sound idealistic, but if you take time to choose the right team members, train and equip them, and build strong, caring relationships with them, you can prevent many misunderstandings and pathways to conflict. It will not prevent everything, but it can certainly reduce the amount.

When you have team members who are **humble, honest, compassionate, discerning, teachable, competent, and called to the ministry**, you will have far less opportunity for the “flesh” to contribute to conflict. James 4:1 teaches us: “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?”

If you have ever been through a major conflict, you know that it is spiritual war, and unfortunately, there are often serious casualties. Conflict in a fallen world is inevitable, but it doesn't have to be destructive. As a leader, you must know your team members and stay connected with them so that you are aware of any seeds of disagreement or behavior that could lead to conflict (anger, bitterness, exhaustion, violation of confidentiality, etc.). By addressing these quickly and with openness and gentleness, you can greatly reduce the number of incidents and the damage done from them. It helps to view conflict as opportunities for the team to grow in greater love, understanding, and commitment to the Lord and one another.

Appendix A in the book *Restoring Broken Relationships, The Path to Peace and Forgiveness* by Neil T. Anderson, gives excellent guidance on how to handle conflict between two parties. The following process has been gleaned from this book.

Reconciliation is the removal of hostility between two parties and requires genuine *forgiveness* and *repentance*. If these two are lacking, true reconciliation is not possible, and only temporary peace (conciliation or compromise) may be achieved.

True reconciliation begins with each party being reconciled first to God, which was made possible through Jesus's sacrificial death. Reconciliation is typically a two-way street. Even though God does not need to repent, He provided a way for humans to be forgiven and reconciled to Him.

This reconciliation with God enables believers to reconcile with others within the Body of Christ, empowered by the resurrected life of Christ. Christians are instructed to be merciful and forgiving, just like God (Luke 6:36, Eph. 4:32). Love and mercy flow from our restored relationship with God.

Personal and spiritual conflicts must be resolved first by each party, along with submitting to God and resisting the devil's schemes (James 4:7), then reconciliation with others can follow. We recommend scheduling a meeting between the two parties in conflict. With the help of a third neutral party, an action plan like the one below can result in reconciliation.

1. **Acknowledge the Good in One Another:** Each of us has been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and has strengths and weaknesses. The tendency in conflict is to only focus on weaknesses and negative aspects of the other party. Pray aloud together, acknowledging God's presence and unique creation in each of you as children of God. Ask God to reveal the good qualities and characteristics of each party to each other and to help them speak the truth in love during this meeting. After prayer, have each party sit quietly and write down what God revealed to their memories regarding the good qualities of the opposite party, then share them.
2. **Recall the Good Memories:** Conflicts often stem from prior history between the two parties. Before addressing the present conflict, take time asking God to help you recall good memories, common relationships, and interactions between the two parties. Thank Him for the good friendship and any ministry accomplished in the past, and trust Him for future fruit. Follow this prayer time with quiet reflection on the past goodness of God to

each party individually and in ministry together. Again, have each party take a moment to write down the good memories revealed to them by God and share them.

3. **Acknowledge Painful Memories and Experiences:** No one is perfect. Since sin entered the Garden of Eden, people have been hurting and offending one another in various ways. Often, these offenses start small, but when they are not dealt with, they escalate into greater tension or an explosion of hurtful words and behavior. Regardless of the offense, believers are called to walk in the light, meaning to walk consistently with Jesus and live by His instruction (1 John 1:5-9). Believers are also called to speak the truth to one another out of a loving motivation to bring the other person back into fellowship with the community and with God (Eph. 4:15-16, 25).

Each party will now have the opportunity to *calmly and without interruption express their conflict story and share how they were hurt*. First, begin by praying and asking the heavenly Father for guidance of speech, clarity of details, and the softening of hearts. Ask for God's help to empathize with the other party's pain and conflict experience. Also, ask for the courage to repent and forgive.

After each one prays, have them sit silently. Then have them write down the facts and circumstances that led to the offense. Strive for clarity and accuracy. It helps to follow a timeline of what led to the conflict event. Have them take turns sharing their view of the timeline and offense. Make sure each party shares how these circumstances made them feel. Encourage the opposite party to control any defense that may well up in them, but rather try to enter into the other person's painful feelings to stir compassion and empathy.

After each party has shared, they should own and confess their part in the conflict and ask forgiveness. The following is an example script from Anderson's Restoring Broken Relationships:

"From your description of what happened, I understand how I have hurt you. I was wrong, and therefore I sinned against you when I _____ (name all specific offenses), and I ask you to forgive me for what I have done and said to you."

After each party has confessed and forgiven the other, they should each pray aloud, asking God to forgive them and to heal the damage done to the other party.

4. **Forgive from the Heart:** FICM teaches several truths about forgiveness. Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is a choice, a decision of the will. Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin. Forgiveness is choosing not to hold someone's sin against him or her anymore. Don't wait until you feel like forgiving. And finally, forgive from the heart.

Forgiving from the heart means acknowledging your feelings and pain from the conflict, to the extent that it touches the emotional core of your being. It is living out the truths about forgiveness listed above. It is responding in a spiritually and emotionally healthy way, whether the other party asks for forgiveness or not. If both parties forgive, then much healing and restoration can come.

Have each party enter a time of prayer, confessing their role in the conflict before the Lord and owning the damage they caused to the relationship, ministry, and Christ. Below is a sample prayer from *Restoring Broken Relationships*:

Dear heavenly Father, we come to You as Your children. We have sinned and have been sinned against, and it has caused us both much pain. We have sinned against You and damaged Your reputation in Your church body by our words and deeds. We have not honored You in this relationship. We need to experience Your healing grace. Restore to us the joy of our salvation.

We humbly ask that You would heal our damaged emotions and restore our fellowship with You and each other. Give us a love for each other that overcomes the negative feelings we have had. Now we ask for Your grace to enable us to forgive each other from our hearts. Set us free from our past and bind up our broken hearts, we pray in the matchless name of Jesus. Amen.

After prayer, have the parties respond to the other's request for forgiveness, as the Lord leads.

5. **Commit to Live Together in Christian Love:** This requires true heart and behavior change. If no change is evident, then there was no reconciliation. The neutral party can help the others discuss realistic expectations and changes going forward with the relationship or ministry.

Begin this discussion with prayer, asking the Lord for clarity, strength, and healthy change.

Sit for a few minutes, allowing the Lord to bring ideas to mind. It may be helpful for the neutral person to write down initial ideas and then what each party agrees to do or not do to amend the situation. Make sure each party agrees with what it discussed.

If the previous exercises have proven **unsuccessful**, then reconciliation is not possible at this time. However, a peaceful compromise can still be established by writing down some guidelines and expectations as suggested above.

Then, take time to pray together, committing the future agreement and each other to the Lord.

6. **Bless One Another:** There is no better time than the present to practice Luke 6:27-28, the passage about loving our enemies and blessing those who persecute us. Allow the two parties to pray spontaneously for each other, thanking God for this time of reconciliation and renewal.

The overriding goal of this process is to follow the Biblical principle found in Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

Sometimes, a conflict is outside our power to bring resolution and reconciliation. If, after much praying and seeking to follow the principles described above, there is no progress, you may need to ask those on the team to either benevolently agree to disagree or take a leave of absence from the team while the Lord does a necessary work in their hearts. It would be wise to consult with the spiritual leadership of your church or ministry if things progress to this point. If the conflict results in legal ramifications, please seek outside professional help.

As the leader, your role is to seek to bring understanding and agreement and demonstrate a Spiritfilled walk of freedom in the midst of conflict. Remember, Jesus was never threatened by criticism because He had confidence in the truth. He also remained dependent on His Father and did nothing on His own initiative.

So Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him (JOHN 8:28-29).

Jesus was gentle, humble, loving, and forgiving. We must follow His example under the control of the Holy Spirit. When we stay dependent on Christ, He will lead us into truth, which brings unity and harmony through brotherly love.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 JOHN 4:11,21).

The above guidance, when understood and put in place, will prepare you to deal with whatever you face and build a foundation that will make you much less likely to encounter conflict. Remember, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 JOHN 4:4B).



GROUP DISCUSSION 4

1. Have you ever used a formal conflict resolution process with your family, friends, or ministry? If comfortable, share your experience with the group.
2. Recall a time when you have seen a conflict handled poorly. Mentally replay how the scenario might have happened if you used the reconciliation process from this session.
3. How do you respond as a leader when others have issues with YOU? Do you admit mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and take ownership of the consequences?
4. As a leader, how can you implement this type of reconciliation process with your current or future team?

RESOURCES

- **Neil T. Anderson**
 - *Restored*
 - *Restoring Broken Relationships: The Path to Peace and Forgiveness*



SESSION 8

MULTIPLYING THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP

INTRODUCTION

In a previous session, we discussed the foundation of our Freedom Ministry as the Three T's: Truth, Turning, and Transformation.

Truth is delivered primarily through teaching who God is and who we are through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Turning from sin and toward Jesus is repentance, often accomplished in a fuller way by using *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*.

Transformation occurs when we grow in freedom and maturity, resulting in fruitfulness.

Truth, turning, and transformation yield their best fruit within a relational community using the method of discipleship.

Biblical discipleship is the commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus and spend time getting to know Him to become more like Him. It is not merely about transferring knowledge, but about life transformation. Jesus called people to follow Him—in word, deed, and heart.

Before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples and therefore all believers to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

In this session, we will revisit Jesus’ discipleship model for team building from the last session and apply it to those you will serve through your Freedom Ministry. As you can see, the model applies to both finding team members and reaching others with the freedom message. Read through the

aspects of the model again below. Keep in mind your ministry audience. How will you effectively reach them?

PREPARE: He prepared Himself through prayer and the Word of God.

INVITE: He identified and invited people to follow Him.

DISCIPLE: He taught them truths and equipped them to follow His example.

NURTURE: He developed and nurtured personal relationships with His followers.

RELEASE: He sent them out to serve in ministry as the Lord directed.

Whether you are starting by yourself or with a team, it is vital that you continually walk with the Spirit, seeking the Lord for ministry direction. Your heart needs to be fully submitted to what He has for you, your team, and the Freedom Ministry.

Start thinking about how you will share the news about your Freedom Ministry discipleship program. What is required by your organization for promotions or printed advertisements? Remember to work in tandem with your organizational leadership and respect the direction of your spiritual authority (Session 6: Establishing Your Ministry Foundation). Also, start to pray about who you might invite to a new Freedom in Christ study.

As the Lord brings people to join your study groups, you and your team will have opportunities to disciple others toward freedom and fruitfulness, who will then become mature followers of Christ! Freedom Ministry discipleship can be exciting and rewarding! The methods we use depend on the size and nature of our audience. **With large audiences**, teaching study content to the whole group and then breaking into smaller groups for discussion is an effective method of communicating the freedom message. **With individuals**, we have the opportunity to teach the freedom message as we live it out in relationship with them. This session will cover both methods, giving guidelines and tips on how to disciple well within your Freedom Ministry.

GROUPS

Small groups provide a powerful atmosphere for life change. We believe that life change comes when people are connected in loving, supportive relationships and encounter Jesus in the Bible. Small groups allow each person to spend personal time with Jesus in the Word and in prayer, engage in Biblical discussion, and receive personal encouragement and nurturing from others. The whole goal of a small group is to provide relationships, care, and a support system that fosters spiritual growth.

Small groups are the heartbeat of your Freedom Ministry. People are exposed to the truths of who they are in Christ, while in a safe atmosphere, to make life-transforming changes. Many churches and ministries already utilize small groups for different studies. Freedom in Christ Ministries offers Bible-based courses that can serve this purpose and help grow your Freedom Ministry. We will discuss resources in a future session, but for now, consider the typical small group setting as one of your best tools. In the future, you'll need to make decisions about what content to use, who will lead the groups, and the day, time, and place to meet.

Let's look at what it takes to lead a group. Often, the Freedom Ministry leader is also a small group leader, but that does not need to be the case. Stay open to the Holy Spirit's guidance. He may ask you to lead, but He may also bring others to lead the small groups.

These four questions can help you discern whether you or another team member is ready to lead a small group.

1. Is the Lord calling you to lead a small group?

If He is, He will make it clear through prayer and guidance. If He is not calling you to be the group leader, He will bring another person to assist you or fill in your place. It's important to consider your giftings and whether they fit with this type of group discipleship. Spend time in prayer, considering whether God is calling you to this role.

2. How is your spiritual health?

We are all at different places on our spiritual journey. Are you at a place of maturity where you are ready to lead by example? Are you struggling with anger, gossip, addictions, or behaviors that are unbecoming of a leader? If you are struggling, make sure you get help and confess your struggles to a mentor or pastor to see if you are ready to lead others. As a group leader, you are leading others to follow our ultimate example, Jesus. Are you striving to be more like Jesus? This is not a call to perfection but a call to growth. We are human and will make mistakes; this is where God's grace comes in.

3. How is your emotional health?

Are you at a place where you can lead a group of people struggling with their burdens while working on your own life? Are you going through anything difficult and stressful, such as a health challenge, or are you grieving a recent loss? Difficult life circumstances do not automatically disqualify you from leading a small group, but it's good to be aware of your load. Take a moment to do an honest assessment of your emotional health and whether you are at a place to minister to others.

4. Can you make time to lead a small group?

We use the phrase "make time" because we are all busy, but we make time for the things that are important to us. This may be part of your "load." It will take time to run a small group and invest in others, but don't disqualify yourself just because you are busy. God may still call you to lead. This requires great discernment and time before the Lord to hear Him clearly on this topic. It feels good to be needed, and leadership feels powerful, but you may need to invest in other areas of the Freedom Ministry or in your life. Take time before the Lord to discern your motives and margin.

Watch for others in your group who exhibit gifts and abilities to serve in the Freedom Ministry. This can be a wonderful opportunity to take a rising leader under your wing and begin to train them, giving them opportunities to hone their skills. For example, you could give them responsibilities during the group, beginning small and growing in responsibility, such as attendance, recording prayer requests, helping others find resources, leading parts of the discussion, or leading all of the discussion. *Reproducing skilled leadership is crucial to the vitality of your ministry.* The Apostle Paul exhorted young Timothy to do the same with the gospel in 2 Timothy 2:1-2. "You then, my child, be

strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” Take advantage of these opportunities.

Leading a small group can take a lot of time and energy, but the reward of watching God change lives and heal hearts makes every moment worth it.

SMALL GROUP TIPS

Once your ministry is ready with a set time, place, and study material, you may feel you have everything you need to launch a small group study. However, dealing with people in a group dynamic holds many nuances. In this section, we want to cover some tips and guidelines that may be helpful as you enter into group ministry.

Processing the Content

Facilitating a group lesson and the corresponding discussion takes much more wisdom and discernment than just reading the lesson script and asking the discussion questions. The newest educational research indicates that helping people recall what they’ve read reinforces the content. Time is also a huge factor in providing the mental space to process and implement what was learned into your daily life, affecting positive change.

Group discussion is the best tool to allow for recall and reinforcement of the lesson. The more the group discusses how the information impacts their lives, the more they learn and retain. Make it your goal to ask good, open-ended questions that allow people to discover the truth for themselves rather than just telling them the truth. Often, good questions are found within the material. Sometimes you may need to come prepared with your own or better-formed questions than the ones provided. Try not to answer the questions for them. *If you are hearing only one voice and that voice is your own, then you are talking too much and not “facilitating.” Use questions and sharing to launch the discussion, then guide it toward maximum application, remembering each person is at a different place on their spiritual journey and will answer from that place.*

Coming Prepared

As the group leader, you need to know the material well and give time for the Lord to speak through the material into your life. *Leaders are learners.* Challenge your group members to complete lessons early in the week, allowing time for the Lord to work. Ask questions with the assumption that they have studied the material. This helps to establish lesson preparedness from the onset. The goal is for them to share from the overflow of what the Lord is teaching them. Practice grace on those weeks when someone comes unprepared. Life happens. The facilitator may need to check in and privately address a consistent lack of preparedness or promptness to meetings. There may be other issues going on behind the scenes.

Quiet Groups

Sometimes a group will be very quiet and not participate much at all. A good way to get a quiet group to open up is for the facilitator to share what was meaningful to them or something they

learned from God in the lesson. You can draw out quieter participants by asking them to look up a verse, answer a question, or share what they have learned as a way of pulling them into the group discussion. Be mindful and cautious, as this may shut them down more, depending on why they are quiet in the first place. A private conversation may help build the relationship and encourage them.

Don't be concerned if you prompt the group with a question that is followed by extended silence. Sometimes participants are thinking, and someone will answer if you are patient. This gives time for the Holy Spirit to work as well. There exists a "Rule of 15," where a leader waits 15 seconds for someone to answer. It helps to train the group that it is ok to allow silent time for thought before they answer, so other group members who are uncomfortable with silence don't pipe in to ease their nerves. If, after giving ample time, no one answers, try to rephrase the question, making it more specific, or give an example of an answer. As you get to know your group and your group gets to know each other, you will be able to draw out the discussion more effectively.

Chatty Groups

Sometimes the issue isn't a quiet group but a chatty group or a chatty person within the group. You will need to rein them in and work to keep them and the group on task. If someone dominates the discussion and doesn't self-correct, you could use statements like the following:

"We haven't heard from Mary today. Mary, would you be willing to share your thoughts?"

"Bill, what do you think about what Jim just said? Does that resonate with you?"

If someone tries to turn your meeting into a personal counseling session, you will need to establish compassionate control of the group and discussion. You could use these kinds of statements.

"I hear what you are saying, and I am sorry that is happening to you. Can I give you a call later so we can talk it through?"

"Let's take a moment and pray for Bob right now."

Grace-based Groups

Often, there will be someone who joins the small group who may not really be ready for group discipleship. These members cause us to increase our prayer coverage and show us our need for the Lord to keep us well supplied with love, kindness, patience, grace, and mercy. They may be new to the faith, new to community, battling their own trauma, or have a difficult personality. They may behave defiantly, sow discord, or not work well with others. While our first response is prayerful, loving, and corrective leadership, we cannot be afraid to pivot our approach with them and have a private conversation about their needs, behavior, or participation within the group. Depending on the situation, you may be able to offer one-on-one discipleship as an alternative path forward. Sometimes, for the sake of the growth and well-being of the group at large, we must have creative solutions that seek to leave no one behind or hijack the group. The hope is that these types of participants may gain the necessary loving and attentive care in a one-on-one setting that will enable them to grow and flourish, so that they become an asset to a small group in the future.

A word of caution: If you sense a troubled participant is beyond your ability to disciple and has not responded to group boundaries, please seek additional help from your ministry leadership or outside help. Ministry often presents great challenges to us as leaders, but the Lord is not always asking us to tackle those challenges alone, or at all. We will discuss individual discipleship later in this session.

Depending on the group, it can be helpful to create group guidelines at the beginning, especially if the purpose of the group serves those affected by grief, abuse, addiction, or other issues that lean toward sensitivity, confidentiality, and difficult conversations. Other groups dealing with lighter topics may only need gentle reminders about confidentiality or sensitivity.

Some possible group guidelines may include:

- We will all strive to arrive on time and put our full focus on the lesson, discussion, and each other. If online, we will do our best not to multitask, check email, or play with our phones as much as possible during our group meeting.
- We will come to the group as prepared as possible with our materials in hand, lesson completed, with hearts and minds ready to engage in discussion. Of course, there will be weeks where grace is needed and extended. Life happens, and we are not perfect.
- We will strive to support each other in prayer and communication inside and outside of the group.
- All meetings are confidential. Nothing should be shared with anyone outside of the group without permission.
- This group is a safe place. We allow emotions and sharing. All feelings are acceptable to God and to us. We encourage a healthy and godly response (not reaction) to those feelings.
- There is no place for judgment or shame in this group. God's grace flows through this group.
- We are all at a unique place on our spiritual journeys with Christ. Though we may not agree with every action or decision of an individual, we will accept and respect each person as a creation of God, who is striving to grow closer to the Lord.
- One person may not know as much about God or the Bible, but we will work hard to create an environment where no one is made to feel inferior.
- We are here to learn and grow ourselves, not fix each other. We will speak about ourselves and our own experiences when giving feedback. The only person we can change is ourselves.
- We avoid preachy tones and the use of the words "should," "always," and "never."
- If meeting online, we will only record a meeting for an express purpose and with the full permission of everyone present in the group. Once the recording has served its purpose, the file will be deleted. Possible recording circumstances could be to accommodate a participant who had to miss meetings due to illness or a family emergency.

We hope these tips and guidelines serve you in your small group ministry. Again, we believe working with people in small groups, helping them process truth for life transformation, is one of the most rewarding roles in ministry. If you continue to strive toward Christlikeness on your spiritual journey while using the information gained in these sessions, you will be well on your way to reproducing yourself as a leader and multiplying your ministry, leading to growth and change within your church or community.



GROUP DISCUSSION 1

1. As you consider your current or future ministry, who could lead groups or whom could you disciple to lead groups in the future?
2. Which of the four group leader questions made the most impact on you?
3. Which of the small group tips resonated with you and your experience? Share a time you handled a difficult group situation well.

INDIVIDUALS

While classes and small groups are planned and organized, individual discipleship happens more organically. We have a conversation with someone who desires freedom but struggles to appropriate truth in their lives. Or we have a dear friend who has battled an addiction or behavior for years. They love God and try hard, but victory seems unattainable. Sometimes we have a person in class who is a first-generation Christian, and he or she has no foundation for beginning their journey to freedom. Also, trauma and crisis often open doors for meaningful conversation. These are all examples of fertile ground for an individual discipling relationship.

One-on-one discipleship can be wonderful and develop into a lasting mentoring relationship; however, please heed a word of caution. Sometimes, participants may not seem heavily wounded at first. They may come across as gentle, loving souls grateful for your help. But heavily wounded people almost always need more than what one individual can give. This is not a failure on your part. It typically takes a whole team of trained professionals, with a clear plan, to give the support that is needed in these situations. Keep in mind that even though Freedom in Christ is a discipleship ministry, it is also a spiritual warfare ministry. There will certainly be people and warfare sent from our spiritual enemy to disrupt and destroy you and your freedom work. Sometimes warfare comes in the form of these very needy people with heart-wrenching struggles. As a leader, you want to extend compassion and help. This is what Freedom Ministry is all about, right?

To a certain extent, this is correct. However, we have seen ministries take on difficult, needy people as individual discipleship projects, and the load became too much for the ministry to bear. If you do not have pastors or professionals you can refer more serious cases to, you may find yourself and

your ministry hijacked by the weight of one person's needs. They may leave you burnt out and your ministry in shambles.

We are **NOT** saying you never take on difficult or complex people and their situations. We **ARE** saying and highly encouraging you to walk closely with the Spirit so you can discern when to take on these cases. They almost always involve a very time-consuming and lengthy process that involves a whole team.

In the meantime, know your limits and boundaries. Often, there are early warning signs when boundaries begin to give way under the weight of the demanding needs of a complex situation. If you find any of the following statements to be true, you may be in a complex situation.

- Are you getting phone calls and texts in increasing volume even during nonworking hours or family time?
- Do you feel you are being pulled in opposite directions and cannot get your main ministry work completed?
- Are you making a lot of exceptions to your normal schedule and time set aside for yourself or others?
- Are you receiving feedback that indicates you are someone's hero or savior?
- Do you feel your ministry and maybe your life are beginning to unravel, and things are slipping out of control?

If any of these are happening, we encourage the following, out of a desire to seek wisdom, not out of a spirit of fear.

- Avoid making open-ended, idealistic offers, like "Call me any time!" or "I'll always be there for you!" Be conservative with what you commit to.
- Promptly reach out to your pastors or those who are in spiritual authority over you and your ministry. It is wise and kind to everyone if you get help and guidance as soon as you recognize one of these situations.
- Encourage the heavily wounded person (complex participant) to meet with you and your pastor or spiritual authority so that the authority becomes aware of the person's wounded history by their own report.
- Work in collaboration with your pastor or spiritual authority and ministry staff to refer this person to the appropriate medical or mental professionals, such as counselors, doctors, and therapists. Depending on the situation, it may be the best step to refer your participant to resources outside your church or ministry.
- Discern when you release them to pastoral or professional care. At that release, your new responsibility is to pray for them. You cannot do more than you are trained or legally allowed to do in this Freedom Ministry situation. We will discuss this more in the Freedom Appointment sessions to come.

If the Lord has opened a door for you to disciple an individual who is not considered a complex participant, you may wonder how to structure and maximize your time together. Just like with a small

group, you'll need to decide where and when to meet. You will want to know what is required of you, the mentor, and what should be expected from the individual. There are no hard and fast rules, but these suggestions may prove helpful.

LOGISTICS

If the purpose of your time together is discipleship, we recommend you have a study or some other content you are focused on, similar to a small group. This keeps your time together centered on spiritual growth. Any of the beginning FICM studies are wise choices: *Victory Over the Darkness*, *Freedom in Christ*, and *The Grace Course* are excellent individual and group studies that encourage discipleship.

Most studies provide discussion questions within the study, or a separate study guide is available. Study guides reinforce the material being read and allow the learner to fully digest the concepts being covered.

Your meeting time can be very flexible. We recommend you plan enough time to meet together for quality discussion, but have a set end time if boundaries are an issue. The location is vital to the atmosphere of the meeting and the ability to have a good conversation. A noisy coffee shop or restaurant may inhibit your purpose. You will want a space that is quiet and comfortable - and somewhat private. Consider the spiritual environment in the room you choose. The first choice would be a room in your church or ministry, if available. Depending on the spiritual issues of the person you are meeting with, we caution against using your home or theirs. Remember the spiritual battle we wage in the heavenlies. Meeting online is always an option for both local and distance meetings. Virtual meetings offer privacy and convenience. Take time to work out these details when establishing an individual discipleship journey. Allow for grace and adjust as needed along the way.

EXPECTATIONS

The final practical consideration we'll cover is expectations. As we mentioned previously, the expectations we place on participants are pretty straightforward. He or she is expected to read the material and complete the study guide or follow whatever direction you have given as the leader. As you meet and develop this relationship, the leader will want to foster a safe and healthy sharing environment. We do this in many ways: actively listen, maintain eye contact, be supportive, use open body language, and do not rush the conversation. As your participant becomes more comfortable, an honest and fruitful conversation will follow.

While maintaining healthy boundaries, make sure you are responsive to calls and texts. Try to find things to do aside from church and class. In some instances, we are asking people to "do life" in a way they've never observed before. It's more helpful to see the Christian life than just to hear about it. The early church recognized the importance of "doing life" together.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

ACTS 2:46-47

Although the practical considerations of one-on-one discipleship are important, the beauty of this model becomes apparent in the ways both disciple and discipler find freedom, healing, and maturity as their relationship with Christ and one another deepens. As the Body of Christ walks together, we move from knowing about God to knowing God (and each other).

Whether you are working with large groups, small groups, or individuals, discipleship is the Biblical method to foster freedom and fruitfulness. As you keep your eyes on your heavenly Father, follow the example of Jesus Christ, and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, you will grow into the leader He is calling you to become and point many lives to Him. All for His glory!



GROUP DISCUSSION 2

1. Have you ever discipled someone individually? What have you learned from this section that would have proven helpful during that experience?
2. Not everyone feels comfortable or called to disciple individually. If the opportunity presented itself, how would you respond?



SESSION 9

NETWORKING & RESOURCING YOUR MINISTRY

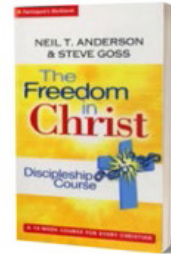
INTRODUCTION

It's often very helpful to understand where you've come from before you can make wise decisions about where you are going. In this session, we are going to share with you some of the history and development of Freedom in Christ Ministries over the years, as well as where we sense the Lord is leading us. We will also cover parts of our organizational structure, how to network in your geographical region, resources for your Freedom Ministry, and what is available on our website and social media. All these tools will help you remain connected with us while you set out to build your own Freedom Ministry.

FICM HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1989**— Freedom In Christ Ministries officially begins as a speaking conference based on the teaching and counseling ministry of Dr. Neil T. Anderson, a former pastor and professor. The first office opens in La Habra, California.
- 1990**— The ministry publishes *Victory Over the Darkness* and later *The Bondage Breaker*, including *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* in the appendix.
- 1992**— Freedom in Christ branches out from the US with representatives in Canada and Switzerland.
- 1993**— Youth ministry begins within Freedom in Christ Ministries through Rich Miller and Dave Park. They work together to release several youth freedom resources.
- 2001**— Joe Wasmond is appointed the new President of FICM.

2002— The US office moves to Knoxville, Tennessee. 2004— Dr. Neil T. Anderson and Steve Goss (then UK Director) co-wrote *The Freedom In Christ Discipleship Course* as a 13-week small group resource for church leaders.



2006— Rich Miller is appointed the new President of FICM.

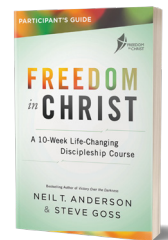
2007— Freedom in Christ Ministries International (FICMI) officially begins. www.freedominchrist.org.

2008— Community Freedom Ministry University (CFMU) launches in the US. Training is now available for others to take the freedom message back to their church, lessening the load of the conference circuit.

2012— Steve Goss moves from UK Director to FICMI's first Executive Director. Steve Goss begins an active campaign to develop leaders around the world, including in creative access countries.

2012— FICM Youth Ministry becomes Generation Freedom under the directorship of Chris Campbell.

2017— The newly revised *Freedom in Christ Course* is now a 10-week small group resource that includes *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. It releases with accompanying videos on the subscription platform *FreedomStream*, and a new Freedom in Christ app for cell phones.



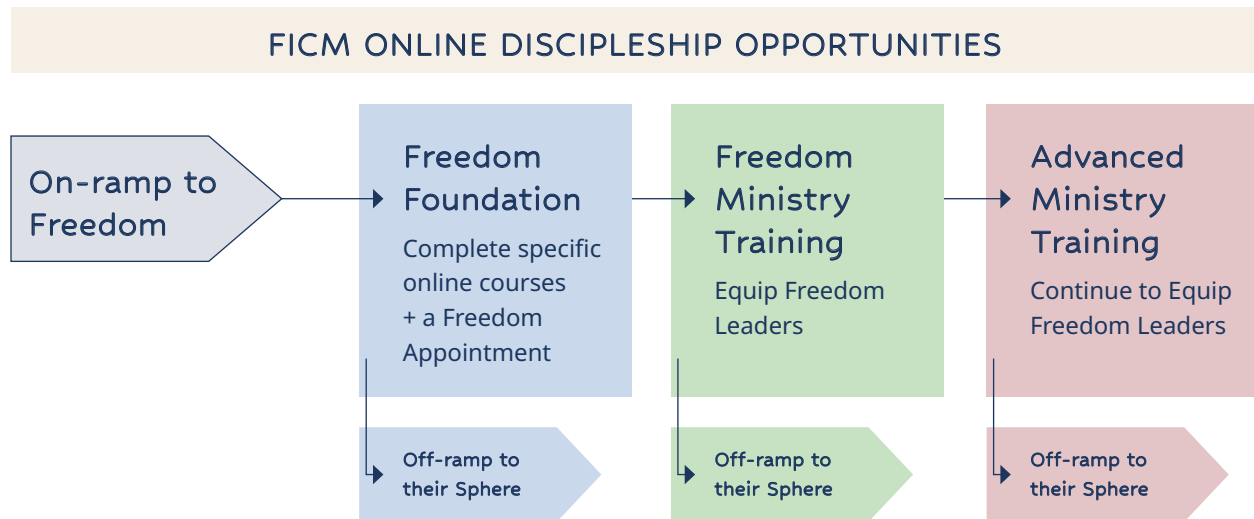
2019— Dan Studt is appointed the new President of FICM-USA.

2021— Generation Freedom becomes GenFree under the directorship of Mellisa Pressley.

2025— Freedom Ministry Training (FMT) is released as a new and improved leadership training tool to bring the message of freedom to all ministry spheres. It replaces CFMU.

FICM-USA

Our mission focuses on helping believers walk free and fruitful in Jesus Christ through transforming discipleship. We accomplish this by introducing the freedom message through free digital resources on our website, offering online group courses that include freedom appointments, and equipping leaders through trainings like this one, so they can return to their sphere and spread the freedom message. The basics of our discipleship process are depicted below.



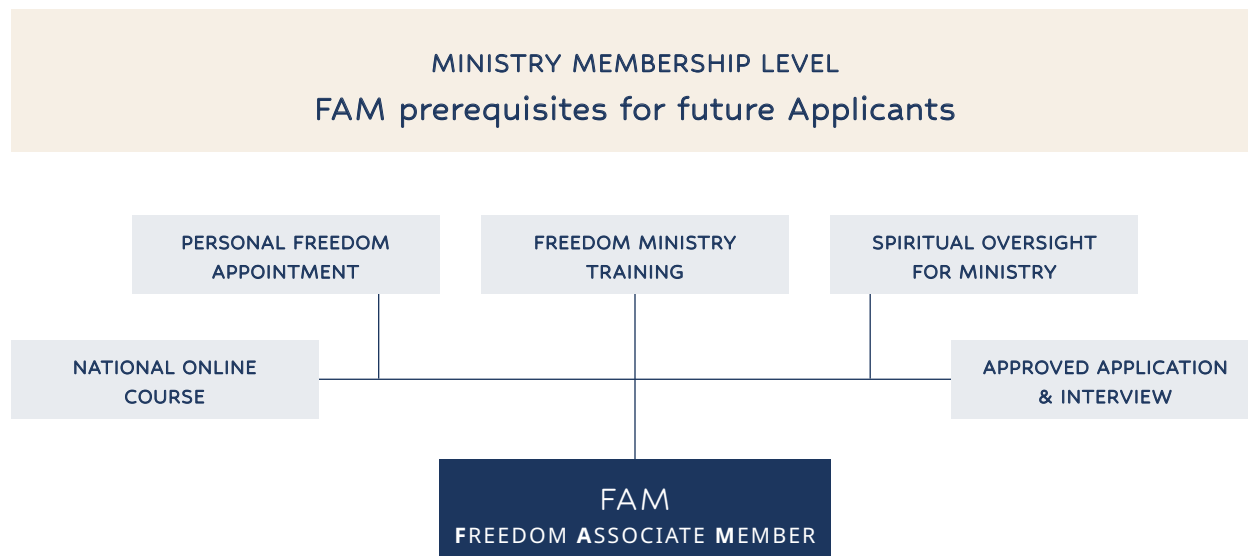
Our vision is to reach all age demographics with the freedom message using multiple modes and methods of sharing, teaching, and training. In the future, we plan to build on our training materials to reach many different people groups. Toward that end, we already have other areas of FICM, including Latinos USA, www.ficm.org/latinos-usa, a branch of our ministry that reaches our Latin American friends living in the US. We also have GenFree, <https://genfree.ficm.org>, which reaches and resources young people and parents with the message of freedom. FICM-USA has published a children's book, *Extraordinary Max*, with a second book close to publication. We are excited about the future as the Lord leads us in this vision. Check out our US website at www.ficm.org. Our US online bookstore can be found at www.freedominchrist.com.

THE FREEDOM NETWORK & ORGANIZATION

Once you finish this training, there is no need to feel like a lone ranger in your Freedom Ministry. You can become a part of the FICM family by applying to be a Freedom Associate Member (FAM). FAM is a network of US-based freedom leaders organized for community and support.

To become a Freedom Associate Member, you must complete an application and interview by the FAM Team. Once the team approves your membership application, you will be invited to participate in FICM national and regional prayer and share times. You will also receive a discount off the retail

prices of most materials purchased through our online bookstore, an automatic invitation to all FICM regional, national, and international gatherings, and the opportunity to serve in leadership roles within FICM, USA.



FICM-USA has a Board of Directors that works with the President on vision casting and decision-making. There is also a National Leadership Team composed of several representatives from across the nation. The national office in Knoxville, TN, houses our bookstore and is run by a small on-site staff.

To help keep all of our Freedom Associate Members and Staff connected, we have divided the US map into three super regions that further divide into smaller regions as needed.

- **EAST SUPER REGION**
 - NE—Northeast Region (CT, DE, MA, ME, MD, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VA, VT, WV)
 - SE—Southeast Region (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)
- **CENTRAL SUPER REGION**
 - NC—North Central Region (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, ND, NE, SD, WI)
 - SC—South Central Region (AR, KS, LA, MO, OK, TX)
- **WEST SUPER REGION**
 - NW—Northwest Region (ID, MT, OR, WA, WY)
 - SW—Southwest Region (AZ, CA, CO, NM, NV, UT)
 - PAC—Pacific Region (AK, HI)

Each of the regions has a leadership team to serve and support you and your ministry in multiple ways.

Regional leadership teams include the following:

- A **Regional Director of Ministry Relationships** heads up all leadership in their region and runs regular regional leadership meetings. The Regional Director of Ministry Relationships' role is to network Christian leaders within the region to spread and support the freedom message.
- A **Regional Director of Prayer** keeps the region united through regular prayer and share times.
- A **Regional Director of Member Care** remains in relationship with the Freedom Associate Members (FAM) and provides spiritual support through prayer and guidance for their ministry.
- A **Regional Contact Coordinator** helps connect people from outside the ministry who are interested in personal freedom to those inside the ministry who can help them on their freedom journey.

FICM-USA is unique in that the majority of those who serve with the ministry are not located in or near the ministry's home office in Knoxville, TN. Most of our staff members, scattered around the US, are not salaried but what we call Field Staff. A Field Staff member functions much like a missionary. They raise their own support and spend their time working with others, sharing about the ministry and resources available through Freedom in Christ as the Lord leads. Field Staff are serving at all levels of FICM-USA.

That brings our conversation back to you! While you serve in your church or community, you can connect others with Freedom in Christ Ministries, and you can personally connect with other FAM in your area. If you have questions or need prayer or support, please reach out to your regional leadership team for help or another FAM member. If your regional leadership team does not have the answers you are looking for, they will connect you with the national leadership or office staff.

You can find more information and several free resources right on the US website, www.ficm.org.

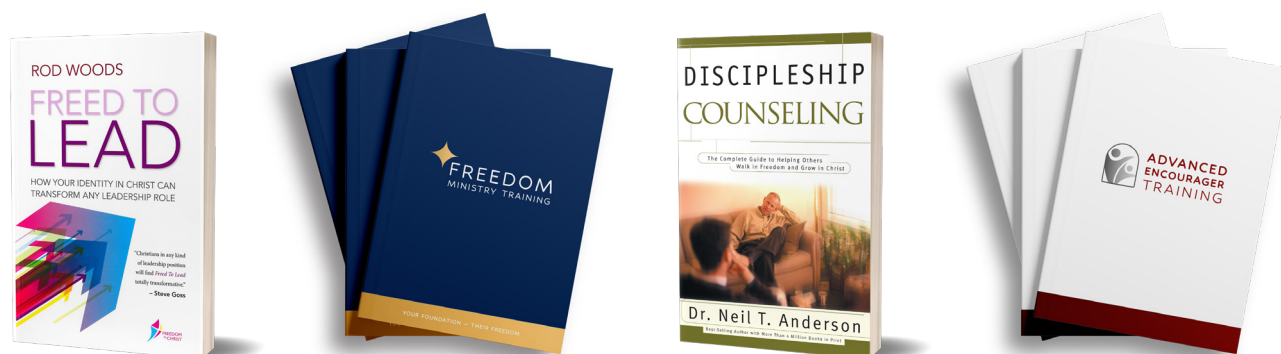
PRINTED STUDIES & TRAININGS

Our resources have grown beyond conferences and printed books to e-books, videos, social media, and online training communities like the one you are in right now. As previously mentioned, using the freedom studies in small groups is a great way to reach others with the freedom message and potentially gain new leaders for your local ministry. We recommend beginning with the Freedom in Christ Course to lay the foundation of Biblical freedom principles and allow each person to experience a Freedom Appointment. After the foundation is laid, there are several other small group studies that will lead your people into deeper discipleship through addressing specific issues we all face. Pray and ask the Lord which studies best meet the needs of your people.

Studies for establishing personal freedom in groups:



Studies for building upon the freedom message and training others in freedom leadership:



DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA

Many of our studies have accompanying **videos** that can be used to enhance small-group learning and discussion. These videos can be obtained via subscription to FreedomStream through the international website, <https://freedominchrist.org/freedomstream/subscription>. Many videos can also be found on Rightnow Media, www.rightnowmedia.org, a popular digital media service used by thousands of ministries and organizations worldwide. Several crisis centers use the platform BrightCourse. BrightCourse is a subscription-based video-streaming service for providers who want to help their clients learn about topics such as prenatal care, parenting, relationships, life skills, and more. Several related FICM resources are available through this service at www.brightcourse.com.



rightnow MEDIA

BrightCourse

There is a **Freedom in Christ Course** app with videos, songs, devotionals, and truth lists. There is a **Stronghold Buster** app where you can create your own buster complete with notifications. There is also an app for **Disciple**, a freedom study for younger adults, and an app for **The Grace Course**. YouVersion **Bible** app hosts The Wonder of Grace, a short supplemental video series used to enhance The Grace Course learning experience. Search for these in your app store.



There are multiple free videos on all kinds of topics from multiple speakers, including Dr. Neil T. Anderson, available on **FICM's YouTube channel**. Subscribe to FreedomInChristMinistries.

Instructional **podcasts** containing the audio of the course videos for *The Freedom in Christ Course* (English and Spanish), *The Grace Course* (1st edition), *Freed to Lead*, and *Keys to Health, Wholeness and Fruitfulness* can be found under “**Freedom in Christ**” on your **podcast app**. Also, check out FICM-USA's **Stories of Freedom** podcast, where you can hear stories of people who have overcome obstacles, gained freedom, and found abundant life in Christ.



Follow us on socials.

Facebook: [Freedom in Christ Ministries USA](https://www.facebook.com/freedominchristusa)



Instagram: [@freedominchrist_usa](https://www.instagram.com/freedominchrist_usa)

Most notable websites at a glance:

- FICM-USA
 - Website: <https://www.ficm.org/>
 - GenFree: <https://genfree.ficm.org/>
 - Latinos USA: <https://www.ficm.org/latinos-usa/>
 - US Bookstore: <https://freedominchrist.com/>
 - Email: info@ficm.org
- FICM-International
 - Website: <https://www.freedominchrist.org/>
 - Email: office@freedominchrist.org
 - Find your country: <https://www.freedominchrist.org/FIC-around-the-world>



GROUP DISCUSSION & HOMEWORK

1. What is attractive to you about becoming a Freedom Associate Member? If you have any questions about what that involves, please bring them up with the group.
2. Find the Free Resources page on the US website's top menu bar and browse all that is available. Share anything you found helpful or exciting with your group.
3. Whether you have already started doing freedom ministry in your sphere or you are preparing to do freedom ministry, which studies have you found the most helpful, and why?
4. Go to the Freedom in Christ YouTube page. Browse the many videos and share what you observed with your group.
5. Which digital and social media are you already using to remain connected to FICM, and what do you like about them? Are there any that you'd like to check out?



SESSION 10

THE FREEDOM APPOINTMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Steps to Freedom in Christ and the “Freedom Appointment” were born out of the ministry of Dr. Neil T. Anderson. Dr. Anderson developed the freedom method on the college campus and during speaking conferences called “Living Free in Christ,” where he helped people deal with their personal and spiritual conflicts. Today, his teachings and the prayer and repentance process called *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* are used all over the world.

We hope that this training will help you understand and use *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* regularly as your sharpest and most valuable Freedom Ministry tool.

All sessions in this training will prepare you to conduct a Steps to Freedom in Christ appointment, which is simply called a Freedom Appointment. No two appointments will be alike, nor should they be. Each Participant comes to the appointment from a unique place on their freedom journey, carrying their own kind of spiritual baggage. Everyone involved in the appointment must be walking closely with the Lord to follow His voice and guidance through an appointment. This training will equip you to guide a Participant through a Freedom Appointment, but the results fully depend on God.

We will focus on **best practices**, build on the Biblical concepts behind *The Steps*, and share effective methods of stewarding an appointment. There are several versions of *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*, depending on the age of the participant and the study in which The Steps are found. There are the original Steps, Leadership Steps, Grace Course Steps, Keys to Health Steps, and The Marriage Course Steps. There is also a new GenFree version geared toward younger generations that will hopefully be released in 2026. Each of these versions has been adapted to uniquely fit the theme of the freedom study or audience for which they were written.

We cannot train you in each of the individual versions here, nor do we really need to. Each version is designed to be self-explanatory. However, it is wise for you to be very familiar with whichever version of The Steps you use in appointments. There is no need to stick to just one version; use the version that best fits the participant and the context. **We do recommend that a Participant first process**

through the original **Steps to Freedom in Christ** before proceeding to the themed **Steps**. This will lay a solid foundation of freedom that they can build upon with additional studies and Steps.

THE FREEDOM APPOINTMENT

To start off with, let's define a Freedom Appointment. **A Freedom Appointment is a gentle encounter with God that provides a Scriptural way to resolve personal and spiritual conflicts in seven distinct areas of a person's life and relationship with God.**

They are typically scheduled following a freedom study. Once the Participant understands the Biblical foundation of their identity and freedom in Christ, they are ready for the Appointment. We highly recommend that Freedom Appointments be done within the context of a Freedom Ministry under the authority of spiritual leadership, such as a pastor, a leadership board, or other spiritual directorship.

The roles involved in a Freedom Appointment:

- The **Participant** who is seeking freedom and requests a Freedom Appointment.
- **God's Holy Spirit** to help, prompt, guide, and encourage the Participant toward freedom.
- The **Encourager** who leads the Participant through the Freedom Appointment.
- The **Prayer Partner** who supports the Participant and Encourager in prayer throughout the process.
- The **enemy** who is present to distract and disrupt.

Entering a Freedom Appointment is like stepping into a holy place where the Lord is present, waiting for His invitation to cleanse and mend a willing soul. The Encourager and Prayer Partner assist the Participant in this process as the Participant humbly stands before the Lord. This is a serious spiritual responsibility and should not be entered into casually or flippantly. All three people are on holy ground, fighting a spiritual battle for a soul to accept and grow in their freedom in Christ.

THE PARTICIPANT

Various motivations bring a Participant (also known as an Inquirer) to a freedom appointment.

Some appropriate and healthy motivations:

- A desire to get right with God.
- A desire to resolve issues causing interference in their relationship with God.
- A desire to resolve personal issues causing interference in their relationships with others and their ability to live the life God created them to live.

Some motivations that may indicate it is not a beneficial time for a Participant to go through a freedom appointment:

- Someone else requested the Freedom Appointment for them, and they are not committed to doing it themselves. FICM-USA does not typically take third-party requests for FAs unless for a child, and only then with parental permission and the child's consent.
- Major crises exist in their lives, such as:
 - Marital discord or divorce
 - Domestic violence
 - Severe troubling situations with children or other family members
 - Financial distress or unemployment
 - Complicated medical situations
- The Participant is only looking for deliverance from demonic interference, but does not indicate a willingness to personally invest in a journey of repentance and renewal.

Please note that in some cases, people are overwhelmed with the circumstances of their lives, making it difficult to concentrate on going through *The Steps to Freedom*. These crises may need to be addressed with professional help before a Participant is ready to have a Freedom Appointment. However, sometimes the process of a Freedom Appointment helps the Participant move forward in a healthier spiritual state of mind and heart. Making an appropriate decision requires wisdom and discernment through prayer and conversation between the Encourager and the Participant.

Typically, before a Participant is ready to begin a Freedom Appointment, they have done one of the following:

- Read *Victory Over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker*
- Participated in an online course such as The Freedom in Christ Course, Transform, The Grace Course, or another Freedom in Christ Ministry course that leads to a Freedom Appointment.

This may seem like a lot for the Participant to do before scheduling a Freedom Appointment. Asking the Participant to take responsibility will reveal those who are looking for an instant fix without being serious about repentance. Do not assume that every Participant genuinely wants to get right with God. This level of preparation can reveal the Participant's motivation. It can also go a long way toward correcting wrong motivations.

It is also crucial that the Participant understands who is responsible for what in a Freedom Appointment. 2 Peter 1:3 affirms that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Colossians 2:9-10 states, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." The Holy Spirit is doing the work with the Participant during the appointment. Even though the Encourager and Prayer Partner are there to guide and assist as needed, the Participant must own their responsibility as a child of God and pray, listen, and repent throughout the appointment.

THE ENCOURAGER

The Encourager is the steward of the appointment. They manage details around the appointment and guide the Participant through the appointment. They don't need to be a pastor or hold a Bible degree. Anyone can be an Encourager, cheering other believers on toward freedom.

Those interested in becoming Encouragers:

- Have read through *Victory Over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil T. Anderson to deepen their understanding of the material, or have completed the Freedom In Christ Course.
- Have gone through their own Freedom Appointment and are progressing on their freedom journey.
- Exhibit mature, godly behavior relying on the Holy Spirit for wisdom and discernment.
- Have completed some sort of Encourager or Freedom Appointment Training as arranged by a Freedom Ministry.
- Have participated in other Freedom Appointments as a Prayer Partner before becoming an Encourager.

The Encourager often schedules the time and place. He or she also handles the forms and materials used during an appointment. The Encourager finds a suitable Prayer Partner and ensures the Participant is informed, prepared, and ready for the appointment.

THE PRAYER PARTNER

Prayer is essential to any freedom work, and the Prayer Partner holds an essential role. Every Freedom Appointment should have both an Encourager and a Prayer Partner who are relying on God to work in and through them.

Those interested in becoming a Prayer Partner:

- Have gone through their own Freedom Appointment and are progressing on their freedom journey.
- Are godly, Spirit-led prayer warriors in your church or community who understand *The Steps to Freedom* process.
- Are other Encouragers in your ministry or community.

Prayer Partners should be aware that the Encourager's role is to facilitate the appointment, and the Prayer Partner's primary role is to pray silently throughout the appointment. However, each role is vital, and there should be strong communication between the Encourager and Prayer Partner during an appointment. The Prayer Partner is uniquely positioned to see and hear from the Lord and speak into the appointment when appropriate.

An important thing to pray throughout the appointment is that everyone stays on task and is open and honest before the Lord. Pray against enemy interference or when the Participant is struggling.

Follow along in *The Steps* book and be ready to read any portions as needed. The Prayer Partner should diligently record any lies heard or discerned and write down anything the Encourager suggests.

Pairing trainees with an experienced Encourager or Prayer Partner in a freedom appointment helps the training process. Trainees can sit in as the Prayer Partner while a seasoned Encourager facilitates the appointment.

Additional prayer support is always welcome. On freedom appointment days, many ministries utilize on-site or off-site prayer groups to cover the appointments in prayer, even though they are not directly in the room. Before the appointment, team members can be asked to pray for the upcoming appointment. It is essential to respect the Participant's privacy, so using the first letter of their first name should suffice for relaying any requests to the team. For example, "G is coming on Thursday for a Freedom Appointment. Please be in prayer for G, the Encourager, and the Prayer Partner as they prepare."

This preparation prayer list can be very helpful to your prayer warriors:

1. Pray that the Participant will complete the Confidential Life Review (CLR), honestly and thoroughly, and return it promptly.
2. Pray God would remove any fear or anxiety the Participant might have about the appointment.
3. Pray that God prepares the Participant's heart to surrender completely to Him.
4. Pray the Lord puts together the right ministry team, supernaturally matching the Encourager and Prayer Partner to the Participant.
5. Pray that the Encourager, Prayer Partners, and Participant (and all their families) will sleep well the night before the appointment and that there will be a good rapport between all three of them.
6. Pray for any specific requests about the Participant or appointment from the Freedom Ministry leadership.

On the day of the appointment, the prayer team could pray as follows:

1. Pray that nothing will keep the Participant from coming to the appointment.
2. Pray that the Encourager and Prayer Partner come to the appointment united with the Lord and walking closely with the Holy Spirit.
3. Pray that Satan and his emissaries will not interfere in any way with the freedom appointment.
4. Pray that the Participant will recognize the areas in their life where sin and Satan have a foothold or stronghold and that they will have the courage and humility to renounce each area with genuine confession and repentance.
5. Pray for wisdom and discernment for the Encourager and Prayer Partner and for complete unity and harmony among them as a team.

6. Pray that the Participant will not become afraid, weary, or confused during the appointment.
7. Pray that the Participant will hear from God and be honest and cooperative with Him.
8. Pray for protection over the families of the Participant, Encourager, and Prayer Partner.
9. Pray that the Lord would set the Participant free from all bondage.
10. Pray in whatever other ways the Lord leads.

As you know, Scripture clearly teaches the reality of the spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-13,18). A solid ministry of prayer is not a best practice; it is the strategic battle plan and should be treated accordingly. Be diligent to press on and steward the freedom ministry well.

PREPARATION FOR A FREEDOM APPOINTMENT

Master Copy of *The Steps*

Appropriate preparation helps set the stage for a successful Freedom Appointment. We will cover how to develop your own master copy of *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* that you can use while administering Freedom Appointments. These master copies will contain extra notes and Scriptures. Please do not use your master copy for your own personal Freedom Appointments.

Forms and Practical Details

Before the appointment date, have the Participant complete the **Freedom Appointment Confidential Life Review form (CLR)** and return it to the Encourager. The use of the CLR is standard practice for teen and adult FAs hosted by FICM-USA. There is no age-appropriate CLR for children yet. A fillable PDF version of this form can be found at www.ficm.org on the **Free Resources** webpage under the Freedom Ministry section. You can also print the PDF and fill it out by hand.

The CLR will help the Participant reflect on life circumstances that may have shaped their current beliefs and behaviors. The form will also help the Encourager and Prayer Partner know how to pray and prepare before the appointment. Sometimes, the Encourager will want to contact the Participant ahead of the appointment to clarify details mentioned in the CLR. The Encourager should bring the Participant's CLR to the appointment and return it to them following the appointment, along with any notes that were taken. If the Freedom Appointment is online, the Encourager can destroy the CLR by shredding or tearing it up while the Participant is on screen.

The Encourager should also have the Participant sign the **Freedom Appointment Consent Form**. This form explains that FICM-USA, the Encourager, and the Prayer Partner are not functioning as licensed counselors. It also clarifies that the Participant is there by choice and can leave anytime. The back of the consent form contains a section for parents to give consent for minors. This form is required for every Freedom Appointment administered by staff or volunteers in a national FICM-USA program, whether individual, group, in-person, or online. If the Freedom Appointment is under the authority of a church or freedom ministry, return the consent form to the ministry leader for safekeeping. The ministry will keep these consent forms for as long as it deems necessary.

Copies of the form can be found at <https://www.ficm.org/ministry-materials/free-resources/>.

We encourage churches and ministries to develop and use their own consent forms covering their ministry procedures and state laws.

If an appointment is in-person, reserve a quiet room free of interruptions and distractions. If at a church, inform the office staff how long you expect to use the room. If online, be sure everyone involved blocks out plenty of time. Encourage all involved to arrange childcare and other responsibilities so they can be fully available for the appointment. A box of tissues, beverages, a packed lunch, or snacks are helpful. Also, be sure there is access to restrooms and water. Provide pens and paper for the Participant and the Prayer Partner to record notes when necessary.

On the day of the Freedom Appointment, the Encourager and Prayer Partner should:

- Come with clean hearts, having confessed all known sins
- Meet at least 30 minutes before the Participant arrives to pray: commanding Satan and his emissaries to leave in the name of Jesus, acknowledging God's presence, and committing the appointment to God.
- Bring their own Steps to Freedom booklets, paper, pens, and Bibles
- Place a "Do not disturb—prayer in session" sign outside the door to prevent interruptions
- Set up comfortable chairs with the Encourager and Participant facing one another, and the Prayer Partners somewhat off to the side
- Provide easy access for the Participant to exit if they need to

When the Participant arrives for the Freedom Appointment, warmly welcome them and pray with them to help them feel comfortable and calm. Reassure the Participant that it is normal to be a little nervous, but the appointment is confidential, and they will have all the time they need to spend with God. Empathize with participants by letting them know that you understand how difficult this might feel for them (maybe reference your first Freedom Appointment), and you are honored to walk alongside them on this journey.

There is nothing magical about *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. It is simply a Biblical tool to help people believe and act on the truths of Scripture to deal with anything getting in the way of their relationship with God and others. The Steps do not set people free. Jesus Christ (the way, the truth, and the life) sets them free.

A Freedom Appointment provides an opportunity for Participants to obey God's commands in two specific ways:

- Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2 NIV)
- Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV)

The Steps model a practical process for how to obey these commands, including:

- Recognizing and confessing (admitting) lies that have been believed
- Renouncing (rejecting) the lies
- Repenting (turning away) from the lies and taking a stand against the enemy
- Replacing the lies with the truth

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

Guideline #1: Stick to the process. It is tried and true.

We recommend that the Encourager follow the process laid out in the version of *The Steps to Freedom* they are using.

Most versions begin with the gospel, including an opportunity for the Participant to confirm their salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ. The order of The Steps has been laid out with prayerful thought and is effective for most people. However, as the Encourager listens to the Holy Spirit, there are certain circumstances where a different order may be best.

Each step follows the same pattern. The Encourager shares the introduction, explaining what the Step is about, then the Participant prays the prayers, repents, or forgives, and reads any special truth statements out loud.

Again, we recommend that Encouragers follow the concepts and process of The Steps as closely as possible. *As Encouragers, your job is to become so familiar with The Steps and adept at listening to the Holy Spirit that you can personalize the appointment, as needed, without veering from the core message or stepping into the Holy Spirit's role.*

Guideline #2: This appointment is between the Participant and God.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence (2 PETER 1:3) .

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth (JOHN 16:13A).

Each person in the Freedom Appointment can rest on these promises. As the Participant interacts with the Spirit of God through prayer and Scripture, they will be guided toward deeper freedom. Whenever possible, continually direct the Participant to interact with God.

Freedom in Christ is a *discipleship* ministry, not a *counseling* ministry. The Encourager and Prayer Partner are not there to fix the Participant but to facilitate a meeting between the Participant and the Lord.

Throughout *The Steps*, the Participant will be prompted to pray written prayers asking for the Holy Spirit's help. The Holy Spirit will be faithful to bring to the Participant's mind the events, memories, and actions that need to be confessed and dealt with during this particular appointment. Remember, going through a Freedom Appointment is not "one and done." It facilitates ongoing times of repentance and renewal, which is why we recommend people go through the Steps once a year, or as needed. Gaining your freedom and actually walking in that freedom are two different things.

If the Participant seems to be relying too heavily on the Encourager, redirect them back to the written prayers so they can engage with the Holy Spirit. Rejoice with the Participant when you see God respond to the Participant's request. This can be very powerful and give them the courage to press on. If the Participant's heart is submitted and willing, the Lord will answer their prayers and help them find freedom (James 4:7).

Most versions of *The Steps* address the possibility of interference from spiritual enemies during an appointment. This can present itself in many ways such as lack of concentration, headaches, or negative thoughts about *The Steps* process. The best way to deal with this is to have the Participant share what they are feeling or hearing. Encourage the Participant to ask God to redirect their time back to Him. If that's difficult for them, the Encourager can pray for God to help the Participant, but it's most effective when the Participant prays themselves.

Guideline #3: Provide safety and confidentiality for all Participants.

We recommend that everyone involved in the Freedom Appointment is of the same gender, not married to each other, and not family, close friends, co-workers, or staff members. This avoids situations that could prevent Participants from being totally honest during the appointment.

We also recommend that Freedom Ministries follow the safety protocols of their church or organization regarding working with children, youth, and vulnerable people groups. Most organizations require some sort of criminal background check for staff and ministry leaders.

There should also be at least three people in the room for accountability; never just two. Participants under the age of 18 must have their parent or guardian complete the back of the Consent Form granting permission for them to complete the Freedom Appointment, even for a group appointment. On the GenFree website, there are two great resources available called "Talking About the Freedom Appointment" and "Parent Tips After Appointment." Check them out here: <https://genfree.ficm.org/steps-resources>.

Since the Freedom Appointment is such a vulnerable and confidential process, it's crucial to prepare well so the Participant is certain of their safety and security.

As mentioned before, the Freedom Appointment is confidential—**except in the case of self-harm or harming others, as mandated by state laws.** *Know the laws of your state and who is required to report any concerns that arise. Be forthright with the Participant so they know your responsibility (or your pastor's) during the appointment.* *See resources at the end of this session.

Guideline #4: Allow adequate time for the Lord to work.

Generally, appointments take between three and eight hours and can be completed in one sitting. Be patient with the process and allow plenty of time for Participants to work out and process what the Holy Spirit is showing them. For example, during the Forgiveness Step, it can take a while to prayerfully make the list of names and then pray to forgive each one. The Bondage Step is another example of patiently praying while the Participant seeks the Lord. It can be tempting to rush them, but these are valuable opportunities for them to hear from the Lord.

There may be situations where the Participant must leave before completing *The Steps*. As always, allow the Spirit to guide you about when to break for the day. Often, the Encourager and Prayer Partner will not know the extent of the appointment until it has started. If an appointment requires additional meetings, cover the Participant in prayer before they leave and reestablish their submission to God and His authority when they return, using James 4:7 or one of the opening prayers, such as the one at the top of page 4 in the original *Steps to Freedom in Christ*.

GROUP VERSUS INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM APPOINTMENTS

Group and individual Freedom Appointments use the same process outlined in this training. They both require the same materials, the quiet room, pre-appointment setup, prayer, time, and signed forms.

Before planning a group Freedom Appointment, consider who will be in the group. Adjustments may be needed to accommodate various maturity levels and social dynamics, especially with children or young people. Have all teens and adults attending a group Freedom Appointment fill out the **CLR**. It doesn't need to be submitted to the Encourager(s), but it can be used to help prepare the participant personally for the appointment. Everyone attending must also complete the **Consent Form** and return it to the appropriate ministry leader for record-keeping.

At the beginning of a group appointment, it's always beneficial to announce that individual Freedom Appointments are available to anyone who feels they need more time or help. Sometimes, a person does well until they get to a particular Step, such as the Forgiveness Step, and then feel they need additional assistance.

Keep a schedule with a group, announcing how much time they have to complete the sections they are on. Not everyone will complete a Step simultaneously, so encourage those who complete Steps sooner to pray for those still working. If a small minority of people take longer than others, you can move on, offering to help them complete unfinished Steps later.

With a group, the Encourager(s) can read from *The Steps* book themselves or use videos. This will help with clarity and ease of following along.

To grant as much privacy as possible, hold the group Steps in a location where participants can spread out so that they can speak in a whisper to God, not to be heard by others. Quiet instrumental music can be played to set a prayerful atmosphere and create background noise to cover whispers. In addition to adequate spacing in a large room, group participants could break out into individual rooms to complete the prayer processes of Forgiveness and Bondage in privacy.

Use your Prayer Partners well during large group appointments. You can advise Participants to raise their hands if they need help, and Prayer Partners can respond quietly and individually. Often, this will lead to Prayer Partners praying with and for the individual so they can proceed with The Step. If participants are breaking out into small classrooms for individual prayer, have Encouragers and Prayer Partners share their cell phone numbers with them so Participants can send a text if they need additional support.

Group Freedom Appointments can be a great entry into the freedom journey, especially following a large Freedom in Christ group study or if participants are nervous about going through a Freedom Appointment individually. It's common for Participants to schedule their next Freedom Appointment as an individual Appointment to continue diving deeper with the Lord.

PHONE AND VIDEO FREEDOM APPOINTMENTS

The preferred Freedom Appointment is completed individually in person with an Encourager and Prayer Partner. However, any Freedom Appointment can be done effectively by phone or online using several different platforms, such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and FaceTime.

If an individual Appointment is facilitated online, all three people can join on the same screen.

Encouragers or Prayer Partners on an audio or video call should train and prepare just as if they were meeting in person. If facilitating an online group Appointment, we do advise having at least one Prayer Partner online with the group and several others offline praying during the meeting.

The Encourager can introduce the individual Steps or screen share the appropriate videos. Either way, mute all participants to avoid noise distractions. Practice screen-sharing videos beforehand to avoid sidetracking the Appointment with technical difficulties.

Be sure everyone online understands the microphone and video functions of the platform. In online group Appointments, Participants should have their video on during the instructional sections but turned off during the personal, prayer portions of The Steps to provide privacy and to be alone with God. Be sure they agree to stay close to their computer so they know when you call them back for further instruction. Invite them to turn on their video (but not their microphone) when they've finished a personal time with God, to signal they are ready to move on to the next Step.

If you are doing an online group Appointment, the chat feature in online platforms allows individuals to privately message the Encourager with questions or issues while others are still working.

When set up and managed well, online Appointments can be effective and powerful. Each venue has its advantages and disadvantages, but the Lord is mighty and can work in various circumstances as long as the heart is willing and submitted.

No matter the venue or the size of the group Appointment, the objective is always to walk closely with the Holy Spirit, give good instruction, and release the Participant to take their issues to God with confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

The Lord is near to all who call on Him; to all who call on Him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; He also hears their cry and
saves them (PSALM 145:18-19).

SESSION 10—PREP WORK FOR DISCUSSION

- Develop a MASTER *Steps to Freedom* book you can use each time you are an Encourager or Prayer Partner. We recommend using a pencil to include notes to yourself and underline important phrases or sections. Write in prompts to pray or specific scriptures. As we move through The Steps in future sessions, please make notes in your MASTER copy. This will be very helpful in the future.
- Please make notes on the inside cover of your MASTER copy of items needed during the Freedom Appointment, such as tissues, Bible, pencil, paper, and water.
- Think through and record your responses to the questions and scenarios below. Be ready to discuss them during class.



FA DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SCENARIOS:

Scenarios are stand-alone situations.

1. What purpose(s) do the CLR and the Consent Form serve? To whom?
2. Why is it important to view yourself as an Encourager and not a counselor?
3. What are the advantages of having the Prayer Partner in the room for the appointment or on a video call with you?
4. How can the Encourager and Prayer Partner prepare themselves for the Freedom Appointment?
5. Scenario: A participant, Janet, who you recently worked with in a Freedom Appointment, comes to you and says that her friend, Kathy, really wants to have a Freedom Appointment, too. Janet says she wants to be the Prayer Partner for Kathy. She says Kathy wants you to schedule the FA right away, and she is available on Thursday. What do you think is happening? What do you do?
6. Anyone can purchase a Freedom in Christ Steps book and begin using it with friends, family, or people in their ministry with little experience or training. What, if any, issues do you see in this practice?
7. What might be some advantages and disadvantages of doing online Freedom Appointments, whether group or individual?

RESOURCES

- Free Resources page for FICM:
<https://www.ficm.org/ministry-materials/free-resources/>
- Free Resources page for GenFree:
<https://genfree.ficm.org/steps-resources>
- Know your state and local laws for the mandated reporting of abuse or neglect for minors and those who cannot defend themselves. Mandated reporting laws require certain professionals to report child abuse and neglect concerns. While some States require all people to report, many States identify specific professionals, such as clergy and counselors, as mandated reporters.
- National Child Protective Services:
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/state-child-abuse-and-neglect-reporting-numbers/?rt=795>
- National Adult Protective Services:
<https://www.napsa-now.org/help-in-your-area/>
- National Domestic Violence Website and Hotline:
https://www.thehotline.org/?utm_source=youtube&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=domestic_violence
- American Association of Christian Counselors search portal for care:
<https://christiancareconnect.com/>
- National Suicide Hotline: <https://988lifeline.org/help-someone-else/>
- You can text or call this hotline at 988 directly 24/7. Video to help use these resources: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQnHUzfYGIE>



SESSION 11

INTRODUCTION—STEP 3

Read: *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*, Introduction through Step 3: Bitterness versus Forgiveness. Also read Appendices A and B at the back of the book.

In this and the following sessions, we will dive into the main elements of each of the seven steps. The Encourager and Prayer Partner must be very familiar with every page of *The Steps* book they use.

INTRODUCTION

Each portion of *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* book is vital to the overall process. The introduction section covers foundational truths that need to be clarified or settled. There may also be some initial exercises to work through or processes to explain. Be diligent and attentive to this section.

At the end of the introduction, you will encounter the Review of Your Life section. This is covered in the CLR, which the Encourager has already read over. So, this is simply a time to clarify anything that was not included in the CLR or needs to be added. Ideally, these issues should be clarified before the day of the Freedom Appointment. If a CLR has not been completed and shared with the Encourager, then it's important for the Participant to look through the Review of Your Life section and share any details the Lord prompts them to share at this time.

STEP 1: COUNTERFEIT VERSUS REAL

This section deals with ways the world and Satan offer false guidance, counsel, and direction for life apart from God. Some of the ways listed in this Step may seem innocent. **But whenever a person gives priority or devotion to someone or something other than God, they are replacing Him and His Lordship in their lives with false gods, which is idolatry.** When God is not on the throne of your life, Satan has an opportunity to influence you. To be completely free of any past counterfeit experiences, these need to be eliminated by confessing and renouncing all involvement in these areas.

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world (1 PETER 5:8-9).

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (JOHN 10:10).

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil (EPHESIANS 4:25-27).

It's common that the Participant wasn't aware they were turning away from God when these things occurred in their life. The "aha moment" is when they realize these counterfeits are in opposition to God and His ways.

To start, the Participant silently reads the list and checks off any items they participated in. Alternatively, the Encourager can read through the entire list out loud. In this section, it's especially important to make sure the Participant can see and understand the list because the enemy often interferes. The Encourager does not need a thorough knowledge of each item on the list, but they should be familiar with the terms. Trust the Holy Spirit to bring to mind what needs to be dealt with in this Step.

Once this Step is completed and God has regained his rightful place on the throne of the Participant's life, reading and processing the rest of *The Steps* often becomes easier. However, continue to watch the Participant closely to ensure they are tracking with the process.

Going forward, the Encourager can read any lists if the Participant would benefit from hearing them out loud. Be aware of any visual, hearing, or learning disabilities that may inhibit the Participant's ability to understand the printed information. Remember, the Holy Spirit is present!. Be attentive and prayerful.

APPENDICES

The original Steps book has four appendices at the end. The appendices contain tools that the Participant can use before, during, or after their Freedom Appointment. We will cover the appendices as they occur within their corresponding Step.

Appendix A: Renouncing Satanic Worship is referenced in the Additional Questions of Step One. It is important to use this appendix if the Participant has been involved in Satanism. They need to make specific renunciations to break their agreements with the enemy (or agreements made for them as children).

Watch the Participant closely during this section to ensure engagement and comprehension. The enemy will want to distract and deceive. If someone has been subject to Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA), it could present itself through Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as Multiple Personality

Disorder. DID is a spiritual and mental health condition characterized by the presence of two or more distinct personalities that alternate in controlling the individual's behavior, thoughts, and memories. You may recognize this behavior by noticing the Participant acting like a different person, such as a young child, as you work through these renouncements or while they share memories with you.

Although DID is often a result of SRA, it can occur in people for other reasons. Any severe trauma can be the source of DID. If a Participant presents as a different person, it is wise to interact naturally with the alternate personality as much as possible. Trying to get the Participant to return to the original personality can be disturbing, even threatening to the Participant who has shifted to the alternate personality for a legitimate reason, usually for comfort or protection. Although it may seem like the alternate personality could be of demonic influence, asking the Participant to renounce the alternate personality can be traumatic for the Participant. If the Holy Spirit prompts you, you can ask the alternate personality to share if Jesus Christ is his/her Lord to get a sense of the source of the alternate personality. Working to identify and integrate established alternate identities is best left to a professional mental health practitioner. SRA and DID are explored further in the FICM Advanced Encourager Training.

We recommend that every Participant prays **all** of the “I renounce... I announce...” statements in this section aloud, whether they think the statements apply to them or not. The enemy may be interfering, or they simply may not remember the event from their past.

Celebrate with them once the appendix is completed.

STEP 2: DECEPTION VERSUS TRUTH

The Bible says that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). We want to embrace this truth so we can have fullness of life in Jesus (John 10:10). Satan is described as the father of lies, the exact opposite of Jesus. “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44b) He comes to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). Satan’s most effective tool is deceiving people with twisted truth. He often uses just enough truth to confuse us, and then twists it to deceive us into believing a lie.

Christians respond to deception by believing the truth through faith. We are held in bondage when we do not recognize deception and continue to fall for lies. Choosing to believe the truth will set us free. Jesus instructed his disciples, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32 NIV).

This section of *The Steps* presents several ways we can be deceived—by the world, by ourselves, or through wrongly defending ourselves—and prayers to renounce those lies.

STEP 3: BITTERNESS VERSUS FORGIVENESS

This section is potentially the most life-changing of the entire Steps process. Holding onto unforgiveness is one of the most common ways we allow the enemy to influence us (2 Corinthians 2:10-11). “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” Ephesians 4:32. When someone chooses to forgive out of obedience to Jesus Christ, they can experience freedom as never before.

Many Christians know God wants them to forgive, but they don't know how. Be sure to spend adequate time presenting the entire introduction of Step 3, especially if they haven't received this teaching in one of the Freedom in Christ studies.

After reading all the instructions, make sure the Participant understands what they are being asked to do– the list of names, the prayer with its various components (name, event, and feelings), and the choice to forgive. Encourage the Participant to identify how an offense made them feel, which will bring them to a deeper level of forgiveness. It may take a little while for the Participant to get used to stating how the offense made them feel. We recommend giving the Participant a list of feeling words if one is not already provided in *The Steps* book. This can be found under the Free Resources section on FICM.org.

Again, allow plenty of time and space to work through this section while the Encourager and Prayer Partner pray. Many people feel uncomfortable with the long period of silence while the Encourager and Prayer Partner are in the room. This is when most people need assurance and encouragement to “embrace the awkward” and not let the enemy keep them from engaging wholly in this process. Reassure them that the other two people in the room are diligently warring in prayer, not staring at or judging them.

HELPFUL TIP: Draw lines on a clean sheet of paper to divide it into three columns. Label the top of the columns “person,” “offense,” and “feelings.” The columns will help the Participant organize their list of names. Remind the Participant that they are in a safe place, and everything shared is strictly confidential.

If the Participant gets upset, it's tempting to want to comfort them by touch. We recommend that neither the Encourager nor the Prayer Partner touch the Participant throughout the whole process. Let the Holy Spirit be the comforter. If Participants cry, thank God that He has opened that release for them. If they do not cry, it's also okay. Many people feel as though they need to rationalize or excuse the choices of the offender (especially to defend them or protect their reputation). Young people often try to dismiss or minimize the pain they feel to keep others from condemning their loved ones. Encourage the Participant with the fact that choosing to forgive them is a way to honor and respect these people in their lives. The Encourager can gently remind the Participant that this is not a time to explain or defend, but a time to forgive, release others, and release any perceived personal responsibility.

Appendix B: *Seeking the Forgiveness of Others* is referenced after the forgiveness prayers. The Participant should use this appendix when they have specific events in mind where they need to ask forgiveness from others. It may help to write these events down.

Work slowly through the numbered list, taking one event at a time. The Encourager can help the Participant carefully compose a confession according to the guidelines in the statements. Then, the Participant will complete Appendix B by praying through the prayer at the bottom of the page for each event listed.

CHOOSING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

The Forgiveness section culminates with truth statements about our Heavenly Father. These statements are especially important for those who've had significant issues with their earthly fathers because it's easy to project these onto our Heavenly Father.

HELPFUL TIP: Have the Participant look through the statements and check any of the negative character traits that represent their earthly father. Assure them that their Heavenly Father is not like their earthly father. His love for them is unconditional and everlasting. Have the Participant read the statements aloud with conviction.

Typically, it is a good time to take a break after this section. Encourage everyone to get up, stretch, walk around, get a drink, or have a snack.

SESSION 11—PREP WORK FOR DISCUSSION

- Read through the fictitious CLR and Consent Form on the next several pages. Be ready to discuss your perceptions about this person.
- Read through the session a second time. In your MASTER Steps book, mark and highlight key items you want to remember. Add Scriptures you want to have on hand.
- Think through and record your response to the questions and scenarios below. Be ready to discuss them during class.



FA DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SCENARIOS:

For the Scenarios, consider using these questions to help you respond well as the Encourager or Prayer Partner.

- How is the Holy Spirit leading you?
- How is the Holy Spirit leading the Participant?
- What questions could you ask the Participant?
- What information or Scripture could you share with the Participant?

Scenarios are stand-alone situations.

1. **Scenario:** As the Participant processes through **Step One: Counterfeit versus Real**, she shares that her husband was just inducted into the local Masonic Lodge. She says the lodge helps with several community events supporting the local school and families in need. She asks how the Masons could be bad since they are helping the community and doing so much good. What might be happening? What do you do?
2. **Scenario:** After completing **Step One: Counterfeit versus Real**, the Participant shares that he is worried about his son because while he was on an overseas trip, he visited a shrine and had to remove his shoes. His son is a Christian. He asks if that means his son has allowed Satan to enter his life. What might be happening? What do you do?

- 
3. **Scenario:** The Participant is working through several statements in the “Defend Yourself” portion of **Step Two: Deception versus Truth**. He disagrees with the statements about fantasy. He says that it is ok to relax by watching shows, daydreaming, or scrolling through social media. As you try to explain more, he begins to argue with you and the Prayer Partner. What might be happening? What do you do?
 4. **Scenario:** While reading the Statements of Truth following Step Two: **Deception versus Truth**, the Participant keeps stumbling over their words and has trouble reading. They have been doing fine up until this point. What might be happening? What do you do?
 5. Why do you think it is important that the Participant follow the forgiveness prayer “formula” during **Step Three: Bitterness versus Forgiveness**?
 6. **Scenario: Step Three: Bitterness versus Forgiveness** is taking a loooooong time to complete. The Participant has a very long list of names. You, the Encourager, are starting to feel impatient and agitated, wishing the Participant would just get on with it. What might be happening? What do you do?
 7. How could the Encourager and Prayer Partner deal with ongoing enemy opposition in a Freedom Appointment?

RESOURCES

Most resources related to Freedom Appointments, including **Feeling Word Sheets**, are either incorporated into *The Steps* booklet or can be found as free downloads at :

- <https://www.ficm.org/ministry-materials/free-resources/>
- <https://genfree.ficm.org/steps-resources>



FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Freedom Appointment Confidential Life Review

The Confidential Life Review (CLR) is a tool to help you think about and remember the home life and environment you were raised in, including any struggles you are currently experiencing. Take time to consider your answers to each item prayerfully. Allow God to bring clarity to vague or distant memories. Ask Him to bring to your mind things you may have forgotten. When you are unsure or the memory is unclear, please indicate that in your response. Do not rush through this personal review. This process helps stir up memories you want to address during your freedom appointment.

This information will be kept confidential and only be shared with the person arranging your freedom appointment so they can select the appropriate ministry team. The team includes the Encourager (appointment facilitator) and a Prayer Partner to assist the process.

The CLR is a fillable form you can type on directly. You must save the completed form to your device before attaching and returning it to your leader. You can also print the CLR, fill it out by hand, and scan the pages to return them to your leader. If you have any problems with the digital document or have questions, please contact the person arranging your freedom appointment.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name Ima Mess Phone 111-222-3333

Email ABC@123.com

☐ Male ☒ Female Age 35

Address 678 Main Street

City Town State ZZ Zip 99999

Name of Your Church Town Community Church

How Did you find out about *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*?

The church is very friendly and reached out to me about this after our freedom Bible study.

Present Marital Status married If married, how long? 15 years

Have you ever been divorced? No If so, how long ago? _____

How long were you married before becoming divorced? _____

MOST RECENT VOCATIONS

Where	What Job	When
First National Bank	Customer Service	Now
Day Care	Room Director	during community college
Coffee Shop	barista	High School

SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

1. Have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
Share your experience.

When I was in High School my neighbor, Mrs. Clyde, talked to me about Jesus and took me to church. I prayed with her to receive Jesus. She was so nice and kept encouraging me.

2. Are you plagued with doubts concerning your salvation?
Please explain.

Not really. I just don't know if God likes me or not.

3. How do you connect relationally with the Lord?

I go to church. I try to read my Bible and pray during the week.

4. How are you enjoying fellowship with other believers to nurture your spiritual growth?

I go to Sunday School - a ladies class - and then attend the main service. There are sometimes some mom's events I attend, too.

5. How do you support your church with your time, talent, and treasure?

I don't have much talent to give. I go to church on Sunday and when I have extra I give to the offering.

PERSONAL WELLBEING

1. Briefly describe the current state of your physical health.

I'm ok. I'm about 20 pounds overweight but don't have any major problems yet.

2. Have you ever experienced addictive behavior in yourself, and how have you dealt with it?

No - I don't drink or smoke or do drugs.

3. Describe any problems you are having with getting restful sleep.

Sometimes I lay awake at night worrying about money or my kids & stuff.

4. Describe any recurring dreams, nightmares, or disturbances.

Sometimes I have stress dreams where I wake up in a panic.

5. How does your schedule allow for rest, relaxation, and recreation?

I get weekends off but I have to use that time to run kids around, clean the house, etc.

6. What traumatic physical, verbal, or sexual experiences have you had?

None

7. Have you seen a counselor or therapist in the past?
If so, when and how long?

No

8. What conflicts were you able to resolve with your counselor or therapist?

9. Are you seeing a counselor or therapist now?
If so, how often and how long have you been seeing them?

No

10. How do you think you are progressing?

11. Check the thoughts you are experiencing. Then, describe in the space to the right how, when, and where you struggle with them.

- ☐ Condemning
- ☐ Distracting
- ☒ Fearful
- ☐ Fantasy
- ☐ Lustful
- ☐ Blasphemous
- ☐ Obsessive / Compulsive
- ☒ Suicidal
- ☐ Jealousy
- ☒ Confusion

Fearful - I just worry about a lot of things.

Suicidal - I was suicidal in high school and sometimes those thoughts come back when I'm down.

Confusion - I feel confused a lot and just zone out.

12. Check the feelings you are experiencing. Then, describe in the space to the right any struggles you have controlling or expressing those emotions.

- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Bitterness
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☒ Loneliness
- ☐ Worthlessness
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Hatred
- ☐ Hopelessness
- ☒ Fear
- ☐ Joy
- ☐ Love
- ☐ Gratitude
- ☒ Guilt
- ☒ Shame

Loneliness - I feel like no one really understands me.

Guilt- I just can't be who everyone needs me to be, ya know?

Shame- I feel bad about myself.

13. What have you lost in your life that has caused you to grieve or feel sad?

My mom died soon after I was married. I miss her.

14. How content or discontent are you with who you are: your looks, body, personality, and intelligence?

I don't like myself at all. I wish I looked differently. I'm ok with intelligence but could be a lot smarter.

15. How much media (socials, apps, streaming, music, reading, TV...) do you consume daily? List your favorites.

Facebook, Instagram, crime shows/mysteries - maybe 2 hours everyday total. I don't read much.

16. Who can you be emotionally honest with right now?
(i.e., you can tell this person exactly how you feel).

My dog. If I tell my husband everything I 'm thinking or feeling - he will think I'm crazy.

17. Describe how you are emotionally honest with God.

I don't think God wants to hear all that. He's got more important things to do.

FAMILY HISTORY

1. Did you grow up with your biological parents?

If not, explain.

Yes - Mom & Dad

2. Was there a sense of security and harmony in your childhood home?

Please explain.

Sometimes Mom and Dad fought a lot. Us kids tried to stay out of the way. They loved us though.

3. How did your parents or guardians relate to one another?

They stayed married but I'm not convinced they liked each other.

4. List any patterns of physical or emotional illness experienced in your family growing up.

Mom dealt with depression and just wanted to be alone. She tried meds for it but didn't like taking them.

5. List any addictive or threatening behaviors experienced in your family growing up. How have these experiences affected you?

Dad liked to drink and sometimes got out of control. I just learned to stay away when he was drunk.

6. What kind of guidance did your family give you to make choices about areas of your life such as clothing, dating, sex, media, and friends?

The didn't really care what I did as long as it didn't make them look bad and I didn't get in their way.

7. Briefly describe the spiritual or religious climate of your childhood home.

We were no religion and didn't go to any church

8. Who was the spiritual leader of the home? Please explain.

My dad was the leader but he didn't do anything spiritual.

9. List the names of individuals who have positively or negatively influenced your life and explain why they were significant to you.

Bonnie Vogel - my school librarian. She was very nice to me. She encouraged me to be girly and not like my rough brothers. She also found good stories for me to read even though i didn't like reading.

Margie Clyde - our neighbor lady. She would help out at the house when my mom was in a mood. She taught me to cook and took us kids to church in high school.

STAGES OF YOUR LIFE

For each of the following stages of your life, share 2 or 3 words that describe your life during those years. Explain why you felt that way during that stage. Write “can’t remember” if you have no memories of that time.

STAGE	2-3 DESCRIPTIVE WORDS ABOUT THIS STAGE	EXPLAIN WHY YOU FELT THAT WAY
Pre-School	can't remember	
Kindergarten through 2 nd Grade	mostly happy, some I can't remember	only remember some bits and pieces
3 rd Grade through 6 th Grade	fun, playful, scared	I remember playing outside a lot at school and with friends
Middle School	hard work, chores, pressure	I studied more and had to do chores at home to help mom. I felt ugly.
High School	Same as middle school except I met Tim - now my husband.	Tim made me feel better and safe.
Twenties	happy, pressure, hard work	got married - had some kids but was exhausted.
Thirties	more of the same - I'm 35.	
Forties		
Fifties and Older		



FREEDOM
IN CHRIST

GENFREE
LEADING YOUNG GENERATIONS TO FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Freedom Appointment Consent Form

I, the “inquirer”, deem the person leading this freedom appointment to be an “encourager” in the Christian faith and his or her assistant to be a “prayer partner,” both of whom are here to help me to assume my responsibility in finding freedom in Christ.

I understand the person leading this freedom appointment and others attending this session, are not assuming the role of professional or licensed counselors, therapists, medical or psychological practitioners. I understand that no medical advice will be given.

I understand everything I state during this freedom appointment will be held in confidence to the extent allowed by law. Exceptions to confidentiality would be the following mandates required by law: the “encourager” must intervene if he/she suspects physical endangerment of a child (under age 18) or an elder (over age 65) or any vulnerable adult or if there is suspicion that I am a danger to myself or to others.

I understand I am here voluntarily and free to leave at any time. I also understand there is no financial obligation for receiving this freedom appointment.

I release all involved in my freedom appointment of any liability.

INQUIRER INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT)

Name Ima Mess Age* 35

Home Address 678 Main Street

City Town State ZZ Zip 9999

Phone (h) _____ (c) 111-222-3333

Email ABC@123.com

I have read the above information and completely understand what the document is saying. This is signed without mental reservation.

Signature Required *Ima Mess* Date xx/xx/xxxx

***For freedom appointment of a minor: Parents or legal guardians must complete the back.**

**PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN INFORMATION
& CONSENT FOR A MINOR (Please print)**

Name _____

Phone (h) _____ (c) _____

Email _____

(Include address if different from minor).

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

***I, _____, the parent or legal guardian of
_____, a minor (under the age of 18), have read
the informed consent and grant permission for this minor to be encouraged in a freedom
appointment. I release all involved in this minor's freedom appointment from any liability.***

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature Date _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY (To be completed by Encourager)

Encourager _____ Prayer Partner: _____

Location _____

Date _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Notes of Interest:

Follow up Recommendations for the Inquirerer:

Mandatory Reporting Necessary? ☐ Yes ☐ No Date Report Filed _____



SESSION 12

STEP 4—FOLLOW-UP

Read: *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*, Step 4: Rebellion versus Submission through the end. Also read Appendices C and D at the back of the book.

STEP 4: REBELLION VERSUS SUBMISSION

Whether people are striving to control their circumstances or they are reacting to being wounded, rebellion is very common today. But the Bible calls us to submit to governing authorities and pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-2 and Romans 13:1-7). This Step helps surface issues the Participant has with authority figures in their life. The Encourager can help the Participant grasp the main points listed below:

- Legitimate authority is given by God.
- An authority figure's role is to bring order, protect, and defend.
- When someone in authority attempts to rule outside their realm of authority or requires us to do something morally wrong, God does not require us to obey.
- Remind abuse survivors to get help. Encourage those currently in abusive situations to seek help and devise a way to protect themselves.
- A rebellious attitude is a defense mechanism and a stronghold.
- A disrespectful heart is the same as outward rebellion.
- Our role is to pray for and submit to authority figures in our lives, unless they are using their authority for evil or asking us to do something sinful or wrong.

This Step requires great discernment and gentleness, and could go in several directions depending on the Participant's background. Wonderful freedom awaits those who relinquish their grip of control, confess their rebellious heart, and allow God to truly be Lord of their life.

If the Participant is hesitant to proceed with this or any Step, have them stop and pray and ask God what they should do. In addition, the Encourager and Prayer Partner should pray and ask the Holy Spirit how to proceed.

STEP 5: PRIDE VERSUS HUMILITY

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”
(JAMES 4:6).

Once the Participant has dealt with their rebellion in Step Four, dealing with pride in Step Five is the natural path to going deeper. The basis for this Step is that we have all learned to live a life of self-sufficiency, independent from God. Satan delights when we turn from God to self. Humility is confidence properly placed, and that place is in the grace of God. Let God show the Participant specific ways they live in self-centeredness, rather than living in grace-filled humility. This is often a very eye-opening Step because they may not have thought some of the things listed are prideful. The Holy Spirit is always faithful to shine the light on the inner heart of the Participant. Once pride is confessed, the Participant can experience the full joy of living in humility.

STEP 6: BONDAGE VERSUS FREEDOM

This Step addresses the cyclical nature of certain areas of bondage involving our relationships and our flesh. Walking in the flesh means behaving according to sinful human desires or tendencies, which are not aligned with God and His purpose for our lives. This Step emphasizes the distinction between living by the flesh and living by the Spirit. Galatians 5:16-17 reads, “So I say to you, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other...”

Participants who are stuck in a repetitive sin-confess, sin-confess cycle can find freedom by choosing to live according to the Spirit and renouncing their attraction to the sins of the flesh. It helps to remind Participants that these sinful behaviors are not **who** they are in Christ! Romans 6:11-14 reminds us that as children of God, we can continually consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, using His power and authority to stand against sin. Be aware that some of these areas of bondage may be deeply entrenched, and the Participants may need additional help from other trained professionals.

Allow the information provided in these sections to speak for itself. Explain and encourage where needed. Allow the Holy Spirit to do the work.

Sexual Sin

This section covers several very personal and sensitive topics. The Encourager and Prayer Partner must guard their hearts, words, and expressions from judgment, pride, disgust, fear, or any other emotion that may discourage the Participant from moving forward.

Participants may discover they have been trying to meet legitimate needs for acceptance, security, and significance through these sinful behaviors. But these are misguided ways to fulfill those

legitimate needs. Once they realize this, they can break the “sin-confess, sin-confess” cycle by renouncing the lies they’ve believed that resulted in these sin patterns and claiming the truth of who they are in Christ.

A reassurance of confidentiality and safety is helpful during this section.

Especially with this section, it’s really helpful if the Encourager, Participant, and Prayer Partner are of the same gender.

At the end of this section, Participants may need to stop and forgive someone or even themselves for something they remember. Also, it can be comforting to remind the Participant that they will never be tempted beyond what they can bear and that God always provides a way of escape for them (1 Corinthians 10:13).

When participants complete this part, take a moment to rejoice in the freedom God has given them from sexual bondage. They might have never believed they could be free from the guilt and shame associated with their sexual sins.

Special Prayers for Specific Needs

Immediately following the Sexual Sins are several other prayers. The Encourager and Prayer Partner should be familiar with each prayer. Allow the Participant to read through each of them silently, giving the Holy Spirit time to speak to their hearts and see if they want to bring any of these issues before God. If they do, they can pray out loud. Trust the Holy Spirit to reveal what needs to be dealt with in this part of the Step.

NOTE: In the USA, you may be using an original Steps book that still has the additional Gender Identity prayer printed on the bottom of page 18, or you may have a copy where it has been removed. Both copies have almost identical copyright pages, but the newest version (without the Gender Identity prayer) lists Baker Publishing Group above the row of numbers at the bottom of the copyright page. Due to potential legal ramifications for FICM International, the publisher has decided to remove the Gender Identity prayer from future printings; however, the topic can still be addressed in the US as it comes up in conversation following the clear explanation of God’s model for Biblical marriage in the introduction to the Resolving Sexual Sin section.

If appropriate, the Gender Identity prayer can still be used without legal ramifications in the US. It is printed below.

“Dear Heavenly Father, I choose to believe that You have created all humanity to be either male or female (Genesis 1:27) and commanded us to maintain a distinction between the two genders (Deuteronomy 22:5; Romans 1:24-29). I confess that I have been influenced by the social pressures of this fallen world and the lies of Satan to question my biological

gender identity and that of others. I renounce all the accusations and lies of Satan that would seek to convince me that I am somebody other than who you created me to be. I choose to believe and accept my biological gender identity, and I pray that You would heal my damaged emotions and enable me to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. I take up the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:13) and the shield of faith to extinguish all the temptations and accusations of the evil one (Ephesians 6:16). I renounce any identities and labels that derive from my old nature, and I choose to believe that I am a new creation in Christ. In the wonderful name of Jesus, I pray. Amen”.

The appendices covering Fear and Anxiety are referenced next. If the Participant is prompted by the Holy Spirit to address these, the Encourager can move to these appendices.

APPENDIX C: OVERCOMING FEAR

The principle behind this appendix is that there are legitimate fears and illegitimate fears. Fear always has a specific object that must be present and potent to be legitimate. We need to identify the object of fear and discover if there are any lies keeping someone stuck in an illegitimate fear. It's important to remember that these fears might feel very real to the participant, even if they are false. Renewing their mind to God's truth takes time and is a work of the Holy Spirit. Below is an acronym reminding us that fear is based on lies.

False

Evidence

Appearing

Real

TIPS: The fear checklist is already helpful, but it can be even more informative if the Encourager has the Participant rate their level of fear for each checkmark. Normally, these exercises are completed after Step Six, but some Encouragers prefer to have the Participant work through the appendix and checklist before beginning Step One, and then revisit it once the appointment is over to see if their levels of fear have changed.

APPENDIX D—OVERCOMING ANXIETY

The principle behind this exercise is that anxiety, unlike fear, does not have a specific object. Anxiety arises when a person is uncertain about an outcome or does not know what is going to happen in the future. The fact that we cannot control future events can lead to anxiety. Anxiety can signal that a goal feels uncertain. Unchecked anxiety can be vastly out of proportion to the actual problem.

This section is laid out to assist the Participant in getting to the root of their anxiety. The Encourager and Prayer Partner can help where needed.

STEP 7: CURSES VERSUS BLESSINGS

The final Step is based on Exodus 20:4-6, where the Lord says He will punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him, but show love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

There can be confusion between the Exodus passage and Ezekiel 18:20, which states, “The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent nor will the parent share the guilt of the child,” and Deuteronomy 24:16, “Children will not be put to death for their fathers.”

But Ezekiel and Deuteronomy are not in conflict with Exodus. It is a matter of generational consequences and influence versus sin guilt. People are not guilty for their ancestors’ sins, but their ancestors’ sins can adversely affect and influence them. That’s why it is necessary to identify and renounce these generational sins to break ties with them and gain freedom. Renouncing the sins of our ancestors closes any doors for Satan to influence our lives.

Since this Step usually comes at the end of a long day, encourage the Participant to finish strong through this section.

IN CHRIST STATEMENTS

At the end of the Steps, there is a list of “Who I am in Christ” statements. Have the Participant read the statements as a way to wrap up the wonderful work they did with God. If the Participant is feeling particularly tired, the Encourager and Prayer Partner can take turns reading the statements. Or feel free to have everyone in the room make these declarations together as a way to give honor to the One who set us free!

MAINTAINING YOUR FREEDOM

This section is a wonderful follow-up to the appointment, alerting the Participant that they are in a daily battle and have a responsibility to maintain the freedom they found today. This section provides additional daily and situational prayers, instructions on how to move forward in freedom, and places to find helpful resources. The Encourager can walk the Participant through these pages, reading instructions and pointing out tips, prayers, and resources to encourage their personal growth.

APPOINTMENT CONCLUSION

Before the Participant leaves the appointment, shred the CLR or return it to them to destroy. This can be very symbolic. They did hard work in the appointment to break through spiritual strongholds and renew their minds.

The Freedom Appointment is now officially completed! Close the time with prayers of thanksgiving and praise for all the Lord accomplished during the appointment. Discuss with the Participant a follow-up plan and when they can expect to hear from someone. It would be natural and appropriate to walk the Participant out.

Once a Freedom Appointment is over and the Participant has left the premises, the Encourager and Prayer Partner will want to debrief the session together. We recommend you take some time to pray together, thanking God for his guidance and insight. We also recommend you pray for cleansing,

release, and forgetfulness over each other, especially if the appointment was difficult or if graphic details surfaced.

Following the debriefing and prayer, the Encourager and Prayer Partner should fill out the box on the back of the **Consent Form** before returning it to the appropriate leader. The form contains basic details from the Freedom Appointment for record keeping and additional follow-up, including the names of the Encourager and Prayer Partner who were present at the appointment.

FREEDOM APPOINTMENT FOLLOW-UP

Within a week of the freedom appointment, the Encourager should check in with the Participant to encourage them. It is very common for the enemy to counterattack a Participant with doubts and fears.

In this check-in, you can:

- Remind them to maintain their freedom: Repent of sins, Renounce lies, Replace lies with truth. Memorizing Scriptural truths is a great way for them to renew their minds.
- Pray with and for them.
- Encourage them to build a Stronghold Buster or use one that was built during the Freedom Appointment.
- Encourage them to become involved in a small group or Bible study at church or in another ministry that would help them continue their freedom journey.

Check in with the Participant a few more times over the next month until you feel they are gaining stability and momentum in their freedom journey. If the Participant needs a deeper level of follow-up, connect them with a freedom pastor or leader.

Encouragers should also check in with the Prayer Partner to be sure they are processing what occurred during the appointment, especially if they are still in training.

Once a Participant completes their Freedom Appointment, they can become so excited about their newfound freedom that they want all their friends and family to be free. This is natural and wonderful; however, each person needs to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth and complete the prep work for a Freedom Appointment. FICM-USA's policy is not to take third-party recommendations for Freedom Appointments unless it is a parent referring a child. Even with a parent referral, the child must consent. See the Consent Form for more information.

It is vitally important for Encouragers and Prayer Partners to take care of themselves. Administering too many freedom appointments can be physically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausting, leaving room for the enemy to attack. It's wise to leave space for rest and recovery between appointments. Also, we recommend you schedule your own freedom appointment at least once a year to close any doors to the enemy and continue growing in freedom.

SESSION 12 - PREP WORK FOR DISCUSSION:

- Read through this session a second time. In your MASTER Steps book, mark and highlight key items you want to remember. Add Scriptures you want to have on hand.
- Think through and record your response to the questions and scenarios below. Be ready to discuss them during class.

FA DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SCENARIOS:

For the Scenarios, consider using these questions to help you respond well as the Encourager or Prayer Partner.

- How is the Holy Spirit leading you?
- How is the Holy Spirit leading the Participant?
- What questions could you ask the Participant?
- What information or Scripture could you share with the Participant?

Scenarios are stand-alone situations.

1. **Scenario:** The Participant begins to read the checklist from **Step Four: Rebellion versus Submission**. Instead of checking boxes, he begins to complain about the federal government and how the recent election went. You finally get him to refocus, but then he gets off track again when he reads the “church leaders” box and begins criticizing some of his church leaders. What might be happening? What do you do?
2. **Scenario:** In **Step Four: Rebellion versus Submission**, a 20-year-old female Participant tears up when she reads the box entitled “Teachers, coaches, school officials.” As the Encourager, you ask what she is feeling or thinking. She shares about a time when her basketball coach sat with her on the bus after a late-night game to discuss stats and strategy, but instead began touching her inappropriately. What might be happening? What do you do?
3. **Scenario:** You are the Prayer Partner and have closely observed and listened to the Participant and Encourager interact. They are on **Step Five: Pride versus Humility**. The Participant has been very engaged and diligent in processing through the sections. You observe her check every box. Her face flushes, and her breathing becomes shaky. As tears begin streaming down her cheeks, she blurts out, “I’m such a horrible Christian! I just can’t do this anymore! I can’t get it right.” She then melts into sobs. What might be happening? What do you do?



4. **Scenario:** In **Step Five: Pride versus Humility**, the Participant reads the opening prayer aloud but then stops, sets down her pencil, and says, “It sounds like God wants me to be a doormat, denying myself and serving others all the time. Isn’t it ok to take time for myself and do things I want and do them my way?” Her brow is furrowed, and her lip and nose are scrunched in a pout. What might be happening? What do you do?
5. In **Step Six: Bondage versus Freedom**, why might someone not be fully honest about their experiences? How can you tell if they are or are not being honest? Does it matter? How would you handle it?
6. **Scenario:** The Participant is dealing with a lot of fear and anxiety. In Appendix C: Overcoming Fear, he begins to pray the opening prayer that says, “I choose to believe that You have not given me a spirit of fear...” He stops and exclaims in despair, “This isn’t going to work! I have already tried everything. Where is all the fear coming from? Why can’t I just kick this?” What might be happening? What do you do?
7. What would you suggest as the best follow-up method for online Freedom Appointments when the Participant, Encourager, and Prayer Partner are not local to each other and may not have much contact with each other once the course is over?

RESOURCES

Most resources related to Freedom Appointments can be found as free downloads at

- <https://www.ficm.org/ministry-materials/free-resources/>
- <https://genfree.ficm.org/steps-resources>

Books can be purchased in the US Bookstore at

- <https://freedominchrist.com/>



SESSION 13

FREEDOM APPOINTMENT ROTATION

The FMT Leaders will divide the trainees into same-gender groups of three to rotate through each role in a real Freedom Appointment. An FMT leader will participate in a role or be assigned as a coach to each group. Use the time between meetings 12 and 14 to schedule a 4-hour window for your group to meet. The groups will process through an appointment from start to finish, from the Confidential Life Review form (CLR) to follow-up, and will pause each time they switch roles to debrief and share feedback. During the last training meeting on Week 14, everyone will share and celebrate what they have learned and accomplished.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Each of you will fill out the CLR and Consent Forms in preparation to be the Participant. Send the PDFs of the forms to your 3 or 4-person group so everyone has what they need when you rotate roles.

Bring to the meeting all the items you would want at an actual Freedom Appointment. Decide which number person you are and follow the rotation in the chart on the following page.

3 PERSON GROUPS	4 PERSON GROUPS
Intro - Step 2 Person 1: Encourager Person 2: Prayer Partner Person 3: Participant	Intro - Step 2 Intro - Step 2 Person 1: Encourager Person 2: Prayer Partner Person 3: Participant Person 4: Watch
Steps 3 - 5 Person 1: Participant Person 2: Encourager Person 3: Prayer Partner	Steps 3 & 4 Person 1: Watch Person 2: Encourager Person 3: Prayer Partner Person 4: Participant
Steps 6 - The End Person 1: Prayer Partner Person 2: Participant Person 3: Encourager	Steps 5 & 6 Person 1: Participant Person 2: Watch Person 3: Encourager Person 4: Prayer Partner
	Step 7 - The End Person 1: Prayer Partner Person 2: Participant Person 3: Watch Person 4: Encourager

- When you are the **Participant**, be yourself and allow the Spirit to speak to you through the process.
- As the **Encourager**, come prepared. Refer to the notes and Scriptures you have been writing in your MASTER book during class.
- As the **Prayer Partner**, pay attention and be prepared to step in and work closely with the Encourager. Pray, record notes, and write down Scriptures.
- Plan to complete the whole process. Add the Appendices where they fall within *The Steps* book.
- Stay focused and keep the appointment moving so you can complete the process.
- Debrief with each other at the end of each rotation before you switch roles
- If questions arise concerning the process, make notes and bring them to your full group debrief in Week 14.
- This is a real appointment but also a learning process, so ask each other questions along the way and help each other as needed.



SESSION 14

DEBRIEF & CELEBRATION!

Be ready to discuss these questions during the group meeting.

FREEDOM APPOINTMENT ROTATION:

1. In what areas do you feel the Freedom Appointment rotation helped you gain experience?
2. What “aha!” moments did you have?
3. What did you learn that will impact how you do Freedom Appointments in the future?
4. What was your most memorable moment?

FREEDOM APPOINTMENT TRAINING:

1. Share specific ways this training will help you in your ministry.
2. What personal and ministry lessons stand out in your mind from this training?
3. What, if anything, surprised you?
4. If you were leading the training sessions, what would you do differently?
5. What was missing that you would still like to learn?
6. What else would you like to share?

Take time to pray together over one another’s ministry spheres and send each other off with a blessing.



APPENDIX

These resources can be used to benefit further growth on this topic. Please be like the Bereans in your search for truth, “for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” Acts 17:11. A resource that can be accepted in its entirety is a rare find. Be diligent to find the gems of truth and leave the rest.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Session 1

- **Josh McDowell & Sean McDowell**, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World*
- **Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart**, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*

Session 2

- **John Eldredge**
 - *Moving Mountains*
 - *Experience Jesus. Really.*
 - *Resilient: Restoring Your Weary Soul in These Turbulent Times*
 - *The Pause App*
- **Richard Foster**
 - *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*
 - *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*
- **Daniel Henderson**, *Transforming Prayer*
- **Brother Lawrence**, *Practicing the Presence of God*
- **Dallas Willard**, *Hearing God*
- **Pew Research Link**: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>
- **Crossway Link**: <https://www.crossway.org/articles/infographic-how-is-your-prayer-life/>

Session 3

- **Augustine of Hippo**, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*
- **Richard Foster**, *Celebration of Discipline*
- **Sue Lindsay**, *The Prayer Manual*
- **Eugene Peterson**, *Working with Angles*
- **Daniel Henderson**, *Transforming Prayer*
- **Mark Buchanan**, *The Rest of God*

Session 4

- **Tony Evans**, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare: Outfitting Yourself for the Battle*
- **Craig S. Keener**, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking*
- **Kyle Idleman**, *Follower: Becoming More than Just a Fan of Jesus*
- **John Bunyan**, *Pilgrim's Progress*

Session 5

- **Peter Scazzero**, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*
- **Ken Sande**, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*
- **Milan and Kay Yerkovich**, *How We Love* - howwelove.com
- **Gary Chapman**, *The Five Love Languages*
- **Marcus Warner**, *Understanding the Wounded Heart*
- **Jim Wilder**, *Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You*

