

**LIFEGROUP STUDY**  
**REAL GOOD QUESTIONS:**  
**“Doesn’t Christianity Take Away Personal Freedom?”**  
**20210509**

**LEADER NOTES**

**OVERVIEW**

Welcome back to our series, Real Good Questions. Over the weeks of this series, we’re exploring six common challenges to Christianity and how Christ followers can respond. Our challenge this week is – “Doesn’t Christianity take away personal freedom?” Many people today believe Christianity is a straightjacket contrived by people who want to wield authority by taking away personal freedoms. Does Christianity inhibit me from being who I really want to be and doing what I really want to do? Or, does choosing to follow Jesus actually lead to the true freedom God designed me to experience?

**ICEBREAKER** - I’m Free! What memory comes to mind for you when you felt totally free? Maybe it was that exhilarating experience of skiing down the side of a mountain. Or, maybe that time you were up in a plane, looking over the vast landscape below you. Share with the group a favourite memory of a time you had that feeling – I’m free!

**STUDY**

1. On Sunday, Ken talked about how in our culture today freedom has become our highest pursuit. **What did he mean by this?**

LEADER NOTE: In our culture today we believe that there are these restraints in life that are keeping us away from knowing personal freedom. If we can break free from many of the limitations imposed on us, the restraints we believe are suppressing us, controlling us, weakening us, constraining us from being all we could be and all we truly are in terms of our deeply beautiful identity, then we will know a happiness and a satisfaction and a fulfilling life in a way we do not know now. We believe freedom is the ultimate prize because it is in freedom that we will find deep and lasting happiness.

2. **How would you define freedom?** Take a few moments to offer your definition of freedom with the group.

LEADER NOTE: One dictionary definition says this: “The condition of being free of restraints, especially the ability to act without control or interference by another or by circumstance.”

The Freedom Jesus Offers and Why We Resist It. (John 8:31-58)

3. READ: John 8:31-32

“Jesus said to the people who believed in him, ‘You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” NLT

- **Why is the truth so important to our quest for freedom?** (also read John 8:33-36)

LEADER NOTE: “... the truth will set you free.” Jesus is talking here about his teachings. As we faithfully follow Jesus’ teachings we gain freedom from spiritual darkness, falsehood and sin. Jesus uses the analogy of being set free from slavery (vs. 34-36) to explain the kind of freedom he offered. Jesus allowed people freedom to choose whether or not they would follow His teaching. Some that day chose to believe in Him. Others chose to reject.

4. READ: John 8:33

“‘But we are descendants of Abraham,’ they said. ‘We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, ‘You will be set free?’” NLT

- The people of Jesus’s day thought they were free, but they were really slaves to sin. **Why did they (and we) resist what Jesus was saying to them about freedom?**

LEADER NOTE: In verses 44-47, Jesus identifies why the people resisted the truth. They belonged to Satan and were following Satan’s lies. In this sense, they were slaves to sin. We are the same. All of us once belonged to Satan and were slaves to his lies. All of us resist the freedom Jesus offers. By God’s grace, He sets us free to follow a new Master, Jesus. (see Eph. 2:8-9)

5. READ: John 8:36

“So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” NLT

- **How would you describe what it means to be truly free?**

LEADER NOTE: Being free in Jesus means we are set free from being slaves to Satan and his lies. Being free in Christ does not mean we do anything we want (following the desires of our sinful nature). Following Jesus is a decision to become a “slave” to Christ. In the NT the word *doulos* is used 124 times to describe someone who belongs to another. We do not belong to ourselves. We belong to Master Jesus. It is in living for Him that we find peace and joy – true freedom.

6. Author, Timothy Keller, writes, “In many areas of life, freedom is not so much the absence of restrictions as finding the right ones, the liberating restrictions.” The Reason for God

- **What are some examples from our culture of liberating restrictions?**

LEADER NOTE: Liberating restrictions in our culture include things like the speed limit (liberating us from accidents) the criminal code (liberating us from crime) and workplace safety (liberating us from unhealthy, unsafe workplace environments).

## 7. How might you make a case for saying Jesus' teachings are liberating restrictions?

LEADER NOTE: Jesus described his teachings as light that leads to life (see John 8:12) He invited people to come to him for "living water" (see John 7:37-38). Jesus' teachings are restrictive in that we are called to self-control rather than indulge our sinful nature, but they are liberating in that they lead us to life, rather than death. (see John 11:25-26). Timothy Keller asks, "If we only grow intellectually, vocationally, and physically through judicious constraints – why would it not also be true for spiritual and moral growth? Instead of insisting on freedom to create spiritual reality, shouldn't we be seeking to discover it and disciplining ourselves to live according to it?"

## 8. READ: Ephesians 2:8-9

"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." NLT

- In these verses we see the basis of our relationship with God is not based on rule following, but on faith. **How might these verses speak to someone who sees Christianity as limiting their freedom?**

LEADER NOTE: Christianity is not a moral straight jacket. It is an experience of God's grace. These verses remind us there is nothing we can do to earn His favour. Instead, because God has saved us by his grace, we respond by loving Him back, by following Him as an expression of thanks and worship for what He is doing. Yes, following Jesus includes "liberating restrictions" – but these are not about our salvation. We are saved by faith alone. Our faith is based on a personal relationship with Jesus, not religious rules.

## 9. What has been a key learning for you from this week's focus on freedom?

### PRAYER

This week, let's pray for Creekside's outreach in our community. Particularly, today we'll be praying for The Big Serve.

- The Big Serve is Creekside's way of loving and caring for our Region in Jesus' Name. Pray for us as we network with agencies and ministries in our community and set up serve projects for this Summer. [www.creeksidechurch.ca/thebigserve/](http://www.creeksidechurch.ca/thebigserve/)

- Pray as a Lifegroup that God would give you as a group an idea for a Big Serve project that you could take on this Summer. It could be anything!
- Pray that God would give us opportunities through this community service to share the love of Jesus in deed as well as with our words. Pray that the people we serve will be drawn closer to the Lord through us.