

FREEDOM

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Friends,

Freedom is a topic we especially love in America, but this love of freedom actually comes from how God designed us. Did you know that you were MADE to be free? Sadly, lots of people go through their entire lives without really enjoying the freedom God has for them because they get stuck behind barriers that the Lord never intended for us. These “walls” can be barriers built with bitterness, shame, pride, greed, or even confusion. The GREAT news is that Jesus has given us all the tools we need to reclaim the freedom we might have lost. That’s what this Freedom emphasis is all about. I’m praying that we would all invite God to examine our hearts for any unseen walls that might be holding us back from the life He intends for us to live. Would you join me in this adventure of freedom? I can’t wait to see what the Lord has in store!

Blessings,

Ryan Rush

HOW TO USE THE FREEDOM DEVOTIONAL

This devotional is intended to lead us into a deeper, more honest place in our relationship with God. To receive the most from the devotionals, it is important to set aside 10 to 15 minutes each day to seek God through prayer and reflection.

These devotionals are written in a format that includes three sections: 1) My Story 2) His Story 3) Your Story. The “My Story” section of the devotional is the writer of the devotional sharing their heart and personal experience with the specific devotional topic for the day. The “His Story” section of the devotional is portions of God’s Word that focus on the specific devotional topic of the day. Lastly, the “Your Story” section of the devotional is set aside for you to reflect, pray, and invite God to speak to you and lead you to freedom.

Please know you are being prayed for daily as you seek God through these devotionals. May God do a powerful work in our lives as He tears down Walls so we can live the life we were created to live!

Day 1:

Why Freedom

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” Isaiah 61:1

This Scripture was fulfilled through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to save us, heal our hearts and set us free. However, the enemy works hard to deceive us in ways that keep us from experiencing freedom in Christ. We struggle to accept the truth of our identity in Christ and we try to heal our own hearts and change our lives apart from Christ. Walls are created in our relationship with God, separating us from living the life we were created to live.

We need Jesus to heal our brokenness and set us free from the enemy's lies so that we can experience freedom to live the life we were created to live. As Jesus heals our hearts and sets us free, we experience true fulfillment in Jesus Christ, transforming our homes and community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My Story

The past couple of days I've struggled with fear, worry, condemnation, insecurity and doubt. I have felt unseen Walls in my relationship with God. I've looked within my heart to see any sins that needed to be confessed. I tell God that I am struggling and need His help, yet I continue to struggle. I begin to question my ability to help anyone experience freedom because of my obvious lack of personal freedom. This question leads to a series of questions about my heart and I begin to feel unqualified to serve in ministry. I have the thought that maybe I should just quit - give up. As I hear the thought to quit and give up, I realize that I've actually been under spiritual attack the past couple of days. How did I miss the onset of this attack? Why did I wait until the thought of giving up to recognize the presence of the enemy?

The answer is because the enemy is often very subtle. The enemy does not want us to recognize him at work in our lives. The enemy wants us to focus inward and our futile attempts to change the condition of our hearts, relationships and lives. The enemy doesn't want God's children to recognize his attacks on our lives and he certainly doesn't want us know how to experience freedom from his attacks.

Freedom Week

Freedom Week is a time to seek God's presence in our lives. As a church, we set aside a specific time to seek freedom from any unseen Walls in our relationship with God. We seek freedom from ways that the enemy has worked in our lives to create fear, shame, condemnation, pride and any other Walls in our lives. We seek freedom to hear more clearly from the Spirit and experience a greater revelation of God's love for us. We seek freedom from a false sense of who we are so that we can walk in our true identity as God's sons and daughters.

There is a lot at stake during Freedom Week at Kingsland. Some of us are being attacked in such a way that the enemy is tearing our families apart. Some of us don't recognize the lies we've been told but are weary from trying so hard to cover our insecurities, shame and condemnation. We are secretly exhausted from wearing the mask of performance and isolation. And some of us have experienced freedom in our lives and God has even more He wants to do in our lives.

God is for our freedom. The enemy is against our freedom. Our freedom changes our lives, changes our families and ultimately God gets the glory. The Gospel is proclaimed as a result of transformed lives and His story becomes our story. Yes – a lot is at stake during Freedom Week.

The answer is because the enemy is often very subtle. The enemy does not want us to recognize him at work in our lives. The enemy wants us to focus inward and our futile attempts to change the condition of our hearts, relationships and lives. The enemy doesn't want God's children to recognize his attacks on our lives and he certainly doesn't want us know how to experience freedom from his attacks.

Where Are You?

After the enemy's attack on Adam and Eve, they hid from God. Scripture tells us in Genesis 3:8-9, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

Prayer

Ask the Lord to help you answer these questions:

Where are you in regards to seeking God and freedom in your life?

Where are you possibly hiding behind the Walls of performance, shame and fear?

What Walls were identified as a result of taking the Walls inventory {insert link or instructions about Walls inventory}?

Ask God to show you what you need to surrender in order for you to experience more of God's presence and freedom in your life?

Ask God to show you any lies that you believe about spiritual warfare.

Freedom Prayer:

LORD, thank you that you've called me out of darkness and into your light. Thank you for giving your life for me so that I can be healed and set free from any kind of Wall in my life.

You know every lie that the enemy has told me. You know where I need healing and freedom in my life. You see the Walls in my relationship with you and with other people. I confess that I don't have the power to heal my heart, free myself or change my life. I need you to show me where I need healing and freedom and I need you to help me trust you to lead me to freedom.

LORD, heal my heart and set me free from anything that is separating me from living the life you created me to live.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Day 2:

Freedom Basics

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

Lies about God

In Genesis 3, we have a clear picture of how the enemy works in our lives. The enemy assaulted Adam and Eve’s relationship with God. The enemy lied about what God said to Adam and Eve in an attempt to destroy their relationship with God. Their story forever changed as they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and darkness entered their lives. They responded to their brokenness in the same way we often respond to our brokenness. Adam and Eve hid from God and tried to cover up their guilt and shame with fig leaves. Genesis 3:7.

God could have left Adam and Eve to suffer in their guilt and shame, but he called them out of hiding, out of darkness and into the light of His presence. Instead of rejecting Adam and Eve in their sin, God embraced them. This is exactly what God did for us through the Cross. He embraced us in our sin with His great love, covered us with the blood of Jesus and delivered us out of darkness into His light. Romans 5:8, Colossians 1:13.

Jesus describes Satan as “a liar and the father of all lies.” (John 8:44). The enemy’s first lie to Adam and Eve was about God and he saw the devastating consequences of that lie. An important lesson we can learn from Adam and Eve’s story is that 1) The enemy (Satan) lies to us about God 2) We need to recognize the enemy’s lies 3) We need to reject the enemy’s lies.

Along with lies from the enemy about God, another problem many of us have in relating intimately with God is the result of unhealed and unresolved wounds from our past. Our wounds are opportune times in our lives for the enemy to lie to us because the lies feel real – they often match the pain of our emotions or painful experience. Over time, we believe these false images or perceptions about God to be true. Simply put, we believe the lies and Walls are created in our relationship with God.

Your Story

The following are common lies we believe about God. Ask God to help you identify any of these lies you may believe about Him.

God is disappointed in me.

God is not good.

God doesn’t really care about me.

God doesn’t delight in me.

God is not pleased with me.

God wants to punish me.

God needs me to earn His approval.

God loves others more than He loves me.

God is not really present in my life.

Ask God to reveal any other lies you believe about Him.

Which of these lies have caused the most pain in your life?

List 3 things (people, events, experiences) that have shaped your perception about God.

Freedom Prayer:

Father, my relationship with you has been wounded by these lies I believe about you. The lies have kept me from trusting you completely, receiving the depth of your love for me and kept me from experiencing a deeply intimate relationship with you. Lord, I'm so sorry for believing lies about you. I need to be set free from every lie I believe about you. My heart needs to be healed of the hurt these lies have caused me. Father, take my heart and heal it. Uproot the lies from the soil of my heart and remove them completely from me. Break the power of these lies off of my life and set me free. I choose to believe what your Word says about you. I accept your great love for me and your powerful grace!

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Day 3:

Freedom Basics

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Freedom from Lies about Ourselves

In Genesis 3, we have a clear picture of how the enemy works in our lives. The enemy assaulted Adam and it is essential that we know what God says about us for us to experience freedom. We receive messages at an early age about who we are and those messages are based on what God says about us or on what the world, the enemy and others say about us. The messages we hear about ourselves, the things that we say about ourselves and especially the way we think about ourselves are powerful and impact every area of our lives.

For example, Walls are easily created in our relationship with God when we believe the lie that “I’m not good enough.” The lie leads us to try to earn God’s approval and make ourselves good enough for Him. When we believe the lie that “I am a failure” or “I am a disappointment to God,” Walls develop that separate us from receiving God’s love and grace.

IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Our identity answers the question “Who am I?” The enemy certainly wants to answer this question for us. He tells us lies about our identity at a very early age in our lives and continually lies to us about who we are. Scripture tells us that we are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). The enemy hates that we are created in God’s image and certainly doesn’t want us to reflect God’s image. The enemy lies to us about who we are to hinder us from living the life we were created to live, distorting the very image of God in our lives.

His Story

We see a powerful picture of how God sees us in Matthew 3:17 as God speaks His blessing over Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” The word “pleased” means to think well of, approve, take delight or pleasure in. Obviously God is speaking about His beloved Son, however it is also a picture of our own hearts. We need to know God loves us, approves of us and delights in us. Of course, God does not approve of the sin in our lives, but He is well pleased with us, approves of us and delights in us because we are His. We belong to Him and our lives are hidden in Christ (Colossians 3:3). When our Father looks at us, He sees His Son. This is the only way we can be holy and blameless in His sight (Ephesians 1:4). And, this is our Identity in Christ.

Your Story

The following are common lies the enemy tells us about ourselves. Ask God to show you what lies you believe about yourself.

I am too far gone. I have done too many bad things.

It's all up to me.

I must work harder.

If I work and try harder, maybe God will love me more.

I am a failure.

I am a disappointment to God/others.

I don't have what it takes.

I am stupid/not smart.

There is something wrong with me.

I could never be what God wants me to be.

I am such a loser.

I am such a fraud/fake.

I'm not lovable.

I'm not important.

I don't need freedom from anything.

Ask God to show you any other lies you believe about yourself.

How do you think these lies have impacted your life?

Freedom Prayer:

Father, forgive me for believing what the enemy said about me. I reject these lies and ask that you break the power of these lies from my life. These lies caused so much pain in my heart and life. Jesus, I need you to heal my heart and set me free from the power of these lies. Help me accept and believe what you say about me. I ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 4:

Power of Words by Ryan Cook

“Life and death are in the power of the tongue” Proverbs 18:21.

My Story

Words have amazing power in our lives. The very creation around us was made by the power of the words of God. God invites us into the creative process of life by allowing us freedom to create words. We can use words in many wonderful ways to bless, encourage, build up, teach, instruct, and shape the world and lives of those around us.

However, in our sinful and fallen state, we have the option to use words that can also tear down, hurt, wound, condemn and even destroy someone. The enemy of God also knows the power of words and will speak lies to us to destroy us. These lies only have power when we come into agreement with them, but when we do, it can bring new levels of pain and burdens.

As a young boy, I experienced some personal rejection and set-back. Instead of turning to the life-giving words of God, I began to listen to the life-taking lies of the enemy. I began to believe the lie that “I wasn’t good enough.” This terrible lie caused deep pain that I attempted to cover up and heal on my own by having success. Success in school, relationships, sports, and even church. I became a full-blown ‘performer’ in my life – full of pride and fear. Fear of failure that would confirm the lie, and full of pride because I was healing myself.

When God graciously showed me this lie, I repented for agreeing with it, and for living out of the lie rather than the truth of God. As I continue on my freedom journey these days, I am very aware of the words I speak to others, and the words I receive from others. When the enemy tries to bring lies, I turn to God’s words of truth for my identity, my healing, and my guide.

His Story

Jesus says in John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.” Jesus has won the battle for our lives and salvation and he offers us the blessing of abundant life. We must draw near to His live-giving words to combat the enemy’s lies.

Your Story

What are the words that have impacted our life? Have you had someone speak words of criticism, rejection, condemnation or judgement over you? Have you listened to a lie from the enemy and believed those words? Are you turning to the life-giving words of the Lord for healing and blessing?

Freedom Prayer:

Father, thank you for showing me words that wounded me. I ask that you heal me and set me free from the pain of those words. Father, you know the profound way those words have impacted my heart and life. Break the power of those words from my life and heal me of the damage those words caused. Help me to accept your Word and what you say about me and my life.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Day 5:

Freedom from Pride by Susan Sowell

“But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” James 4:6-7.

My Story

I have a love/hate relationship with pride. I hate to admit that I have pride. I hate the way my pride focuses on me. I hate the way pride creates a wall in my relationship with God and other people. However, I love the temporary feeling of safety pride gives me. I love the temporary sense of being in control pride gives me. I love the temporary relief of shame pride gives me.

The truth is that pride is a trap. Pride traps my heart behind a wall of defense that keeps me from being honest with God, honest with myself and honest with others. Pride isolates my heart and does exactly what the enemy intends it to do. Pride steals the gift of grace in my life and leads me to perform, strive and seek other's approval.

I need God to help me admit that I have pride. I need God to expose the hidden pride in my life. I need God to help me believe that pride doesn't protect me, empower me or heal me of shame. I also need God to free me of my selfish desire to gain other's approval and praise. I need freedom from pride.

His Story

JAadopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death - even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8). What are the words that have impacted our life? Have you had someone speak words of criticism, rejection, condemnation or judgement over you? Have you listened to a lie from the enemy and believed those words? Are you turning to the life-giving words of the Lord for healing and blessing?

Your Story

Ask the Lord to help you identify pride in your life. Consider areas in your life such as your position at work, your children, relationships, ministry, appearance, possessions, accomplishments - where is there pride?

How often do you attempt to do things in your own strength (without asking God to help you)?

How quickly do you acknowledge when you've done something wrong or done something that is hurtful to another person?

Freedom Prayer:

Father, thank you that I am your son/daughter and you love me. You see the pride in my heart and you know why I'm vulnerable to pride. I confess my pride to you and ask that you forgive me for being prideful. Lord, break the grip of pride from my life and set me free. Give me discernment to recognize when I am being prideful and grant me your grace to refuse what the enemy offers with pride. Teach me to walk humbly before you and with others.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Day 6:

Freedom from Control By Pat Bramlett

“For the love of Christ compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If one died for all, then all died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

My Story

I don't like to feel that I 'm being controlled by another person or situation, but rather I enjoy feeling like I have control over myself, circumstances, and relationships (spouse, children, and friends). Often, I don't even realize that my efforts to control things and people has created a Wall around me because it feels good to be in control. Being in control gives me a false sense of power and identity.

It's easy for me to think that as a Christian, I let God be in control, but actually my actions and attitudes contradict that when I get upset or anxious when things do not go my way. Control manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as perfectionism, anxiety, stress, fear, and exhaustion. When I'm experiencing these things, I'm not able to receive the love of Christ and the freedom He desires for me. My heart feels enslaved to these emotions. Therefore, trying to control things in my life produces the opposite result of out-of-control feelings. The enemy tricks me into believing that control feels good, but it really steals the true joy and peace in trusting God.

I need God to help me identify areas in my life where my false sense of power to control has created Walls in my life. I need God to show me what lies the enemy has told me and set me free from control.

His Story

Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life (John 14:6) and you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free (John 8:32). It is in a relationship with Jesus Christ that my heart knows truth and trusts that His love can set me free from the false sense of power to control. Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Your Story

Picture control like this: hold your fist in the air with fingers clinched tightly. This is what our hearts look like to God when we have excess control in many areas of our lives. As we seek God and surrender relationships, circumstance, our future, and our emotions to Him for His control, we begin to live in freedom to God's plans and purposes instead of our own. As you surrender to God, one finger opens up and a little more of your heart is available to God. As you surrender another area of your life, another finger opens up, and step by step, you have an open palm face up to God, allowing Him control in your heart and life. How beautiful that is to God!

So, ask God to show you any area in your life that you try to exercise a false sense of power and control. Then, with the Holy Spirit's help, take one step of faith to God and surrender it to Him. Remember, it may not feel easy, but God's promise of freedom is worth it! True freedom is not bringing ourselves under our own control, but under the power of Christ and His truths.

Freedom Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for demonstrating your love to me through your son Jesus Christ. You know the areas of my heart where I have a false sense of control. I confess my attitude and behaviors where I try to take control, instead of trusting in your truths and plans. I ask you to break the grip of control in my life and bring healing to my heart from the deception of the enemy. God, give me your wisdom to know the areas that I need to release to you and the courage to walk in your truths.

In Jesus Name,

Amen.

Day 7:

Freedom from Performance By Gil Harris

“Not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Armies. What are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain. And he will bring out the capstone accompanied by shouts of: Grace, grace to it!” Zechariah 4:6-7

My Story

That look, the twinkle in his eyes, that smile. I can still see it. I can still feel it, just like it was happening now. I lived every day of my life for it. It encouraged me, motivated me, blessed me, and drove me to do whatever was necessary to get it. I lived and breathed for that look of “that’s my son” or “that’s my boy” from my father.

I was 12 years old. Life was good. I was good. Then the diagnosis came...cancer, lymphoma, Hodgkin’s. In 1970, this was likely incurable. Harsh radiation and chemo therapy is what lay ahead. My father, a very strong and proud man, checked out emotionally — isolated. And all I remembered thinking was, “What have I done wrong?”

No more looks, no more smiles, no more twinkle in his eyes. I could not find a way to bring these back, regardless of how hard I tried. Then, seven short years later, I said goodbye to him, to his expressions of love, and to his approval and validation.

Fast forward to the adult years of my spiritual journey with God. Remember, we relate to our Heavenly Father the way we relate to our earthly father. I lived to please my Heavenly Father, to get that look, that feeling of approval and validation.

The only way I knew to get it was to PERFORM. Every known spiritual discipline available, I did with one goal in mind — to earn His approval and pleasure.

Thank God, I finally crashed.

With the help of Godly mentors, friends, and my wife, I began to remove the face of my earthly father off of the face of my loving, kind, and gracious Heavenly Father. I have learned that regardless of my performance, good or bad, He is crazy about me, loves me unconditionally, and there is nothing that I could ever do to separate His love from me.

His Story

In Zechariah Chapter 4, the prophet encouraged and motivated the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple. They had a lot of work ahead of them. It seemed impossible. Many had already become disillusioned and defeated.

Zechariah’s word to them is the same word that God wants us to hear today. Our ability to earn, work, serve and perform will never produce the needed results to obtain God’s favor and acceptance. When facing mountain-sized obstacles, always listen for those comforting words from God — grace, grace.

Your Story

Whose face have you put on God?

A person, your spouse, a church? The test to discover if it's anyone or anything but God is simple. Ask yourself, "What are those things I do daily, weekly, yearly that make me feel loved, and accepted by God?" I'm sure those things are good, and helpful, but they will never bring the security and approval you are seeking. God wants you to trust and rest in what He has done for you. He has provided for us, through His Son, everlasting and unconditional love, acceptance, and total forgiveness

Freedom Prayer:

Dear Father in Heaven, thank you for doing for us what we could never do, nor provide for ourselves. At the cross, You placed on Your Son all of our failures, sin, guilt, shame and condemnation. We can now boldly proclaim that "He made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Today, I choose to accept and believe this fact, this truth, this life changing promise.

Amen.

Day 8:

Freedom to Rest By Jessica Sowell

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

John 14: 27

My Story

Rest is not something that comes easy to me. I am slave to productivity, to-do lists, and stress. God hard-wired us humans with a deep thirst for true, Spiritual rest, but I like to ignore that need. I like to think I can get everything done by myself, tick every box off my to-do list, say yes to everyone, down another cup of coffee, rinse, repeat. When I finally run out of steam (and I always do), I tend to swap the true rest God offers us for escapism. By this I mean a lot of things, but my common culprits are scrolling through Instagram or online stores or news articles on my phone, binge-watching my latest Netflix obsession late into the night, or filling every hour of free time I have left with social activities. But rather than fill me afresh with new energy, all these things ever do is fill me with more noise. Slowly and steadily, my stress and lack of rest build into a crescendo of restlessness, anxiety, hopelessness, and despair.

His Story

God offers us something different. He offers us His peace, or to be more precise, His shalom. In the verses directly preceding John 14:27, Jesus promises his followers the Holy Spirit: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said.” (v 26) This peace he leaves with us is, then, a gift of the Holy Spirit. That is really great news, because, just as we freely receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when we put our faith in Christ, so we also freely receive the gift of shalom. Shalom is different than our modern concept of peace. Biblical shalom is a deep, inner sense of completeness or wholeness. It is resting in your identity as a child of God, resting in God’s promises, and resting in God’s sovereignty. It is finding your completeness, your purpose, your hope in the person of Christ. We are created to find our completeness in the Lord, and when we receive and rest in the gift of Shalom, it also functions as a defense against fear and anxiety. Just after promising the gift of peace, Jesus’ promise turns to a warning: “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” This gift of peace empowers us to rest and protects us from fear.

Your Story

We all know the enemy is a liar, but more often than not, we fall for his deception anyways. While rest may be a free gift, one we don’t ever have to work for, that doesn’t mean there aren’t things the enemy will use to keep us from receiving it. He will try to tempt you with mindlessness, escapism, control, busyness, etc. to keep you from experiencing true Spiritual rest.

Ask God to reveal to you the things in your life that keep you from receiving His gift of rest.

Freedom Prayer:

Father, you are the Prince of Peace. Your promises are true, and you desire to lavish your children with good gifts. Holy Spirit, search our hearts and show us where the enemy has tried to prevent us from experiencing Spiritual rest. Show us what lies we have believed about rest and where we have pursued false rest. We lay those at your feet, and we claim the promise of peace in Jesus' name. Thank you, Lord, for the finished work of the cross, that we are forgiven, redeemed, and made new.

God, we rest in your faithfulness and we look with anticipation toward the time when you will return in glory. Help us find our sense of completeness and wholeness in you and in you alone. Help us to receive your free gift of rest. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Day 9:

Freedom from Fear By Rebecca Skinner

“It is the Lord who goes before you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you. Do not fear or be dismayed.” Deuteronomy 31:8

My Story

There are two things I'm often tempted to fear the most: fear of the unknown and fear of being alone or left without needed support. It is safe to say that while these types of fears are fighting for residence in my heart and mind, I often temporarily experience a total loss of courage. For a period of time, I can find myself completely dismayed and in desperate need of reassurance & hope. In those moments, where I place my hope and look for that reassurance will determine whether I sink deeper into my fearful thoughts or instead rediscover anew the perfect love that drives out all my fear. (1 John 4:18)

I can remember a time in my life where fear nearly overwhelmed me. I was alone and in unfamiliar surroundings; while I knew I had the support of family and friends across the miles, there was no one at that moment that could offer the “gift of presence” during this particular time of uncertainty. I can remember calling a close friend who reminded me of the truth found in God's Word. I then laid there afterwards throughout the entire night literally forcing myself to arrest and take captive every fearful thought that did not align with what I knew God's Word promised. (2 Corinthians 10:5) As the minutes passed by, I meditated on the truths that I could remember from God's Word. As I prayed those out loud and talked to my heavenly Father, a supernatural peace flooded my soul and I truly was able to find rest and supernatural peace in God alone. (Psalm 62:5) (Philippians 4:6-7)

His Story

“So don't worry [fear], because I am with you. Don't be afraid [dismayed], because I am your God. I will make you strong [strengthen you] and will help you; I will support [uphold] you with my [righteous] right hand that saves you.” (Isaiah 41:10 EXB)

“On God my salvation and my glory rest; He is my rock of [unyielding] strength, my refuge is in God. Trust [confidently] in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. Selah.” (Psalm 62:7-8 AMP)

Your Story

Ask the Lord to reveal to you your fears. Consider areas such as: family, marriage, children, future, commitments, health, a diagnosis, school, job, relationships, church, leadership, death, finances.

Are you willing to share your fears with a brother or sister in Christ who can pray for you and remind you of God's promises?

Ask God to help you receive His perfect love that casts out all fear.

Freedom Prayer:

Father in Heaven, all things are possible for you. You have all wisdom and power and everything in heaven and on earth belongs to you. You are Jehovah Elohim, Creator of the Universe and El Roi, the God who sees everything. Nothing in my life escapes your notice. You tell me in your Word that you see the tiniest bird that falls from its nest and that I am far more precious to you than the birds. Please open my eyes to the promises in your Word that remind me of your perfect love for me which you promise will drive out all my fears. Help me on a daily basis to place my hope in you and seek reassurance from you alone when fear & anxiety attempt to take over my heart, mind and soul. Since you tell me not to be anxious or worried about anything, I know that you will show me how. I will commit to praying and laying my requests before you with thanksgiving, and I ask that you will flood my soul with your peace which will stand guard over my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. I declare my trust in you and will pour out my heart to you; you are my rock of unyielding strength, my fortress and my defense, I will not be shaken or discouraged.

Day 10:

Freedom from Doubt By Todd Pendergrass

Mark 4:35-5:1 On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea." So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?" He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!" They came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes.

My Story

It is often said that the enemy of faith is doubt. This may not be true in every circumstance but it is true nonetheless. After being in the ministry for 20 years, my marriage of 25 years had ended and serving in the ministry as a vocation ended. The calling upon my life was still to serve Him vocationally, but the enemy continued to bring up the failures of my past. Doubt entered the picture and I felt that God was through with me in the ministry. I thought, "Maybe I should find something else to do with my life." I had forgotten His promises. It reminds me of Jesus' statement to the disciples to get in the boat. That statement came with a promise - the other side. They obeyed Jesus until the storm came. The storm made them doubt, and they even thought they would die. Remember, Jesus was in the boat with them and asleep. They woke him up, "Teacher, don't you care that we are going to drown?" Jesus arose, calmed the storm and they came safely to the other side. The disciples then asked, "Who is this that even the wind and waves obey him?" If they would had really listened and trusted Jesus, they would have realized that he had already assured them that they were going to the other side. But when the storms came, so came the doubts. Isn't that just like us? I know I sure allowed those doubts to creep into my life.

We can be secure that no matter how much the winds of adversity blow or how bad the storms is, Jesus is our assurance that we are going to make it to the other side. He also allowed me to return to serve Him vocationally. So, why would Jesus allow such storms to happen?

His Story

Do you notice at the end of Mark 4:41, there is a question mark? Later, in Matthew 14 the disciples are in another storm and Jesus calms the wind and waves again. This time, however, they respond, "Truly you are the Son of God!" Did you see it? Jesus has turned their question mark into an exclamation point. This is His desire for you. May the question marks of doubt be replaced with the exclamation marks of declaration that Jesus is real and his promises are true! "On God my salvation and my glory rest; He is my rock of [unyielding] strength, my refuge is in God. Trust [confidently] in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. Selah." (Psalm 62:7-8 AMP)

Your Story

Are there doubts that have slipped into your life during a difficult time? Have your assurances of the past turned into question marks? Jesus wants to erase those doubts today. Just trust Him. He will get you to the other side.

Freedom Prayer:

Father, thank you for the reminders in your word of your power over my storms and your victory over my doubts. I trust you today and lean on the promises you've given to me to get me to the other side. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day 11:

Freedom from Approval By Joe Landi

“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer.” 2 Timothy 2:3-4

My Story

I am a people pleaser at heart. I suppose in some ways, many of us are. It's not all bad to want people to like us, but we can certainly cross an unhealthy line where we fall into bondage over what others think of us. Growing up, I remember struggling and worrying about what others thought of me - especially at school. I can remember my Dad's advice: "Make like a duck and let it roll off your back. It doesn't matter what others think of you, it only matters what you think of yourself." For years, I tried to live by this advice and even as I got into adulthood, I would advise others to do the same. Yet despite telling myself things, I still found myself seeking the approval of others. Somehow, I couldn't shake it!

This began to change by God's grace when I read a book by Pastor Tim Keller entitled, "Freedom of Self Forgetfulness." The major premise of Pastor Keller's book was that it ultimately does not matter what others think of you, but it does NOT even matter what you think of yourself! The reason for this is because, as you may have already experienced, you can be wrong about yourself. No, the only opinion of you that really matters is Jesus' opinion of you.

Good news! I can tell you right now how Jesus feels about you - even as you read this! He feels you're worth dying for! He feels you are worth saving and wants nothing more than to not only have a relationship with you, but for you to experience true freedom in Him. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved!"

Jesus' opinion of you is all that matters. He settled that 2,000 years ago on the cross.

His Story

"Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23-24)

Your Story

Ask the Lord to help you identify areas where you are seeking the approval of others in an unhealthy way. Make a list of the people whose opinions matter most to you. What do you believe they think of you? How about yourself? What is your opinion about yourself?

How about Jesus? What does He think of you? Now, compare those list and opinions. Are they the same, similar or different? What does that tell you?

Freedom Prayer:

Father, I confess I have sometimes sought the approval of others to the detriment of my health and even my faith. Jesus, thank you for this simple truth that You settled how you feel about me on the cross 2,000 years ago. Help me to base my thoughts, words and actions on that truth and not on whether or not I am approved by others. Holy Spirit, help me to recognize and take captive any lies that are from the enemy and make them obedient to Jesus! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Day 12:

Freedom from Perfectionism Doug Valot

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:37-38.

My Story

When I think of being freed from something one thing hits me every time. Perfectionism. For as long as I can remember, I have had this internal drive to be perfect. I was so good at it my sister gave me the nickname “perfect son” with not a small hint of sarcasm! Even in writing this devotion, I am fighting the need to make it perfect!

Perfectionism is birthed by an emotional wound. I came from a great family and never doubted my parents loved me and yet I also felt the pain of disobeying my parents and disappointing them when I did wrong. So I coped with that pain in the only way I knew how, to try as hard as I could to be perfect. And it seemed to work. For the most part when I was really good, life was peaceful and pleasant. It took me a long time to see that I had made an idol of being perfect. I was trying to be my own healer by my striving for perfection.

Perfectionism can affect everything, from work, marriage, even my relationship with God. Many times in my life I missed the personal relationship Jesus was offering with my own efforts to earn His love. Even though I knew of His love, I still had this sense He was disappointed that I wasn't doing enough. Even today, there can be a Sunday where I walk out of worship discouraged because my wound of perfectionism is telling I am not doing enough. The underlying cry from the wound of perfection is, “it's never enough.” It can be exhausting!

But God.....so loved me. The truth is my identity is not in what I do but who I am, a child who has a heavenly Father who delights in and rejoices over me! It took a while for me to receive that kind of love because I had been caught in the performance trap for so long. And if I am totally honest, I still struggle at times today. But I am so grateful for Jesus and for the freedom He has allowed me to experience. I am now freer to love and to serve without the baggage of having to be perfect.

His Story

The Lord delights in me; He will quiet me with His love and rejoice over me with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

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 in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Your Story

How about you? Do you feel like you can never do enough? Do you find yourself reacting defensively to others because you feel like they are demanding one more thing from you? Are you weary and heavy-laden? How does the enemy entrap you with perfectionism? What lies do you hear?

Take some time with the Lord in prayer and ask Him to show you the root cause of your drive to be perfect. As you begin to gain a clearer picture, take those wounds to the cross and ask Jesus to heal your pain and

allow the comfort of His love to break the chains of perfectionism. Give yourself permission to hear God's voice of delight over you.

Freedom Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me unconditionally. Sometimes it's hard for me to believe that you love me unconditionally because it's so foreign to my life experience. Thank you for pursuing me and loving me with your perfect love. Father, forgive me for trying to earn your love, trying to be perfect and trying to heal my own heart. I need your healing and freedom in my life. Help me to rest in your perfect love for me and receive your unconditional love. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Day 12:

The Blessing: A Powerful Choice to Make By Brad Flurry

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. Deuteronomy 30:19-20

My Story

What do you think of when you hear the word “blessing”?

As a child, I thought it was something you might say before you eat. I remember my Grandfather saying “the blessing” before holiday meals. However, I never realized the blessing is something you could actually give someone else.

So what is the blessing? Simply put, the blessing is choosing to give honor by intentionally ascribing God’s promises to another through the giving of unconditional love and acceptance.

“I’m proud of you son.” “I love you, regardless of how you do on the football field.” “I choose you as my son.” These were words I never heard from my father. These were words I longed to hear, however they never came.

What I learned over time was the lack of the blessing in my life was not because of who I was or what I did or did not do. Instead, the lack of blessing was simply a choice my earthly father had intentionally or unintentionally made. Simply put, the blessing is a choice.

But not only is the blessing a choice, it is a powerful one. A few years ago, the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology released their findings of a 36 year study. What the researcher found was that children who receive physical affection, quality time, and acceptance (key elements of the blessing) by their parents were more likely to have closer marriages, healthy friendships, and successful careers. Why is this? Because God established the power of blessing; and He meant for it to function in every family on earth, including yours.

His Story

“We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The blessing was created by God to paint a beautiful picture of the Gospel. The message of the blessing is to give unmerited, unconditional acceptance. It’s about speaking worth and value into someone, regardless of their performance. This is the foundational message of the Gospel! You no longer have to strive to hear the words, “I choose you.” Your Heavenly Father has already chosen you!

Your Story

Did you receive the blessing as a child? How has this impacted your ability to share the blessing with others? Are there parts of your life where you have denied the blessing that the Lord offers us? Remember, you are fully chosen and accepted by God! Take time and share your blessing with someone today! How about Jesus? What does He think of you? Now, compare those list and opinions. Are they the same, similar or different? What does that tell you?

Freedom Prayer:

Today, say a prayer of Thanksgiving. Thank God for the following:

- **Thank God that He has chosen you (Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:9-10)**
- **Thank God that He has adopted you into His family (John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6-7; 2 Corinthians 6:18)**
- **Men, thank God that He believes in your strength (Gen. 1:26-27; Isaiah 40:31; 2 Timothy 1:7)**
- **Women, thank God that He delights in your beauty (Gen. 1:26-27; Psalm 45:10-11; Zephaniah 3:17; 1 Peter 3:3-4)**
- **Thank God that He has a glorious plan for you (Jeremiah 29:11-13; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Psalm 27:14)**
- **Thank God for being faithful to this blessing, even when we are faithless and rebellious (Romans 5:6-8, 8:37-39; 1 Corinthians 13:7; 1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 2:13; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5).**

Day 12:

Our Story By Susan Sowell

“We will not hide them from their children, but will tell a future generation the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed (Psalm 78:4).

My Story

It's impossible for me to tell of all the praiseworthy acts and wondrous works God has performed in my life. I could tell you that God delivered me from an addiction to alcohol when I was 22. I could tell you that God healed me from the devastation of sexual abuse. I could certainly tell you that God took a broken, insecure, and fearful woman and transformed her life through His amazing grace.

However, the wondrous work that God has given me a passion to tell is about the freedom He gave me from the enemy's insurmountable mountain of lies. Starting at a very young age, I believed countless lies about myself, my life, my future, and, more than anything, about God. The weight of the enemy's lies felt like chains that I could never be free from. It wasn't until I was close to 30 years old that someone told me that the enemy was real, that he lies, and that he lies to me.

It took some time to unpack all the lies that I believed and heal from the pain and damage of those lies. The enemy's lies created countless Walls in my relationship with God and my relationships with people – especially the ones I wanted to love the most. The enemy's lies felt so real to me, so personal that it is nothing short of a miracle that I have a sound mind today. However, this does not mean that the enemy stopped lying to me or that I walk in perfect freedom. To God's glory alone, most days I recognize the enemy's lies and reject them. Other days, the enemy's lies hit a vulnerable place, and I feel the sting of insecurity and shame. I know when I've been hit because a Wall goes up and I step back into fear, performance, pride, and isolation.

But not today! Today I choose to believe and receive the power of the Gospel so that my story becomes His story- and I tell the praiseworthy acts of the LORD and the wondrous works he has performed. Amen.

His Story

Read Mark 5:1-20.

In Mark 5:19, scripture tells us, “Jesus did not let him but told him, “Go home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.” Jesus had just delivered a man who had lived in the tombs, bound with shackles and chains (vs. 3-4). Scripture tells us that the man who had been demon possessed was now in his “right mind” (vs.15). God gives us great insight into our own lives through the story in Mark. Some powerful truths for us to grasp are (1) Jesus knows our chains and He is our “chain breaker,” (2) Jesus uses our past chains to set other people free (vs. 20), and (3) Jesus changes our life story.

Your Story

What is one thing that God showed you through Freedom Week that is leading you to freedom?

What is one lie that God set you free from during Freedom Week?

Ask God to show you anything that is keeping you from sharing your story of freedom with others.

Freedom Prayer:

Father, thank you that you love me and desire to have a deep and personal relationship with me. Thank you that you have set me free from the power of the enemy and that you have called me out of darkness and into the light of your presence. I have been set free through the power of the Gospel. Jesus, thank you for dying for me and giving me your life so that I can be free. I surrender my life fully to you and ask you to continue to heal me, free me, and write YOUR story on the tablet of my heart. I want for my life story to be all about your life story, but I need your help to make that happen. I need you to continue to tear down the Walls in my life so that I can live the life that I was created to live.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

