

Freedom: The Joy of a Heart Set Free by Jesus

On September 14th, we are beginning a sermon series called *Freedom: The Joy of a Heart Set Free by Jesus*. It's a 12 week sermon series based on 12 step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and Freedom Session. While the 12 steps can be a tool for those working through addiction, it is also for those who explode with angry words, those with hidden online habits, those who spend money based on how they're feeling, those with unhealthy stress responses, those who hate others, or those who never feel like they are enough. In short, while we all start from different places, Jesus invites us all to live into greater freedom!

For 12 weeks, we are inviting everyone to commit to meeting weekly in same gendered groups of 3-4 people for vulnerable sharing and responsive prayer.

Discuss

1. What excites you about this sermon series? In other words, what could go wonderfully well?
2. What makes you nervous? In other words, what could go terribly wrong?
3. If our group doesn't currently meet weekly, what barriers would keep us from meeting weekly for 12 weeks? How could we make a weekly connection work?

How Will The Time Look?

There will be a weekly discussion guide sent out, but it will be designed for an Apprentice Group to use (3-4 people of the same gender committed to meet regularly, share vulnerably, and respond with prayer). If we stay together as a large group, the discussion will either take a really long time, be less vulnerable, or only have a few people share. Forming smaller groups allows each of us to have time and space to share openly and deeply.

Discuss

1. To help everyone be able to share vulnerably, which would work best for our group?
 - a. Meet all together as a group for 20 minutes of social time and then break into Apprentice Groups for discussion
 - b. Don't meet as a large group, but have each Apprentice Group meet when and where works best for them. The whole group could meet socially every few weeks.
 - c. Another option that you can think of

How Will We Make Groups?

1. Don't overthink it! It's OK if you're in a group with someone other than your best friend.
2. To make groups, you can:
 - a. Form groups of 3-4 people based on where you're sitting in the room right now

- b. Form groups based on where you work or live
 - c. Form alphabetical groups, or groups based on birthdays
 - d. Form groups based on whether your Apprentice Group would like to meet in the morning or evening (if you go with that format)
 - e. Pause the group discussion for a moment and let everyone mingle - see if you can make groups in under 5 minutes. It might be easier than you think!
3. If your group doesn't divide easily into groups of 3-4, consider different options:
- a. **1 Person** - It might be that you don't have anyone in your group who can or wants to be in an Apprentice Group. If this is the case, ask your friends, family members, or other people at church to make a group that can work for you. If you've asked around without success, reach out to the church office and we'll help you.
 - b. **2 People** - Meeting as 2 people only works if both people are very committed to meet regularly. If one person cancels, the "group" can't meet.
 - c. **5 People** - 5 people sharing each week is a lot of people sharing. One group of 3 and one group of 2 likely works better than a group of 5. However, if you do form group of 5, have a very clear time limit each week when you share to keep your time from going too long. After a week or two, check in to see if a group of 2 or 3 would work better.
 - d. **6 People** - Just meet as two groups of 3. You'll be OK. 😊

Take a moment to make Apprentice Groups.

The Apprentice Group Commitment

- 1. Commit to Showing Up** - Don't cancel on your group, especially at the last minute!
- 2. Commit to Sharing Vulnerably** - You get out of it what you put into it
- 3. Commit to Letting Others Share** - Everyone needs an opportunity
- 4. Commit to Listening, not Fixing** - You're there to listen and pray, not to give advice
- 5. Commit to Confidentiality*** - Don't tell others what you talked about.

**We don't hold confidentiality when someone intends to harm themselves or another person, or discloses abuse.*

More information will be coming in the following weeks. In the meantime, may God give you grace as we begin this journey as a church into the freedom offered by Jesus!