

“God and Freedom”

Genesis 2:15-17

Introduction

Lady Liberty is marked by these words: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Our country has been built around language full of the ideals of freedom, and yet so many, including Christians, have failed to understand the kingdom vision of true freedom. When we start to consider this concept of freedom, we have to begin with God’s initial mention of it. From the beginning, we see God’s intention after He sets man in the Garden of Eden and gives him dominion over that territory. Shortly after that, in Genesis 2:16-17, the Lord warns Adam, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” The scope of this freedom is vast. Every tree is available for consumption and enjoyment, except for one.

God’s ideal freedom can be defined this way: an unimpeded opportunity and responsibility to choose righteously and justly what God has provided so you can maximize your potential as part of God’s created order. There is ample opportunity for man to choose accordingly. But with great freedom comes great responsibility. Adam is called to manage, maintain and expand the productivity in the garden; to maximize the opportunity God has provided. However, without a boundary, restriction or limitation, freedom loses its meaning. Maximizing one’s freedom requires legitimate boundaries, not to restrict, but rather to enhance freedom.

From the onset of the first nation He created in Israel, God purposed civil government to maintain a safe, just, righteous and compassionately responsible environment for freedom to flourish through limited regulations. It was only then that man could enjoy a free society. As we have departed from adhering to those limits and departed from leaders with character and competence, we have seen the fallout. Once God is excluded from government and leadership, the government begins to take control. And once that starts, we see government take the place of God in society. This is because God will allow us to experience the consequences when we remove His presence and refuse to submit to His power in our governing bodies.

Kingdom impact requires kingdom thinking. When people become more aligned with a political ideology than a kingdom one, it leads to division in the church and a lack of impact in the culture. Instead of looking to God’s standards to inform our decisions regarding the laws of the land, we look to human understanding, which is limited, unsteady and ever-changing. When we don’t make a straight line using the ruler of God’s absolute truth, everything in society becomes zig-zagged. Real truth becomes obsolete when everyone can change the standard based on their own personal definition of it. When people turn away from God’s definition of freedom, more and more laws must be instituted to keep sinful men in check.

When we choose to include God’s view of freedom in our own perceptions and understandings of government and leadership, we can become kingdom thinkers. Kingdom thinking will result in a kingdom mindset, resulting in a kingdom impact on society. When people start to apply a kingdom mindset to freedom and understand God’s definition and purposes within it, they begin to live by an important kingdom principle: people who are free live to set others free (Gal 5:13). Through the ultimate freedom we’ve been given as those who claim Christ, we can live to be freedom fighters.

As Kingdom Voters, we have been given not only the gift of true and absolute freedom through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, but we have also been given the knowledge of how freedom is supposed to operate in civil governments and societies. We no longer have to be enslaved to political ideologies of human creation. We are free to engage civil government towards expressing God’s intentions for human flourishing through freedom found in Him alone. For “if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Getting Started

1. Imagine a sport with no boundaries or limits in a game. Describe some of the things that might happen if there were no rules.
2. Freedom is a word used often in American culture. What do you think most people mean when they talk about freedom? How can that thinking be dangerous, harmful, or even the opposite of what they think it means?

Let's Get Personal

1. How would you define freedom? How does your definition differ from the one mentioned: unimpeded opportunity and responsibility to choose righteously and justly what God has provided so you can maximize your potential as part of God's created order?
2. What is the relationship between freedom and restriction? Why must freedom include restriction? Think about this in terms of children. Why must children have restrictions when it comes to freedom? What do the restrictions do for them?
3. What responsibilities come with freedom? Consider your freedom in Christ. What responsibilities come with that?
4. God knew that man would not experience true freedom once he ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Does your reliance on human knowledge and understanding keep you from experiencing true freedom?

Take the Next Step

1. "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Free people live in such a way that frees other people. What would that look like practically? Describe someone you know who is living in spiritual bondage, and how you could be a freedom fighter for that person.
2. In what ways have you seen God's truth be replaced with a human standard of truth in today's culture? What must you do to know God's truth? How could you encourage others towards God's immovable truth?
3. Christians who are free in Christ can still sometimes choose to live as if they are enslaved. How do you go back to living as someone who is not free? Are there specific sins that make you forget the freedom found in Jesus? Pray for one another to live as free people.
4. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Leviticus 25:10; Exodus 20:2; 21:16; 1 Samuel 8:10-19; Galatians 5:13; John 8:26.

Renew Your Mind

"Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; . . .'"

Genesis 2:15-16
