

*DEVOTIONAL*

*GUIDE*

ALIVE MINISTRIES

STUDENT CONFERENCE

2006

## FREEDOM TRUTH #1

"Met-a-static os-te-o-sar-coma" the doctor tells you for the third time – not realizing that your "What?" meant you couldn't believe it, not that you wanted to hear those awful words again. Whatever..., it all comes down to one simple word: *Cancer*. Well, two words: *Terminal cancer*. And *you* have it. It could be weeks. It might be months. But it all boils down to it's just a matter of time.

When you get home you log into your blog site. Trying to put words to your feeling of numbness you write...,

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It's six months later now, and you've been through radiation, chemo, and a bunch of other treatments that seemed more like medieval torture than modern medicine. Your appetite is gone..., and so is your hair. You spend hours hugging the toilet from nausea after each treatment. And for what? Nothing, nada – still no change. Well..., that's not exactly true – the cancer is in fact *growing*. You sit down at your computer with a cap on your head – because you can't stand to see the reflection of your bald head in the monitor – and make another entry into your blog...,

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Long after you've given up hope of ever being cancer-free, your nurse calls. It seems they've found a doctor in some far-away place that has developed a cure for your type of cancer – and in extensive tests it has proven to be 100% effective! Your doctor has ordered the medication, and you have an appointment tomorrow morning to start treatments. As you hang up the phone it takes a few minutes for it to really sink in: *Beginning tomorrow you will start the process to be*

*free from the disease that has been killing you!* You log on to your blog and write...,

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This story is obviously fictional, but the reality is that there is a lot of truth in it for most of us. While most people do not have cancer, we all have a need and desire to be free from things that want to eat away at our life or to keep us enslaved. Jesus spoke about the need to be free in John 8:

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,  
32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

- According to Jesus, what will give us freedom (v32b)?
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- "Knowing the truth" requires two things. What do you think each one means?

1. "Abide in Jesus' word" \_\_\_\_\_

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2. "You are truly Jesus' disciple" \_\_\_\_\_

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Look back at the blogs you wrote earlier. Even though you probably don't have cancer in your body, do you still feel the same kind of need for freedom down deep in your heart? Do you feel like the cancer patient – you've done all you can to be free, but instead of gaining freedom you're constantly losing ground? If so, there is a Great Physician that has a cure for you – a cure that has been extensively tested, and is 100% effective when used as prescribed.

Let's try one final blog – but this one's for real. What are your feelings about your need for freedom, and your commitment to living by the truth that it takes to get that freedom?

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*Today's Truth: Genuine freedom comes from accepting the truth that God shows me, and living my life by it.*

*Today's Prayer: God, I want the freedom that Jesus said that I can have – I want to experience true freedom. I realize that to have that freedom, I must commit my life to being a follower of Christ, and to live my life following the pattern that the Bible gives me. I willingly and gladly make that commitment today. Amen.*

### FREEDOM TRUTH #2

It's late – really late – and you *still* can't go to sleep. You reach over for the remote to do a little channel-surfing – maybe some mindless old show will numb your brain enough that you can finally doze off. As usual, there is absolutely, positively nothing on TV. But as you're channel-hopping you suddenly hear that familiar haunting "do-dee-do-du, do-dee-do-du", and you realize that you've just found an old black-and-white episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Yeah, this should be mindless enough.

You watch for a few minutes, and sure enough sleep slips up on you without you knowing it. As you start to dream it's the normal dream stuff for a little bit, then suddenly you're back at ALIVE. You dream about the RecPlex, the concert, and then start remembering all the stuff that Bro. Donny said about our need to be free.

Then, as you're listening to Bro. Donny, your best friend hands you a note. The note says "Yeah, right! Like there's any way for me to be free from the bad stuff that I've been doing. I've tried to quit – I really have – but it's impossible!" Just as you're about to ask your friend "What are you talking about," a list of sinful habits appear one after another on the note. (*Do-dee-do-du, do-dee-do-du.*) Missing

church, smoking pot, experimenting with other drugs, back-talking Mom, sex, bad attitudes . . . , and the list goes on and on.

As you finish the list you look up to say something to your friend and (*do-dee-do-du*) you are both suddenly in your church van. You want to share some hope that God can make a change, and then some verses from Romans 6 suddenly come to mind:

6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

7 For one who has died has been set free from sin....

16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?...

18 [A]nd, having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness.

Based upon the truths in these verses, what do you tell your friend about being free from sinful habits?

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Then suddenly (*do-dee-do-du*) you notice something about the note that is still in your hand. At the very bottom of the page is *your own signature*. You look up quickly and it isn't your best friend that you've been talking to – *it's your own reflection in the mirror!* You look down at the note again and (*do-dee-do-du*) some of the sinful habits are disappearing, but other ones are appearing in their place. And all the sins on this list are things that *you* are guilty of – things that *you* know *you* need to be free of.

"Do-dee-do-du, do-dee-do-du, do-dee-do-du." There's that music again.... But this time you are startled awake and back in the real world – and you hear theme song play on TV as the show goes off. Man, are you glad that's over....., *or is it?* You find it haunting that the last list of sinful habits wasn't just a dream – the

things on that list are *really* things that you struggle with. As you think back on it, you remember the list of your sins included....

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Yeah, you know that you really need to have all that junk out of your life, don't you? But how? Well, the truths from Romans 6 aren't just a dream. They are real-world truths – the kind of truths that will give us real-world freedom. What truths did you find in these verses when you were helping with your friend's sinful habits? Don't you think the same truths will work for you as well?

What do the truths in these verses reveal that you should do about sin that seems to have a grip upon you?

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Be aware that being free from the slavery of sin doesn't mean that breaking old sinful habits is always easy. You definitely need to ask God for help with it. If you struggle with getting free from certain sins and just can't seem to overcome them, consider talking it over with your youth minister or pastor.

*Today's Truth: The freedom that God gives me includes the freedom from the sinful habits that I can't quit on my own. That freedom may not be quick, and it may not be easy, but there is no sin that is bigger than the help that God can give to me – through faith, prayer and maybe the help of spiritual friends and leaders.*

*Today's Prayer: God, I realize that there are sinful habits in my life – things that are a part of my normal life that go against what the Bible says is right. God, I am truly sorry for allowing them to find a home in my heart, and I ask that you forgive me. I believe that you give your children the freedom from such sins, and I ask that you give me the strength and determination to turn*

*my back on them. I pray that you will give me something godly and wholesome to take their place in my life. Amen.*

### FREEDOM TRUTH #3

*As you read the story below, imagine what it would be like to be Patti. If you were in her place, how would you react?*

"Patti, I can't believe you let him off the hook like that," Holly said. "How long have you and Kenny been going together?"

"Almost a year."

"And Kenny was going out with someone else, for what, the last six weeks?"

"Yeah."

"Girl, if I were you Kenny would be *history!*"

"Yeah, I know. But he did sincerely apologize, and he told me that it won't happen again. But most of all, I really care about him – more than just the way that he makes me feel, but also I just want to do what's best for him. And I think forgiving him and giving him another chance is what is best."

"Whatever, girlfriend. He just better be glad that's he's *your* boyfriend, and not mine. The dude would be *toast* if he had done that to *me!*"

Later that afternoon Patti is over at Kenny's house. "Hey, you mind if I check my math grade online?" Patti asks. "No problem. Go right ahead," Kenny replies.

Patti bumps the mouse, and the screen pops back life. Patti doesn't mean to be nosey, but apparently Kenny had been reading an email from his best friend, Brian, and forgot to close the message. Patti happens to see her own name in the message, and before she knows it she's reading Brian's email. Patti had always thought Brian was a sleeze, and now she's finding even more reason to believe that it's true. The email says...

"That is awesome, dude! You mean that Patti isn't going to dump you? Way, cool! That girl must *really* love you, man!!

"Hey, I got an idea. I know this cute cheerleader over at Central High, and I could fix you up with her next Friday night when Patti is

out of town. And you remember Connie, my cousin from out of state that likes you? She and her family will be here for a couple days during the holidays next week, and I could arrange for you to come over and spend some time with her. Oh yeah, Shannon will also be in from college about the same time. Hey, the two of you used to make such a great couple, and I bet she would go out with you again while she's home. Dude, this is great! Since Patti loved you so much that she forgave you the first time, then you can go out and enjoy yourself – she'll love you enough to forgive you again, won't she?!"

If you were Patti, what would you be thinking right now?

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What do you think about Brian's conclusion, "Since Patti loved you so much that she forgave you the first time, then you can go out and enjoy yourself – she'll love you enough to forgive you again, won't she?" How *should* Kenny treat Patti after what she's done for him?

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Let's change the setting just a little. What do you think God feels when someone has the attitude, "Since God loves me so much that He forgave me the first time, then I'm going to do whatever I want – He'll love you enough to forgive you again, won't He?"

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Notice what Paul wrote in the Romans 6:

- 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that [God's] grace may abound?
- 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

What do you think this verse says about willfully sinning just because we know that God loves us and is gracious towards us?

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Someone has said "Our freedom *from* sin is not freedom *to* sin." What do you think that means?

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Patti was right. Brian is pretty sleezy, and his attitude about how Kenny should treat Patti proves it. But think for a moment..., what does the way you treat God say about you? Write down your thoughts.

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*Today's Truth: Our freedom from sin is not a freedom to sin.*

*Today's Prayer: God, I now see that I have taken your love for granted. I guess I felt that since you will always love me I can do whatever I want – that it really didn't matter all that much. I never realized how much it must hurt when you love me so much but I don't live like I appreciate it. God, please forgive me. And help me to do better. Amen.*

**FREEDOM TRUTH #4**

What things did you have on your Christmas wish-list this year? What else would you have added to that list if you thought someone would actually buy it for you?

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If you found an old lamp and when you rubbed it a genie popped out and said that he would grant you three wishes – what would you wish for?

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If you won a million dollars on *Deal or No Deal*, what would you buy with it?

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Finish this sentence, "What I need in order to be *really* happy is \_\_\_\_\_."

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Heb 13:5: Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for [God] has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

What do you think each of the mean?

- Love of Money ["money" also includes the things that money can buy] \_\_\_\_\_
- Content \_\_\_\_\_

According to this verse, you can "be content with what you have because \_\_\_\_\_"

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What is the connection between God being with you and your contentment?

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Most of us have a wish-list – a list of things that we'd like to have – and there's nothing wrong with that. The problem comes

when we start thinking that we *have* to have those things in order to be happy or content.

So, once again: What do you need to *really* be content?

- More money.
- More things.
- Remembering that God is with you and will provide all you need.

*Today's Truth: "I have learned to be content" (Philippians 4:11).*

*Today's Prayer: God, I admit that I've not been very content lately. I've too concerned about the things I didn't get for Christmas, and about the stuff my friends have that I don't have..., and it's easy to forget about all that I do have to be thankful for. And most of all, God, I have you – always! I know that with you beside me I have all that I truly need – and I can be content with that. God, forgive the times that I've been discontented, and help me to learn to be contented with whatever I may or may not have. Amen.*

### FREEDOM TRUTH #5

"E..e..oo..oo..oo..oooo!" Rachel nearly screamed as she checked one of the triplet's diaper. "Not a dirty one – again!" Since Dad's National Guard unit was deployed overseas, and Mom had been moved to the evening shift, Rachel had to take care of her three baby brothers. Every night. "Won't the three of you ever get big enough to take care of yourselves?"

"Eighteen more payments?! That will take forever!" Two-years didn't sound like all that long last summer when Clint first got the loan to buy a used Jeep. But six months later he feels like it will be forever before he will have money for anything but that monthly Jeep payment.

"I don't think I can stand another whole year of school!" The words came from Ashley, but all her friends were agreeing. "Hey, it's like we've been going to school our whole lives, and there's still another year to go before graduation. When will this ever end?!"

You know how it feels . . . , some things just seem like they go on forever. What are some things you've felt would never end?

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The truth is our quest for freedom is another one of those things. We commit ourselves to freedom, we work for it, and we gain ground from time-to-time. But we never get to the end of the battle.

Even Paul – a man especially chosen by God to do some really great things – had struggles. At one point in his life he even "despaired of life itself" (2 Corinthians 1:8). Life is a battle for everyone in some ways, so don't feel like there must be something wrong with you just because you never completely win the battle for freedom.

Paul writes about his own ongoing struggle for freedom. Romans 7 says,

- 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?  
25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Can you relate to the anguish that Paul feels in verse 24? Re-write the verse, using your own words?

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Even after being a Christian for years, being an apostle, being a missionary, and having Jesus talk directly to him from heaven, Paul is *still* struggling for freedom. But who does Paul say "will deliver him from this body of death" (that is, who will help him through his struggles for freedom while he is still alive)?

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*Today's Truth: The struggle for freedom is a war we will fight as long as we live, and its battles can only be won with Christ's help.*

*Today's Prayer: God, I realize achieving spiritual freedom is like a marathon, not a sprint. I know that I can't complete it without your help, so God please give me strength to go the full distance with you. When this life is through I want to be standing in the winner's circle, wearing the gold medal, and hear Jesus say, "Well done my good and faithful servant." Amen.*

### THE ULTIMATE FREEDOM

There is one more *mega*-important freedom you need to know about. Of all the freedoms that the Bible talks about, the greatest freedom comes from giving our life to Christ. If you feel God stirring your heart to give your life to Him, here is all you have to do:

1. Admit to yourself and to God that you've done things that the Bible says are wrong. (The Bible calls this "sin.")
2. Repent – be genuinely sorry for the wrong things you've done, and turn away from them.
3. Ask God to forgive you.
4. Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you.
5. Ask Jesus to be your savior – and to give you *real* freedom.

*A Sinner's Truth: God loves you, and wants to give you the greatest freedom of all – the freedom to spend eternity with Him in heaven.*

*A Sinner's Prayer: God, I know that I have done things that the Bible says I shouldn't have. I am really sorry for that, and I ask that you forgive me. I also ask that Jesus save me – not because I'm good, but because He is. God, I give my life to you, and I ask that you give me real freedom. Amen.*