

**SPDYM**

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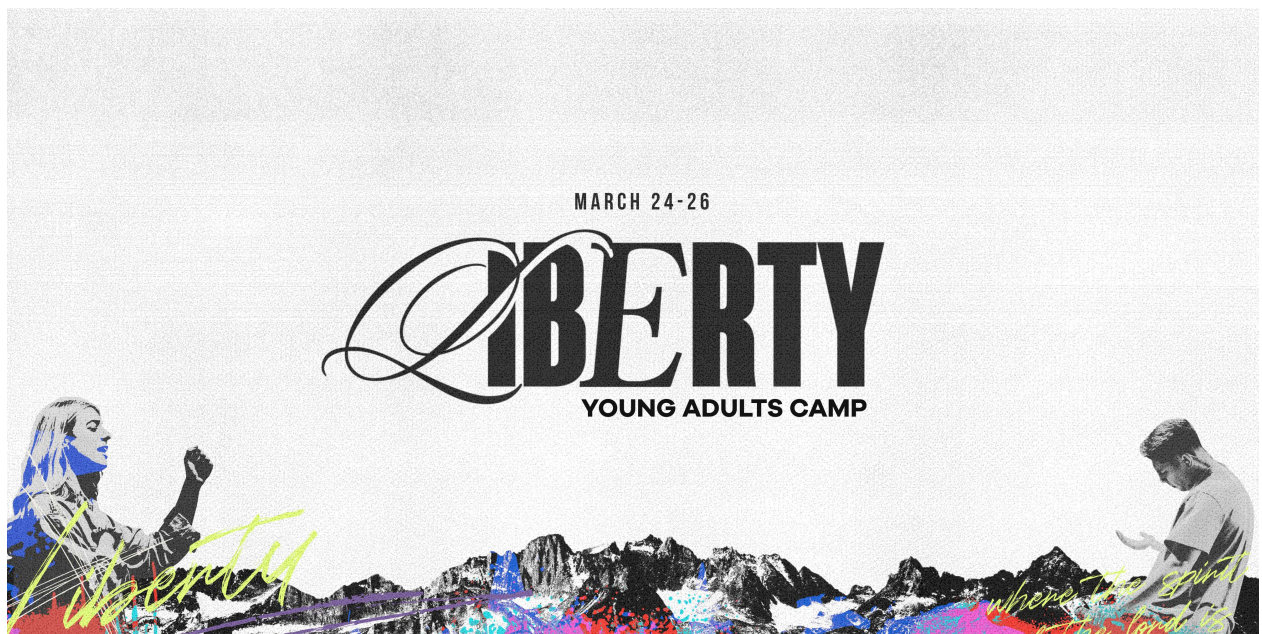
**SHANE LEPISI**  
*worship*

**MARCH 24-26**

**LIBERTY**  
**YOUNG ADULTS CAMP**







## Life and Liberty

**Big Idea of the Series:** This four-week series reveals the importance of clarifying freedom for the Christian life. While freedom can mean different things politically and culturally, true freedom ultimately comes through Christ. Jesus brings freedom from the bondage of sin, legalism, and the need to put our desires above others.

### Week 1

**Text:** John 8:31–32

**Topic:** Freedom, Truth

**Big Idea of the Message:** In a Western society obsessed with freedom, Jesus declares that truth and freedom are found in him.

**Application Point:** We will follow the truth of Jesus and be free.

### Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. How do we define freedom and liberty? Does money equal freedom? Is freedom about politics, religion, or our own desires? Our society cares about freedom. We want to live a free life with no boundaries.
2. The 1965 Rolling Stones song “I’m Free” helps describe our society’s obsession with freedom: “I’m free to do what I want any old time.” The song sums up the anthem of many generations; people want to be free to live their lives as they desire.
3. The American Founding Fathers cared about freedom and liberty. The Declaration of Independence states that all are created to be free and to have basic rights for “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” (<https://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/>). Many of these ideas about freedom came some biblical insight concerning freedom. One illustration (*An Attempt to Land a Bishop in America*) shows colonists speaking of John Calvin and liberty of conscience: <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel03.html>.
4. Another way we can see freedom is being tied to truth telling and knowledge. The phrase “the truth will set you free” is a quotation from the teachings of Jesus

in John 8:32. Many can take the words of Jesus to mean truth and freedom in a broad sense that could apply to any situation.

5. Bebe Rexha's song "You Can't Stop the Girl," from the 2019 movie *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, says, "You can't stop the world from knowing / the truth will set you free." This song suggests a teaching of Jesus that has grown beyond the biblical context and shows that people desire freedom.
6. John 8:31–32 says, "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" The Greek word for "truth" is *alētheia* and means "what is true in any matter under consideration" (John H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009], 26). Truth conforms to reality. So, when Jesus says that he is "the truth" in John 14:6, he is saying that the reality of knowing the real God only comes through him. The Greek word for free is *eleuthero* and means to "set free from bondage, or from another's control" (John H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, [Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009], 204). In the context of John 8:31, Jesus is relating himself to truth and freedom.
7. Jesus is speaking to "Jews who had believed him" (John 8:31). For some of these Jews, Jesus speaking of truth and freedom could seem unique to understand, but Jesus wants to stress that "receiving his teaching would mark them as genuine disciples and would lead them into a deeper experience of truth. The truth thus learned would liberate them from legalism and superstition" (Merrill C. Tenney, "John," in *John & Acts*, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 9, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 95).
8. In John 8:32, the truth comes from abiding in Jesus, and that truth that only comes from Jesus can set all of humanity free. The truth and freedom that Jesus speaks of isn't about people being "true to themselves" and then having some ambiguous feeling of personal freedom. Truth is the reality of Jesus and what he has done. Freedom is found solely in Jesus; that is the context for freedom.

## Week 2

**Text:** John 8:31–36; Romans 6:17–18

**Topic:** Jesus, Freedom, Sin, Bondage

**Big Idea of the Message:** Jesus reveals that the freedom he gives is freedom from the bondage of sin and death.

**Application Point:** We will live free from the bondage of sin.

### Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. Does the thought of being bound make you panic a little? What if you couldn't escape and were in a life-threatening situation? A famous trick performed by magicians concerns escaping from a straitjacket. Here's an example from Harry Houdini: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r8qr-p9z5g>.
2. When Jesus stated that the truth would set people free, the Jews answered him, saying, "We are the offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone." Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:33–36). "The freedom Jesus spoke of was spiritual freedom from sin and its effects, as the following context shows. The Jews' response indicates that they were thinking of political freedom, since they spoke of being enslaved to persons (v.33)" (Merrill C. Tenney, "John," in *John & Acts, The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 9, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 95).
3. Like a being bound by a straitjacket and drowning in water, sin enslaves us and kills us. The bondage of sin cannot be broken by moral philosophy or self-discipline. Think of someone who has an addiction. Addiction binds the person physically and mentally to a substance. No matter how hard they try, they can find themselves bound to the addiction, even in the most compromising of situations. Musician Brian "Head" Welch describes being so addicted to drugs that he couldn't stop taking them, even in front his daughter (something he told himself he would never do) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6ElhkAyy3s>.
4. Other places in the New Testament describe this freedom from the enslavement of sin. Paul declares that "you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17–18). "Paul appeals first of all to a fact familiar to all—namely, that whatever one submits to becomes his master. ... Here Paul arrives at the full answer to the question raised in v. 15. To be set free from obligation to serve sin means entrance upon the service of righteousness (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *Romans through Galatians, The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 10, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], 73).
5. For Jesus, freedom was about being loosed from sin by being united with him. However, Christians can go to extremes and forget the messy reality of Christian growth. While Christians may be free from sin, they do still sin in life.

There is hope in Jesus still for the messy walk: “The participle construction ‘everyone who (*practices*) sins’ is in the present tense, which implies a continual habit of sinning rather than an occasional lapse” (Merrill C. Tenney, “John,” in *John & Acts*, 95). Likewise, Paul tells believers to “let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions” (Romans 6:12). This doesn’t mean that one will never sin again, but that a believer is not a slave to sin and does not have a lifestyle that is unrepentantly bound to sinning.

### **Week 3**

**Text:** Galatians 5:1–2; 3:10–13

**Topic:** Freedom, Law

**Big Idea of the Message:** Christians are free from the law as a means of salvation but are not free from moral standards and holy living.

**Application Point:** We are free from legalism and can live holy lives in Christ.

### **Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:**

1. The 1980 song “Breaking the Law” by British heavy metal band Judas Priest provided an anthem for millions of rebellious teenagers. The chorus just proclaims, “Breaking the law / breaking the law.” While the song might emphasize rebellion, in the New Testament, the idea of freedom from the law wasn’t necessarily a problem. Why? Because the Christian’s heart has been changed.
2. One of the main themes of the New Testament is that Christians are free in Christ—and specifically free from the law. Galatians 5:1 declares, “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery,” and Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” There seems to be a separation of the saving work of Christ from the idea of appealing to a set of laws for religious identity and salvation.
3. For the Galatians, and many Christians at the time of Paul, a major struggle was whether to add the Jewish law of the Old Testament to the gospel of Christ as a type of legalistic salvation. In Galatia, it seems that certain groups were “insisting that salvation requires strict adherence to Jewish customs like circumcision (6:12)” (Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2013], 283). Thus why, “at the center of the Galatian Epistle is the truth that salvation is God’s free gift. It is not earned by human merit,” and why, “Galatians has been called the Magna Carta of Christian liberty because of its stress on freedom from a performance-based approach to pleasing God” (Elwell and Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 283).
4. Does the salvation from law mean that grace holds no rules for living? Many Christians have struggled with this question throughout church history. One extreme heresy is called *antinomianism*. “Literally meaning ‘against law’ antinomianism is the view that the moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments is no longer binding on Christians. More generally,

antinomianism may be seen as a characteristic of human rebellion against any external authority” (“Holiness Wars: What Is Antinomianism?,” *White Horse Inn* [blog], March 20, 2012, <https://www.whitehorseinn.org/2012/03/holiness-wars-what-is-antinomianism/>). J. I. Packer gives an example of what he calls “Christ-centered Antinomianism.” This type of antinomianism “argues that God sees no sin in believers, because they are in Christ, who kept the law for them, and therefore what they actually do makes no difference, provided that they keep believing” (J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* [Tyndale House, 2001], 178–80, quoted in “Holiness Wars,” *White Horse Inn*).

5. Within contemporary evangelical Christianity the “Sinner’s Prayer” (<https://www.allaboutgod.com/sinners-prayer.htm>) is said at revivals, churches, and street corners. This can be said in many ways, but usually involves an acknowledgment of sin, the sacrifice of Jesus, and asking Jesus to become that person’s Savior. While many people have come to Jesus through these types of conversions, without proper discipleship many people can accept Jesus but live lives far from God. Some people practice a type of antinomianism—one that believes that they are in Jesus because of saying the Sinner’s Prayer, and believing that they will go to heaven even though their lives do not reflect Jesus.
6. Freedom from sin, does not mean freedom from rules. The reason the law being practiced led to sin was because it replaced salvation through Christ alone. But Christ was the fulfillment of the law, not a replacement. When you see Christ, you see the full expression of the law. Old Testament scholar Carmen Joy Imes, emphasizes that although the law became something salvific in the time of Jesus, it was not there at the beginning of God’s people, “They are delivered completely by grace and they come to Sinai. And the first thing that God tells them is that they’re his treasured people and that he is making them into being a kingdom of priests. And to begin the Ten Commandments, he says, ‘I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.’ So whatever the law is, it’s not a means of salvation. It’s not a means of bondage either. He’s already set them free. And he is (I think) in the law outlining what it looks like to live in freedom—what believing loyalty looks like as a new nation. And so if we get that right and we get to Jesus, we see Jesus is saying, ‘I haven’t come to abolish the law; I’ve come to fulfill it.’ He’s living out the covenant faithfully and modeling for us how to do so” (Michael Heiser, Carmen Imes, hosts, “Bearing God’s Name,” episode 302, *The Naked Bible* [podcast], December 15, 2019, <https://nakedbiblepodcast.com/podcast/naked-bible-302-bearing-gods-name/>).

## Week 4

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 8:1–13

**Topic:** Freedom, Love, Sacrifice

**Big Idea of the Message:** The Corinthian church showed the need for Christians to forgo their freedoms for the benefit of others.

**Application Point:** We will show love to others by freely letting go of our liberties in areas that can cause division.

### Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. What is one of the ultimate expressions of love? Sacrifice. We might think of the direst of examples, like laying down your life for someone else. But maybe it's the mom who loves and cherishes her kids so much that she makes sure they are fed, even if she is hungry. Or the teacher who sacrifices time to help a struggling student. Olaf, the snowman from the 2013 Disney movie *Frozen*, said it best: "Love is putting someone else's needs before yours."
2. In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul wants to talk about love and Christian freedom as he deals with a hot-button issue at the time: meat sacrificed to idols. There were two issues related here. "First it was an accepted social practice to have meals in a temple" (Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 7, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 120). People would gather together for various public and private occasions to sacrifice an offering to a specific deity and eat together. Most of the meat sold in merchant shops had first been offered in sacrifice. So, when a Christian would purchase meat, they would have to realize that some of it might have been a part of idol worship.
3. Now, imagine that these Corinthian Christians were eating together in fellowship, and meat was at the table. Some Christians did not want to eat the meat, because they believed if they did so, they would be participating in idol worship (since the meat had likely been offered to an idol). But some other believers said, "An idol has no real existence" (1 Corinthians 8:4), and they reasoned that therefore they could eat the meat in thanksgiving to God (who was the *only* real God). But the first group then judged the other group, saying, "You sinners!" while the second group didn't see a problem with what they are doing and thought the first group was too legalistic. Paul agrees that eating the meat isn't a sin (v. 8). But what is sinful is how the Corinthians are not acting in love over issues of conscience. He stresses that they may eat the meat, but if eating the meat causes another to feel convicted or tempted to defile their conscience (v. 7) then they are using their freedom to cause another to stumble, and that is wrong (vv. 10–13). While Paul did encourage Christian freedom, he stressed love above all else. We might have the right as a believer to do something, but if it will cause another to move away from Christ, it is wrong. Leon Morris describes this point, "The person who insists on doing anything allowable has not learnt the Christian way of love" (Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 7, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 125).
4. In this article, D. L. Mayfield shares why she chose to give up alcohol, in service to the community where she lives and serves:



<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/june/why-i-gave-up-alcohol.html?share=ipMWw8NQTtA%2b3aWQ9zhRpSkNOZEyPE3%2b>. This is a great example of love constraining freedom. Not all Christians may feel called to make the same choice, but the love in Mayfield's choice is a clear and compelling witness.

5. Sinclair Ferguson explains the *rights* of a Christian: "True Christian liberty, unlike the various 'freedom' or 'liberation' movements of the secular world, is not a matter of demanding the 'rights' we have. Dare one say that the American Founding Fathers, for all their wisdom, may have inadvertently triggered off a distortion of Christianity by speaking about our 'rights' to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? The Christian realizes that before God he or she possesses no 'rights' by nature. In our sinfulness, we have forfeited all of our 'rights.' Only when we recognize that we do not deserve our 'rights' can we properly exercise them as privileges" (Sinclair Ferguson, "4 Principles for the Exercise of Christian Liberty," *Ligonier Ministries* [blog], November 15, 2019, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/4-principles-exercise-christian-liberty/>).
  6. The greatest expression of love is sacrifice. As Christians we can put others' needs before our own. We can set aside our liberty and freedom in certain areas to encourage and help others to grow in their walk with the Lord and achieve freedom in their own lives.
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