

# Shepherd's Staff

July 2024

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

“You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!”

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m.

## 4 Things the Bible Says About Freedom

Source: <https://billygraham.org/story/4-things-the-bible-says-about-freedom/>

As the United States of America celebrates Independence Day on July 4, it's worth noting the nation was founded upon the idea that [God created human beings](#) to be free. The Declaration of Independence states that people “are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”



But what is “liberty,” exactly? Is freedom based upon the country where you live, or can it have a deeper meaning?

**Here are some key ideas from the Bible about freedom—including how to find true freedom in your life.**

### 1. People have been searching for it for thousands of years.

The quest for freedom is a theme found throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Just three chapters into the story of God's creation, humanity gave up its freedom by choosing to rebel against God. From that time forward, the perfect freedom God created in the Garden of Eden was gone, and the long-term effects were both physical and spiritual.

The Old Testament of the Bible records how God's people lost their physical freedom time and again as various empires overtook them (most notably the Egyptians, as recorded in the book of Exodus).

The loss of physical freedom was often tied to spiritual disobedience like worshiping false gods. But time and again, the one true God forgave His people and rescued them. When God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He was foreshadowing the arrival of Jesus Christ, who came to free humanity from sin—the spiritual slavery that leads to death.

Today, many people are living in spiritual slavery without realizing it. They chase false gods of money, success, personal comfort and romantic love—only to realize [they still have an emptiness that can't be filled by any of those things](#).

### 2. God's answer to our loss of freedom has always been Jesus Christ.

When Jesus began his short period of ministry on the earth, He announced He was the One that God's people had been waiting for since the fall of humanity. He did this by reading a particular passage from the book of Isaiah—a passage his listeners knew was referring to the Messiah, or the Savior of the world.

The words had been written hundreds of years earlier and spoke of a new freedom that was coming in the future. When Jesus stood up to read, He was saying the future had arrived. Liberty would come through Him.

*“And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim **liberty** to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at **liberty** those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*



*And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'' (Luke 4:17-21, emphasis added).*

### **3. Jesus came to free us from death, sin and anything that enslaves us.**

The core message of the Christian faith—the Gospel—is that Jesus Christ rescues us from the slavery of sin and offers true freedom in this life and beyond. This is what Jesus said:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

The Good News—the best news ever—is that faith in Jesus frees us from the death we deserve for sinning against God. It frees us from the punishment that would be inflicted upon us at the end of our lives for the evil things we've thought and done.

While Christ followers still battle with sin, they are no longer slaves to it. Through the power of Christ, His people can be set free from the bondage of greed, vanity, pride, pornography, [addiction](#), abusive behavior, gluttony, selfishness—and any other sin under the sun. Here's what Jesus said about the freedom He offers:

*"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).*

*"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 8:34-36).*

### **4. God gives us freedom to choose our own path.**

God created human beings, not robots. We don't have to accept the freedom He offers us through Jesus Christ. He gives each person the free will to accept or reject His salvation. But the Bible warns that [hell is a real place](#) where real people end up when they knowingly reject the truth.

Likewise, those who choose Christ are not forced to obey Him at every turn. But God makes it clear: the best life is one that's devoted to honoring Him. As the Apostle Paul explained to some of the first Christians:

*"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12).*

*"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).*

### **Final thoughts on freedom.**

From cover to cover, God's Word points to freedom in Christ. And God doesn't leave us wondering how to grab hold of the freedom He offers. It starts with acknowledging our brokenness—and admitting we are slaves to sin. And it ends with choosing Jesus and following Him daily. Only He can break the bonds of slavery and lead us to true freedom, now and forever.

**Choose Jesus today and find out what true freedom feels like.**



- 7/3 Darrell Druvenga
- 7/3 Janet Johnson
- 7/8 Clarence Karsjens
- 7/14 Curtis Kalkwarf
- 7/14 Michael Mulder
- 7/20 Frank Pott
- 7/20 Marcia Allspach
- 7/21 Marjorie Aswegan
- 7/22 Luke Edeker
- 7/25 Lola Stirling
- 7/26 Amy Swanson-Haan
- 7/28 Joy Kneppe



- 7/5 Dale & Angie Meester
- 7/23 Dennis & Sharon Schipper



**Reminder:** If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.





www.hiddenpicturepuzzles.com



How many can you find?