

THRIVE

Session 2

Session Topic: Freedom from Perfection

Session Overview: God knows we aren't perfect, so He offers unending grace as we pursue Him and the ways of His kingdom.

Open with prayer.

- Today is the second part of a three part series called "Freedom." We're talking about freedom – specifically spiritual freedom – and what that means for us.
- In our last session, we compared the true freedom that Jesus offers to the fake freedom that we sometimes settle for. True freedom is rooted in Jesus' work on the cross, which breaks the power of sin in our lives so we can choose to obey God and live by the Spirit.
- In this session, we're going to talk about freedom from perfection. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 10 (absolutely) how much of a perfectionist are you? Being a perfectionist can be a good thing depending on what area of life you're talking about.
- You want the person who designs and builds a new bridge to be a perfectionist so that you don't end up in the middle of a river. You want the doctor doing your brain surgery to be a perfectionist. But there are some areas of life where perfectionism isn't as important.

- When you're mowing your grass, sometimes good enough is good enough. When you're cooking grilled cheese sandwiches, it's probably okay if one side of the sandwich is a little lighter than the other. When you're hanging pictures in your room, your life isn't going to be ruined if one of them is a little crooked. Sometimes perfectionism is good, but sometimes it can cause you to waste time or cause you a lot of stress.
- One area of life that perfectionism can really mess you up is in your spiritual life – in your relationship with Jesus. That might sound surprising, so we're going to spend a little time unpacking what that means. And that's our main point for today: **God offers us freedom from perfection.**
- A lot of people feel like they need to be perfect Christians. And if you're striving to be faithful and obedient to God, that's awesome; we should all strive for that. But if we're striving to be perfect because we think God will punish us or not love us when we mess up, we're missing the point.
- There's a misunderstanding because there are a lot of verses throughout the Bible that say to "be holy" or "be perfect." In our language today, these words mean "never making mistakes" or "as good as can be." If we apply that to our faith, we could assume the Bible says we should "never make mistakes."
- But that doesn't reflect God's expectations of us. "Holy" or "perfect" can also mean "complete" or "whole." God knows us, and He knows our hearts, so He knows we're not perfect. He just wants us to be honest with Him and honest with ourselves about the fact that we aren't perfect. Let's look at a Bible verse that will flesh this out for us.

Read 1 John 1:8-9.

Reflect and Discuss:

1. What stuck out to you in that passage?
2. What is the danger of not recognizing that we are all sinners?
 - That verse shows that God wants you to be honest with yourself. We shouldn't "claim we have no sin." When we lie to ourselves, we eventually start believing the lies. Eventually, we may believe we do everything right and don't need any help from anyone, including Jesus. But we need Jesus's love and forgiveness in our lives. He is our only path to salvation. We can't earn it and don't deserve it.
 - God doesn't just want us to be honest with ourselves. He also wants us to be honest with Him. God wants us to be honest with Him and confess – or acknowledge – our sins. When we confess our sins to God, it allows Him to bring healing to our brokenness. Think about it: God knows you better than you know yourself, so He's not telling you to confess to Him because He needs to know... He already knows! Confessing our sin to God is not to help God, it's to help us.

Reflect and Discuss:

1. Have you ever felt the peace and joy of God's forgiveness?
3. Have you ever felt that you sinned too much for God to forgive you? Have you ever felt ashamed to pray or to talk to God?
 - When we confess our sins to God, God will forgive us... every single time. This has been a pattern throughout human history and is true for us today: if we put our trust in ourselves, it leads to pain

and brokenness, but if we put our trust in God, it leads to healing and wholeness.

Reflect and Discuss:

1. Have you ever been afraid to trust God?
2. When have you trusted God even though it was hard?
 - God knows we aren't perfect, so He offers unending grace as we follow Him and the ways of His kingdom. And here's why: God loves you more than you can imagine... just as you are.
 - God loves you when you get things right, and God loves you when you get things wrong. God loves you when you've got it figured out, and God loves you when you don't. God loves you when you make the right decision, and God loves you when make the wrong decision. God loves you... no matter what.
 - Are you scared to mess up and disappoint God? Remember that He knows you are not perfect and still died for you because He loves you so much. He always forgives and never leaves your side.

Read Romans 5:6-11.

Discuss:

1. What do you think "Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die" means? Here is another translation: "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die."
2. Who would you die for? (Think of a superhero movie... if you could give up your life to save a friend... would you do it?) Now think of an

"enemy" of yours. Would you die for that person to save their life even if they don't like you or respect you?

3. Who are "the sinners" in this passage? Who did Christ die for?

4. Is there anyone or any group of people Christ did not die for? What do you think?

5. What do you think "But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" means? What exactly "proves" God loves us?

- Jesus would have still given up His life if there was one person in the world. Even if that one person was a horrible person, Jesus would still die for them to offer them the gift of salvation because He loves them.
- Remember, if you're a follower of Jesus, you have freedom from perfection. Jesus wants to take that weight off your shoulders. He says that you are enough and that you'll always be enough.
- We have to remember that we can't choose to sin because we know God will still love us. In Romans 6:15, Paul writes, "Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not!" If that's our attitude, I'm not sure we actually understand what it means to be in a relationship with God. If we truly love God, our actions will show it.
- Think about it this way: If you have a girlfriend or boyfriend who claims they love you but then cheats on you, never answers your FaceTime calls, and doesn't make time in their schedule to hang out with you... do you think they *really* love you? True love is backed up with action. A girlfriends or boyfriend who truly loves

you will put you first in their life. If we truly love God, we will spend time with Him and strive to put Him first in our lives.

- Because we are free from the power of sin, we can follow God and grow closer to Him through our obedience of His will for us. God loves us whether we obey Him or not. However, God wants us to experience the fullness, peace, and joy that come from having a close relationship with Him. But to experience these things, we must obey Him.
- In Romans 2:4, Paul writes, “Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?” God wants us to pursue Him. God expects us to pursue Him. That’s the way we experience the best life possible.

Session Challenges

- Each session, you will have a challenge to complete and a theme verse to memorize before you come back. The more verses you memorize and the more challenges you complete this semester, the more prizes you can win!
- The theme verse for this series is **1 John 1:9**, which is "If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing."
- Now for our challenge: Sometimes we feel guilty or weighed down by our sins. Take time this week to reflect on the past few weeks or months and write down 3 sins. Think about times when your parents asked you to do something and then you didn't obey them. Or maybe about times you knew what the right (or Godly) decision was but still made the wrong (bad) decision. Then, spend time in prayer asking Jesus to forgive you for your sins and thank Him for His mercy and for dying for you.