

Let Freedom Ring

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Saturday we celebrated Independence Day – the 4th of July – which we consider to be the birthday of our nation. I'd like you to think about that concept for a moment, birth and freedom. How does birth, or a new beginning, actually give us freedom?

We won our independence from British rule and began a new nation founded on these noble ideals: "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness..."", but the key word here is pursuit. To pursue something means to go after it in order to catch it, or to follow a certain path or

route.

So this phrase implies that life and freedom are our God given right, so that we can somehow obtain happiness by going after it, or by following a path toward it. Today I'm going to propose that our understanding of the word "freedom" is incomplete, we have some misconceptions about what freedom really is and how it leads to happiness.

The Path to Freedom and Happiness

In the United States of America freedom is one of our highest ideals, yet because we don't understand it we have difficulty to experience it. How many people truly feel free today? What stops you from feeling free? Is it the bills piling up, work obligations, school or homework, your spouse or your children? These thoughts often pass through our minds, "*If I could only just be free of...*"

New Hampshire is the "live free or die" state where we refuse to wear seat belts and motorcycle helmets because we don't want the government telling us what to do. We're proud of our "No sales tax" because it further expresses our independence from government control. We have turned freedom into a sort of myth that we believe will give us happiness, but freedom and happiness remain elusive.

The Illusion of Freedom



The desire for freedom is kind of an illusion like this picture. This young man looks like he's freely soaring through the sky, but that freedom only lasted seconds. He jumped from a dock or a float to his 2 second freedom in the air and then he landed in the water. To experience this 2 second freedom he needed a place to launch from and a place to land.

Teenagers are often eager to be free of parental control. They want to make their own decisions and pursue their own intentions. If you ask a teenager or young adult what freedom is they will almost always

say, "*doing whatever I want, when I want.*" Why is it then, that after 20 or 30 years of being an adult and making our own choices we still don't have the time to do whatever we want, when we want? Is that the true definition of freedom?

Consider that you are not truly born free

So I want to suggest that freedom is not something that can be achieved independently – freedom requires some sort of support or relationship. Freedom requires unity centered on a higher purpose.

The unity of male and female creates new life. The fetus develops in unity with the woman's body. When the baby is freed from the womb, even after the doctor cuts the umbilical cord it can not live freely – a baby needs an incredible amount of care from others to survive.

The only thing we are truly free to do is breathe and follow our instincts, but that's not really freedom

because those are pre-programmed functions. Freedom involves a choice, but as an infant your brain has not developed enough to make choices. It takes a long time to develop mentally and emotionally to the point where we can make good choices.

We need a support system to experience our freedom



We need family, friends community and education in an atmosphere of support and approval in order to discover and develop the hidden attributes we are endowed with from birth. The family is the beginning point of our support system.

When a couple thinks about raising children they usually want to find a good community to settle in. They want good schools for their children and a place where they can feel safe and supported.

Who chose your life? Did you choose any of these things before you were born?

- Parents
- Siblings
- Home environment
- Country
- Economic conditions
- Race
- Religion, etc.

In reality your birth is simply an opportunity to deal with all the circumstances you are born into, to learn and grow, and to create something from the life you've been given. You did not even choose to be born, but your life is a gift that was freely given to you by God and your parents.

A Parental Heart Gives Us Freedom

A child who is deeply loved and cared for, taught well and guided toward maturity has a greater chance to fulfill their potential in life than a child who is abandoned, neglected or born into a war torn country.

That's why during the Korean and Vietnam wars women would desperately give their infant children to soldiers asking them to air lift their babies out of danger and into freedom. That takes an incredible amount of sacrificial love, trust, fear of the current conditions and belief that something better is possible. I can't even imagine being in that position.

This is how important freedom is from a parent's perspective –

I want my child to live – even without me
I want my child to have the best chance to learn & grow
I can sacrifice my love for their life



This is truly the heart of God who was willing to sacrifice Jesus life to obtain freedom for all people. When we believe in this kind of incredible love we begin to understand who we really are as children of God. Jesus was willing to inherit the heart of the parent to sacrifice himself so that people would believe in God's incredible love.

Somehow it's liberating when we can see, feel and believe that God is such a loving parent. When we have a deep experience of God's love it motivates us to live in gratitude and return

love through our lifestyle. When we develop our true potential to love others we experience God's heart even more deeply.

When a child recognizes the love and support of their parents and family, they feel grateful. Gratitude motivates us to do our best, and to return love to our parents. Freedom exists in the relationship of love

and gratitude.

Why do we continue to seek freedom?

Why did the pilgrims risk their lives to cross an ocean in hope of finding a new land? Why did we rebel against Britain seeking our independence as a nation? Why do we risk our lives even in war to seek or preserve this elusive concept of freedom? Each of these questions have one answer – to fulfill our dreams by following our inner aspirations (or conscience). Inside of every human being exists these 3 questions. The inalienable right we are given by God is to pursue the answer to these 3 questions:

Who am I?
What can I do?
How can I do it?

The natural born limits of freedom

Even though we have the freedom to develop our own potential according to our own will, as individuals we are born with specific personality traits and genetic tendencies. So you could say that we are born with certain limitations and possibilities. You have to be you; you can not be your mother or father, your rock star idol, or that friend you envy because they seem to have it all.

You can't become a bear, a cat or an eagle either because you are human. We can learn many things from the animal Kingdom, and we can learn many things from each other, but ultimately your true freedom comes from discovering who you are and what you can do with your life. That is the most precious thing.

We each have to find freedom within the framework of our natural limitations and potential. Within the limitations of our personality we each have incredible possibilities for growth, learning and development. It is your freedom to discover all the things you might be able to do with your life; to create and experience true love. This is enough freedom to fill a lifetime with greatness.

We're free to learn from our mistakes

Unfortunately, because we have freedom to chart our own course in life, sometimes while we're learning we make stupid choices or mistakes. This is where we learn about the flip side of freedom. Everything in life has a flip side, like Yin and Yang, front and back, top and bottom. The flip side is not bad or evil – it is simply what gives life dimension.



Responsibility is the Yin side of freedom. Responsibility is dealing with the consequences or results of our choices – whether those results are good or bad. If you choose not to wear a helmet while riding your motorcycle and you get into an accident, you may end up with a serious brain injury. That's something you will have to live and deal with for the rest of your life.

But consider this – the people who love you will also have to live with the fact that you have become disabled. Your choice affected others. One of the problems in our society is that people think their choices only affect themselves.

Responsible choices lead to freedom

In fact, all of our choices have either a direct or indirect effect on others. Freedom does not exist without responsibility and that's why we have laws that protect the rights of others. By law you don't have the freedom to take away or hamper someone else's freedom.

Even though you may be the parent, in NH you don't have the right to choose for your child to not wear a helmet while they're riding with you on your motorcycle. Laws exist to protect people, not to take away rights or freedoms. Laws exist to remind people of their responsibility toward others.

Earlier we listened to the song *America the Beautiful*. In that song there is a verse..

*America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!*

Liberty exists when there are laws because laws teach responsibility and ensure the rights of others. When we raise children we make rules for their safety and to ensure respect for each other. This is part of the

support system that ensures freedom.

Living for the Sake of Others is True Freedom

So let's dispel the self-centered myth of "freedom" by living responsibly in love and gratitude. Looking at the whole picture we can see that there is no such thing as freedom without considering others. Our nation was built on the understanding that independence exists within unity and interdependence.

We came into this world dependent on others and we will most likely leave this world dependent on others as well. Within that context we are blessed with a lot of freedom to be a co-creator of our lives. When we keep this bigger perspective everything else makes sense. This is why Rev. Moon lived and taught the motto: "*Live for the sake of others*".

If we lose the perspective of our relationship to others and the interdependence of all life, then we lose our freedom as well.

"'We are free to do anything', you say. Yes, but is everything good for us? 'We are free to do anything', but does everything help the building of the community? Each of you must regard, not his own interests, but the other man's." – I Corinthians 10:23-24