

# Heroic Deeds



**FREEDOM**

**40 DAYS  
TO FREEDOM**

## Devotional introduction

Welcome to "40 Days to **'Freedom'**" a journey of faith, courage, and action. In a world where cowardice is creeping into our culture, we are here to declare that we will not shrink back, but instead, we will respond. We will respond to the needs of our God, our families, and our communities. We will explore various areas of being set free. We will be the guardians that God has called us to be. This is a campaign of six weeks filled with daily devotions and small group discussions. The format is in person and through Zoom; with a final week of small group Heroic Deed events. We are here to develop ourselves to be equipped with the right mindset and to take action to respond in various aspects of our lives.

Throughout the next 42 days, we will embark on a journey of self-reflection, spiritual growth, and practical application. Each day, you will find a devotion or a training brief that will challenge you to respond in different areas of your life. While most of the material will focus on fundamental Christian doctrine, we will also explore other aspects of our lives. This will include Freedom To, Freedom From, Freedom to Understand and Embrace, Freedom From Technology, and Freedom To Be. Each week has a specific theme and each day contains a prayer starter or an action point to help you take practical steps toward responding in that area of your life.

As we dive into this campaign, we encourage you to approach it with an open heart and mind. Be willing to be challenged, be ready to take action, and be prepared to see transformation in your life. Whether you are a seasoned believer, a new Christian, or someone seeking answers, this campaign is for you. We believe that by the end of these 40 days, you will be equipped with a renewed sense of purpose, courage, and determination to respond in a way that honors God and impacts the world around you.

A diverse group of individuals, including first responders and those closely connected to them, have collaborated to author these daily devotionals. Take a moment to identify the author of each devotional and learn more about them in the biography section. This section provides an opportunity to get to know them better.

Once you have finished all the weekly devotions, we encourage you to reflect on how God may be guiding you through this campaign and respond accordingly. This response could take various forms. Such as:

- Serving the community as a small group
- Developing an exercise plan
- Organizing a small group gathering
- Addressing a personal challenge...like overcoming addiction
- Initiating a peer support program at your workplace
- Pursue any other idea that may have been planted in your heart during this campaign. We encourage you to prayerfully consider how God is leading you and take action accordingly.

We are excited to have you join us on this journey of "**Freedom.**" Together, let us grow in faith, courage, and action as we strive to live out God's calling in our lives.

Are you ready to walk in Freedom? Let's begin!

***“Freedom”***  
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**40 DAYS-FREEDOM**

**WEEK 1**



**FREEDOM**

### Take Time to be Holy

How can we be holy? Do we become holy by doing great things for God and for others? Is it accomplished by having good morals, integrity, and character? Holiness is not something to achieve, rather it is a place of being, a mindset, a reminder that you have been set apart for sacred use by God.

Your holiness will be strengthened by setting apart time each day where you are communicating with God. Through these times of thoughts, prayers and focusing your mind and heart on God, you will notice uplifting emotional and physical responses. God is constantly transforming and building us into the person He wants us to be. This process requires us to be intentional. For example, setting aside blocks of time to communicate with Him and study His Holy word.

In doing so, we become free and clean from worldly influences. This creates a better opportunity for the workings of the Holy Spirit by and through us. We become a stronger vessel for God to flow. As Paul wrote in *Ephesians 3:20 & 21*, "*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*"

Jeff Nabor

## Beyond Braveheart: A Call to Spiritual Freedom

*It was for this freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed].*

*Galatians 5:1 Amplified Bible*

In my mind, the concept of freedom ties directly to the film "Braveheart." Let me take you to a pivotal scene in this movie: William Wallace fires up his men with words that burn before the clash. Wallace (actor Mel Gibson) stands tall among his brethren, a beacon of defiance against the dark tide of tyranny. He declares, "I am William Wallace, and before me stands an army of my countrymen, united against tyranny. You have arrived here as free individuals, and it is as free individuals that you stand. What will you do with this freedom? Will you engage in battle?"

A voice among them falters, questioning the madness of resistance, "Battle? Against such odds? No, we will flee, and by fleeing, we will survive."

Wallace, unyielded, responds, "Yes, to battle may mean death. To flee guarantees life, at least for a time. But consider this: years from now, as you lie on your deathbed, would you exchange every day from this moment to that for just one opportunity to return here and proclaim to our foes that they may seize our lives, but our freedom will forever remain out of their reach!"

This moment, this choice cuts to the core of what it means to stand against oppression. Wallace's words are not just a call to arms but a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who would rather die on their feet than live in subjugation. The Scottish warriors, downtrodden yet unbroken, face a crucible that transcends the immediacy of their plight, embodying the eternal struggle for freedom against overwhelming forces.

While taking liberties with historical accuracy, the film captures the essence of Wallace's struggle and the universal fight for freedom. This story, this speech by Wallace, it's not just words. It's a call to arms, a battle cry through history for those ready to pay freedom's steep price: courage and blood. It's about standing firm, refusing to bow down to tyranny. It's about the relentless pursuit of freedom yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Wallace's refusal to surrender, his stand against the dark, it's a beacon. It's a message that the fight for freedom is eternal. It's up to us to answer that call and face oppression with unwavering resolve. This is not just history. This is a lesson in what freedom means, a reminder that the battle for freedom never ends. It's on us to carry that torch.

What fight have you got on your hands that seems unbeatable and makes you want to pack it up, head home, disappear? Remember how Wallace stood his ground and bled for his people's freedom? That's the kind of resolve we're talking about here.

This fight is not just about physical battlegrounds but the spiritual warfare that ropes us in and demands every ounce of our grit and faith. You've got to dig deep and find that unyielding warrior within. Better yet, tap into the explosive force of the Holy Spirit. That's your real firepower. It ignites the fight in your soul and drives you to claw back your freedom.

We're not in this fight solo. It is a call to arms for all of us, a united front against the chains of oppression and sin. Stand firm. Hold the line in this freedom we have been handed through faith.

*Lord Jesus, in Your mighty name, grant us the courage to stand firm against oppression, to choose freedom over bondage. May we embody the spirit of bravery, never yielding to tyranny. Strengthen us to fight our battles with faith, holding fast to the freedom You've won for us. Amen.*

Toby DePew

## Freedom To Breathe: Be All You

*“For you created my innermost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”Ps.139:13-14 NIV*

*“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” Prov.16:3 NIV*

I had the opportunity to listen to an Air Force Thunderbird pilot speak at a leadership conference. The Thunderbirds are an elite group of highly trained pilots. They fly six F-16’s as close as eighteen inches of each other while performing extremely difficult maneuvers at speeds up to 700 mph. This Thunderbird shared that when she was having difficulty perfecting her skills, (while trying not to kill those on her team) she was told by a senior pilot, “your problem is that you are holding on too tightly. Loosen your grip and trust your skills and experience.” Essentially, he told her to relinquish control and trust who you are. This resonated with me as I could relate this advice to so many areas of my life; my marriage, my job, my relationships, my education, pretty much everything.

The truth is that each of us are uniquely made by the Creator of the universe. Everything about you, and everything about me was specially and specifically designed by God, for His glory and His purpose. He has equipped you with everything you need to live your purpose. We don’t have to be anything else! You being 100% you is enough. How does this apply to control? Not only has God uniquely created you, but he has guided you through experiences that give you the skills and abilities necessary to be the truest and best version of you. You don’t have to control anything. You can simply loosen your grip.

I often think in any given situation there are dozens of competing priorities. For example, personalities, preferences, unforeseen events, history, culture, trauma, and countless other variables are all happening at the same time. We are not and cannot ever be completely in control. However, if we commit to the Lord all that we do, prioritize our relationship with Him, and give control to Him, we can breathe, relax, have confidence, and let Him establish our plans - for both today and our future. Who better to take control of our lives than the one who created us for His purpose?

Solomon drops some more wisdom in Proverbs as it pertains to this topic. *“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Prov. 19:21 NIV*  
*A person’s steps are directed by the Lord. How can anyone understand their own way?”*  
*Prov. 20:24 NIV*

**I give you this simple challenge, breathe. God has made you perfect, be all you and let Him take control.**

Tom Thompson

## Echoes of Incarceration: A Journey Towards Freedom

*“But I see a different law and rule of action in the members of my body [in its appetites and desires], waging war against the law of my mind and subduing me and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is within my members. Wretched and miserable man that I am! Who will [rescue me and] set me free from this body of death [this corrupt, mortal existence]?”*  
*Romans 7:23 (Amplified Bible)*

The jailhouse casts a shadow long and dreary, a place where warmth and comfort are just illusions. As a retired deputy sheriff, I have walked these cold, echoing halls more often than I can count. The clang of metal doors and the unyielding concrete floors serve as constant reminders of the grim reality of incarceration. Yet, amidst this stark landscape, I have come to profoundly respect those who serve within these walls, the unsung custodians of society's most challenging burden. Often unseen and unappreciated, the correctional officer's dedication is a testament to human resilience. For twenty or thirty years, these guardians have upheld a duty, a righteous task that deserves our gratitude. They stand as silent warriors, maintaining order in a world many fear to tread.

While on patrol bringing the 'bad guys' to justice, watching the jail doors close behind them was a moment of triumph. However, the true victory lay in my walking away, exiting and returning to freedom. A luxury lost to those behind the bars. Each exit was a silent reminder of the liberties we often take for granted.

But the confinement of jail is not merely physical. Life, in its unpredictable course, has shown me other prisons—mental, emotional, and spiritual. Whether these prisons were caused by being injured in the line of duty or haunted by the visions of the suicides I've witnessed, I've known the shackles of trauma and the grip of panic attacks. Times arose when endless darkness engulfed me, clouding my worth and purpose with despair. In these moments, I've found solace in the words of Apostle Paul, as he speaks in *Romans 7* of a war within, a battle between flesh and spirit. Like Paul, I've questioned, *“who will rescue me from this body of death?”* Many face a struggle, a silent war raging within, unseen but deeply felt.

Paul, however, doesn't leave us in despair. *Romans 7:25* offers a beacon of hope, a promise of deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord. It's a profound truth that has guided me through the darkest times. We cannot achieve this deliverance on our own—it's a gift of grace, a surrender to a power greater than ourselves. So to those walking through the valleys of shadow, feeling trapped in prisons without bars, know this: deliverance is within reach. It's not through our might or wisdom but through the love and power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. In Him, we find not just escape but victory, a freedom that transcends all bars of incarceration.

*Lord God Almighty, guide those in life's prisons, whether concrete or spirit. Bring comfort and strength to the weary first responders who need hope. And who may be mentally, emotionally, or spiritually bound. May Your light shine in the darkest corners, offering deliverance and peace. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

Toby DePew

## Finish Strong

*“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2*

I discovered an interesting fact that has radically changed the trajectory of my life. Consider the following: Dr. Robert Clinton, from Fuller Theological Seminary in Southern California, was able to identify just over one thousand biblical figures from their birth to their death, as described in the Bible. Out of these one thousand men and women, less than 30% of them finished well – put another way, over 70% didn't **Finish Strong**. Personally, I want to be in the less than 30% when all is said and done and I'm confident you do as well. Why? Because you are investing your time with Heroic Deeds.

One of my pastors growing up once said, “Following Jesus is more than a prayer of repentance; yes, that's the beginning, but our walk with Christ is a lifelong journey of committed obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.” (Pastor Chuck Smith) Therefore, the question is, how does a Christ follower finish strong? Put simply, a radical passion and commitment of spending time studying His Word (see *1 Peter 3:15*); a resolve within your heart to live a life of prayer (see *1 Thessalonians 5:17*); a vow to memorize and meditate on His love every day of your life (see *Psalms 119:11*; *Joshua 1:8-9*); and a commitment to plug into a Bible teaching fellowship (see *Hebrews 10:25*). Yes, it's that simple.

As a Pastor and Chaplain for over three decades, I can guarantee on biblical authority that if you follow the aforementioned, you will **Finish Strong**. Best of all you will hear on that day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Brother, sister, remember this simple truth: Christ in you is your only hope of glory (see *Colossians 1:27*); and how glorious that is. Last, embarking upon a daily (YES, daily) relationship with Jesus isn't laborious, arduous or a bummer. Truly, it's the most invigorating and exciting life lived...no question!

*Father, I ask You to help me fix my eyes on the finish line. Namely, let the focus of my life be solely on You! And, by Your strength, I commit to **Finish Strong** as I desire to live for Your glory. In Jesus Name. Amen*

**Randy Ponder**



**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**  
**“PURSUING TRUE FREEDOM”**

## Pursuing True Freedom

"How can we actively work towards achieving true freedom in our lives? Is it achieved through our spiritual walk with God, our relationships, our health, our professional and personal missions, discipline, hard work, and a relentless pursuit of excellence?"

### Survey the Big Picture:

The foundation of our study, *Galatians 5:1*, serves as a crucial reminder from Paul about the essence of Christian freedom. This freedom is a gift and a responsibility that requires active maintenance and dedication. Paul's letter to the Galatians addresses the challenge of returning to old ways of living—specifically legalism and the bondage of trying to earn salvation through the law. He emphasizes that Christ has liberated us for a purpose: to live in freedom, which entails "freedom from" the law's curse, "freedom to" live by the Spirit, and "freedom to be" who we were created to be in Christ. This concept lays the groundwork for understanding that true freedom encompasses various aspects of life and requires our active engagement to realize and live out fully.

### Explore the Bible Scripture:

*Galatians 5:1 (Amplified Version)*

*"It was for freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed]."*

### What does it mean?

- **Interpretation:** This scripture highlights that freedom in Christ is both a gift and a task. It's about liberation from the past and empowerment for the future. How does this dual aspect of freedom challenge us to live differently in relation to God, others, and ourselves?
- **Significance:** The significance of this passage extends beyond spiritual freedom; it also encompasses freedom in our daily lives. How does this freedom influence our relationships, our approach to health, our work, and our life's mission?

### Discover the Big Idea:

In what ways does the freedom Christ offers compel us to pursue excellence, discipline, and hard work in all areas of our lives?

## Application Questions:

- **For Personal Reflection:** Identify areas of your life where you may live in 'bondage'—whether to sin, unhealthy habits, negative thought patterns, or unfulfilling work. How can *Galatians 5:1* inspire you to pursue freedom in these areas?
- **Cultivating a Habit:** What daily disciplines or habits can you develop to pursue true freedom actively? Consider practices that enhance your spiritual growth, improve your relationships, boost your physical and mental health, and align your job and mission with God's purpose for your life.
- **Risks and Obstacles:** What risks or obstacles might we face in striving for true freedom, and how can we overcome them through faith and community support? Reflect on the challenges of maintaining discipline and excellence in a world that often encourages the opposite.
- **Benefits of Living Like This:** Discuss the potential benefits of living in true freedom—freedom from sin and past limitations, freedom to pursue God's will, and freedom to be our true selves. How might this impact our ability to affect the world around us positively?

**Group Prayer Focus:** How can we support each other in our journey toward true freedom? Consider incorporating prayers for strength, discipline, and perseverance in our collective and individual pursuits.



**40 DAYS-FREEDOM**

**WEEK 2**



**FREEDOM**

## Freedom From Fear

*“For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

*(2 Timothy 1:7)*

*“For those who know your name will put their trust in you, for you have not forsaken those who seek you.” (Psalm 9:10)*

Have you ever noticed that a newborn infant will turn toward its mother’s voice? They will only be comforted when their mother takes them into her arms. No one else can stop their crying because they are only at peace with the parents they know. We, too, are designed to be at peace in the presence of our Heavenly Father. The more we know Him, the more we trust Him and find security and comfort.

Satan does not want us to have peace. He wants us to live in fear and anxiety. He will fill our minds with “what ifs” and torment us with worst case scenarios. He knows that if he can distract us from our relationship with God, he can cripple our thinking and our actions. This is why the Bible tells us to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18.) We have these tools to fight spiritual battles. The newborn spent nine months listening to his/her mother’s voice, therefore, a child is secure when near her. We too must spend time with our Father so we will recognize His voice.

When I became a Christian, I was very blessed to have a mentor who taught the value of knowing God. She had me study the character of God and advised me to get to know Him before I tried to serve Him. The more I learned of his character, the more peace and confidence I had to face life. She helped me to build a strong foundation that would weather the storms of life. I remembered God’s power and abilities when my boys were deployed to the middle east, when my husband was working 3<sup>rd</sup> shift in the ghetto, and when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I remembered and I was comforted by the truths that God is love, all powerful, sovereign, just, and good. I still hurt and was concerned, but I trusted the outcome to the God I knew, and I had supernatural peace. I counsel others to study the characteristics of God and to remind themselves of these three things when going through trials:

- 1. God is good**
- 2. God is sovereign**
- 3. God cannot make a mistake**

If we are overwhelmed with the fear of the unknown and feeling anxious or depressed, we need to ask ourselves if we doubt any of these things. If we believe these truths, we can regain that supernatural peace. We all struggle with fear at times. Fear is a natural feeling and helpful at times. It becomes unhealthy and paralyzing when it consumes us. Satan wants us to live in fear. God wants us to live in peace and be secure in His providence.

*Thank you, Father, that we can trust you. We cannot see the future, but we know that you, the Creator and God of the universe are in complete control of all things. We know that you love us. You proved your love by sending your son Jesus to die for our sins. Help us to work and live in the peace that you supply. May our supernatural peace cause others to seek you. Give us the boldness and love to share the plan of salvation. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.*

Denise Molatch

## Embracing Freedom: A Journey from Injury to Inspiration

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1 (NIV)*

November 5, 2020. This date is etched into my memory. A day that started like any other in my duty as a deputy sheriff and a job I tackled with fervor and commitment. Yet, in a split second, everything changed. A car accident. An event I had no control over and abruptly ended my active service in law enforcement. This was not just a physical blow. It was a mental and emotional one that pushed my resilience to limits I had not known existed.

As someone deeply passionate about my role, and accepting the fact I could no longer serve as I used to was a crushing realization. My journey towards recovery was tough, filled with the hope of donning my uniform once more. However, reality struck hard with my medical retirement on October 4, 2022. The scars from that day were not just on my body—they were etched in my mind, and the label "permanently disabled" was a tough pill to swallow.

Dealing with the workers' compensation process was another battlefield. I followed every rule, yet found myself fighting for the surgeries I needed. Losing my job was hard enough, however, fighting for my right to healthcare added insult to injury. This story is not unique to me. Many first responders face this uphill battle, struggling against inadequate care, financial losses, and ongoing physical and emotional trauma. The system seemed designed not to help but to deepen my struggles, leading to more pain, depression, and a sense of betrayal. I turned to my faith in Christ for strength in these dark times.

I embraced the freedom Christ offers, breaking free from the chains of my past, the present pain, and the uncertain future. The scripture from *Galatians 5:1*; *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free,"* became a guiding light, a reminder to not give in to despair.

Despite facing injustice in the workers' compensation system, where they used ugly tactics to question my honesty despite overwhelming medical evidence, I found refuge in my faith. The physical injuries, the ongoing legal battles, and the unjust doubts cast upon my character could not imprison my spirit. I chose to walk away from despair and follow the path God had laid out for me.

To everyone on this challenging road, keep this in mind: our best days can be ahead! It's not our injuries or battles that shape us, but our faith and determination. With Jesus as our guide, we have a future filled with hope and the strength to overcome any challenge—a future that shines brighter than today.

And for those who haven't walked through the fire of injury or wrestled with the maze of worker's comp; show compassion. Extend a hand to those who are suffering. Your empathy and support are powerful forces that can profoundly impact their path to healing and getting back on track.

*Lord, in the spirit of Galatians 5:1, grant us the freedom to rise above our struggles. Guide us with Your love, empowering us to face each day with faith and determination. May our compassion shine, reflecting Your hope and strength, as we walk towards a future brighter than today. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

Toby DePew

## The Pace of Life

I was born with a type “A” personality. Always on the run, planning or thinking about what I will be doing next. My thoughts are focused on accomplishing goals. These could be as simple as getting all the items on a shopping list to the recent rebuilding of an antique motorcycle. Being a first responder re-enforces these thought processes. The job requires that I plan out what I will be doing and makes me focus on accomplishing the goal. I have to do it right and always beyond what is expected.

However, without any guidelines, we can become burnt-out. As first responders, we have a natural instinct to help as many people as possible. We sometimes think we can help everyone and solve all the problems. This frequently leads to disappointment and frustration.

Our personal expectations of performing the job can easily exceed the organization expectations. I learned that in order to survive my career, I have to re-think my level of expectation. Even so, can I adjust my pace-of-life as a first responder when everything and everybody around me seems to be demanding more?

In order to re-calibrate my mind, I have to read and study what God's expectations are for my life. This provides a path to freedom from unrealistic goals. In *John 16:33*, Jesus said, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Biblical reminders like this scripture helps adjust my thinking and my pace. I do find peace in being reminded that He has “overcome the world.” It helps me set the **proper pace of life**.

I hope and pray it helps you, too.

Jeff Nabor

## Freedom From, Freedom To, Freedom to Be

*"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." This scripture has been a cornerstone of my journey. Galatians 5:1*

As a retired deputy sheriff and an ardent follower of Christ, my life has been a testament to the complexities of justice and the profound truths of faith. The scripture from Galatians reminds me to do the following:

- **Breaking Free from the Past:** In my years wearing the badge, I saw the shadows of the past loom large over the present – unresolved cases, personal failings, haunting memories. Yet, in Christ, I found a path to redemption. Once riddled with mistakes and regrets, I have seen my past transformed into a story of grace and liberation. It taught me that in Christ, our past doesn't define us; it propels us towards a redeemed future.
- **Walking in Freedom Today:** Daily life in law enforcement is a minefield of moral decisions and societal pressures. However, living in Christ's freedom gave me a unique strength. Each day was not just about being a first responder but allowing the Holy Spirit to be with me in each moment, especially during those critical moments that were traumatic and frightening. This freedom to be in the moment with the Holy Spirit did not isolate me from work or personal challenges but equipped me to face them with integrity and courage.
- **Envisioning a Future of Freedom:** Understanding my freedom in Christ opened up new possibilities for the future. Beyond just performing a job, I dreamed of contributing to the world the way Jesus would want and allowing me to be a light. Inspired by my faith, I desired to heal from pain, trauma, depression, and anxiety and plan to live my best life. The job is full of trauma, but I do not want it to rule and continue to traumatize me in the future.
- **Safeguarding Our Spiritual Freedom:** We must learn the importance of guarding our spiritual freedom. We must strive for a disciplined life of prayer, fellowship, and scripture study. This means to strive to be better and do better in our walk with God and to take our gains in God seriously and safeguard them.

In my career and retirement, I've embraced the discipline and strength found in Christ. Free from past chains, firmly grounded in the present freedom, and looking towards a future filled with hope and freedom, all while rigorously integrating faith with duty.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the freedom found in Christ, which redeems my past, guides my present, and brightens my future. Grant me the strength to uphold justice with integrity, the courage to face life's trials, and the wisdom to safeguard my spiritual freedom. In Your grace may I continually reflect Your light. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.*

Toby DePew

## Say Goodbye

*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

*Philippians 3:13-14*

Have you ever felt stuck, you know, in a rut because of the nagging reminders of your past? Whether it is a bad habit, a bitter grudge, a broken relationship, or a horrific trauma – what holds you hostage? Have you ever considered saying goodbye to that stuff once and for all? I have some good news for you. We all have a past, even the greats of the greats.

Consider David, Jonah, Paul, Peter, for starters.

I encourage you to set some time aside and do a self-evaluation (see *Psalms 139:23-24*) to determine what might be holding you back from becoming the person God meant for you to be. As you do and identify what that is, lay it at the Lord's feet once and for all.

(see *1 Peter 5:7*) **Say Goodbye** to it all and trust the Lord to give you the **Freedom From** your past. (see *Hebrews 11:6*)

You know, it's been said that he who looks behind will continually trip on what's ahead. Let go of the past and allow God to set you free from those fetters. There's a powerful truth in the Word of God. Check it out: the Lord forgives our stuff (sins) and removes them as far as the east is from the west (see *Psalms 103:12; Micah 7:19*). And... He doesn't ever, ever remember them again, at all (see *Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 43:25*). Remind your mind and heart dear friend, neither should you!

*Lord, I ask for **Freedom From** the stuff, the sin, the mistakes, the issues that have been the restraints that have impeded my growth as Your child. I trust You and have the faith to be set free as I **Say Goodbye** to my past. Thank You, in Jesus Name, Amen.*

Randy Ponder



**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**  
**“STANDING FIRM IN FREEDOM”**

## Standing Firm in Freedom

"In a profession that constantly confronts us with the harsh realities of life, how can we stand firm in the freedom Christ has given us? How do we ensure we don't become burdened again by the yoke of slavery?"

### Survey the Big Picture:

Our study focuses on Galatians 5:1, a pivotal verse in Paul's letter to the Galatians. This epistle addresses the Galatian Christians who were being influenced to adopt Jewish legal practices alongside their Christian faith. Essentially, turning back to the 'yoke of slavery' from which Christ had set them free. Paul writes passionately to remind them of their freedom in Christ, a freedom from the laws' demands through faith and encourages them to live in the Spirit. This verse encapsulates the essence of Christian liberty and calls believers to stand firm in this freedom.

### Explore the Bible Scripture:

*Galatians 5:1 (Amplified Version)*

*"It was for freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed]."*

### What does it mean?

•**Interpretation:** This scripture emphasizes the complete liberation that comes through Christ—freedom from sin and legalistic ways of earning God's favor. Paul urges believers to stand firm in this freedom and resist any return to legalism or bondage.

•**Significance:** The significance of this passage for first responders lies in the encouragement to live in the freedom of Christ amidst a world that can often make one feel trapped or burdened by circumstances. It reminds us that our identity and worth are not based on our performance or adherence to a set of rules but on Christ's sacrifice and love.

### Discover the Big Idea:

"How does the freedom Christ gives empower you to face the daily challenges of your work as a first responder with resilience and hope?"

## Application Questions:

- **For Personal Reflection:** Consider areas in your life where you might be slipping back into 'slavery'—whether through trying to earn approval, perfectionism or control. How can you apply the truth of *Galatians 5:1* to stand firm in your freedom?
- **Cultivating a Habit:** What daily practices or habits can help you remember and live out your freedom in Christ? How can these practices impact your work as a first responder?
- **Risks and Obstacles:** What risks or obstacles might you face to live out this freedom? Particularly in a high-stress job like first responding. How can you address these challenges while maintaining your freedom?
- **Benefits of Living Like This:** Discuss the benefits of standing firm in the freedom Christ has given us, personally and professionally. How might this freedom change how you approach your duties, interact with others, and view yourself?

**Group Prayer Focus:** How can our group prayers support one another in standing firm in our freedom in Christ, especially when facing pressures or challenges that might make us feel enslaved again?



**40 DAYS - FREEDOM**



**WEEK 3**

**FREEDOM**

## Chasing Freedom: The Struggle to Find Peace Beyond the Shadows of Duty

*"I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts."  
Psalm 119:45 (NIV)*

As a retired deputy sheriff, I have experienced the sharp contrast between the intensity of the job and the supposed calm of days off. The end of each shift often brought a rush of anticipation for a break from the rigors of law enforcement. However, the elusive peace and freedom I expected on my days off were often just out of reach. They were overshadowed by the lingering effects of my work. The toll of duty, especially the more harrowing calls, didn't simply vanish. I battled with frustration towards the administration. I felt my efforts were unrecognized and underappreciated. This perceived lack of justice was a constant mental burden.

The domestic violence calls were particularly scarring. Witnessing the plight of those vulnerable individuals left deep imprints on my psyche. My role didn't end there because as a deputy and coroner, confronting death was a regular part of the job. These experiences fostered a sense of depression and disconnection, creating a divide between me and my family. I had time off, yet I felt imprisoned by the memories of my work life.

Reflecting on a Joyce Meyer quote, "Where the mind goes, the man follows," I realized that frustration, violence, and mortality consumed my thoughts. This mindset trapped me in a victim's mentality, overshadowed by the darker aspects of my profession.

The concept of 'stinkin' thinkin' that I heard a preacher say once comes to mind. As *Psalm 119:45 (NIV)* points out, the remedy is a mindset shift. *"I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts."* This passage emphasizes the transformative power of renewing our thoughts and aligning ourselves with the wisdom in God's word. For those seeking tranquility and liberation during their days off, the key lies in embracing the principles of Christ, aligning both thought and heart with the teachings of the Bible.

On my days off, I often pondered: "Am I free, or do the remnants of my duties still shackle me?" The answer to true freedom and peace is not escaping work but changing our perspective and grounding ourselves in enduring values and principles.

*Lord, help me combat 'stinking thinking' on my days off. Guide me to embrace the truth of Psalm 119:45 (NIV) "I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts," so I can find true peace and rejuvenation, preparing myself for the challenges ahead.  
In Jesus Name. Amen.*

Toby DePew

### Freedom to Give and Receive

*“You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and ignore them. You shall help to lift them up again.” (Deuteronomy 22:4)*

This scripture is simply saying if you see someone in trouble, don’t ignore the need, go help. We are to be a people who are available and ready to lend a hand in trivial as well as crucial situations. We are God’s hands and feet in this world. This verse also reminded me of my own donkey dilemma. We were given a miniature donkey for our little farm. He is seventeen years old and a bit of a lovable grouch. Not well versed in donkey antics, we were intimidated by his stubbornness and his quick kicks. He seemed to enjoy watching us jump. Thankfully, our ‘donkey expert’ friends noticed we were being mistreated and stepped in to help. They taught us how to manage the little beast and all turned out well. We were so appreciative to have friends who saw our need and took the time to help.

As first responders, we respond daily to needy people. Our job exposes us to more trauma, violence, and pain than any other profession. This often piles up within us until we start to exhibit unhealthy behaviors such as drinking, anger, withdrawal, and family problems. We are trained to handle everything and solve every problem, however, we do not easily seek help for ourselves. I encourage you to listen to the concerns of others. If they are worried about you, it is time to seek help. In addition, we must be vigilant to notice our coworkers who are struggling. And we must be bold enough to reach out to them.

Just this week, my friend Thomas met up with his old police partner and realized he was in bad shape. He had been drinking heavily for some time and it was apparent that he was in physical and emotional turmoil. Thomas was hesitant to confront his friend, afraid to offend him. However, after going home he could not stop worrying. He took the step to go and confront him. The friend was tearful and appreciative. He admitted he needed and wanted help. Within six hours this man was on a plane headed to a treatment center that specializes in help for first responders. Without the bold intervention of a caring friend, this situation would have had a tragic ending.

We are trained and called to help others. First responders sacrifice a great deal for others. Our emotional, mental, and physical health should not be one of those sacrifices. Take the time to notice and intervene in the lives of your coworkers. There is always a proverbial donkey that needs to be pulled out of the ditch. *Galatians 5:2* tells us to; *“bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

*Father, we thank you for our jobs that put us in a position to help others. We recognize this may come at a cost. We are often damaged in the process. Help us to be aware of our own needs, as well as those around us. Give us bold love to reach out to other first responders. Help us to reflect on your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*

Denise Molatch

## The Unseen Battles: Courage, Cynicism, Conviction, and Freedom

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows.

*Galatians 5:13 (The Message)*

In the realm of first responders, we are constantly thrown into the eye of the storm. As someone who has worn the badge, I've navigated through a myriad of dangerous, weird, traumatic, and profoundly sad scenarios. Amidst these ordeals, I've shared hearty laughs and deep bonds with my colleagues, finding moments of levity in the gravity of our duties. However, the journey hasn't been without its rough patches. Delivering death notifications, attempting to soothe those battling their inner demons; instead they battle me. These experiences have often led me to ponder deeply; how did I end up here? Why did I choose this profession? It's more than just questioning my career choice, these trials can render first responders cynical.

Kevin Gilmartin's stark depiction of our world resonates deeply: "Now the police officer... Can explain any social dilemma or problem that presents itself: 'It's just bull\*\*\*\*, and this guy is just an \*\*\*hole. Now, there is no longer any need to deal with the problems the officer encounters every day.'"

This blunt portrayal mirrors the relentless nature of the challenges we face daily. Yet, this mindset can be harmful, bleeding over into other aspects of life. We start to see every minor irritation as "BS" and hastily dismiss disagreements with loved ones as if they are being "Aholes." This negative thinking initiates a spiral of internal conflict, eroding our serenity, relationships, and, ultimately, our spirit.

Here lies the paradox: Cynicism may seem inevitable, but we must allow our faith to reshape our focus, recognizing our profession as a calling. This is not just a job. It is a commitment to a cause greater than ourselves. My Christian faith is interwoven with this duty. It goes beyond upholding the law. It's about being a custodian of peace and order. We are tasked with protecting, serving, and preserving the values that unite our community. This role demands strength, bravery, and a resilient heart.

Embracing our purpose comes with the inherent responsibility to protect our mental, emotional, and physical well-being fiercely. Every single day we stand in the arena of life, where our decisions hold the power to transform or rescue lives. It's critical we prioritize our survival and strength while steering clear of the path of self-destruction; warned about in *Galatians 5:13*. Discipline is our ally in this mission, not the pursuit of unchecked freedoms that lead us astray.

To my fellow officers, active and retired, remember our role is a testament to our resilience and determination. You're not just a cog in the system, you're a pillar of strength and a beacon of hope in tumultuous times. Embrace this duty wholeheartedly. It's not just a responsibility, it's a privilege. Stand tall, embodying the honor and nobility of this path. Own it, for you are all you were destined to be and all God has called you to be.

*Heavenly Father, as we navigate the tumultuous path of first response, embolden our hearts with Your love. In moments of danger and despair, grant us Your peace. Let us not grow weary or cynical, but remember our calling is sacred. Strengthen us to serve with compassion, reflecting Your light in the darkest hours. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

## The Unique Calling

Freedom comes with understanding and embracing how God has provided for us. I have two brothers; one works in industrial safety and the other in retail store maintenance. They are great brothers. Unlike them, I enlisted in the U.S. military after graduating high school and started a thirty-five year career in law enforcement. I look back now and remember all the opportunities and all of the suffering and disappointments. I was a faithful man, serving in ministry roles at a Christian school or at my church. I slowly came to realize how God had uniquely qualified me to do His work as an officer. A lot of times, this realization became clearer after dealing with a crisis. Unlike my brothers, God has provided a unique calling, an ability to survive and thrive as a first responder. Very few people can do the job and do it well for decades. There is great responsibility that comes with our calling. Service can oftentimes become a struggle, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

When a first responder arrives at the scene of a critical incident, they are serving God and their community. God has equipped us to do His work. God expects us to honor Him as we do His work. How we think, what we say, and how we act, should all be based on Godly principles since...He called us.

I hope this gives you time to reflect on your calling. In *Luke Chapter 12*, Jesus says; “*For everyone to whom much is given, from him, much will be required, and to whom much has been committed, of him they will be asked the more.*” God has given you much by the mere fact that He called you to do this very unusual job.

**Let us understand, embrace and do it well for Him.**

Jeff Nabor

**Finding Freedom in Vulnerability:  
First Responders Confront Trauma with Courage and Faith**

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [emancipation from bondage, true freedom]. 2 Corinthians 3:17 (Amplified Bible).*

My conclusion in this devotion, may be more anecdotal than factual. Consisting of personal accounts I heard in one small setting of about 20 first responders.

This gathering was not an ordinary meeting. The individuals, mostly strangers to one another, came together to share their experiences in an environment that encouraged honesty, vulnerability, and truthfulness. Such openness is exceedingly rare, particularly among groups of men. Even more so among first responders who often maintain a facade of stoicism. I can't recall another instance where first responders were this candid and genuine. The organizers intentionally crafted the setting to foster such openness. The participants, burdened with trauma and in search of healing, were prepared to embrace vulnerability.

What stood out to me most was a shared experience among a significant number of the attendees. I estimate that 50% or more had encountered childhood trauma, specifically instances of molestation or, in some cases, forced to witness such acts. This shared trauma appeared to be a pivotal factor in their decision to combat the evils of the world. The result of childhood trauma led many to pursue careers in law enforcement. Reflecting on this, it seems logical. Law enforcement officers are on the front lines, confronting evil to protect the vulnerable.

I am not a psychologist and my observations are purely anecdotal. As a result, I concluded their experiences of vulnerability and victimization drove these individuals to fight against wrongdoing and seek justice. However, it also became evident that many had not fully processed or healed from their childhood traumas.

This realization is the reason behind my decision to write this piece. I have been fortunate enough never to have experienced such trauma myself. However, the prevalence of such experiences among the officers in that group suggests that individuals reading this may have faced similar challenges. You may or may not be grappling with past traumas from childhood or adulthood. I hope this message offers comfort or perhaps aids in fostering empathy for others.

When you embrace your journey with faith, remember you're never alone in your struggles. Whatever trauma you've faced, it wasn't your fault, and it's okay to feel every emotion that comes. God's love is steadfast and offers healing as well as strength beyond our understanding. You possess incredible resilience, a testament to His grace. Healing may seem distant, but with each step forward, you're moving closer to a life filled with joy and purpose. Let's lean on faith, set boundaries for our peace, and open our hearts to the support around us. Remember, there's freedom and a future filled with hope and love through God.

*2 Corinthians 3:17*; speaks to the hope and freedom available to us. Emphasizing that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—a promise of release from bondage and a brighter, unburdened future.

*Heavenly Father, we lift up those first responders who carry the weight of past traumas, especially those scarred by childhood. Please give them the strength to heal, the grace to forgive, and the peace to overcome. Let them experience Your profound love and the freedom that comes with Your promise of renewal. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

Toby DePew



**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**  
**“FREEDOM FROM THE PAST”**

## Freedom from the Past

"Have you ever felt like your past mistakes or experiences hold you back from fully embracing your role and responsibilities as a first responder? How does being liberated from these burdens resonate with you?"

### Survey the Big Picture:

The passage we'll explore is from the book of Philippians, specifically *Philippians 3:13-14*. This letter was written by Paul, an apostle of Christ, while he was in prison. Despite his circumstances, Paul's letters are filled with joy and encouragement. The book of Philippians focuses on the joy that comes from faith in Christ, emphasizing living a life worthy of the Gospel. In this context, Paul talks about pressing forward, leaving the past behind, and focusing on what lies ahead as a critical component of living a life in Christ.

### Explore the Bible Scripture:

*Philippians 3:13-14 (Amplified Version)*

*"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [heavenly] prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

### What does it mean?

•**Interpretation:** Paul acknowledges he hasn't achieved perfection or completed his journey. The act of "forgetting what lies behind" suggests a conscious decision not to let past failures or achievements hinder his progress in faith.

"Reaching forward to what lies ahead" emphasizes pursuing spiritual goals and the Christian calling.

•**Significance:** This passage matters because it speaks to the universal struggle of dealing with our past, our failures, and sins along with successes that might keep us from moving forward. It highlights the importance of focusing on our spiritual journey and the ultimate goal of life with Christ rather than being ensnared by our past.

### Discover the Big Idea:

"What does 'pressing on toward the goal' mean to you in the context of your faith and work as a first responder?"

## Application Questions:

•**For Personal Reflection:** How can you apply Paul's mindset of forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead in your personal life and your duties as a first responder? Consider a specific area where you need to let go of the past.

•**Cultivating a Habit:** What steps can you take to focus on your calling in Christ and your responsibilities as a first responder without being weighed down by past experiences?

•**Risks and Obstacles:** What are the risks of doing what Jesus says here, especially in the context of your work? What obstacles hinder you from living out this call to press forward, and how can you overcome them?

•**Benefits of Living Like This:** Reflect on the benefits of living according to Paul's exhortation in your personal life and as a first responder. How might this perspective change how you approach your duties and interact with the community?

**Group Prayer Focus:** How can our prayer time as a group better reflect what we have been learning about letting go of the past and pressing forward? Consider incorporating prayers of release from past burdens and for strength to move forward.



**40 DAYS-FREEDOM**

**WEEK 4**



**FREEDOM**

## Fulfill Your Calling

*“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11*

*“For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.” Romans 13:4*

My oldest son was a young teen when he began dreaming of becoming a Navy SEAL. I shouldn’t have been surprised as his dad was a SWAT/Firearms guy and most of our family were either first responders or military. Still, I was not happy. My plan was for him to remain in our little hometown and give me lots of grandkids and Sunday dinners. I even chose a career and tried to convince him to be a land surveyor. I reasoned it would fit his love for the outdoors. I had prayed for him to seek God’s plan and special forces was not in my eyes, the right plan. My son held on to his dream and I held on to my reluctance.

Then, one day, Mike, a police officer friend, helped to change my mind. I remember the exact words, “Denise, God calls people to be warriors. Consider King David. He was a great warrior and yet was called “a man after God’s own heart” (*I Samuel 13:14*). *I knew Mike was right. I began praying for God’s will, not mine. My son did achieve his dream to become a Navy SEAL. Four years later, my younger son followed in his footsteps and also became a SEAL. I didn’t bother to object! Today, they both serve in Federal Law Enforcement. God’s ways are not our ways! I am proud of my warriors.*

You, too, are warriors, chosen by God to serve Him and society. Society and freedom can only exist if we have your protection and direction. It is an honorable and essential calling. Your spouse is a warrior wife or warrior husband because they too have been called to sacrifice and to serve. Perhaps you have not thought of yourself as a warrior. Unfortunately, we live in a society where first responders are not always appreciated and are often demeaned and targeted. This makes your job much harder, however, no less crucial. You are a true freedom fighter. Everyone in this country, good or bad, has freedom and rights because of the job you do. Not everyone can succeed as an officer, firefighter, or emergency responder. It is a unique calling for few strong men and women.

I pray that you know Christ personally so that you can be confident of your calling. As a Christian, you have access to Christ’s wisdom and discernment. You can accomplish good and be a light to those around you. Many of your daily calls don’t make sense but you have strength to continue because you know a loving God who is in control. We cannot always see or understand God’s ways, but if we know Him, we can trust Him. Thank you for responding to the call.

*Father, thank you for loving our nation so much that you chose these men and women to serve and protect us. I pray for each person reading this that you will protect them physically and emotionally. I also pray each of them will come to know you as a personal savior and depend on you daily. We know evil abounds in this world, but you are in control and more powerful than any evil we may encounter. May each first responder and family realize their great value and see their job as a calling from you. I pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

*Denise Molatch*

## Embracing the Essential: Minimal Gear, Unyielding Faith, and Freedom

*“Therefore, put on the complete armor of God, so that you will be able to successfully resist and stand your ground in the evil day of danger, and having done everything [that the crisis demands], to stand firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious].” Ephesians 6:13 (Amplified Bible)*

I'm not a gear nut. Sure, I get why some first responders geek out over it. They know their firearms nomenclature inside and out and understand the specifics of flashlights, lumens, and the works. They drop serious cash and time on the best gear. That makes sense. I should be into it as well. However, to be honest, I'm just not that guy. Start chatting about all that gear and tech; you've lost me.

It might sound basic, but here's my deal: I know my gun, it's black, and it shoots. I do not want you to think I am totally clueless. I was probably in the top 5% where I earned the highest medal to wear on my uniform at my agency—but, drooling over gear? Not my style. One of the reasons I steered clear of SWAT is that I saw them all kitted out and it just looked like a burdensome load. Not just wearing it, but primarily the responsibility of it all. I sound lame, but give me a gun, ammo, and a stick. That's it. Simple and effective, but also impractical and unsafe, I know. The core of the job is keeping peace and enforcing the law. However, the top priority, the one thing above all? Make sure you get back home safely every night. For me, ensuring safety meant being on top of my game. And yes, that required suiting up in full gear. It's not about loving the equipment. It's about the commitment to the mission and making sure we all come back.

Each piece of an officer's gear finds a metaphor counterpart in the whole armor of God. As believers, we must put on the spiritual armor and stand firm against the world's challenges. Similarly, just like a dedicated police officer who equips themselves to safeguard their own safety and the community. Let us remember, “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world” (*Ephesians 6:12*), and in Christ, we have all we need to stand victorious.

The Christian's duty uniform, representing righteousness and integrity, is comparable to a visible reflection of Christ's teachings, much like an officer's uniform. Body armor symbolizes the "breastplate of righteousness," guarding spiritual aspects, while the duty belt represents the "belt of truth," securing the whole armor of God. Boots echo the "gospel of peace," essential for faith. Communication tools like radios and badges signify prayer and identity in Christ. Defensive gear, including handcuffs, batons, and pepper spray, metaphorically illustrates spiritual authority and resistance against evil. Firearms and related gear, such as handguns and rifles, symbolize the power of God's word and prayer. Lastly, additional equipment like flashlights represents the Christian's role as a light in darkness, guided by Scripture.

Ultimately, the essence lies not in the gear but in the intention and resolve behind its use. In both law enforcement and spiritual journeys, it's our dedication and purpose that genuinely matter. Our strength comes from within, guided by faith and duty, not by the tools we wield. Our commitment to serve, protect, and uphold our values defines us as fully prepared for the trials ahead.

*Dear Lord, in Jesus' name, help us to remember that our strength lies not in physical gear, but in You. Guide us to serve with integrity and simplicity, trusting in Your protection and wisdom, as we fulfill our duties with faith and dedication. Amen.*

Toby DePew

## Freedom From Mediocrity: Protect Your Portals

*So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” Revelation 3:16 NIV*

On a beautiful Saturday morning about 20 men in our church attended a “Man Cave” brunch. At this particular man cave, each man wrote down a question they had or a topic they wished to discuss. Topics were drawn at random and we began discussing and sharing opinions. The men in my church represent all walks of life; black and white, old and young, rich and poor, cops and convicts, educators, entrepreneurs, and the unemployed. As we began to look at questions, a theme quickly developed, “how do I avoid mediocrity, and how can I become the man God designed me to be?” We were all concerned with being lukewarm.

The quick and easy answer is to make sure you are hearing from God through reading the Bible and communicating with Him through prayer. We all know, understand and many of us practice these things. It is a must. Why then aren't we growing as we should and why do we still feel mediocre? Our discussion today revealed one simple shortcoming, we aren't protecting our portals. We aren't protecting what goes into our mouth, eyes and ears.

Professional athletes don't eat junk food and expect to perform well. They are on strict diets and nutritional plans. If we wish to be physically healthier, we need to protect what goes into our mouths. If we wish to be spiritually healthier, we need to protect what we watch, what we listen to and our daily conversations. Our 15 minutes with God in the morning can easily be watered down as we engage in unhealthy talk during our days, or listen to music and/or watch TV for hours each evening. These examples all promote lifestyles that are contrary to God's intent for our lives. It just makes sense that if we fail to protect our portals, we can easily become mediocre, lukewarm, and miss out on being the person God designed us to be.

I challenge you, as I challenge myself to break free from mediocrity and protect my portals. *2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” In Christ, we are a new creation, let's fully embrace that calling!*

Tom Thompson

## Discipline Equals Freedom: Integrating Faith, Work, and Wisdom

*But [like a boxer] I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached [the gospel] to others, I myself will not somehow be disqualified [as unfit for service].  
1 Corinthians 9:27 (Amplified Bible).*

"Through discipline comes freedom." Aristotle's words hit the mark, echoing loudly in my past life as a deputy sheriff and my walk as a Christian. This age-old wisdom was given new life by Jocko Willink titled; Discipline Equals Freedom speaks volumes. The website Blinkist sums it up as a "motivational book that promotes the idea that self-discipline is essential for achieving freedom and success. It offers practical advice on how to develop and maintain a disciplined mindset that can help you overcome obstacles and achieve your goals."

To complement Jocko's ethos, I'd highlight the Christian faith. In the realm of faith, discipline transcends mere rules, rituals, and religion. It's fundamentally about forging a profound bond with God and cultivating meaningful relationships with those around us. It's about syncing every fiber of your being with God's Word, His plan for your life, and your relationship with Him. This alignment demands a disciplined commitment to prayer, diving into the Bible, and living out Jesus' teachings. In this disciplined way of life, we find real freedom—breaking free from sin and the chains of our past and stepping into a life rich with purpose and satisfaction.

Paul nailed it in *1 Corinthians 9:27*, when he talked about keeping his body and spirit in line to avoid being sidelined after leading others. This kind of discipline isn't about restriction; it's about liberation. It's what lets us run our earthly race with endurance. *Hebrews 12:1*

Therefore, for anyone following Christ, discipline is not optional. It's the key to spiritual freedom. It's how we tackle the hurdles, resist the temptations, and chase down God's plans. Discipline shapes who we are, deepens our connection with God, and steers us toward the freedom Christ offers—freedom beyond all understanding, empowering us to live out our God-given mission.

We are not born disciplined. We ask, we believe, and God delivers the power of discipline. It's about seeking it, putting in the work, and then witnessing God's strength magnify within us. Get after it—discipline is a blend of our effort and divine enhancement.

*Heavenly Father, we seek the discipline that births true freedom. Strengthen us to embrace Your teachings, to walk in obedience, and to forge deeper connections with You and others. Grant us the discipline to overcome obstacles and to fulfill Your divine purpose for our lives. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.*

Toby DePew

## What Do You See On Your Phone?

My phone is my life. I communicate with it more than any other way. I use it more than calling someone or meeting with someone. I recently reviewed my “Screen Time” and noted that I average three hours a day on my phone. **Three hours!** I don’t usually talk to real people for three hours a day. I don’t know if I am an average cell phone user but three hours a day surprised me. My phone also records what applications I am using and how long per day I am using them. Most of my phone time is on social media or text messaging. I pause to think about how this technology influences my life and my spirit.

As a Christian, I am aware of the Bible verse from Apostle Paul: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:12.* We will struggle. Life on earth oftentimes can be physically exhausting but Paul reminds us that it is much deeper, much unseen. The things that influence us are the things we are most accustomed to...our phones. How much does social media own you?

Consider this when you use your phone. Be intentional by periodically reading Bible verses, looking at Godly pages or websites. You have the freedom to decide what you see and hear. Awareness and intentional use of technology will grant us freedom from the rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world.

Matthew wrote about what we look at. *“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”*  
*Matthew 6:22-23.*

We have to intentionally and faithfully seek God by looking for Him. If we don’t, the darkness is waiting.

Jeff Nabor



**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**  
**“FREEDOM TO LIVE**  
**IN THE PRESENT”**

## Freedom to Live in the Present

"In a world filled with distractions, worries about the future, and regrets about the past, how can we find the freedom to live fully and appreciate the present moment, especially in the demanding role of a first responder?"

### Survey the Big Picture:

The passage we'll delve into is from *Matthew 6:25-34*, part of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus addresses a multitude of people with teachings on how to live according to the Kingdom of Heaven. This sermon found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5-7, offers profound insights into ethical and spiritual life, emphasizing trust in God, love, and humility. In this specific passage, Jesus teaches about the futility of worry and the importance of seeking God's Kingdom first. It highlights a mindset that enables us to live fully in the present.

### Explore the Bible Scripture:

*Matthew 6:25-34 (Amplified Version) "Therefore I tell you, stop being worried or anxious (perpetually uneasy, distracted) about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, as to what you will wear. Isn't life more than food, and the body more than clothing? [...] So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

### What does it mean?

•**Interpretation:** Jesus challenges us to reconsider our priorities and the focus of our anxieties. He questions the value we place on material needs and societal pressures. He points us toward more profound spiritual sustenance that comes from faith in God. By advising us not to worry about tomorrow, Jesus emphasizes the importance of living in the present, trusting that God will provide for our needs.

•**Significance:** This passage is crucial for understanding how faith intersects with daily life, especially for first responders who face uncertainty and stress regularly. It reassures us that by prioritizing our spiritual life and relationship with God, we can navigate life's challenges with a clearer mind and a more present heart.

### Discover the Big Idea:

"How does 'seeking first the kingdom of God' help us live more fully in the present, especially in the context of the high-stress situations encountered by first responders?"

## **Application Questions:**

•**For Personal Reflection:** Reflect on what being "perpetually uneasy, distracted" means. How can Jesus' teaching help you shift focus from your worries to living more intentionally in the present?

•**Cultivating a Habit:** What practical steps can you take to reduce worry and increase your trust in God's provision, enabling you to be more present in your daily life and work as a first responder?

•**Risks and Obstacles:** Consider the risks of living in a high-pressure role according to this teaching. What obstacles might you face to live more in the present, and how can you address them with faith?

•**Benefits of Living Like This:** Discuss the potential benefits of this approach to life for a first responder. How might this mindset impact your effectiveness, mental health, and relationships?

**Group Prayer Focus:** How can we incorporate what we've learned into our group prayers, asking for guidance to live in the moment and trust more deeply in God's care for us?



**40 DAYS-FREEDOM**

**WEEK 5**



**FREEDOM**

## Become All God Meant For You To Be

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10*

What an amazing truth the Apostle Paul wrote about some two thousand years ago. Chiefly, you as a follower of Jesus, you are His personal, intimate, specialized work of art – a master poem as the ancient language teaches. Let this sink in for a moment. God is writing a story and it’s about your life. A story that will be read throughout all eternity to display you as His trophy of grace that will broadcast His glory forever and ever and ever. This is life changing.

First Responder, it’s our heart that you ***Become All God Meant For You To Be***. *In other words, as a believer in Jesus Christ, God has a calling on your life, a tailored gift(s) from God that you are invited to exercise this side of eternity. He will enable you to contribute to the redemptive story that God planned before this world was ever created. Wow! What an amazing blessing.*

One of my heroes is Pastor Mike MacIntosh from Horizon Christian Fellowship. He once stated, “Success as a Christian is being faithful to do that which God has called you to do!” I have found this so freeing, so liberating. You, nor I, have to compare ourselves to others, we don’t have to lead one thousand to Christ, go on one hundred trips to Africa – we can simply be faithful and obedient to do what He’s invited us to do. Whatever that may entail.

Last, this biblical fact enables the ***Freedom To – Become All God Meant For You To Be***. *I encourage you to live in the moment right now. Be careful NOT to allow the urgent to preempt the important. Work on being who God has called you to be...vigilant, strong and focused as you serve your God, your family, your friends, and your vocation. As you follow His plan, you’ll be eternally blessed.*

*Dear God, thank You for allowing me to be Your workmanship, Your master work of art – what a huge blessing! It is my prayer that I can become all you meant for me to be as I rely on Your Holy Spirit to live in the ***Freedom To Become All You meant me to be***. In Jesus Name, I thank You. Amen*

Randy Ponder

## Unleashing Potential: Navigating Constraints to Fulfill God's Divine Calling

*"For I know the plans and thoughts that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and well-being and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11*

In my time as a deputy sheriff, I frequently assessed my purpose and potential. My career was marked by constraints from both my agency's ingrained culture and my colleagues' fixed mindsets. This was often epitomized by the belief that "we've always done it this way; change isn't necessary." These barriers clouded my vision and impeded not just my potential but that of my peers as well. However, reimagining my position as not just a job but a divine calling brought a transformative shift in perspective. This liberating change allowed me to rise above the routine tasks and deeply understand the true essence of my role.

For example, motivated by this higher purpose, I pioneered a chaplain program in our department, driven by my convictions rather than a collective consensus. Bringing this vision to life was challenging, reminiscent of what the former sheriff of Stanislaus County once told me: "Cops hate two things: change and the way things are." This paradoxical view mirrored the resistance I encountered. Nonetheless, armed with faith and resilience, I pushed against the norm, advocating for what I believed was a critical addition to our agency. I sought to inject a transformative element in a setting often rife with life's most challenging situations.

Throughout this journey of innovation and challenging the established order, I drew strength and direction from *Jeremiah 29:11. (Amplified Bible) "For I know the plans and thoughts that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and well-being and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."*

This path taught me that true empowerment in our field comes from aligning our actions with a higher purpose. It's about breaking out of cultural and psychological confines and pursuing the changes we deeply believe in. My experiences have shown there is ample space for spiritual growth and reinforcement. Yes, even in law enforcement, a realm traditionally bound by rigidity and discipline. It's an opportunity to leverage God's gifts and respond to His calling, positively influencing our agency and the broader community. Ultimately, it's a call to action for all in uniform to look beyond the day-to-day, embrace change, and step into the broader idea of who we are free to be in God, which is the divine role we are meant to play.

*Lord, instill in us the relentless will to confront change, to rise above tradition, and to align unwaveringly with Your purpose. Forge in us the strength to chase our calling with unyielding faith, breaking free to become all that You have destined us to be. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

Toby DePew

### Freedom To Be Special: Fail Forward

*“Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, Lord save me! Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”” Matt. 14:29-31 NIV*

One of the most famous stories in the Bible is in Matthew 14. The story of Jesus walking on the water to the disciples during a storm. The disciples were in a boat and initially were afraid thinking they saw a ghost. Jesus told them not to be scared because what they feared was a ghost...was Him. Peter felt his oats and said that if it really was Jesus, that he would be invited to walk to Him on water to which Jesus extended the invitation. Peter was brave enough to step out of the boat, however, as soon as he felt the strong winds, he was reminded of the storm and was scared. He began to sink. Peter then cried out for help and Jesus immediately saved him from sinking and helped him back into the boat.

Essentially, Peter answered Jesus's call but he failed by taking his eyes off of Jesus and onto his surroundings. He focused on everything but Jesus.

This is the same Peter who would deny Jesus three times after Jesus was arrested in the garden. There, he failed again. Big time. However, this is also the same Peter who is nicknamed “The Rock,” the disciple upon whom Jesus would build His church. The same Peter who is regarded as the first leader of the Church after Jesus ascended to Heaven. Furthermore, the same Peter to whom Jesus said He was giving the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. The same Peter who was so revered that he is buried beneath the main altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, Rome, the home of the Pope (and the Basilica that is named after him). There's no question that Peter failed - but he failed forward.

He failed forward and he kept moving forward. Peter was and will forever be regarded as historically special.

We can all resonate with answering God's call. Then soon, like Peter, we become afraid because we took our eyes off of Jesus. Failing. We become afraid of what people think about us, financial challenges, the power of our vices... all of the circumstances that are seemingly out of our control. When these failures occur, God picks us up and gives us the opportunity to learn from our failures and move forward. The keys to overcoming failure are to learn and keep moving forward. I recently heard a speaker comment, “if you keep moving forward, failure will lose its grip on you.” You will fail. I will fail. When we do, we have the opportunity to be special if we will just get up, re-engage with God and keep putting one foot in front of the other. In our professional work as first responders, like Peter, God can make us historically special, life-changing special, for those we protect and serve.

God created you special and has given you the tools and unique abilities you need to change the world. I challenge you to humbly answer His call, and when you fail, get up and keep moving forward. Fail well. Fail forward.

*Tom Thompson*

## Patrol and Perspective: Finding Freedom on the Road

*“It was for this freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed].”*

*Galatians 5:1 (Amplified Bible)*

In the sweeping landscapes of rural California, where the sun paints the sky in hues of hope at dawn and dusk, in an odd sense, my days as a deputy sheriff were chapters of freedom. Have you ever driven rural California Highway One? If so, you get it. Each shift began with the liberty to roam. My patrol car is more a vessel of exploration than an enforcer's whip. There's an unparalleled joy in the absence of office walls, the open road a testament to the beauty of free will and movement.

Yet, as boundless as it seemed, this freedom was always tethered to the static crackle of the radio dispatch. A call, minor or major, was all it took to snap me back to duty's reality. That fleeting moment when responsibility's weight clipped freedom's wings. Some calls were forgettable and annoying. Others, however, had the power to etch themselves into my psyche, leaving scars invisible yet indelible.

This dichotomy of patrol life, the interplay of freedom and obligation, was a constant dance. The job, a delicate balance of independence and duty, offered a unique perspective on freedom. Then and now, I revel in the liberties we often take for granted in this great country—the freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, and the spiritual liberation found in Christ.

To be free, not just in body but in mind, will, emotions, and spirit, is a gift beyond measure. Yet, much like the dispatcher's call, life often demands a response. It challenges us to face events that could either shackle or strengthen us. The key lies in our response, our choice to seek God and help and maintain our freedom. In my journey, Paul's words in *Galatians 5:1* reminded me that Christ has granted us profound freedom, liberating us from the yokes of life's burdens. It's a freedom to stand firm in a bastion against the tides of life that threaten to enslave us once more.

*Dear Lord, let us embrace this freedom in Christ, a freedom that transcends the physical, echoing into the depths of our souls. Let us proclaim it boldly, standing firm in the freedom Christ has bestowed upon us, never to return to the chains of our past.*

*In Jesus Name. Amen*

Toby DePew

## Free to be Happy

*“So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

Henry David Thoreau said, “Happiness is like a butterfly, the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come to sit softly on your shoulder.” We are a society that pursues happiness. We obsess over sports, vacations, nice cars, the newest gadgets, and anything money can buy. However, things do not bring happiness. Consider all the rich and famous who end up as alcoholics and are constantly divorcing and remarrying. As first responders, we know many who work twenty plus hours of overtime to have the best things, but never enjoy them or their family.

Most definitions of happiness refer to a state of well-being, a sense of meaning, and contentment. Research shows that it is the greatest pursuit of mankind. Yet, most people cannot find and keep it. Perhaps we are chasing the proverbial butterfly. Happiness is a byproduct of finding purpose. Humans were originally created to fellowship with God and to glorify Him with our life. This has not changed. We can find a fantastic job, be a devoted spouse, or become good parents, but those are goals – not our purpose. If we are not glorifying God as we achieve these goals, we lack purpose. We desperately need purpose.

There is a story of a wealthy businessman who suddenly lost everything and ended up under a bridge and became homeless. As a Christian, he continued to praise God. One night another homeless person bedded down beside him. The Christian shared Christ with this newcomer and he asked Christ into His heart. He became a believer. A few days later, the newcomer died. What was the purpose of that Christian being under that bridge? It was to glorify God with his life and share the plan of salvation. Whether we are a cashier, a stay-at-home parent, a garbage man, or a first responder we are to glorify God in all that we do. Our purpose has eternal significance.

First responders are known for getting their identity from their job. It is wonderful to be proud of the job, but our identity is so much more. One day, that job will be history and without a solid Biblical foundation you will likely flounder. Lack of purpose contributes to the high rate of suicide and alcoholism among ex-first responders. It is crucial to remember we serve as representatives of God’s love. That is why we were created and when we live out this purpose, we find contentment and happiness. There will be times when we feel unhappy or discontented with our life. Those times should not leave us in despair if we keep in mind our real purpose.

*Father, we thank you for loving us and choosing us to be your hands and feet on this earth. Thank you for giving us a purpose far beyond our job and our relationships. Help us to daily recognize the eternal value in glorifying you in all that we do. May others see the source of our happiness. In Jesus Name. Amen*

Denise Molatch



**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**  
**“FREEDOM TO HAVE**  
**HOPE IN THE FUTURE”**

## Freedom to Have Hope in the Future

"In the face of challenges and uncertainties that come with being a first responder, how can we maintain a hopeful outlook for the future and trust that God is shaping us to be our best selves?"

### Survey the Big Picture:

We will focus on *Jeremiah 29:11-13*, a letter sent by the prophet Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon. This passage is part of a larger message of hope and future restoration despite the present circumstances of displacement and despair. Jeremiah's letter reminded the Israelites that God had not forgotten them and had plans for their welfare, peace, and a future filled with hope. It teaches us about God's sovereignty and good plans for those seeking Him, even when the current reality seems bleak.

### Explore the Bible Scripture:

*Jeremiah 29:11-13 (Amplified Version)*

*"For I know the plans and thoughts that I have for you," says the Lord, "plans for peace and well-being and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call on Me and you will come and pray to Me, and I will hear [your voice] and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."*

### What does it mean?

•**Interpretation:** This scripture reassures us that God has a plan for each of us designed for our well-being and not for harm. It emphasizes that our future is in His hands and is filled with hope. It also highlights the importance of seeking God through prayer and with a sincere heart.

•**Significance:** The significance of this passage lies in its ability to inspire hope and trust in God's plans for our future, especially in professions fraught with unpredictability and stress. It reminds us despite the immediate challenges, there is a divine plan that aims for our ultimate good.

### Discover the Big Idea:

How can understanding and embracing the promise that God has plans 'for peace and well-being and not for disaster' transform how you approach your role as a first responder and your view of the future?

## Application Questions:

- **For Personal Reflection:** Reflect on how the assurance of God's plans for your future and well-being can change your perspective on the difficulties you face as a first responder. How does it affect your hope and trust in God?
- **Cultivating a Habit:** What practical ways can you remind yourself of God's promise for your future, especially on challenging days? How can you incorporate seeking God with all your heart into your daily routine?
- **Risks and Obstacles:** What might be risks or obstacles in relying on God's plans for your future, especially in a profession requiring constant readiness and action? How can you overcome these with faith?
- **Benefits of Living Like This:** Discuss the potential benefits of living with a hopeful outlook on the future based on God's promise. How might this faith and hope influence your effectiveness as a first responder, in regard to, your mental, emotional health, and relationships?

**Group Prayer Focus:** How can our group prayers reflect trust in God's plans for our future and well-being? Consider praying specifically for the ability to see beyond immediate challenges and for the faith to trust in God's greater plan.

## **About the Authors**



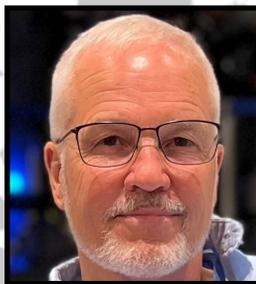
**Toby DePew**

Toby is the co-founder of Heroic Deeds and is a retired Sheriff's Deputy from San Luis Obispo, CA. He holds a degree in pastoral ministry and has served as a pastor for more than 15 years. As a sheriff's deputy, Toby created a county-wide Chaplain program and specialized in Peer Support training and Crisis Intervention training.



**Denise Molatch Naber**

Denise is a biblical counselor for First Responders, a former police officer, and a widow of a veteran police officer. She holds a degree in Criminal Justice and Counseling, and she and her husband Jeff, host First Responder marriage retreats at their farm in No. Carolina. Denise passionately believes in marriage as the greatest emotional topic at the Responders in Faith Conference: Building a Refuge in the Home; a Place to Recharge.



**Jeff Naber**

Jeff began his LE career in the US Air Force, Security Forces. He continued in LE as a police officer, deputy sheriff and U.S. Probation Officer. His federal service included work as an instructor at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. He retired from LE in 2012 and served as the Manager of Law Enforcement Ministry for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc. from 2013-2019. Jeff has taught crisis intervention and spiritual fitness courses throughout the U.S., as well as, in Europe, South America, and Asia. Jeff and his wife, Denise, are facilitators for Wilderness Scout Ministries, a ministry that offers marriage counseling and marriage retreats to LE couples. They live on a small farm in rural NC and support their 5 children and 11 grandkids.

## **About the Authors, cont.**



**Randy Ponder**

Pastor Randy Ponder has been serving in ministry for over 30 yrs. First, as a Youth/Missions pastor, and 22 years as a senior pastor in Temecula and Morro Bay, CA. Currently he is serving as an Assistant Pastor at Regeneration Calvary Chapel in Sandpoint, ID. He has been a Chaplain for 16 yrs. serving the Morro Bay Police Dept, San Luis Obispo Co. Sheriff's Office, and most recently, the Bonner Co. Sheriff's Office in Sandpoint, ID. Pastor Randy has a heart for service and understands the toll that it takes on those in the First Responder profession. His passion is to share Jesus, not only to the lost but also to the found, as the only source that will provide true contentment.



**Tom Thompson**

Tom serves as the Chief of Police/Director of Public Safety at Sinclair Community College. Previously he served as the Network Executive Director of Police for the Kettering Health Network, Assistant City Manager in Miamisburg, Ohio and retired as the Assistant Chief of Police of the Miamisburg Police Department. Chief Thompson founded Valens Solutions, a non-profit organization which focuses on connecting immigrants to quality-of-life resources and provides scholarships for persons entering Law Enforcement and Health Care professions. He is a speaker and consultant with Law Enforcement Action Partnerships, a workplace violence consultant with KLA Risk Management, is on the Welcome Dayton Committee, the Advisory Board of the Dayton Equity Center, the Board of Heroic Deeds, the Macedonia Community Development Corporation Board and is a Silver lifetime member of the NAACP. He is a veteran of the United States Air Force and has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Chapman University and a Master's in Public Administration from Wright State University. He has been married to his wife Tiffany for almost 33 years. They have three children and eight grandchildren.

## Introduction

### **After Campaign Action Plan: 40 Days to Freedom**

As you dive into the weekly devotions, we challenge you to stand firm in the freedom Galatians 5:1 speaks of. It's not just about reflecting on God's direction; it's about recognizing your liberation from past constraints, being vigilant in the present, and seizing the potential of your future. This campaign is your battleground for personal growth and leadership within your community or group.

Your plan might range from leading a community service project to setting a new standard for personal health, tackling personal demons head-on, innovating support networks in your agency, or even rallying fellow warriors for meaningful gatherings.

Embrace any mission that calls to you, for its impact will reach far beyond yourself. As you strategize your next moves, be deliberate. Define clear, attainable objectives that resonate with God's intentions and forge a path to victory. Break down your operation into actionable steps, and commit to relentless forward movement. Adopt a mindset of discipline, resilience, and continuous adaptation.

Be prepared for the battlefield to change. Keep your strategy flexible, your support network strong, and your gratitude loud. When the campaign ends, debrief us on your action plan, whether through a direct message, a shout-out on social media, or tagging us in your victories. As a leader, your execution and accountability will inspire those around you. Share your plan, and let's join forces to propel forward momentum.

With the wisdom, grace, and strength God grants, you can make a profound impact now and in the future. Trust in His navigation, engage with faith and discipline, and remember that victory is within your grasp.

## **Steps to Forge an Effective After-Campaign Action Plan: Embrace Freedom: Answering the Call to Be Unbound.**

As you navigate this campaign, remember that authentic leadership means embracing the freedom to act in response to God's call. Here are the steps to forge an impactful after-action plan:

1. **Prayerfully Consider God's Guidance:** Allocate time for deep reflection. Listen to the inner voice guided by God, and identify how you can make a significant impact. Seek His wisdom, grace, and strength to recognize your path forward.
2. **Set Clear, Achievable Objectives:** Establish clear, attainable objectives for yourself or your small group based on divine guidance. These targets should challenge and stretch your capabilities while remaining achievable. Document them; make them your plan.
3. **Develop a Plan:** Dissect your objectives into smaller, actionable operations. Draft a plan detailing the maneuvers needed to secure each objective. Approach this with discipline and precision, ensuring each step is actionable and deliberate.
4. **Be Proactive, Resilient, and Welcome Feedback:** Execute your plan with unwavering commitment. Overcome obstacles with the tenacity of a warrior and bounce back from setbacks with the resilience of a leader. Stay receptive to divine guidance and feedback from your trusted advisors and allies.
5. **Maintain Flexibility:** The plan and your strategy may evolve. Stay agile and willing to adjust your plan in alignment with God's shifting guidance, ensuring you remain on the path to victory.
6. **Build a Strong Alliance:** Surround yourself with a formidable support network. Share your strategic plan with them, and enlist their support. Celebrate your advances together and express gratitude for the growth and opportunities that arise from living out God's command.
7. **Debrief and Collaborate:** Post-campaign, report to us with your action plan. Whether through direct communication, a declaration on social media, or a signal flare of your success, we're here to celebrate and strategize for future victories. Your initiative sets the stage for triumph. Together, we'll advance with unstoppable momentum.

You are unstoppable with God as your commander and His wisdom as your guide. Trust in His plan, move with faith and discipline and remember that you are prepared for victory.

# FREEDOM

*Our mission is to actively pursue and maintain true freedom as described in Galatians 5:1. We strive to empower individuals to achieve "freedom from," "freedom to," and "freedom to be," through hard work, discipline, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.*

## Heroic Deeds