

Sermon Series FREE: Week One
“FREEDOM - Free as an Eagle”
Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
February 21st, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 *“Go and make disciples of all nations...”*

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Here we go.....another sermon series starts today! This sermon series is different in the respects that we are joining with close to 90 churches in the Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky area to all teach on the same theme of being FREE! Every church will teach their own thing, but we'll all be on the same theme throughout the next six weeks.

You are encouraged to follow along with your personal journal as well as to meet with a small “FREE GROUP”; a small group of other believers who will meet together once a week for six weeks. You will be given a study guide to follow and should be a lot of fun.

This first week of the Free Journey is called: “FREEDOM – Free as an Eagle”

This first week of the journey I will be challenging you to engage into this aspect of being free. My goal is to paint a vivid picture of what freedom as Jesus describes it can look like. I also want to challenge the notion that people are really as free as they think they are.

2 Corinthians 3:17

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.”

John 10:10

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” JESUS

Galatians 5:1

“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.”

Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” JESUS

Ps 119:45

"I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your truth."

HINDSIGHT – "Find Our Way"

Finding your way back home. When you have freedom, you can find your way back home.

This morning I want to tell you that you can know what True Freedom is in your life. True Freedom. What is that anyway?

Is true freedom being able to eat Ice Cream anytime you want? Is True Freedom the absence of all rules? I think that's called Chaos. Is True Freedom defined by our rights and our pursuit of happiness? Is True Freedom related to our finances, free from Creditors?

There's so many ways we can define Freedom this morning, and many of them do point to a certain kind of freedom. But this morning I want you to know a Freedom that you can possess that Sets you free regardless of your circumstances in life, it supercedes what the Government is doing or not doing, it goes over the head of dictators and kings.

True Freedom sets you free from a 9th circuit Court in California that has decided that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional, Why? Because of the phrase, One Nation Under God. These secular humanist judges would have us take God out of every area of life, what they don't care to understand is that our founding Fathers did understand that if God wasn't with us as a nation, we wouldn't last for long, and so references to God are all through their writings and in our history as a nation.

This morning I have two points I want you to consider.

1. True Freedom is only gained through Jesus Christ!

This morning we need to look at the passage that we find our scripture in and try to understand what Paul is teaching to this church in Corinth. What he has to say is very important, it's important for you and I to understand how God has went out of his way to Give you True Freedom.

How many of you know this morning that God wants you to be Free? Let's examine the evidence.

READ v.7-11

Paul is talking to his readers about the difference between the Law of God which we know was given to Moses to give to the Israelites. This law came with Glory, remember watching the 10 commandments on TV, and when Moses came off the mountain with the two tablets with the Law written on it, his face was radiant, why, because he had been in the presence of God. But we are told that Moses put a veil over his face to hide the radiance from the people.

Here's what I want you to know about the Law. When God gave the Law to Moses and he read it to the Israelites, that Law brought death and condemnation upon everyone who heard it. Why?

It was kind of like they were sitting there listening to what Moses was saying, "Thou shall not steal.", Thou shall not covet, Thou shall not commit adultery, Thou shall not lie and give false testimony, and as he continued to read these off, each person there realized that they were guilty, they were condemned by this law, and now they were going to need a way to get on the right side of the Law.

How many of you have ever lied? Anyone here ever stolen anything? Coveted your neighbor's possessions, their money? Worshiped a false God? Anytime you are not putting God 1st in your life, you are putting something else in His place, and that becomes false worship before God.

So we all sit here and realize we are all sinners, right? So did the Israelites, this law brought condemnation - they knew they were sinners- but of course God provided a way for their sins to be forgiven - A sacrificial Lamb - A sin offering -

A blood offering would be offered for each family every year, to represent the covering of their sins.

Remember Paul is talking to people who were still living under this Old Covenant, and now what he is saying is that God has provided a New Covenant. The New Covenant is what God has promised you and me today - This covenant is an everlasting Agreement between God and man -- It's an agreement that was initiated by God, He has offered it to us, our part is to accept what He has offered us.

What is this new Covenant that God has offered us? Thanks for asking. The New Covenant is the Gift of Jesus Christ, God sent his own Son to be our blood sacrifice, to cover our multitude of sins, God has offered His Son Jesus Christ for our Salvation, It's an offer of Grace, forgiveness, and Righteousness!

Our Question today is How can I be truly Free? The answer is that True Freedom comes only when you can wake up every morning and know that in God's eyes you are Pure, or Righteous in his sight. My friend when you can get up in the Morning and know without any doubt that your relationship with God is right where it needs to be, that you're walking in obedience to Him, let me tell you that is Freedom.

It's through Christ living in us that we can know True Freedom. You see, with the Spirit of the Living God living with us, helping us, encouraging us, directing our paths and decisions, we can live a Righteous life, we can know that we are pure in God's sight. My friends that's Freedom. God's Spirit living in us doesn't remove our humanness, but God's Spirit living in us empowers us to live for Him in this world, even with all the things that are around us, trying to pull us away from God. 1 Jn 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (NIV)

It's only through a personal relationship with Christ ~ A relationship where you have called out to God and asked forgiveness for your sins ~ you've invited Jesus to be Lord of your life, and by faith you believe that He has done what He promises to do. This morning, when you woke up, did you know in your heart of hearts that everything is clear between you and God?

Friends, True Freedom is knowing that every day! Nothing in life gives you True Freedom except Jesus Christ living in you. Your money won't save you, your job, your hobbies, your friends, your parties, your loved ones, your husband or wife, no matter how wonderful they may be, nothing brings freedom except a clear conscience before God.

Let the Freedom of Christ Reign in your heart today! Call upon the Lord and He will answer you, He will set you free.

I only have one more point this morning. BUT WE GOT TO GET IT!

2. True Freedom will bring about transformation in your life (Christlikeness.)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Our passage is pretty clear this morning, When the Spirit of the Living God Reign in your life, Your Life will be continually changed! How? You will continually become more and more like Christ. In your attitudes, In your Passion, In your priorities, In your speech, In your thoughts, In your love for People, In your burden for the Lost - In every area that's important to God, it will become important to you.

Being like Christ is God's will for you life. Nothing else. Ultimately God's will for us is to Love each other, and Love others as Christ does. I didn't say as Christ did! (past tense) Because Christ lives today, amen! Christ lives in you, and it's you that must be his witness, it's you that must show others His love, His compassion, His Holiness. What will this transformation mean for me today?

Friends, our attitudes, motivations won't be self-centered, they will be Christ-centered.

The Transforming Power of God will touch every area of your life. It will transform your Family life. As a family your priorities will change. Men, with Christ at the center of your life and calling the shots, you will lead your families, you will provide for your family, as the Spiritual leader, you will provide for you family financially, you will be their emotionally, in other words you will be willing to pour yourself out for your Families sake, your wife, your children are your number one responsibility - If you neglect them in any way, you are missing it.

Ladies, God's transforming power will enable you to be the woman that God created you to be. Women of grace, strength, God will help you in every way if you will follow his lead.

God's transforming power can heal brokenness, in a marriage, in relationships. God's transforming Power can give grace and wholeness to our single parents. God wants to lift you up, embrace the power that God has for you to deal with your circumstances, God's grace is sufficient. Do you believe this?

Friends, when you have been filled with His Spirit, when you have given God total access to your life, He Sanctifies you through and through, He sets you apart to be used for His Glory. And His transforming power is unleashed through you. Is this your experience today? It can be, it's God greatest gift. You have to choose to accept His gift to you.

ARE YOU FREE TODAY? FREEDOM ALWAYS HAS A PRICE. WITH GOD, YOU JUST NEED TO GIVE HIM "YOU" BY FAITH, TRUST IN HIM, YOU WILL NOT BE SORRY YOU DID. And when you do, then.... You watch, you wait... you'll see!

Illus: Bird Cage Illustration

God who made the birds never made birdcages; it is men who make birdcages, and after a while we become cramped and can do nothing but chirp and stand on one leg. When we get out into God's great free life, we discover that that is the way God meant us to live "the glorious liberty of the children of God." - Oswald Chamber

Imagine being given a check for a million dollars and never cashing it. Imagine having a freezer and cupboard full of food and never eating. Imagine dangling precariously on a rope when there is a ladder within your grasp.

Imagine living a life of defeat and despair when there is no reason to do so. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty/freedom."

If you read 2 Corinthians 3 you will discover that God does not want us under the bondage of law keeping or self-effort. Instead He wants us to have the freedom of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Because the Holy Spirit is present within us, all we need to do is reach for it by faith. We live such self-defeating lives that God never intended us to live.

Do you feel free? Or do you sometimes feel trapped? No way out, all the exits boarded up? Ever feel that all your obligations and responsibilities have tied you down, that all you're doing is marching to someone else's music, responding to someone else's demands, all the time doing what you have to do instead of what you want to do?

It's easy to feel that way. You graduate from high school or college with very few responsibilities. Then a job (and after a while you're a manager with responsibility for other people), marriage, children (paying for college), a mortgage, a lease on a Dodge Caravan, a dog. Maybe you have elderly parents to care for too, or an ex-wife to pay alimony to, or college loans to repay. And after a while, and the walls start to close in. Every year that passes, your options, your freedom to make changes in your life, get fewer and fewer. You pass 30, and then what seems like only a few weeks later, 40 and you wonder where the time went. It's difficult enough to handle when you have a good marriage and a job you enjoy, and the kids are doing well. Even then, the pressure of all those responsibilities can be almost overwhelming. But what if the job isn't so great? What if the marriage is rocky? What if the kids are going through a rebellious phase - say from 9 to 19? What about when illness or old age starts to place additional limits on your freedom? Then your life can feel like a kind of prison, and you've got a life sentence without possibility of parole.

Then... you turn 50, like Cathi and I did this year... (but we are oh so young still!)

What do you do? Some people's answer is to run, to try to escape. They feel they have no alternative but to cut and run. Quit the job; divorce the husband; abandon the kids; default on the loans. They may even choose suicide as an escape. If they don't do it physically, they escape emotionally - they're home, but completely disengaged from the family. They're at work, but just doing the bare minimum to get by. They're still going through the motions, but in reality they've checked out. Or they may try drugs or alcohol, or some other mind-numbing pastime, as an escape.

What is freedom? The world would answer that it's the ability and opportunity to do whatever you want, however you want, whenever you want, with whomever you want, with no consequences. Freedom means indulging every appetite, fulfilling every desire, yielding to every temptation. According to the world, freedom means not doing anything you don't want to do, and not answering to anyone else. In short, the world sees freedom as me putting myself and my desires first, and woe to anyone who gets in my way. [If I only had ____, then I would be free.]

But as anyone who has tried it knows, that's not freedom, it's slavery. Slavery to sin, slavery to self, slavery to desires

which can never be satisfied. There's no joy in it, no peace, just a constant chasing after the next thrill, the next pleasure.

"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income." - Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)

"All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied." - Ecclesiastes 6:7 (NIV)

"I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well-the delights of the heart of man. . . . I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." - Ecclesiastes 2:8-11 (NIV)

Real freedom is the power to live in obedience to God. Real freedom is the power to serve God rather than self. And here's the key. Those who have the Spirit of God, those who have received Christ as savior, can serve God in any and every circumstance. We are always free, because we are always able to serve and obey God.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. - 2 Corinthians 3:17 (NIV)

[Not "where plenty of money is, there is freedom . . . "]

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. - Romans 6:22 (NIV)

Freedom doesn't come from following our own desires. Freedom doesn't require that we have no limits or restrictions on our actions. Freedom is the ability to reject sin and to follow Christ. It's the ability to serve and obey God in any circumstances, pleasant or unpleasant, desirable or undesirable, easy or difficult. If you are a Christian, you are truly free. You are free to love God, to serve God, to obey God, to follow God. That's what true freedom is. That's the freedom that brings joy and peace, regardless of our circumstances.

Illus: Quail/Farmer/Circle Walking

A BAZAAR WAS HELD in a village in northern India. Everyone brought his wares to trade and sell. One old farmer brought in a whole covey of quail. He had tied a string around one leg of each bird. The other ends of all the strings were tied to a ring which fit loosely over a central stick. He had taught the quail to walk dolefully in a circle, around and around, like mules at a sugarcane mill. Nobody seemed interested in buying the birds until a devout Brahman came along. He believed in the Hindu idea of respect for all life, so his heart of compassion went out to those poor little creatures walking in their monotonous circles.

I want to buy them all, he told the merchant, who was elated. After receiving the money, he was surprised to hear the buyer say, Now, I want you to set them all free.

What's that, sir

You heard me. Cut the strings from their legs and turn them loose. Set them all free!
With a shrug, the old farmer bent down and snipped the strings off the quail. They were freed, at last. What happened? The birds simply continued marching around and around in a circle. Finally, the man had to shoo them off. But even when they landed some distance away, they resumed their predictable march. Free, unfettered released, yet they kept going in circles as if still tied.

Salvation cuts the strings of sin. It's time to stop marching and start flying.

God's desire is that you can experience True Freedom like that of AN EAGLE.....

Isaiah 40:31

But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Deut 32:11-12

As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.

In the scriptures, God has likened His people to many things. For example, they are described as being like branches on a vine, trees by a river, a light on a hill, sheep, salt, a racer in a race, a wrestler, a soldier and as our text in Isaiah implies - an eagle.

In this teaching we are going to focus our attention on some facts that I've gathered about the eagles way of life, and from them , discover some spiritual truths that will aid us in becoming "God's Eagle Christians."

Illus: Video – Eagles or Chickens, “which would you rather be?”

I'm really glad that it's the eagle and not one of the other birds that God chose to identify us with. He could have likened us to a variety of other birds if He had so desired, and rightly so, because we display many of their characteristics. Take the chicken for example. Having spent some time on a farm, I know something about chickens. Let me give you some chicken facts to show you why I'm glad God said we are to become like eagles and not chickens.

With this in mind, I want to share some eagle facts you may not be aware of. As we examine the eagles way of life, let us think of ourselves as being the eaglets of Jehovah Father Eagle, and that He desires to accomplish in our lives what the eagle parents are trying to accomplish in their offspring's lives.

It's hard to soar like an eagle when you hang around the chickens all of the time. We have FREEDOM in Christ Jesus – like the eagles! We're not caged up birds, but free birds to enjoy life!

Look at the life of FREE EAGLE...and then compare it to our life as we live in FREEDOM for Jesus Christ, making an IMPACT for His Kingdom!

What can an eagle that has been set free do?

FREE, UNCAGED EAGLES...

What can an eagle that has been set free do?

FREE, UNCAGED EAGLES...

1. Soar Above Their Predators (enemies)

When we are set free, we too are able to stay above our enemies. And, we all know that we only have one enemy, and it's not man, it's the devil.

2. Are Able to Locate Their Food Easier

Eagles Never Eat Dead Meat - You will never see an eagle eating meat that it did not kill. An eagle is not a scavenger. It hunts for and kills its own food. It hunts for the prey while it's warm and alive. You as a believer must go where the action is. You must go where God calls you to go, hunt down the enemy, destroy and conquer, then move forward making an IMPACT.

The eagle is able to locate food easier, which it then can take that food back to its young ones. When we are set free, we are able to feed on God's Word more abundantly and will be able to spend more time in worship to the Father. When the praise goes up, the power comes down! Then, after being fed, we can help to feed others as well.

3. Can See for Miles Ahead

When we are set free, it is much easier to see the vision set before that God has in store for our lives. We can see deeper into the future, which can give us hope. Vision - Just like the eagle, all Christians must have vision. The eagle's eyes can see great distances. They can also look directly into the sun without being blinded. You, being a Christian and person of IMPACT, must have vision. You must have a vision that guides and leads those around you towards God's Word. The vision must be big and focused. A big, focused vision will produce big results.

4. Explore the World Around Them

Compared to a caged eagle or a free chicken..... Chickens just walk with their heads pointed to the ground. Chickens are crowd followers. If a chicken sees a bunch of chickens running across the chicken yard, he will take off after them. It doesn't matter that he doesn't know where they are going or why they are going there. He follows along because he doesn't want to miss out on anything the majority is doing.

Chickens just naturally "squabble and fight" over things in the chicken yard. If

one finds a nice juicy bug to eat, suddenly they all want it. They will chase each other all over the chicken yard, trying to take it away from each other. They are funny that way. They can walk all around a bug or a grasshopper and not pay any attention to it, but the moment one decides he wants it, at that moment, they all decide they want it and the chase is on.

They have no interest in the heavenlies. They are content to live in the chicken yard, walking around with their eyes on the ground, scratching in the dirt looking for something to eat. Most of them will never try to fly. They are earthbound birds.

I think you can see now why I'm convinced that living the chicken life can never compare to living the eagle life. Chicken living is so limited - so confining - so predictable and so boring. However, living the eagle life - that's another story. When we hear the word eagle, our minds envision an eagle soaring in the atmosphere, effortlessly riding the wind currents high above the earth; majestic in appearance. He is King of the Sky, master of his domain. With keenness of eye, he spies his prey and swooping down to earth with tremendous speed, and sharp strong talons set, it snatches up its meal and soars back to its nest to feast.

There is something special about the eagle and for centuries it has been recognized by nations, kingdoms and empires as the King of the birds. Its image has been reproduced on their coins, seals, emblems and flags. And God in His Word tells us that of all the birds of the air, it is the eagle that His people are to be identified with. He is calling us to be "spiritual eagles."

5. Spread Their Wings and Exercise

When all caged up, it can't spread its wings like it desire to for exercise its muscles. When we are set free, we to are able to spread our wings – exercise our faith muscles.

Eagles look for & fly into storms - As storms approach, lesser birds head for cover, but the might eagle spreads its wings and with a great cry mounts upon the powerful updrafts, soaring to heights of glory. Eagles use the storm to lift him to these great heights. Believers in Christ use storms (challenges); we don't run from them. To Christians that are free, storms are tools and opportunities to be used for their development.

6. Choose Their Own Location and Materials to Build Their Home

Those in a cage, the owners decide where they will live and what their nest will be made out of. Those who are outside of the cage, make their own decisions as to where and what they'll have as their home. It's the same for us as believers in Christ. With freedom, we can choose how we want to build our lives, the ingredients that will make our lives what they are; and, we will decide where we want our homes to be!

7. Understand Commitment

Very Gentle & Attentive To Their Young - The eagle is known for its ferocity, yet no member of the bird family is more gently and attentive to its young. At just the right time, the mother eagle begins to teach her eaglets how to fly. She gathers an eaglet onto her back, and spreading her wings, flies high. Suddenly she swoops out from under the eaglet and as it falls, it gradually learns what its wings are for until the mother catches it once again on her wings. The process is repeated. If the young is slow to learn or cowardly, she returns him to the nest, and begins to tear it apart, until there is nothing left for the eaglet to cling to. Then she nudges him off the cliff.

The male Eagle takes interest in the female Eagle around the age of three years old. When this occurs, we know that spring fever has arrived! A game of tag between the male and female Eagle begins. This could last for days. The female Eagle takes a stick up in the air, approximately 8 to 10 thousand feet in a three dimensional figure eight pattern, and she then requires the male Eagle to catch the stick before it touches the ground.

The male Eagle has to then return the stick back to the female Eagle. Then the female Eagle, each time, flies a little lower and faster with a larger stick. The game climaxes when the female Eagle is less than five hundred feet from the ground and she releases the stick. At this point, the male Eagle has to catch the stick before it touches the ground or the female Eagle will chase the male Eagle off. If the male Eagle catches the stick, he satisfies the female Eagle in knowing that when they have baby Eaglets he will be able to catch the Eaglets when teaching them how to fly thus assuring her that he will make a fit husband.

The marriage vows of the Eagles are made while being suspended 10 to 15 thousand feet in the air. This ceremony is done by locking talons together and turning head over heels with both Eagles screaming in joy. Eagles are totally committed to their mates. They will remain together for life, "In Richer or Poorer, In Sickness and in Health to Death do They Part!" What a difference this would make if the Church, the Bride Of Christ, could make such a commitment as this to God and their families!

Conclusion:

Remember our key verse during this FREE journey together....

2 Corinthians 3:17

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.”

As you do....

You watch, you wait, you'll see!