

Day 1

June 24



Pray | Ask God to help you not waste your freedoms.

SELFISH IN AMERICA

As Americans we are BIG on freedom, at least to the point where it applies to us personally. However, the very same people have no problems restricting other's freedoms, though, should they be immigrant, a certain religious group, political bent, or ethnic group. If you want to prove this simply say you believe something is wrong in any sort of public forum. Choose from this ready-made list or choose your own: abortion, marital infidelity, homosexuality, the list of possibilities is infinite. If you really want to make the illustration work be sure to say you also think it is a sin. The swift sure hypocrisy of treading on someone else's freedom will come at your own freedom's expense.



Read | 2 Timothy 4: 1-5



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Sometimes it is easy to think the words in the Bible are old and not applicable to our modern day lives. Paul's words to Timothy could easily have been written today and be just as true now as then. How does their timeliness influence you as you share God with others?

Compare the competing worldview of self-preservation against the Biblical concept of self-sacrifice as illustrated by Christ and the Apostle Paul's lives. What are the consequences of lives lived by each view personally and societally?

In what ways is the modern day call for open mindedness (ie. tolerance) actually a reflection of just the opposite (closed mindedness)?

Day 2

June 25



Pray | That when God judges your life you are not a disappointment.

NOT A DISAPPOINTMENT

Yesterday we thought about freedom in the sense of not wasting our freedoms. As we look more at Paul's life and all he accomplished while not being "free" in that sense, we will learn how our circumstances do not change God's calling on our lives. While we may disappoint those around us, we are to be living so we are not a disappointment to God. Paul is a prime example of knowing about God by knowing the Bible as well as tapping into the Holy Spirit to use that knowledge to witness boldly for Christ.



Read | [Hebrews 4:12-13; Ephesians 6:10-20](#)



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

The biblical description of the word of the Lord (the Bible) as a sword should strike fear in you. God has entrusted Paul-has entrusted you-with a very powerful weapon to share the Gospel message. Are you training to use the sword by spending time studying what it says and means?

God has chosen each of us to fulfill certain tasks for him while we are alive on this earth. We are not promised it will be easy nor that it ends well in the here and now. God only promises that he is with us. Next time you are facing up to one of your big fears will you remember to choose to live selflessly and ask for prayer support to help you stay on the path?

In Paul's closing he asks for prayer support to live fearlessly and selflessly. This does not mean he never thinks of self-preservation or his freedom. What can you take away from how Paul is choosing to live and apply it to how you should live?

Day 3

June 26



Pray | That your identity is a reflection of Christ-not you.

COUNTING THE COST

Just because your faith in Christ has not cost you your job, your reputation, your friends, your freedom, or your life does not mean that those things may not be required of you in the future. Paul's appeal to Caesar as a Roman citizen has put him on a direct collision course with Jewish leaders and Rome's appointed leaders alike. He is now committed to whatever end the path God has him on leads to. Yet, every chance he gets he chooses to share Christ over trying to improve his own current condition. God's path is one of self-sacrifice rather than self-preservation. If Jesus was willing to die for Paul, who saw himself as chief among sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), and for you, then there is nothing less than giving 100% in return that God deserves.



Read | Acts 24: 1-27



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

For two years Felix tolerated Paul's witness hoping a bribe would be forthcoming while Paul endured Felix's stalling hoping that he may yet be won over to a faith in Christ. Are you willing to invest two years in those whom you are witnessing to, and if not, why not?

Paul remained a prisoner, yet Felix granted him special opportunity to further witness by allowing him visitors. Those visitors brought Paul news, encouragement, and delivered many of the letters that make up the New Testament. When your plans get derailed how are you using that time to share about Jesus with others?

As a final reflection, look at verse 27. When Felix moved on he left Paul imprisoned as a favor to the Jews. Put yourself in Paul's sandals. How would you have felt, after investing two years in trying to influence the man to find faith, only to become a political favor? Tomorrow we will see what Paul does.

Day 4
June 27



Pray | *That your faith does not waver based on results of your efforts.*

LIFE IS MANY TIMES CIRCULAR, RATHER THAN LINEAR.

Round One was Paul, some Jewish rulers, and the Governor Felix. The accused, the accusers, and the higher authority who held power. Felix put Paul in prison. However, Felix inquired and listened to Paul sharing faith in Jesus even while hoping for a bribe. After two years life has come full circle for Paul and the Jewish leaders who want to accuse (or more correctly have him killed) for his beliefs. Round Two begins with Paul, the same Jewish rulers, and the new governor, Festus. Yet this time the person in power is wanting to appease as many people not named Paul as possible. Moreover, when given the chance to make this case someone else's problem, Festus chooses to do so for his own self-preservation and as expediently as possible.



Read | Acts 25: 1-12



Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Once again Paul finds he is defending himself against trumped up charges. Rewind and repeat... Paul once again states his innocence, his beliefs, and appeals to the ruler to see for himself. In what ways do you suppose Paul's actions encourage today's business owners and believers who have claimed and defended their religious beliefs as a basis for their actions all the way to the supreme court?

Shifting responsibility is a great way to avoid having to look in the mirror yourself and deal with the hard issues in your life that such reflection reveals. When you share Christ with others you are presenting them with truths that mean they need to realize they are less than perfect before they can realize they need a savior. How can knowing this help you deal with rejection as you witness for Christ?

Paul is at peace with the fact that his actions will eventually lead to his death and he accepts and embraces that. By appealing to Caesar, Paul escapes the Jewish threat but will find himself on trial before those with much less understanding of the Jewish theological disagreement he is in the middle of currently. How are the choices Paul makes difficult ones, and what things can you do to ensure you make the same choices in your own life?

Day 5

June 28



Pray | Regardless of the outcome you will choose to do right by God.

ALMOST READY TO BELIEVE

Disciples of Jesus worked to fulfill God's commandment of taking the gospel message to the ends of the earth. They interacted with and attempted to lead people to salvation-and so many were almost ready to believe. Your life as a believer in Christ means you likely will find you are always among many people who are almost ready to believe yet don't. Do not be discouraged. Stay the course and see what God will do because our job is to evangelize while God is the one who handles the conversions taking the almost-ready-to-believe and making them into believers!



Read | [Acts 26: 24-32](#)



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

We already know that Festus is pretty much done listening to Paul except for trying to get King Agrippa's help about what charges to send to Caesar. Paul then speaks directly to Agrippa concerning the king's beliefs. When you are sharing Christ among groups of people, are you seeking the Holy Spirit's help adjusting your message to those who seem most ready to believe at that time?

King Herod is a staple of the Biblical narrative throughout the life of Jesus as Herod saw himself as the only "King of the Jews". There are actually several King Herods of which Agrippa is one. Paul's question about the prophets was a trap – asking essentially are you a good Jew? In the way Paul said things he forced a response. How can you be bold before those you share Christ with?

Our witness for Christ is most effective when we are at our weakest point. Only when we allow God to empower our evangelism because we get out of the way, see the opportunities, and then let the Holy Spirit tell us what to say, will our words be effective. Being in prison may have shortened Paul's earthly life and his in-person missionary journeys, yet here we are generations later still learning from the books of the Bible he wrote. Next time you feel sidelined or inadequate be willing and let God!

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