



Introduction to Setting Your Child Free

Whenever I travel by air, I hear the flight attendant dutifully point out the safety features of the aircraft and instruct us in the proper use of the oxygen masks should they lose cabin pressure. They always tell the parents to place their own oxygen mask on first before they attempt to help their children. A panic struck parent gasping for air is in no position to help their child. Even though the air is thin, the child is in no immediate danger. They can wait until the parent has resolved their own issues.

The same follows for helping our children. They need us to be strong and confident in the Lord. We cannot impart what we don't possess. If the parents are not experiencing their freedom in Christ, they will have a difficult, if not impossible, time helping their children experience their freedom in Christ. Let's examine from a parental perspective the most definitive passage in the New Testament for helping others find their freedom in Christ:

And the Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. 2 Tim. 2:24-26

As you can see this is a *kind, gentle, able to teach, patient when wronged* model that requires the presence of God in order to set a captive free. The passage also teaches that freedom comes from knowing the truth, because people are in bondage to the lies they believe. The battle is shown to be in the mind, because when they come to their senses they escape from the snare of the devil. It also establishes the fact that the one who is going to help your child must be the Lord's bondservant.

Christian counselling should be understood as an encounter with God rather than a technique we learn. Jesus is the wonderful counsellor and only He can grant repentance and set a captive free. Every pastor, counsellor, teacher, and parent must be dependent upon the Lord if they are going to be effective in helping others.

Have you been patient when wronged by your child? Have you been kind or harsh? Have you corrected them with gentleness? Do you know the truth well enough to teach them what to do when they are under attack? You may need to start by asking your child to forgive you for the times that you have not disciplined in love, or understood the true nature of their problem.

If a parent has severely disciplined (punished) a child, without knowing what is going on inside, the relationship may be damaged. The same problem is true for any other



authority figure that has tried to shape only their behaviour without knowing about the battle that may be going on for their minds. Can you imagine the frustration of hearing voices or experiencing a presence in your room that frightened you, and not have anyone to talk to who understands? The problem is compounded when they share what they are experiencing with another person who won't believe them. Being told that there is a spiritual battle going on for your mind and that the problem is resolvable brings immediate relief!

If you are looking to find freedom yourself or trying to help another adult or teenager, we recommend that you work through the following courses, books and DVD's:

- *The Freedom in Christ Discipleship Course*
Run in many local churches nationwide the course material can be purchased directly from the Freedom in Christ UK website
- *Helping Others Find Freedom in Christ DVD*
- *Making Fruitful Disciples DVD*
- *Discipleship Counselling*

For teenagers and Children aged 11 – 18

- *Freedom in Christ for Young People*
Run by many church youth groups nationwide the course material can be purchased directly from the Freedom in Christ UK website

In addition to this material there are other excellent resources for more specific issues available directly from Freedom in Christ UK.

Steps for younger children are available to download from the Freedom in Christ Website. If you are trying to help children find their freedom in Christ you should have already gone through the "Steps" yourself. Hopefully you will have resolved your own personal and spiritual conflicts and found your freedom in Christ, and you will be personally familiar with the process. It will also make you an example to follow rather than one who is judging or condemning another person. The joy of knowing your own identity and freedom in Christ will be something your children will recognise and want to have for themselves.



Leading Your Child to Freedom in Christ

The parent, pastor, teacher, or counsellor working with the child must be sure of their own identity and freedom in Christ before trying to help another. Resolution of personal and spiritual conflicts through genuine repentance and faith in God does not equate to spiritual maturity. It is a beginning and not an end, and all the other aspects of maturation are still in process. Be careful to use terms that a child can understand. The prayers and doctrinal statement have been modified from the adult "Steps to Freedom in Christ" for younger children.

In order for children to cooperate they must know that they are not the problem, but they have a problem and resolution requires them to assume their own responsibility. If your attitude is wrong and you say something like: "What's wrong with you anyway?" they will probably get defensive. I asked one young boy if he had thoughts in his head telling him what to do. He said he did, and I asked what the thoughts were. He said, "I'm no good!" The frustrated parents of this adopted child had all but thrown in the towel trying to control his behaviour. The message that he was getting internally and externally was that he is incorrigible, no good, hopeless, and helpless.

The goal is to resolve their personal and spiritual conflicts in Christ and find the peace of God that passes all understanding. For the duration of their life they need to know that they have to be responsible for what they think and do. In order for this process to work, you must have their cooperation to share with you any mental thoughts they are having which are in direct opposition to what you are attempting to do. The power of Satan is in the lie. As soon as the lie is exposed, the perceived power is broken. The control centre is the mind, and if Satan can get them to believe a lie he can control their lives. Thoughts like, "This isn't going to work," or "God doesn't love you," etc., can interfere only if they believe the lies. I usually tell people that it doesn't make any difference if the thoughts they are hearing are coming from a loud speaker on the wall or in their head. It is just a thought or voice and it can't have any power over you unless you believe it. In either case don't pay attention to it.

There are two reasons why most people, including our children, don't share what is going on inside. Firstly, if they even remotely suspect that we won't receive the information appropriately, they won't share it. Patronizing responses like, "You're just having a bad day," or "It will go away," or "You have an over-active imagination," or judgmental statements like, "You need to see a doctor!" will keep a person from revealing what they are thinking. The last response is what many fear the most. They already fear they are going mad, and anything you do to suggest that possibility will drive them away. Many are frightened by the prospects of being put on medication. I have assured many people that nothing they could share about their thoughts would surprise me. The thoughts are usually threatening or vulgar.



Once they know that you understand that those thoughts aren't their thoughts, they are more free to share what is going on inside.

Secondly, they may be threatened by the voices. Usually it is a threat to harm them when they get home or back in their bedroom. The threat can be towards someone else such as their father or baby sister. They believe they have to obey the voices in order to save someone else. Much of the intimidation is threatening them not to share what is really going on inside. Demons are like cockroaches. They only come out in the safety of darkness. They fear being exposed. When you turn on the light they scurry for the shadows. All this intimidation is to keep the child from sharing what must be shared in order to be free in Christ. The problem isn't at home or in their room, it's in their mind. So if they resolve it in your office, it will be resolved at home. And if the problem is resolved in the parent's bedroom it will be resolved in the child's bedroom. One person called hours later and said with a great deal of joy, "They're not here either!" They never were "there."

What is going to set your child free is what they do, not what you do. Since Satan is under no obligation to obey our thoughts, they must pray the prayers out loud, and assume their responsibility to resolve the issues that are standing between them and God. It is fairly common to have interference during the early stages of the Steps to Freedom, but there is enough control gained by exercising our authority so that the person is able to do what they must do to get right with God. Even though they struggle through the steps, a valuable lesson is learned in the process. They learn the nature of the spiritual battle, and how they can win it whenever they are under attack. If you try to "cast out" a demon for them, they will believe it is necessary to call you every time they are under attack. They need to learn how to call upon the Lord. He is the Deliverer.

The parent, pastor, teacher, or counsellor is a facilitator in the reconciliation process. The child under attack must pray the prayers themselves. It is not what we do that sets them free; it is what they choose to renounce, confess, forgive, etc. Watch them closely throughout the steps, especially their eyes. If they start to drift away mentally, ask them what they are hearing. In some cases they may be seeing something. The moment they share it, the lie is exposed, and the power is broken. If they are experiencing a lot of interference, slow down or you may lose control of the process. We sometimes have them get up and walk around the room to help them focus their minds and to ensure them that they do have control if they would only choose to exercise it.

It is common for them to have headaches or feel like they are getting sick. Some will say they are going to throw up. Usually the physical symptoms stop when they share it. If not, pray again that Satan release the child. If they say, "I have to leave here." Remind them that is only a thought, but don't try to restrain them. It has been our experience that they will be back within minutes. You should never use physical force or try holding them down. They will feel violated if you touch them. The



weapons of warfare are not of the flesh (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Prayer is our weapon when we calmly take our place in Christ.

Trust is an essential prerequisite. If a child trusts you they will believe what you say. For them to trust you they have to feel accepted, safe, and secure. The more you calmly explain what is happening and the more reassurance you give them, the more they will believe and trust you. The safer they feel, the better chances they have of finding freedom from the lies they have believed.

Don't get into a shouting match. The authority we have in Christ does not increase with volume. If you find yourself shouting, you are probably responding in the flesh. God does everything decently and in order. You may copy the Steps, and it is better to have a copy for the child to use. It is important that you follow along as the child reads to make sure words are not being misread or left out, which might change the meaning.