



Week 7 - Relentless Freedom Fighters

WE TRAIN PEOPLE TO LOVE GOD & THEIR BODIES.

You were born for a battle.

In all of life, we encounter the reality of good versus evil, and each of us has been born for a battle. Leadership requires wisdom and knowledge in this fight for freedom – first for our own hearts, lives, and families, and then in the battle for the hearts and lives of those we lead. Jesus came that we might be free from sin, death, and all the enemy's power. (See 1 John 3:8 and John 10:10) As God's children and leaders in His church, we partner with the Father to battle for the freedom of those entrusted to our care. If we live without awareness of the battle around us, we will never attain the effectiveness God created and designed us to carry as leaders.

Paul was one of the most effective God-first leaders in the history of Christianity and admonished us to be aware of the battle we are involved in. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, the Apostle Paul provides a foundation for freedom-fighting leadership:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

Our lives here are engaged in a battle we do not see with our eyes – it is an eternal battle that requires leaders to be led by the Spirit, grounded in identity, and fiercely passionate for God's word and people. If we do not understand the role of spiritual warfare in our leadership, we will be ill-equipped and fall prey to the enemy's schemes. Even more tragic, others may not come into the freedom God has designed for them. Salvation is a gift; maturity is expensive.

In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul states, *"that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs."* Oftentimes, there are two extremes in the Christian world – over-focus on the enemy and his role in our world versus under-awareness of our enemy. Wisdom and effective leadership find truth in both **full awareness** – we are not ignorant of our enemy – and **proper focus** – our eyes and worship are only focused on our Father. We neither fear the enemy nor are we impressed by him; we also refuse to be outwitted by his lies. As God's



children, we learn to respond to the Father's leading, not the enemy's tactics to steal, kill, and destroy. We fight FROM the victory of the cross.

What does it look like to be a relentless freedom fighter?

Fierce Commitment to Truth - Get Free ~ Stay Free ~ Set Free

Galatians 5:1 states, *"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."* As leaders, we go first in living with a hunger and passion for getting free and staying free. Freedom comes through everything we have studied thus far: God-first, kingdom living; confident reliance on our identity in Christ; loving and serving others with the Father's heart; learning to risk our own comfort; overall, a life of intimacy with the Lord sets the table for this freedom. Freedom does not come from our efforts but Christ's work on the cross. We receive this freedom and participate with Him in the gift He has given. Freedom continues to be worked out as long as we draw breath.

The greatest battlefield is in each person's mind. In our minds, we delight in God's truth or struggle with lies. As leaders and followers of Christ, we must live daily in pursuit of a mind renewed to think like His. As we renew our minds, we demonstrate to those we lead that truth and God's word are more important than anything else, including our own opinions. Romans 12:2 gives clear directional commands to every believer regarding the mind:

***"Do not conform** to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy or yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

Sun Tzu

The word for "renew" in Greek gives the picture of renovation – pulling down and tearing out old, ugly, and decrepit structures and rebuilding and renewing with fresh new structure and décor. The renewal of our minds presents us with what will be our life's work – we engage with the Holy Spirit to know what thoughts need to be torn out and replaced. As we grow in intimacy with our Lord and root our lives more deeply in His word, we will begin to recognize and tear down the lies quickly and will be able to assist others in getting free themselves. **Get FREE. Stay FREE. Set FREE.**



Strongholds of the enemy reside in our minds (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Where is the Lord calling you to battle for truth and experience more freedom personally? What thoughts are familiar to you but are rooted in a stronghold (lie) of the enemy? As a leader, each of us is responsible to live with an open heart before the Lord –“Lord, show me ME!” He will reveal strongholds and empower us to break free.

A few practical steps to renewing the mind: identify a lie/stronghold that you know the Lord is calling you to tear down. Where does what YOU think differ from what HE says? After identifying this, seek the Lord for what HE says about that sin, lie, or mindset. Ask Him to speak to you about that area. Write down and memorize specific bible verses that apply to that thought pattern and lie; practice thinking, saying, and believing what He says. Daily practice of truth does the renovation work - tearing out the old and building in new neural pathways! Notice the word *PRACTICE*. Renewing the mind takes time and the power of the Spirit. Don't give up. Press into the Word. His Truth truly sets us free.

Living bravely through repentance, confession, and forgiveness

Frequently, freedom comes when repentance is embraced. God calls us to be those who live bravely and honestly through confession, repentance & forgiveness. *Repentance* means acknowledging our sin and turning from it. *Confession* looks like an honest admission before God and others of that sin. Yet another element of freedom is found in 2 Corinthians 4:2. “*We have renounced the things hidden because of shame.*” We repent of our sins and then renounce them. *Renouncing* sin goes beyond simple acknowledgment and boldly proclaims to God, our flesh, and the enemy: “I reject and formally declare my abandonment of this action/attitude.” When struggling with a sin repeatedly, this may be a critical step that gives feet to our repentance. Renounce (out loud) the action or attitude and begin to move forward bravely, receiving the forgiveness of the Father. Sometimes, receiving His forgiveness is the greatest act of faith we will ever do.

Repentance, confession, and forgiveness are to be lived out in our relationships. Vertically, we repent and confess before the Lord. Horizontally, we live out these actions within our families first and then in the relationships beyond our homes. Repentance in a relationship means being quick to recognize when we have hurt or sinned against another person and then asking that person for their forgiveness. Confess the sinful action; humbly ask for forgiveness. This is leadership at its strongest. Recognizing and humbly repenting to those we love and lead is one of the most powerful ways we battle the enemy and maintain free hearts. Here is a [tool](#) Rev created to help walk through the process of forgiveness.



Thick Skin, Soft Hearts

God-first leaders maintain a soft, wise heart towards the feelings and hurt of those around them. God's heart compels us to love and to keep loving when relationships become difficult. Hurtful words and actions will come. As our hearts are grounded in the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14), we can withstand the pain of hurting people lashing out. Our hearts must be softened and sustained by the love of God – this only happens through intimacy with Him. Our skin must be thick – meaning we are unoffendable – so that people's barbs and hurtful actions will not cause our hearts to become hard. Jesus stood and wept over Jerusalem even as He knew He was proceeding to Jerusalem to be killed. His heart was compassionate in the face of their anger and hatred. In every relationship, the enemy is after our love; will we fight to maintain soft yet fiercely loving hearts? In Matthew 24:12, Jesus warns that in the end times, the love of many will grow cold. We must fight for our hearts.

Thick skin and a soft heart mean choosing relationship over the right to be right. Unity of the Spirit replaces personal drive for both acknowledgment and position. No longer does being right drive our actions or hearts; love compels us to go beyond whether we are being treated justly and allows us to love.

As leaders, our hearts are the hinge point of our effectiveness. Continually, a leader must submit their heart – its hurts, struggles, fears, and disappointments to the Father. This is safety. This is where we do not fall into cynicism and lose God's heart for the people He has called us to lead and serve. God first, God only. We cannot lead well in God's Kingdom if our hearts are not grounded in the love of the Father. This comes by intimate time with Him, nothing else. Remember Buddy the Elf? His heart was soft, and his skin was thick. He was utterly unoffendable and freely gave himself to others. This is freedom-fighting, kingdom leadership.

***"Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me, and
lead me in the way everlasting."
Psalm 139:23-24***

There is a battle going on for your love.
How is your heart?

Humility & Self-awareness

Self-awareness is one of the most critical aspects of successful, truly free leadership. Self-awareness by the Holy Spirit enables us to know ourselves and our



roles and to lead more effectively. What does it mean to be self-aware?? And why is it a vital part of leadership?

Self-awareness in the world is defined as having a solid understanding of who you are and how you relate to the world. This awareness means being mentally and emotionally present in situations and understanding how your actions affect people. It also involves becoming aware of what you enjoy and dislike.

Child of God, *self-awareness means knowing WHO you are, how God wired you, your bandwidth, and being aware of your strengths and weaknesses.* We have laid a foundation in knowing our identities and giftings before the Lord, and now we will go deeper into our fight for freedom.

"If you want to be an effective leader, study and learn about your best leadership tool; yourself. Reflect upon the impact your interactions have on others. Listen to the feedback others offer on your behavior and style. Ask for candid feedback on your leadership. Take every opportunity to conduct assessments of your personality and style through the use of valid instruments. Working to understand and develop yourself will pay huge dividends when you are put into that leadership role."

Unknown

What is your bend? Where do you tend to struggle? Where do you thrive? What drives your heart? What are your blind spots? How do you respond to others? How do others respond to you consistently? The willingness to examine our own hearts and understand what is going on there is pivotal in the fight for freedom.

Paul urges us – *"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed, you fail to meet the test!"* (2 Corinthians 13:5) God calls us to search our hearts, and even more so, petition the Lord to search our hearts. Every person has many different blind spots – places in our own hearts we do not see clearly. This is why self-examination must become a regular part of our walk with Jesus. The word for "test yourselves" in Greek means *to test, examine, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), or prove.*

Leadership invites regular self-examination, regular times of coming before the Lord, asking Him to show us our own hearts. Another essential element of self-awareness is living openly before others we trust and are accountable to (like your swim buddy) and saying – What is going on in my heart? Do you see something I do not? If we do not regularly examine our hearts and allow others to



speaking into our lives, we may not notice when we begin to drift from the truth, from His presence. Self-awareness is a time investment in the hard work of knowing our strengths, weaknesses, and desires. As God's leaders, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to be the most in-touch, self-aware people and to lead others to this lifestyle.

Self-awareness heightens awareness of situations. When a leader clearly understands themselves, they are more equipped to lead effectively. *"If you know who you are and what you are made of, it's easier to serve those you lead with more vision, purpose, and clarity."*¹

There are many examples of leaders who were not diligent in self-awareness, and the cost is their ministry, marriages, and family. Please read this excerpt from the book "The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare" by Dr. Ed Murphy:

"We discover his (the enemy's) main target for deception, leaders. In the case of those who do not love our God, he moves in deception against persons in all levels of leadership. Political, military, economic, religious, educational, media, family and other kinds of leaders become the target of his deception. Why? Because they control the destiny of humanity.

Someone has stated that if a solitary man sins, he alone may be affected. If a family man sins, his entire family is affected. If a community leader sins, the community is affected. If a leader over a given structure of a given society sins, the entire society is affected. If a national leader sins, the entire nation is affected. If a world leader sins, the whole world is affected. Who can forget Adolph Hitler!

If a Christian leader sins, a church, a Christian institution, or a Christian home is damaged or possibly paralyzed. Who can argue with this? We are all to some degree the victims of the sinful acts of Christian leaders exploited by the media to discredit God's church."

The battle is real, and self-awareness is one of our most effective tools against pride and the lies of the enemy.

¹Roy, Rob; *Navy Seal Art of War* 2015



Relentless Freedom Fighters

All these things bring us to this: *persistence and the relentless refusal to quit*. We can't stop. We won't stop. We will be patient and not grow weary in leading and doing all God has called us to do. We will choose depth and breadth over shallow width or quick growth. No gimmicks in this leadership. We are willing to do the work of freedom for our own hearts and those God calls us to serve.

Galatians 6:9 is God's promise to the relentless freedom fighter: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* Our labor and diligence in contending for the faith are NEVER in vain. The Father greatly rewards those who seek him and honor Him.

When our hearts become weary, and our strength grows thin, the Father gives us these promises:

Is. 40:31 "But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint".

2 Cor. 12:9 "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

It is time to go deeper than we have before!

"May the words that come out of my mouth and the musings of my heart meet with Your gracious approval, O Eternal, my Rock, O Eternal, my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14



Training Exercise—Day #1 Self-Awareness as a Leader

Be with Him. Intimacy always comes first. Snuggle up with your Lord. He has good things for you. His delight is over you. Come.

Now, listen to this podcast: Matt Chandler – Healthy Leader

[The Healthy Leader - Matt Chandler on Vimeo](#)

Make some notes – what is the Holy Spirit highlighting?

Time for some ***Spirit-led*** introspection ©

- What truly drives my heart? Ego, comparison, people-pleasing, and fear are just a few examples of what might be driving our hearts, and we might not be aware of them. KEYNOTE: BE HONEST BEFORE THE LORD – and if you don't know, ASK THE LORD. He will show you. Do not rush from here. Listen.
- What is my bend? Am I a morning or night person? How do I refill my soul? (Knowing these things grants you freedom in being you – not comparing yourself to someone else and their walk with the Father.)
- What are my strengths? Are there strengths in me that I'm not aware of, or am afraid of?
- What are my weaknesses? Where are my blind spots?
- How do I respond to people? How do they respond to me? Is there a consistent reaction that might show me an area for growth?

Record what the Lord shows you, and come prepared to share.

Check in with your swim buddy



Training Exercise—Day #2 - Foundations in Freedom Fighting

Prayerfully read through Eph. 6:10-17.

Is the idea of being in a battle spiritually new to you or comfortable?

Write out the passage above. List out every piece of armor that Paul details.

Each piece of armor serves a purpose. Next to the piece of armor, write down its purpose.

Which part of the armor do you need most today?

What battle do you find yourself amid today?

“For every plan God has dreamed for you, Satan has a plot to destroy it.”

Beth Moore

“The enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that you might have life, and life more abundantly.” Jesus - John 10:10

Check in with your swim buddy.



Training Exercise—Day #3 - Self Assessment

Prayerfully read through Galatians 6:9.

Then, prayerfully go through the Leader's Self Assessment. It is a separate document uploaded into the portal. Take your time and allow the Holy Spirit to show you where you fall in each of the questions.

After completing the assessment, ask the Lord where He wants to focus on in your own growth and what your next steps in renewing your mind are.

Connect with your swim buddy. Share your experience, what you learned, and what challenged you.