

TRINITY

EXPERIENCING THE JOY OF RELATIONAL FREEDOM

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH
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SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction:

My guess is that, if we're honest, a lot of us don't really feel as if the promises made to us about the Christian life have come true. Think about it. Paul told the Galatians that "it is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (5:1). Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). "Okay", we say, "but if this is true, why is it that often I don't feel free?" Truth is many of us feel trapped by certain things. So how can we step into the freedom God has for us?

This series is intended to help us better understand what true freedom looks like, how it is lived out in the context of relationships, and how, by applying the truth of God's word to our lives, we can truly be Free!

This guide is designed to help you get the most out of this series by connecting with others around the topic of each week. It is not necessary to do any homework, though spending 30 minutes or so in the scriptures referenced each week prior to your small group will undoubtedly enrich and enliven the experience. Also, listening to the sermon prior to your small group (though not essential) will make the time more meaningful. But if you can't do either of those things, don't let that stop you from engaging with the material in a small group.

Here's how it works: The *Connect* section is intended to help you connect with each other, giving you opportunity to share a little bit about yourself and what is resonating with you in the series. The *Engage* section is intended to point you to portions of scripture that will help you to explore in more depth the topic of the week. The *Apply* section is intended to help you to ask yourself some challenging real-life questions that will most likely prompt you to take some action, and also give you opportunity to invite your small group for help and accountability.

So dig in...and begin to enjoy the freedom that Jesus gave his life for.

WEEK 1: COUNTERFEIT V. REAL

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

–2 Corinthians 4:7

WEEK 1: COUNTERFEIT V. REAL

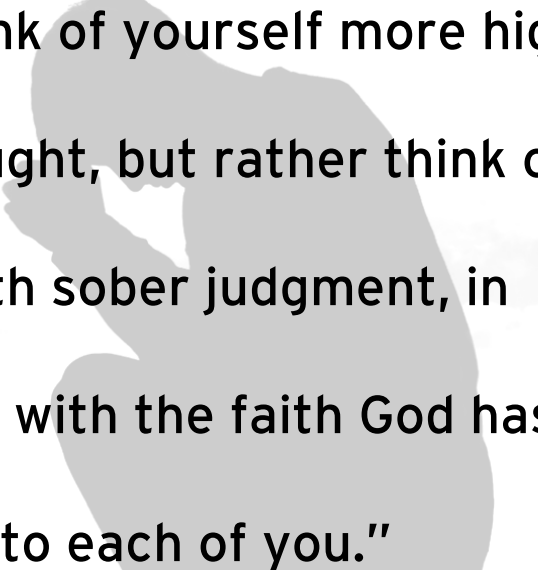
Connect

1. What was the most freeing thing you heard in the sermon on Sunday?
2. Most of us view ourselves from the perspective held by others. From childhood we have learned to think of ourselves in a certain way that—correctly or incorrectly—constitutes our self-image. We put on that mask every time we look in a mirror. It shapes how we think of ourselves. If we deal with life based on a faulty self-image, it robs us of freedom. So to move toward real freedom, introduce yourself to your group using this phrase: “Hi, my name is (insert your name), and the mask I am most prone to wear is the mask of (insert your mask... e.g., the mask of inferiority, or self-confidence, or happy-go-lucky, or woe-is-me, etc...).”

Engage

1. Read Romans 12:3-5
 - What is Paul’s point to the Christ followers in Rome?
 - How can we be sober in our thinking about ourselves?
2. Read Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 7:3-5; 23:13-15, 23, 25, 27
 - The word “hypocrite” comes from the Greek word *hypokrites* which means “actor”. Why does Jesus use the word hypocrite in these verses?
 - In Matthew 7:3-5, what is Jesus challenging us to do (or not do)?
3. Read Psalm 139:23-24
 - What are these verses calling us to do?
 - Why?
4. Read 1 John 1:8-9, James 1:22-24, James 5:16
 - What happens when we confess to God?
 - What is the benefit of getting real with myself?
 - How does taking off my mask and confessing to another person help?

WEEK 2: PRIDE V. HUMILITY



“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”

–Romans 12:3

WEEK 2: PRIDE V. HUMILITY


Connect

1. What did you find freeing from this Sunday's service?
2. Imagine being in a strange city without GPS to attend a job interview. How long would it probably take you to ask for help to find your interview?
3. In your opinion, what are some characteristics of a prideful person? What are some characteristics of a humble person?
4. Which of the two do you generally enjoy being around? Why?

Engage

1. Read Daniel 4:19-37
 - What was Nebuchadnezzar's root problem?
 - What was his message to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - What role did Daniel play?
 - How did Nebuchadnezzar get brought to his senses?
 - What was his attitude afterwards?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 3:18-21; 4:6-7
 - What is the root problem causing division among the Corinthian Christians? (note key phrases in 3:21 and 4:6-7)
 - What was Paul's counsel to them?

WEEK 3: BITTER V. BETTER



“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

—Colossians 3:13

WEEK 3: BITTER V. BETTER

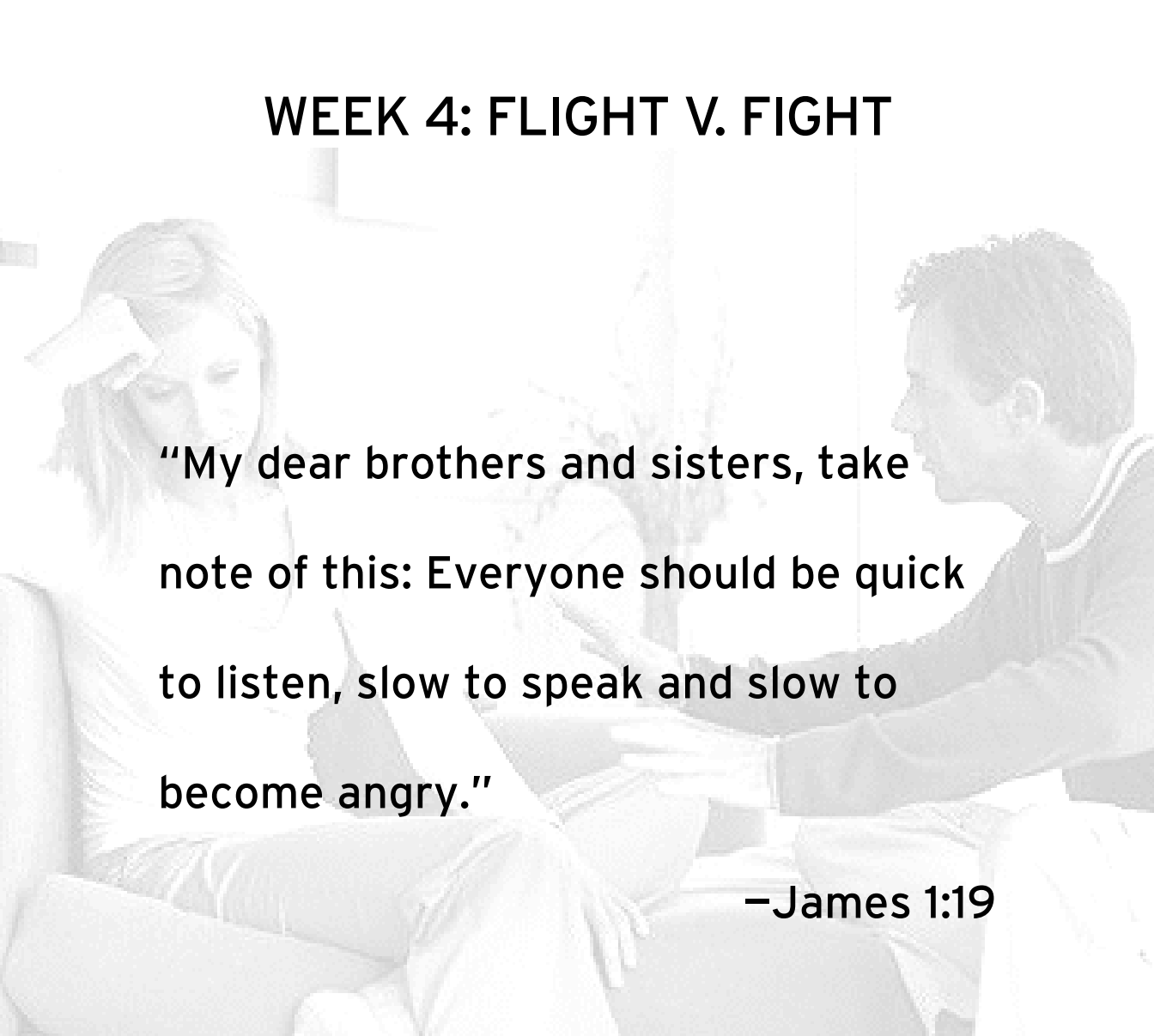
Connect

1. What was the most freeing thing you heard or experienced in this Sunday's service?
2. Have you ever been (or maybe you presently are) in significant financial debt? How did that make you feel? And how did you (or would you) feel when the debt was taken care of?

Engage

1. Read Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:12-13
 - We are called to forgive as God forgave us. Describe that qualifier (how has God forgiven us?).
 - What is so crucial about that? Why must we see that before we proceed to forgive others?
2. Read Isaiah 43:25 and Psalm 130:3-4
 - What's the difference between forgiveness, forgetting and excusing?
 - Of these, which does God call us to do?
3. Read Matthew 18:21-35
 - What do you think Peter's motive was in this passage?
 - How can the realization of how much we have been forgiven by God help fuel our ability and willingness to forgive someone?
 - Have you ever seen someone (perhaps you) who was imprisoned in isolation because he or she refused to forgive? How so? What does bitterness do to that person?
 - How does refusing to forgive help destroy relationships and not glorify God?
 - How is the king's mercy like our Lord's?
 - This servant begged for forgiveness and received it when he neither deserved nor was entitled to it. So, why would he "shake down" a fellow servant who owed him so little in comparison?
 - How is forgiveness like canceling a debt?
 - How do you suppose God feels when we do as this servant did?

WEEK 4: FLIGHT V. FIGHT



“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

—James 1:19

WEEK 4: FLIGHT V. FIGHT

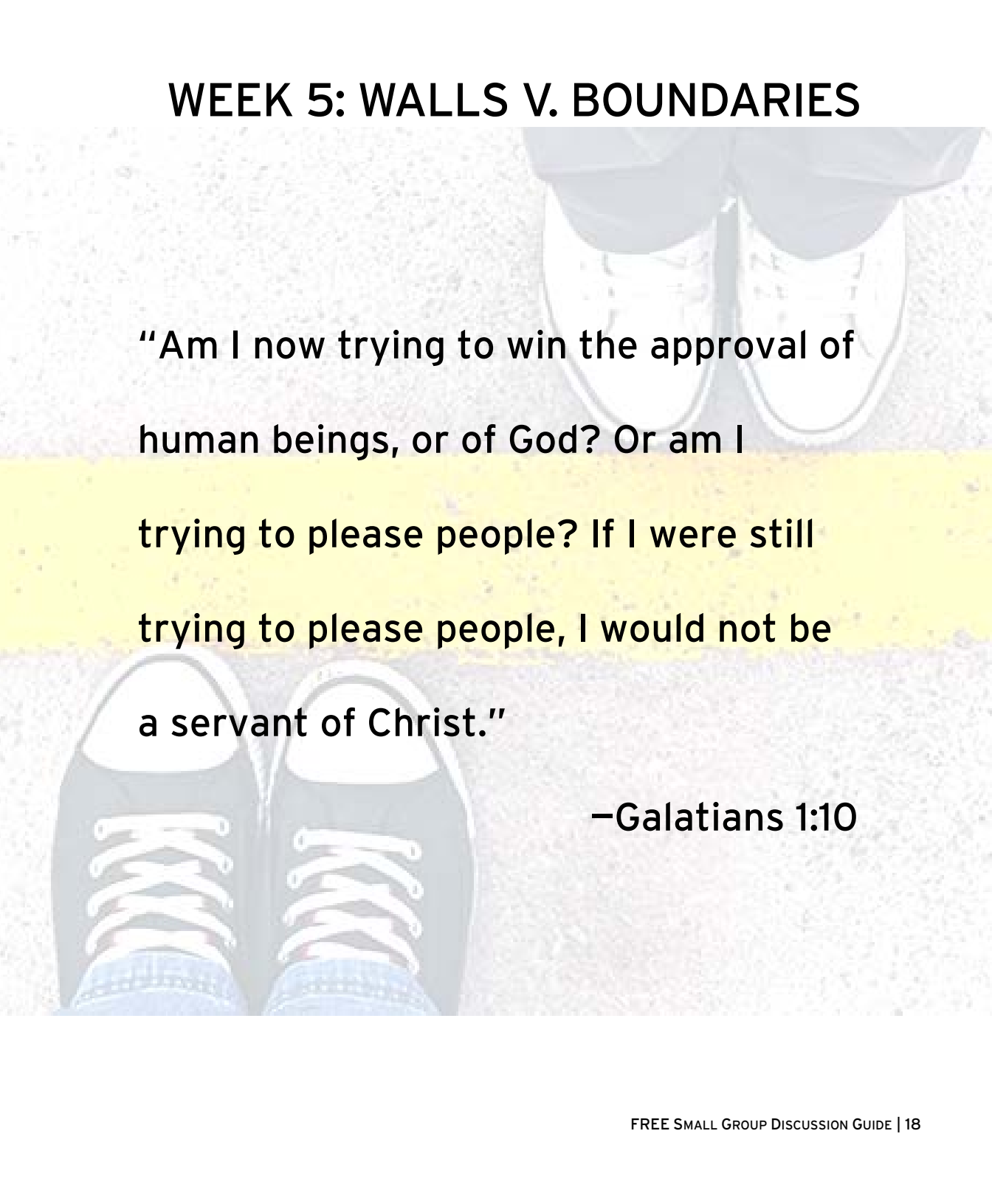
Connect

1. What part of the service on Sunday was most freeing for you?
2. Webster defines the word fight in two ways: 1) "to contend in battle or physical combat; especially to strive to overcome a person by blows or weapons;" and 2) "to put forth a determined effort; to resolve by struggle." When you find yourself in conflict with someone, what is your natural tendency? Flight (to avoid it)? Fight (as in to strive to overcome)? Or fight (as in, to put forth a determined effort to bring resolve)?

Engage

1. Read Matthew 5:23-24.
 - What does Jesus prioritize over the act of worship?
 - Why?
2. Read James 4:1-3
 - According to James, what are some of the reasons we have conflict with others?
 - Does this ring true with your experience?
3. Read Matthew 7:3-5
 - Why is noticing your own big piece of wood over the little piece of dust in the neighbor's eye a primary step in resolving conflict?
 - What are some examples of "logs" that you have had in your eye?
 - How has not dealing with your log impacted relationships?
4. Read James 1:19-25
 - What is James trying to teach the disciples in this passage?
 - How can this passage help us develop the kind of relationships that God desires for us to have?
 - Why is listening so important? How can you be a better listener?
5. Read Colossians 3:12-17
 - Describe in your own words the various virtues required of the disciples at Colossae.
 - What characteristics described by Paul illustrate that love is the overarching virtue for interpersonal relationships?
6. Read Romans 12:18
 - What are some things that depend on us in relationships, things we are absolutely responsible for regardless of how others have been toward us?

WEEK 5: WALLS V. BOUNDARIES



“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

–Galatians 1:10

WEEK 5: WALLS V. BOUNDARIES

Connect

1. Which part of this week's message was most freeing for you?
2. Have you ever had a friendship or relationship in which you felt that no matter what you did it was never enough? Share about this experience.
3. In the context of relationships, what is the difference between a wall and a boundary?

Engage

1. Read 1 Peter 4:7-11
 - Consider the importance of these verses in the context of your relationships (with your co-workers, your friends, your family members, etc.). What is the overarching point of these verses?
 - What is significant about the phrase "as faithful stewards of God's grace"? What does a steward do?
 - How does seeing yourself as a steward of God's grace toward others help you set boundaries?
2. Read Matthew 17:1-9
 - How would you have felt if you were one of the 9 disciples who weren't invited by Jesus to go up on the mountain?
 - Why do you think Jesus only invited 3 to go with him?
 - Similarly, why do you think Jesus made the decision to spend the majority of his time with only a small group of people?
 - What does this tell you about boundaries?
3. Read Luke 10:5-11
 - What instruction does Jesus give his disciples for setting boundaries?
 - What are the practical implications for you?

WEEK 6: SELF-INTEREST V. GENEROSITY

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

–Philippians 2:3-4

WEEK 6: SELF-INTEREST V. GENEROSITY

Connect

1. What was the most freeing thing you heard in Sunday's message or experienced in the service?
2. What has been the most freeing thing you've experienced through this series?
3. How would you define generosity?
4. Describe a time in your life when you have most been filled with generosity.

Engage

1. Read Luke 7:36-50
 - In what ways do you see self-interest demonstrated in this text?
 - In what ways do you see generosity demonstrated?
 - Which was most beneficial to relationship and why?
 - Which brought freedom?
2. Read Luke 10:25-37
 - In what ways do you see self-interest demonstrated in this text?
 - In what ways do you see generosity demonstrated?
 - Which was most beneficial to relationship and why?
3. Read Philippians 2:1-5
 - What point is Paul trying to make in vv. 1-2?
 - Should this move us to act with generosity toward others? Why or why not?
 - What things are essential for you to know in order to look to the interest of others?

