Small Group Guide: The Freedom to Choose

Series: Origins | Week 7

Overview

This week's sermon explored the origin of human free will, why God gave humanity the ability to choose, and what the consequences of that freedom look like in our lives. Drawing from Genesis 1-3 and other key passages, Pastor Mark walked us through the creation of humanity as image bearers of God, the temptation in the garden, and the fall of Adam and Eve. The central challenge of the message was this: God has set before us life and death, blessing and curse, and he calls us to choose life.

Key Takeaways

- Human beings were created in the image of God, which includes a relational, moral, creative, and representative dimension.
- Free will is the God-given capacity to make meaningful choices, act according to our desires and intentions, and bear responsibility for those decisions.
- God gave humanity genuine freedom not to program obedience, but because love by nature cannot be coerced.
- The serpent's first move was to cast doubt on the word and character of God, asking "Did God really say?"
- Freedom does not mean independence from God or freedom from consequences. Human choice carries real moral weight.
- God's response to Adam and Eve's sin was not only judgment but also covering, care, and the beginning of a redemptive plan.
- God's ways are higher than our ways. Walking in obedience to his word leads to a more full and fruitful life than charting our own course.

Opening Question

Use this question to help your group ease into conversation before diving into the content.

Think of a significant choice you have made in your life, good or bad. What made that decision feel meaningful to you? What were the consequences, expected or unexpected?

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. Pastor Mark summarized that humanity was created to know God, glorify him, and live in loving relationship with him and one another. In what ways do you see that original design still reflected in people today, even in a broken world?

2. Genesis 2:16-17 records God giving Adam both incredible freedom and one clear boundary. Why do you think God established that boundary rather than simply removing the tree altogether? What does that tell us about the kind of relationship God wanted with humanity?

3. The serpent's opening line in Genesis 3:1 was a question designed to cast doubt on what God had said. Why do you think that was the enemy's first strategy? Where do you see that same strategy at work in the world today?

4. Adam was present during Eve's conversation with the serpent and said nothing. What do you think his silence reveals? What might have happened if he had spoken up and used the authority God had given him?

5. After Adam and Eve sinned, their first response was to hide and then to deflect blame. Why do you think shame and blame-shifting were such immediate reactions? How do you see those same patterns show up in your own life when you make poor choices?

6. Pastor Mark pointed out that before God removed Adam and Eve from the garden, he covered their shame by making clothing for them. What does that detail reveal about God's character and his intentions toward humanity even in a moment of judgment?

Going Deeper

7. Pastor Mark described free will this way: "Free will is the God-given capacity of human beings to make meaningful choices, to act according to their desires and intentions and bear responsibility for their decisions." How does understanding free will as a gift from God change the way you think about the choices you make each day?

8. Deuteronomy 30:19 records Moses urging Israel to choose life. Pastor Mark noted that God tied blessing to obedience not as a transaction but as a reflection of a loving relationship. How does framing obedience as an expression of love rather than a rule to follow change your posture toward God's commands?

9. Pastor Mark said that God could theoretically have created us to obey him mechanically, but that a programmed response is not the same as freely chosen love. Do you find that idea comforting or challenging? How does it shape the way you think about your relationship with God?

10. James 1 makes clear that God does not tempt anyone and that we bear moral responsibility for how we respond to temptation. Where in your life do you find it most tempting to shift responsibility for your choices onto circumstances, other people, or even God?

Personal Reflection

11. Pastor Mark asked the group to consider: in what areas of life are we neglecting God's word and making it up as we go? Take a moment to sit with that question. Is there an area of your life where you have been resistant to what Scripture says? What has kept you from bringing that area into alignment?

12. He also described a pattern from his own early faith journey of highlighting the parts of the Bible he liked and skipping over the parts that challenged him. Have you experienced something similar? What helped you move past that?

Practical Applications

Choose one or two of the following to discuss as a group or commit to personally this week.

- Read Genesis 2 and 3 in full this week. As you read, pay attention to the moments where a different choice could have been made. Reflect on what that story reveals about your own patterns of decision-making.

- Identify one area of your life where you know your choices are out of alignment with what God's word says. Write it down, pray over it, and share it with a trusted person in your group for accountability.

- Spend time this week meditating on Deuteronomy 30:19-20. Ask God to show you what it practically looks like for you to choose life in the specific season you are in right now.

- Reflect on a past decision that led to a painful consequence. Rather than revisiting the shame of it, ask God to show you what he was doing in that season and how he was still present, still covering, still working toward redemption.

- Consider where the enemy has been asking you "Did God really say?" in your own life. Identify the lie that has taken root and bring it into the light of Scripture. Find a verse that speaks truth over that specific area and commit it to memory.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying along these lines, either as a group or led by one person.

Thank God for the gift of free will and for the grace he extends when we use it poorly. Ask him to reveal the specific areas in each person's life that are out of alignment with his word. Pray for the wisdom and courage to bring those things back into holy alignment. Ask the Holy Spirit to make God's word come alive and to give each person a genuine desire to choose life this week.

Looking Ahead

Next week the series continues with a look at the consequences of Adam and Eve's choice and what the fall means for all of humanity. Come prepared to discuss how the brokenness we see in the world traces back to that original decision and what God's redemptive response looks like.