



How aware is a fish of the water in which it swims? Not very. Similarly, we swim in cultural water everyday, often without realization or examination.

To complicate the matter, we live in a very polarizing time. American culture demands that we adhere to certain cultural dogmas, but it takes great thoughtfulness and courage to stop and consider whether or not these dogmas have Biblical basis or truth.

In this eight-week series, we will examine eight prevalent messages our culture preaches that, for better or worse, create the “water in which we swim” everyday. We will discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each when considered in light of the gospel.

NOTE: There may be slight changes to what follows, primarily in the main passage(s) used. However, the ones shared below will be a great start and very applicable for the sermons.

The Freedom Narrative

A Brief Definition: You should live as you wish, as long as it doesn't hurt anyone.

? What are your thoughts on this definition? What would you add or change?

For Thought



Discuss the image above.

? How do you personally see the freedom narrative lived out in your midst and more broadly in culture? What are the most prominent sources/voices that give rise to this cultural mantra that you should live as you wish as long as it doesn't hurt others?

Bible



Judges 17:6 (NIV)

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.



Discuss what Israel's time during the judges was like. What stories come to mind?



1 Corinthians 6:12-17 (NIV)

¹² "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.



What does this passage have to say about our "right" to freedom?

Rom. 6:11-18 (NIV)

¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

1 Peter 2:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.

? How does our culture's freedom narrative line up with teaching from God's Word? Where do they "agree"? Where do they "disagree"?

? In our culture's narrative, Christianity *restricts* personal freedom (maybe even is the opposite of freedom), provides nothing, hurts others, and creates barriers. In what ways is this true? In what ways is this false?

? Ultimately, why would we ever consider doing something we *don't* want to do?

? People often feel judged when you come down on their freedom, shutting them down to religion. Christians can come off as "judgy" when talking about the "rules" we follow or the immorality of unbiblical behavior. How are we, as followers of Christ, supposed to navigate these difficult waters?



2 John 6 (NIV)

⁶ And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

? How does culture speak of obedience? And how might this interact with the Freedom narrative discussed above? How can we as followers of Christ uphold obedience as an act of love and worship, while not falling into the pit of legalism?

? How do you see the freedom narrative playing out inside the church? Does it impact church involvement and living life as the Body of Christ?

Application & Accountability

? Identify one example (e.g. relationship, work situation, in small group, weekend time, use of finances, etc.) where you are most tempted to believe you can live as you wish as long as it doesn't hurt anyone. What are one or two concrete ways you hope to emulate the example/teachings of Christ that, in the end, we are called to use our freedom in love and service to God and others?