



Fuel Week 2008
Friday Evening Lesson

Students Should

Learn:

1. We each have a sin nature that seeks to keep us captive.
2. God desires that we not only walk with Him, but that we live abundant lives of freedom in Him.

Scripture Focus:

- Romans 7:14–24
- Romans 6:16–23
- John 8:31–36

What You'll Need for this Lesson:

- Bibles
- Food to share a meal together

Set Free!

Lesson Background:

The journey toward holiness is not a quick trip. It is something that must be practiced, time and again, over the course of a lifetime. Perhaps the downfall of many young Christians is that they do not grasp this concept—their faith becomes a works-based righteousness, an effort to be perfect *right now*. Burnout is common for Christians by the time they reach their twenties or thirties; after they have realized that they just cannot kick the old sin nature, many of them give up.

In this lesson, we will look at this sin nature as it pertains to our spiritual slavery. So often, even when we do walk with Christ, we are stuck in slavery to our sinful nature. But God desires more for us—He desires us to live life to the fullest! This can only happen once we step into the freedom that Christ offers us through the Holy Spirit.

My prayer is that as you prepare this lesson, you too will re-examine your perhaps long-held notions about righteousness and freedom. Be reminded that *you* can live an abundant life in Christ as you encourage your students to do the same!

The Lesson

Introduction

Option 1: Share a nice meal

Throughout this lesson, share a “nice” meal with your students. The concept is this: because of our sin nature, we often continue to live with sinful habits even after choosing Christ, not fully entering into the freedom Christ offers us through the Holy Spirit. This is like receiving an invitation to feast at God’s table, yet settling for the scraps on the floor. God desires that we feast in Christ’s freedom, so in this lesson take the opportunity to literally “feast.”

You may choose to provide any version of a “feast” that you like, depending on the time of day you are meeting and the size of your

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group. For example, dinner might include pizza, soda, and cookies, or even a few take-out entrees. An evening snack might include donuts, chips, bagels, and cookies. In any case, choose items that will indeed feel like a “feast”—a semi-lavish departure from your group’s normal snacking routine.

Allow time at the beginning of your session for the students to grab their food, and then proceed with the lesson as you eat. At the end of the session, you will then address the reason for the feast as you tie it in with your study and discussion.

Option 2: Play What’s My Problem?

In this game, one person has a problem. He/she has a tendency to think that he/she is someone or something else. The object of the game is for the “doctor” to diagnose the problem.

Ask for three volunteers to be “doctors” and three other volunteers to be “patients.” Explain that the patient has a problem: he/she thinks that he/she is someone or something else; the doctor must diagnose the problem by figuring out the object the patient emulates. The doctor may ask a question of anyone in the room, but he/she may only ask 10 yes-or-no questions.

Invite one doctor to step out of the room. With the doctor gone, the rest of the group must decide what the first patient’s problem is. Examples include, but are not limited to: three-legged stool, Elvis, bucket of paint, an amoeba, or the Big Dipper. Be sure to coach the group on how they might respond to the doctor’s questions with respect to the above items.

Invite the doctor back into the room and allow him/her to ask any 10 yes-or-no questions. At the end of the questions, the doctor must give his/her best guess as to the patient’s condition.

Repeat the process with the other two patients and doctors. Then ask the following questions:

- To the patients—**What was it like to answer questions based on being someone or something else? Was it difficult? Why or why not?**
- To the doctors—**Did you have a hard time figuring out the patients’ problems? Why or why not?**
- To everyone—**How do we have the tendency to live as someone or something other than what we really are?** Many people—teenagers especially—put on acts to seem cooler, disinterested, smarter, or any number of other things to hide how they really feel or who they really are.

In transition, say something such as, **Let’s look at the tendency we have to sin and do wrong, even when we want to do good.**

Dig In

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Read the Word

Invite students to turn to Romans 7:14–24. Ask one student to read the passage aloud. Next read the passage aloud from *The Message* paraphrase. Then discuss the following questions:

- **How do you respond to this passage? What comes to your mind?**
- **Do you relate to Paul’s words? If so, in what ways?**
- **What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time”? Explain that we all are predisposed to sin—we have a tendency to do wrong, even after we come into relationship with Christ. This should be no surprise to us because most of us have found Paul’s words to ring true in our own lives: we want to do good, but sometimes we just do not, no matter how badly we want to.**

Share the following passage from Jim Hampton’s *Everyday Saint*: “Because of Adam and Eve’s sin, all of us have this tendency to self-rule. We want to be in charge, doing what we want, when we want it, where we want it, and how we want it. In a sense, each of us relives the fall of Adam and Eve. In the books of Romans and Galatians, Paul explains that all humans, along with all creation, are trapped in a slavery from which we are entirely unable to free ourselves . . . It is as if we are born slaves, and sin is like an evil tyrant who holds us captive. It rules over our lives so powerfully that we are helpless to resist it by ourselves” (pg. 40). Then discuss the following:

- **What do you think of sin as self-rule? Do you think this is a good description of sin? Why or why not?**
- **How was Adam and Eve’s sin one of self-rule?** Remind your students that by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve were essentially bypassing God and choosing to rule on their own, with no need for God. You may choose to look at Genesis 3 for reference.
- **How do you think you demonstrate this same tendency toward self-rule in your own life?**
- **Do you relate to the idea of being trapped in slavery to this self-rule tendency? Why or why not?**

Invite students to turn to Romans 6:16–23, and ask a student to read the passage aloud. Then discuss the following:

- **What does this passage tell us about slavery?** We are slaves to whomever we obey. If we obey our sin natures, we are slaves to sin. If we are set free from sin and become “slaves” to righteousness, righteousness is our master and leads to holiness.
- **What do we learn about holiness from this passage?**
- **From reading this passage, how do you think we should respond to the freedom God offers through Christ? Why?**

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Finally, invite your students to turn to John 8:31–36, and ask a volunteer to read the passage aloud. Then discuss the following:

- **What jumps out to you in this passage?**
- **What did Jesus say about sin? What did He say about truth?**
- **What truth do you think Jesus was talking about?**
- **What do you think it feels like to be completely free from sin?** Explain that when we come into relationship with Jesus we become children of God, and Jesus offers to set us free from slavery to sin. It's like God is inviting us to feast with Him at His table. Many times we skip the full freedom that Christ offers and instead settle for scraps from God's table. But the truth is that God has designed a better life for us—a full life in Christ's freedom.

When you are ready to move on, say, **This is the reason we feast today; it is a reminder that we are invited to feast at God's table. We just need to claim that freedom and move away from our scraps.**

Wrap Up

Share the following story, as reprinted in *Everyday Saint* (pp. 45-47):

Back in the 1800s, a young man from England traveled to California. Like many others of that day, he was in search of gold. The young man staked a claim for a small area, and finally, after several months of prospecting, he struck it rich. He dug up all the gold that was there, and then decided to call it quits. As he began the long journey back to his home, he made a stop in New Orleans.

The young man hadn't been in the city very long when he stumbled upon a crowd of people. He noticed that they all seemed to be staring in the same direction, so he was curious what they were looking at. As he approached the crowd, he quickly recognized that the people were gathered to participate in a slave auction. While slavery had been outlawed in England for years, it was still alive and well in many states in the United States. The young man was extremely curious why people would choose to engage in such a deplorable practice, so he pushed his way to the front of the crowd in an effort to see this spectacle up close and personal. Just as he got to the front, he heard "Sold!" and watched forlornly as a middle-aged black man was taken away.

Next up was a beautiful young black girl. She was pushed up onto the platform and made to walk around so everyone could see her. The young man could hear the vile jokes and comments that the men around him uttered, things which spoke to how these evil men intended to use this young girl.

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Many of the men were even laughing as they gazed lustily on this new item for sale.

The bidding began.

Immediately the bids shot up, quickly surpassing what most slave owners would ever consider paying for a black girl. As the bids continued their upward climb, it quickly became apparent to the young miner that there were two men who wanted her. In between their bids, they laughed about what they were going to do with her, and how the other one would miss out. The young miner stood silent, his face set and determined, his entire body shaking with the anger that welled up inside of him. Finally, one man bid a price that was beyond the reach of the other. The girl looked down. The auctioneer called out, "Going once! Going twice!"

But just before the final call, just before the young girl was bought and sold to the man with the evil intentions, the young miner yelled out a price that was exactly twice the previous bid. In fact, it was an amount that exceeded the worth of any person—man, woman, or child. A few began to chuckle, and soon the entire crowd was laughing out loud. They assumed that the miner was only joking, wishing that he could be the one to have his way with the slave girl. However, the auctioneer motioned for the miner to come up and show his money. The miner jumped up on the platform, opened up the bag of gold he had brought for the trip, and showed it to the auctioneer. The auctioneer shook his head in disbelief as he waved the girl over to him.

The girl walked down the steps of the platform until she was eye-to-eye with the miner. Then, unexpectedly, she spat straight in his face and said through clenched teeth, "I hate you!" The miner, without a word, wiped his face, paid the auctioneer, took the girl by the hand, and walked away from the still-laughing crowd.

As they walked up and down the streets of that city, it seemed to the slave girl as if the young man was looking for something in particular, but what it was she did not have a clue. Finally they stopped in front of some sort of store, though the slave girl did not know what type of store it was. She waited irritably outside as the young miner went inside and started talking to an elderly man. While she couldn't make out what they were talking about, it was clear that there was some sort of disagreement, evidenced by their animated actions. At one point the voices got louder, and she overheard the store clerk say, "But it's the law! It's the law!" Peering in the store, she saw the miner pull out his bag of gold and empty it out on the table.

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With what seemed to the slave girl like a look of disgust, the clerk reluctantly picked up the gold and went into a back room. Shortly thereafter, he came out with a piece of paper that both he and the miner signed.

As the miner came out the door, the slave girl intentionally looked away, not willing to give her new owner the satisfaction of seeing her face. The miner, however, stretched out his hand and said to the girl, “Here are your emancipation papers. You are free.” The girl simply looked away, unwilling to even acknowledge what she perceived as her owner toying with her.

The young man tried once again. “Here. These papers say that you are now free. Take them.”

“I hate you!” the girl said, refusing to look up. “Why do you make fun of me!”

“No, listen,” the young man pleaded. “These are *your* freedom papers. I no longer own you. You are now a free person.”

The girl looked at the papers, then looked at the miner, and looked at the papers once again. She seemed incredulous. “You just bought me . . . and now, you’re setting me free?”

“That’s why I bought you. I bought you to set you free.”

The beautiful young girl immediately dropped to her knees in front of the miner, with tears streaming down her face. “You bought me to set me free! You bought me to set me free!” she said over and over.

Clutching his muddy boots, the girl looked up at the miner with newfound respect, admiration, and love and said, “All I want to do is to serve you—because you bought me.”

Invite your students to reflect silently on their lives by asking the following questions:

- **What would motivate a man to purchase a stranger and then set her free? What would motivate God to purchase *our* freedom?**
- **How will *you* respond to the freedom that Christ offers?**
- **Are you sitting at God’s table, or are you merely settling for scraps?**

Closing

Close the session in prayer: **Father God, we thank You and praise You for offering us a life of abundant freedom bought**

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with the price of Your Son's blood. Teach us what it means to embrace this freedom and live a life not as slaves, but as holy people who walk with You. We pray this in Your Son's name, amen.