

Steps to Freedom in Christ

Christ has set you free through His victory over sin and death on the cross. If you are not experiencing freedom, it may be because you have not stood firm in the faith or actively taken your place in Christ. It is the Christian's responsibility to do whatever is necessary to maintain a right relationship with God. Your eternal destiny is not at stake. You are secure in Christ, but your daily victory is at stake if you fail to claim and maintain your position in Christ.

You are not the helpless victim caught between two nearly equal but opposite heavenly super-powers. Satan is a deceiver, only God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Sometimes, the reality of sin and the presence of evil may seem more real than the presence of God, but that's part of Satan's deception. Satan is a defeated foe, and we are **in Christ**. A true knowledge of God and our identity in Christ is the greatest determinant of our mental health. A false concept of God, a distorted understanding of who we are as children of God, and the misplaced deification of Satan are the greatest contributors to mental illness.

The battle is for your mind. The only way you can lose control is if you pay attention to the deceiving spirit and believe a lie. The opposing thoughts that you may experience can control you only if you believe them. If you are working through these steps alone, don't pay attention to any deception (i.e. lying intimidating thoughts in your mind). If you are working through them with a trust pastor or counselor (which we strongly recommend the first time), then share any thoughts that you are having in opposition to what you are attempting to do. As soon as you expose the lie, the power of Satan is broken. **You must cooperate with the person trying to help you by sharing what is going on inside.**

The following are seven specific steps you need to process in order to experience the freedom and victory Christ purchased for you on the cross. Your freedom will be the results of what you choose to believe, confess, forgive, renounce and forsake. No one can do that for you. The battle for your mind can only be won as you personally choose truth.

As you go through these steps to freedom, remember that Satan will only be defeated if you confront him verbally. He is under no obligation to obey your thoughts. Only God has complete knowledge of your mind. As you process each step, it is important that you submit to God inwardly and resist the devil by reading aloud each prayer and verbally renouncing, forgiving, confessing, etc.

The following steps are nothing more than a fierce moral inventory and a rock-solid commitment to truth. If your problems stem from a source other than those covered in these steps, you have nothing to lose by going through them. The worst that can happen is that you will get right with God!

Step 1: Counterfeit vs. Real

The first step to freedom in Christ is to renounce your previous or current involvements with satanically-inspired occult practices or false religions. You need to renounce any activity or group which denies Jesus Christ, offers guidance through any source other than the absolute authority of the written word of God, or requires secret initiation, ceremonies or covenants.

In order to help you assess your spiritual experiences, complete the “Non-Christian Spiritual Experience Inventory”. The list is not exhaustive, but it will guide you in identifying non-Christian experiences. Begin this step by praying the following prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, I ask you to reveal to my mind all the cult or occult practices, false religions, and false teachers with which I have knowingly or unknowingly been involved.

Even if you “innocently” participated, you should put it on your list to renounce just in case you unknowingly gave Satan a foothold. Confess and renounce each one as follows:

Lord, I confess that I have participated in _____ . I ask your forgiveness and I renounce _____ .

Non-Christian Spiritual Experience Inventory

(please check all that apply)

Occult

Astral-projection
Ouija board
Table lifting
Speaking in trance
Automatic writing
Visionary dreams
Telepathy
Ghosts
Materialization
Clairvoyance
Spirit guides
Fortune telling
Tarot cards
Palm reading
Astrology
Rod and pendulum
(dowsing)
Amateur hypnosis
Séance
Mental suggestions (or
attempted to swap minds)
Black and white magic
Blood pacts (or cut
yourself in a destructive
way)
Fetishism
Incubi and succubae
(sexual spirits)

Cult

Christian Science
Unity
Scientology
“The Local Church”
The Way International
Unification Church
Church of the Living
Word
Mormonism
Jehovah Witness
Children of God
Swedenborgianism
Herbert W. Armstrong
Unitarianism
Masons
New Age
Other _____

Other Religions

Zen Buddhism
Islam
Black Muslim
Hare Krishna
Bahaism
Rosicrucian
Science of the Mind
Science of Creative
Intelligence
Hinduism
Transcendental
Meditation
Yoga
Echkankar
Roy Masters
Silva Mind Control
Father Divine
Theosophical Society
Other _____

1. Have you ever been hypnotized, attended a New Age or parapsychology seminar, consulted with a medium, spiritualist or channeler? Explain.
2. Do you or have you ever had an imaginary friend or spirit guide offering you guidance or companionship? Explain.
3. Have you ever heard voices in your mind or had repeating and nagging thoughts that were foreign to what you believe or feel, like there was a dialogue going on in your head? Explain.
4. What other spiritual experience have you had that would be considered out of the ordinary?

Step 2: Deception vs. Truth

Truth is the revelation of God's Word, but we need to acknowledge the truth in the inner self (Ps. 51:6). When David lived a lie, he suffered greatly. When he finally found freedom by acknowledging the truth, he wrote: "How blessed is the man....in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Ps. 32:2). We are to lay aside falsehood and speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15, 25). A mentally healthy person is one who is in touch with reality and relatively free of anxiety. Both qualities should epitomize the Christian who renounces deception and embraces the truth.

Begin this critical step by expressing aloud the following prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, I know that You desire truth in the inner self and that facing this truth is the way of liberation (John 8:32). I acknowledge that I have been deceived by the father of lies (John 8:44) and that I have deceived myself (1 John 1:8). I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that You, heavenly Father, will rebuke all deceiving spirits by virtue of the shed blood and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And since by faith I have received you into my life and am now seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph 2:6), I now ask the Holy Spirit to guide me into all truth (John 16:13). I ask You to "search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Ps. 139:23, 24). In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

Choosing the truth may be difficult if you have been living a lie (deceived) for many years. You may need to seek professional help to weed out the defense mechanisms you have depended upon to survive. The Christian needs only one defense: Jesus. Knowing that you are forgiven and accepted as God's child sets you free to face reality and declare your dependence on Him.

Faith is the biblical response to the truth, and believing the truth is a choice. When someone says, "I want to believe God but I just can't", they are being deceived. Of course you can believe God. Faith is something you decide to do, not something you feel like doing. Believing the truth doesn't make it true; it's true, therefore we believe it. The New Age movement is distorting the truth by saying we create reality through what we believe. We can create reality with our minds. It's what or who you believe in that counts. Everybody believes in something, and everybody walks by faith according to what they believe. But what if what you believe isn't true? Then how you live (walk by faith) won't be right.

Historically, the church has found great value in publicly declaring its beliefs. The Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed have been recited for centuries. Read aloud the following affirmation of faith and do so again as often as necessary to renew your mind. Read it daily for several weeks:

Doctrinal Affirmation

I recognize that there is only one true and living God (Exod. 20:2, 3) who exists as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that He is worthy of all honor, praise, and glory as the Creator, Sustainer, and Beginning and End of all things (Rev. 4:11, 5:9, 10, Isa: 43:1, 7, 21).

I recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1: 1, 14). I believe that He came to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8), that He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public display of them, having triumphed over them (Col. 2:15).

I believe that God has proven His love for me, because when I was still a sinner, Christ died for me (Rom. 5:8). I believe that He delivered me from the domain of darkness and transferred me to His kingdom, and in Him I have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13, 14)

I believe that I am now a child of God (1 John 3:1-3), and that I am seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6). I believe that I was saved by the grace of God through faith, that it was a gift and not the result of any works on my part (Eph. 2:8).

I choose to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10). I put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3), for the weapons of warfare are not of the flesh (2 Cor. 10:4). I put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20), and I resolve to stand firm in my faith and resist the evil one.

I believe that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), and that he is the head over all rule and authority (Col. 2:10). I believe that Satan and his demons are subject to me in Christ since I am a member of Christ's body (Eph. 1:19-23). Therefore, I obey the command to resist the devil (Jas 4:7) and command him in the name of Christ to leave my presence.

I believe that apart from Christ I can do nothing (John 15:5), so I declare my dependence on Him. I choose to abide in Christ in order to bear much fruit and glorify the Lord (John 15:8). I announce to Satan that Jesus is my Lord (1 Cor. 12:3), and I reject any counterfeit gifts or works of Satan in my life.

I believe that the truth will set me free (John 8:32), and that walking in the light is the only path of fellowship (1 John 1:7). Therefore, I stand against Satan's deception by taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). I declare that the Bible is the only authoritative standard (2 Tim. 3:15, 16). I choose to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

I choose to present my body as an instrument of righteousness, a living and holy sacrifice, and I renew my mind by the living Word of God, in order that I may prove that the will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect (Rom. 6:13, 12:1, 2).

I ask my heavenly Father to fill me with His Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), lead me into all truth (John 16:13), and empower my life that I may live above sin and not carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). I crucify the flesh (Gal. 5:24) and choose to walk by the Spirit.

I renounce all selfish goals and choose the ultimate goal of love (1 Tim. 1:5). I choose to obey the greatest commandment, to love the Lord by God with all my heart, soul and mind, and to love my neighbor as myself (Matt: 22:37-39).

Step 3: Bitterness vs. Forgiveness

We need to forgive others so that Satan cannot take advantage of us (2 Cor. 2:10, 11). We are to be merciful just as our heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36). We are to forgive as we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:31, 32). Ask God to bring to your mind those people whom you need to forgive by expressing the following prayer aloud:

Dear heavenly Father, I thank You for the riches of your kindness, forbearance, and patience, knowing that your kindness has led me to repentance (Rom. 2:4). I confess that I have not extended toward others who have offended me, but instead I have harbored bitterness and resentment. I pray that during this time of self-examination You would bring to mind only those people that I have not forgiven in order that I may do so (Matt. 18:35). I ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. People who try to forget find that they cannot. God says He will “remember our sins no more” (Heb. 10:17), but God, being omniscient, cannot forget. “Remember no more” means that God will never use the past against us (Ps. 103:12). Forgetting may be the result of forgiveness, but it is never the means of forgiveness. When we bring up the past against others, we are saying we haven’t forgiven them.

Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will. Since God requires us to forgive, it is something we can do. But forgiveness is difficult for us because it pulls against our concept of justice. We want revenge for offenses suffered. But we are told never to take our own revenge (Rom. 12:19). “Why should I let them off the hook?” That is precisely the problem, you are still hooked to them, still bound by your past. You let them off your hook, but they are never off God’s. He will deal with them fairly—something we cannot do.

“But you don’t understand how much this person hurt me!” But don’t you see, they are still hurting you. How do you stop the pain? You don’t forgive someone for their sake; you do it for your sake so you can be free. Your need to forgive isn’t an issue between you and the offender; it’s between you and God.

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person’s sin. Forgiveness is costly. We pay the price of the evil we forgive. You’re going to live with those consequences whether you want to or not; your only choice is whether you will do so in the bitterness of unforgiveness or the freedom of forgiveness. Jesus took the consequences of your sin upon Himself. All true forgiveness is substitutional, because no one really forgives without bearing the consequences of the other person’s sin. God the Father “made Him who knew no sin to be son on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Where is the justice? It’s the cross that makes forgiveness legally and morally right: “For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all” (Rom. 6:10).

How do you forgive from your heart? First you acknowledge the hurt and the hate. If your forgiveness doesn’t visit the emotional core of your life it will be incomplete. If your forgiveness doesn’t visit the emotional core of your life, it will be incomplete. Many feel the pain of

interpersonal offenses but they won't acknowledge it. Let God bring the pain to the surface so He can deal with it. This is where the healing takes place.

Decide that you will bear the burden of their offenses by not using the information about their offenses against them in the future. This doesn't mean that you tolerate sin. You must always take a stand against sin. Don't wait to forgive until you feel like forgiving; you will never get there. Feelings take time to heal after the choice to forgive is made and Satan has lost his place (Eph. 4:26, 27). Freedom is what will be gained, not a feeling.

For each person on your list, say aloud: "Lord, I forgive (name) for (specifically identify all offenses and painful memories)". Don't say, "Lord, please help me to forgive", because He is already helping you. Don't say, "Lord, I want to forgive," because you are bypassing the hard-core choice to forgive which is your responsibility. Stay with each individual until you are sure that all the remembered pain has been dealt with. As you pray, God may bring to mind offending people and experiences you have totally forgotten. Let Him do it even if it is painful. Remember you are doing this for your sake. God wants you to be free. Don't rationalize or explain the offender's behavior. Forgiveness deals with your pain, not another's excuses. Positive feelings will follow in time; freeing yourself from the past is the critical issue.

Step 4: Rebellion vs. Submission

We live in a rebellious generation of where many believe it is their right to sit in judgement of those in authority over them. Rebelling against God and His authority gives Satan an opportunity to attack. As our commanding general, the Lord says, "Get into ranks and follow Me. I will not lead you into temptation but deliver you from evil."

We have two biblical responsibilities in regard to authority figures: Pray for them and submit to them. The only time God permits us to disobey earthly leaders is when they require us to do something morally wrong before God. Pray the following prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, You have said that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry (1 Sam. 15:23). I know that in action and attitude I have sinned against You with a rebellious heart. I ask Your forgiveness for my rebellion and pray that by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ all ground gained by the enemy because of my rebelliousness would be cancelled. I pray that you will shed light on all my ways that I may know the full extent of my rebelliousness and I now choose to adopt a submissive spirit and a servant's heart. Amen.

Being under authority is an act of faith; you are trusting God to work through His established lines of authority. There are times when employers, parents and husbands are violating the laws of civil government which is ordained by God to protect innocent people against abuse. In those cases, you need to appeal to the state for your protection. In many states, the law requires such abuse to be reported. There are specific lines of authority in Scripture which are listed below. Examine each area and ask God to forgive you for those times you have not been submissive.

Civil government (Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:13-16)
Parents (Eph. 6:1-3)
Husband (1 Pet. 3:1-3)
Employer (1 Pet. 2:18-21)
Church leaders (Heb. 13:17)

Step 5: Pride vs. Humility

Pride is a killer. Pride says, "I can do it! I can get myself out of this mess without God or anyone else's help." Oh no we can't! We absolutely need God and we desperately need each other. Paul wrote: "We worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). Humility is confidence properly placed. We are to be "Strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" (Eph. 6:10). James 4:6-10 and 1 Peter 5:1-10 reveals that spiritual conflict follows pride. Use the following prayer to express your commitment to live humbly before God:

Dear heavenly Father, You have said that pride goes before destruction and an arrogant spirit before stumbling (Prov. 16:18). I confess that I have not denied myself, picked up my cross daily, and followed You (Matt. 16:24). In doing so I have given ground to the enemy in my life. I have believed that I could be successful and live victoriously by my own strength and resources. I now confess that I have sinned against You by placing my will before You and by centering my life around self instead of You. I now renounce the self-life and by so doing cancel all the ground that has been gained in my members by the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that You will guide me so that I will do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind I will regard others as more important than myself (Phil. 2:3). Enable me through love to serve others and in honor prefer others (Rom. 12:10). I ask this in the name of Christ Jesus, my Lord. Amen.

Step 6: Bondage vs. Freedom

The next step to freedom deals with habitual sin. People who have been caught in the trap of sin-confess-sin-confess may need to follow the instructions of James 5:16: "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Seek out a righteous person who will hold you up in prayer and to whom you can be accountable. Others may only need the assurance of 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Whether you need the help of others or just the accountability of God, pray the following prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, You have told us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (Rom. 13:14). I acknowledge that I have given in to fleshly lusts which wage war against my soul (1 Pet. 2:11). I thank You that in Christ my sins are forgiven, but I have transgressed Your holy law and given the enemy an opportunity to wage war in my members (Eph. 4:27, Jas. 4:1, 1 Pet. 5:8). I come before Your presence to acknowledge these sins and to see Your cleansing (1 John 1:9) that I may be freed from the bondage of sin (Gal. 5:1). I now

ask You to reveal to my mind the ways that I have transgressed Your moral law and grieved the Holy Spirit.

After you have confessed all know sin, pray:

I now confess these sins to You and claim through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ my forgiveness and cleansing. I cancel all ground that the enemy has gained through my willful involvement in sin. I ask this in the wonderful name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Step 7: Acquiescence vs. Renunciation

The last step to freedom is to renounce the sins of your ancestors and any curses which may have been placed on you. In giving the Ten Commandments, God said: “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exod. 20:4, 5) Demonic strongholds can be passed on from one generation to the next. This is not to deny that many problems are transmitted genetically or acquired from an immoral atmosphere. All three conditions can predispose an individual to a particular sin. When you tear down a satanic stronghold which has been established in your family, you may have some resistance. In order to walk free from past influences, pray the following prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, I come to You as Your child, purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated in to the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has passed on to me from my ancestors. As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ and who sits with Him in heavenly places, I reject any and every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. I now command every familiar spirit and every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ that is in or around me to go to the pit and to remain there until the day of judgment. I now ask You, heavenly Father, to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I submit my body as an instrument of righteousness, a living sacrifice, that I may glorify You in my body. All this I do in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Once you have secured your freedom by going through these seven steps, you may find demonic influences attempting reentry days or even months later. One person shared that she heard a spirit say to her mind, “I’m back” two days after she had been set free. “No, you’re not” she proclaimed aloud. The attack ceased immediately. One victory does not constitute winning the war. Freedom must be maintained. One jubilant lady asked after completing these steps, “Will I always be like this?” I told her that she would stay free as long as she remained in right relationship with God. “Even if you slip and fall” I encouraged, “you know how to get right with God again.”

One victim of incredible atrocities shared with me an illustration. “It’s like being forced to play a game with an ugly stranger in my own home. I kept losing and wanting to quit, but the ugly stranger wouldn’t let me. Finally, I called the police (a higher authority) and they came and escorted the stranger out. He knocked on the door trying to regain entry, but this time, I recognized his voice and didn’t let him in.” What a beautiful illustration of gaining freedom in Christ. We call upon Jesus, the ultimate authority, and he escorts the enemy out of our lives. Know the truth, stand firm and resist the evil one. Seek out good Christian fellowship and commit yourself to regular times of bible study and prayer. God loves you and will never leave or forsake you.

After Care

Freedom must be maintained. You have won a very important battle in an ongoing war. Freedom is ours as long as we keep choosing truth and standing firm in the strength of the Lord. If new memories should surface, or if you become aware of “lies” that you have been living then deal with them in the same way that you just did. Here are some suggestions:

1. Do seek legitimate Christian fellowship where you can walk in the light and speak the truth in love. We need each other.
2. Do get into your bible daily. You may want to take the Doctrinal Affirmation, express it daily, and look up the verses.
3. Do take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Watch over your thought life, reject the lie, choose the truth and stand firm in your position in Christ.
4. Don't drift away! It's very easy to get lazy in your thoughts and revert to the old habit patterns of thinking. Share your struggles openly. Remember taking authority over Satan has to be verbal. Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth.
5. Don't expect another person to fight your battle for you. Others can help but they can't think, pray or read the bible for you.
6. Do express daily something like the following prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, I honor You as my sovereign Lord. I acknowledge that You are always present with me. You are the only all-powerful and only wise God. You are kind and loving in all your ways. I love you and I thank You that I am united with Christ, and spiritually alive in Him. I choose not to love the world and I crucify the flesh and all its passions.

I thank You for the life that I now have in Christ, and I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit that I may live my life free from sin. I declare my dependence upon You, and I take my stand against Satan and all his lying ways. I choose to believe the truth and I refuse to be discouraged. You are a God of all hope and I am confident that You will meet my needs as I seek to live according to your word. I also express with confidence that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I now take my stand against Satan and command him all his evil spirits to depart from me and I put on the whole armor of God. I submit my body as a living sacrifice and renew my mind by the living word of God in order that I may prove that the will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect. I ask and do all these things in the precious name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.