

Lesson Two

Freedom's Partner

LESSON IDEA

Freedom goes hand-in-hand with an indispensable partner: responsibility. We merit freedom when we behave responsibly, but freedom is inevitably lost when we act irresponsibly.

VISUAL AID

None recommended for this lesson.

LAST WEEK, we discussed the nature and importance of freedom, concluding that freedom can be defined as the ability to act for oneself; to make our own choices about what we do and how we live.

Were we to visit a busy shopping center and ask those we meet if they favor freedom, all would probably respond with an enthusiastic, "Yes!" Everyone prefers to live in freedom. But if we were to ask what steps are necessary to deserve freedom, there would doubtless be a wide variety of answers. Few of us ever stop to think about the requirements of freedom.

Tonight, we will examine situations in everyday life to pin-point the basic principles of freedom and how its blessings can be attained.

FIRST, let us look at the Smith family. Mr. and Mrs. Smith have four children: Larry, age 18; Diane, age 15; Becky, age eight; and Jimmy, who just turned three.

Larry recently graduated from high school and now works as a clerk in a hardware store, saving most of his salary for college. He recently received his driver's license and is allowed to use the family car for special occasions.

Diane graduated from junior high last year and is now a sophomore in high school. She earns spending money by babysitting on weekends. Becky is in elementary school. Her mom depends on her to help tend Jimmy after school.

Which of the three older children has the most freedom? Which has the least? What determines how much freedom each has? [Encourage an in-depth discussion of these questions. A likely answer, though only partially correct, is that the

older the child, the more freedom he or she has. Someone may even suggest that Jimmy has the most freedom, since his responsibilities are virtually nil. But absence of responsibilities is not the true test of freedom, for prisoners also have very few responsibilities — and very little freedom.]

It is true that Larry has the most freedom, but is it due to his age? What if he performed poorly at the hardware store? What if he behaved irresponsibly, causing his parents to lose trust or question his judgment? What freedoms might they take away? [Examples: use of the family car, staying out late on weekends, handling the money he earns.]

Jimmy, the toddler, has the least freedom, since he has little or no control over where he goes, what he eats, or the toys and friends he plays with. [Encourage a discussion about why this is so.]

We see that an important factor in determining how much freedom a child is given is the degree of trust and confidence parents have in his or her judgment. Mr. and Mrs. Smith expect Larry to make the wisest decisions, while Jimmy cannot,

FOR YOUNGER AMERICANS

Since the second example in today's lesson is most appropriate for junior and senior high school students, it is recommended that it be omitted for children in elementary school.

As an alternative, encourage younger children to learn the relationship between freedom and responsibility for themselves by noting how a pet is raised.

When a puppy first becomes a part of the family, for example, how much freedom is it given? What is it permitted to do for itself compared to what must be done for it?

Before the puppy is allowed to go outside alone, what must it first learn? When do you know that it can be trusted not to run into the street or damage furniture? How is it taught what it can and cannot do?

How does appropriate punishment help lead, in the long run, to freedom? What would happen if the puppy were never disciplined for doing what is wrong, or never taught to be careful? How do these lessons apply to us?

