

Lesson Three

The Source Of Freedom

LESSON IDEA

The partnership between freedom and responsibility can be traced back to the Garden of Eden, where we first learn that freedom is a gift from God that includes corresponding responsibilities.

VISUAL AID

The *Holy Bible*, and enough magazines (those with illustrations or advertisements showing people in action) to give one to each participant in the Heritage Hour discussion.

AMERICANS have inherited many wonderful blessings from past generations. Consider some of the items in our home that make life more pleasant and enjoyable. What do we have today that our pioneer forefathers did not have? [Ask each family member to name one or two items, such as telephones, electric lights, plumbing, washing machines, television, video recorders, computers, and so on. Then ask each one what life would be like without them.]

It is difficult to imagine going without such miraculous conveniences. Yet each is the result of the greatest blessing of all, which is neither an object nor a machine, but freedom: the ability think and act — and invent — for ourselves.

Freedom means that we can make our own choices. But as discussed last week, our decisions must be responsible or we may lose some or all of our freedom. As we grow and mature, what are some of the major decisions we must make about our lives? [Give each child an opportunity to mention two or three examples, such as which college to attend, what career to follow, and whom to marry.] Would we like it if someone else were to make such choices for us? Why?

What if you wanted to be a writer, but were told that you had to paint houses? Or preferred to be a policeman, but were ordered to be a fireman? Or looked forward to being a mother and homemaker, but were forced instead to work in a factory? Would you be as creative, successful, hardworking, or happy if you could not choose your own career? Why? [Give each member of the family an

opportunity to answer.]

ONE REASON why freedom is so valuable is it enables men and women to be their most creative. They work longer, harder, and more productively when they are free to exercise their talents and abilities. Because we are all different, we enjoy different things and express ourselves in different ways. For example, how many sports can we play? Can you each name a few? What if there were only one or two to choose from? [Let everyone answer.] What are some of the hobbies we can select? What are some of our career options? Who should determine which of these activities you will select?

The freedom to “be all that you can be,” as the old Army slogan said, is taken for granted by many Americans. Let’s take a moment and thumb through a few magazines to see how many different pictures we can find showing people at work or at play, following a career or hobby of their own choosing. See if you can find two examples of per-

FOR YOUNGER AMERICANS

The following lesson is appropriate for children at any grade level. To stimulate additional discussion, you may wish to explore its theme further.

The story of creation and the Garden of Eden fascinates most young minds. You may wish to read Chapter Three of Genesis, which describes the temptation, the fall, and being driven from the Garden. Here are some of the additional questions that are raised:

Why did Adam and Eve hide when they heard God in the Garden? Do we sometimes want to hide when we’ve done something wrong and are fearful of being found out?

When God asked why they had eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Is it a natural tendency to shift blame to others when we have done something wrong? How did God punish the serpent? How did he punish Adam and Eve?

Do you think that Adam and Eve learned a lesson from what happened? Would they have a greater appreciation for freedom? Would they want to teach their children the importance of making responsible choices?

sons using their freedom to create something or to relax. Now let's take another moment to discuss each. Can you explain how a picture you found portrays freedom at work? If the person (or persons) involved were not free, might there be guards watching, as in prisons? Would your picture even be possible without freedom?

We see that freedom to use our talents responsibly is very important. The ability to reason, create, examine, and invent all help to identify us as individuals who have the freedom to follow paths of our own choosing.

WHAT IS the source of such freedom? When was it given to us, and by whom or what? [Encourage each family member to participate in the discussion, but be prepared for some surprising answers. Three of the most common answers are incorrect.] They are:

The Constitution. No, the Constitution does not give us freedom. It merely protects our pre-existing individual rights and freedoms by defining and limiting the role of government through a series of checks and balances and a system based on the rule of law rather than the whim of dictators, oligarchies, or majorities.

The Government. No, because anything government gives us now can be taken back later. Government does not give us freedom; its purpose is to protect our lives and property so that we may enjoy the freedom we already have.

The Founding Fathers. While it is true that our country's Founders helped to secure our freedom when they declared independence from England, won the War for Independence, and wrote the Constitution, they themselves did not believe that they were giving us freedom. Remember what they said in the Declaration of Independence? Have someone read the following passage:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

The Founders proclaimed that men possessed unalienable rights. What does "unalienable" mean? [Cannot be surrendered or taken away.] What were the unalienable rights with which we are endowed at birth? [Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.] Who gave us these unalienable rights, according to the Declaration of Independence? [Wait until someone answers "God" or "our Creator."] The Founders recognized that freedom comes from God, and that no government has the right to take it away. The purpose of government, they believed, is to protect us in the enjoyment of our God-given freedom.

IN THE FIRST chapter of the first book of the Bible (Genesis, which means beginning), we are told that when God created man and woman, he also gave them certain responsibilities and the freedom to make their own choices. Who was the first man? The first woman? Where did they live?

Let's read a few passages from Genesis to confirm that God wanted Adam and Eve, and their posterity, to enjoy freedom and to accept responsibility. Select two family members to read the following passages from the first two chapters:

Genesis, Chapter One

26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis, Chapter Two

15. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

The belief that freedom is a right given to man by God, and that government should protect rather than interfere with it, has been called "the essence of Americanism."

One of the most significant victories for freedom prior to the Declaration of Independence*, was the signing of the Magna Carta* by King John of England in 1215. That document has been aptly described as "the cornerstone of English liberty." However, it did not proclaim that liberty is was a God-given right, but rather something to be granted by a king.

What rights did the nobles win from King John? Did the provisions of the Magna Carta extend to all English people? Did King John and his successors adhere to the charter?

What are some of the similarities between the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence? What are some of the most important differences? What liberties that we enjoy in this country, if any, can be traced to the Magna Carta?

*Look up these documents in your encyclopedia history book.

mayest freely eat:

17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

19. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

THE STATEMENT that God made man "in our image, after our likeness" tells us that man was given faculties similar to those possessed by the Creator Himself. Limited creative ability, the desire for freedom, and the necessity of accepting responsibility for one's actions are attributes inherent in man because God planned it that way from the beginning.

What are some of the responsibilities that God gave to Adam? [Dressing the garden, naming the animals, and having dominion over all living creatures.]

Once Adam accepted his God-given responsibil-

ities, did he have more or less freedom? Was he given power over other creatures? Were any given power over him? [Encourage each family member to answer.] Adam was indeed given dominion over all other earthly creatures. The food and other necessities he required were freely available, so he did not have to work. We can all agree that he had a great deal of freedom.

Did God place any limitations on Adam's freedom? Was there anything he was not permitted to do?

Indeed there was. Adam was told not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. All other fruit in the garden was his for the taking, including fruit from the tree of life. The two trees (life and knowledge) symbolize a great truth: God has given us certain laws and rules to live by, but He has also granted us the freedom to choose whether or not to obey those edicts. Adam was permitted to exercise his power of choice, without coercion by his Creator. God merely warned him that he must bear the consequences of his choices.

Despite God's counsel, Adam and Eve opted to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And because they did, they were driven from the Garden and not allowed to return. They had to endure much trial and sorrow because they violated God's law. The lesson for us is that God has given each of us the freedom to make our own choices, but he has also placed us in a world that operates under a moral code which assures that the choices we make have inevitable results, either for good or evil.

Based on what we have learned tonight, which type of government do you think would result in the most freedom for its citizens? One that honors God, and bases its laws on His teachings, or one that ignores the Creator (or denies His existence altogether) and establishes man as the highest moral and legal authority? [Encourage family members to compare the differences between the United States and Communist countries. What freedoms do we enjoy that the citizens of such countries are denied? Are there signs that we may be moving in their direction? If so, to what extent do they result from the shirking of personal responsibility by our citizenry?]

Concluding Thought

It is significant to note that tyrants throughout

history have sought to substitute worship of the State for the worship of God. And the more they have undermined religion, the more they enslaved their own citizens.

The Communists, for example, teach that belief in God is "the opium of the people." They claim that only when God and His moral law system is eliminated will man truly be free. Yet these are the very countries where man has historically enjoyed the least amount of freedom.

Is there a reason why belief in God and acceptance of His laws leads to freedom, but atheism leads to tyranny and suppression of the individual? What is it?

Looking Ahead

In our next lesson we will discuss one of freedom's complications: the need to make choices. The more freedom we enjoy, the more choices we must make. Slaves neither need to make, nor are able to make, many choices. If we desire to be free, we must learn to make responsible decisions. Doing so can be difficult at times, and may even entail questions of life and death. As we shall see.