

I Want To Do My Own Thing

Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.
(1 Peter 2:16)

At some time in their young lives, every growing child laments, "I want to do my own thing! I want my independence." These words can also be very tormenting for parents. A child's desire for independence is often expressed before his or her maturity level can handle the decisions that are associated with it.

Consider how Scripture talks about the days of youth. The Old Testament writers observed: "I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment" (Proverbs 7:7). The Apostle Paul noted: "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me" (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Every person has had to learn how to write, ride a bike, speak, operate appliances, and so forth. The same is true of independence, because it requires training. Think, for example, about that first drive in a car by yourself — such independence first involved the training to operate the vehicle.

True freedom is enjoyed by those with the spiritual maturity to recognize that it can only be achieved in accord with God's will. All other freedoms are simply sinful, reckless abandonment. They are not freedoms at all! They are slavery to sin.

As parents, our goal is to prepare our children for true freedom. Like it or not, the day is coming when our children are going to grow up and be on their own. We can send them to the best schools to earn the most valued degrees. We can train them in the most sought-after and profitable skills. But, if we do not train them in what *true* freedom is, then we fail.

Our children need to recognize that in true freedom they can walk through the valley of the shadow of death and not be held captive by fear. In true freedom they can feast before their enemies and not be held prisoner by fear. In true freedom they can correct the erring, proclaim what is right, and defend the defenseless without being bound by the desire to please the world or their flesh. True freedom begins with an understanding of God's will and the faith-moved commitment to live according to that word.

Easy to say, isn't it? But how does it happen? It begins when children see how parents use their own freedom. Is it used for self-serving reasons? Do our children really see us enjoying true freedom, or do they see us as captives of sin? The truth is that they probably observe both. That is why the task of preparing our children for independence is integrally tied to learning a better way to live in that independence ourselves. Ultimately, the manner in which our children observe us doing our own thing is going to reflect in how they ultimately will do their own thing. By the grace of God that thing will be God-pleasing.

For additional information and resources in dealing with this life topic, visit the Christian Life Resources website at www.ChristianLifeResources.com or call us at 1-800-729-9535.