

Hard Questions Too Strict?

Freedom in Christ is the power to live as God designed (Galatians 5:1). One of the foundational issues or objections people have with the Christian faith is that it is too restrictive and limits their freedom. For many, the idea of freedom means that we should have the ability to define it for ourselves and set our own boundaries. But in truth, the limits and restrictions God calls us to actually lead us to far greater measures of freedom, blessing, and joy. He prohibits and commands things for our good, out of His deep love for us. As we live as God designed, we progressively crucify the desires of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit become increasingly evident in our lives.

GETTING STARTED

If someone were to ask you if you think Christianity is *too restrictive*, what would you say? Where, within the Christian church in general, have we made rules where God did not? Where have we possibly taken too much freedom?

GO DEEPER

1. Paul specifically says in Galatians 5:1 that *it is for freedom that Christ has set us free*. What is Paul trying to say and teach in this verse? What was the temptation for Paul's audience at the time, and what was he trying to correct? How does this apply to followers of Jesus today?
2. In Galatians 5:13, Paul writes pointedly that we are not to use our freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. Why are restrictions necessary to be free? Why does the concept of freedom in Christ *not* mean that we can define freedom for ourselves?
3. Paul, in Galatians 5:19-23, masterfully contrasts the works for the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. In what ways do the works of the flesh actually produce bondage rather than freedom (contrary to the common, cultural belief)? How does walking in step with the Spirit – embracing and pursuing the fruit of the Spirit – give us true freedom?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Where are you keeping and enforcing rules that God did not give, or taking liberty beyond what God desires?
2. What do you possibly need to change to begin to walk in step with the Spirit more, to live as God designed and intended? Who or what do you need to give up? Who or what do you need to embrace?

PRACTICE IT NOW

Spend some time in prayer as a group, asking our Heavenly Father to show you areas that you have been either too restrictive as a Christian or have taken too much freedom. If there are portions of your life where you have defined your own freedom, ask Him for forgiveness. Read Galatians 5:22-23 out loud as a group, and then ask God to help you grow in the fruit of the Spirit and to walk in step with Him.