

Hello,

On behalf of the congregations of St. James, Grace & Ferguson Presbyterian Churches as well as our online platform New Hope Miramichi, I want to welcome you to part seven of our Summer Family Faith Series.

Today's message, Freedom Begins Today, is the seventh of ten messages to help your family strengthen their faith over the summer as you find ways that your family can integrate God more and more in your family circle, as you begin with the ABC's of freedom that will develop your family's long-term faith. We will have resources for each member of your family – first we start with Bible readings, then the message and then we provide you with online resources for the rest of the week.

My name is Colin Holmes I am the interim Pastor, here and I want to welcome you to today's service. No matter where you are – here in the congregation, at home, at work, in the car; by yourself or with loved ones, my prayer for you is for you to hear every spoken word, to ponder every word that is read – take it all in and know this: God loves you... God cares for you!

Announcement:

Miramichi Valley Bible Camp have spots available for their summer day camps, which are running until August 28th. To find out more details about these camps, please go online to <http://www.miramichivalleybiblecamp.com/> or call Ashley at (506) 625-8708 or send an e-mail to the Camp: mvbc@onehopecanada.ca

Call to Worship: Psalm 71:14-18

14 As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. 15 My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long—though I know not how to relate them all. 16 I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign Lord; I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone. 17 Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. 18 Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.

Responsive Reading: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12 In fact,

everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Old Testament: Psalm 139:1-14

1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. 5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. 7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. 11 If I say,

“Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

New Testament: 2 Corinthians 5:16- 2 Corinthians 6:2

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6:1 As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. 2 For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard

you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.

Freedom Begins Today

If I were to tell you, that today, everything you’re going through could come to an end, that you could be free from all of the hurts, habits and hang-ups in your life, what would you think? God’s reality for you is not the same as the reality you’re living in, is it? Are you living in the prison of self-doubt that keeps them from making the right decisions? Are you chained to living a life they never planned to live? Is your reality far from God’s reality? God has given to us the English alphabet to help us know in our minds and live in our lives: Freedom Begins Today; a freedom from the world’s reality; a freedom of living God’s reality. It’s as simple as the ABC’s.

For the sake of time, I want you to know we are only going to learn 6 letters A-F in the alphabet that God has given to us to help us understand, embrace and live out the freedom God has in store for us.

A – A Wise Child

Proverbs 10:1 “A wise child brings joy to his father...”

God, our Heavenly Father, wants us to bring joy to Him. We do that when we live in accordance to the principles He’s laid out in His Word. Yet, there are countless generations of people who know there’s something not right, but they don’t

know why. Let me explain with a story from one of my Mentors, John Maxwell in his book Put Your Dreams to the Test: “Business professors Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad wrote about an experiment conducted with a group of monkeys. Four monkeys were placed in a room that had a tall pole in the center. Suspended from the top of that pole was a bunch of bananas.

One of the hungry monkeys started climbing the pole to get something to eat, but just as he reached out to grab a banana, he was doused with a torrent of cold water. Squealing, he scampered down the pole and abandoned his attempt to feed himself. Each monkey made a similar attempt, and each one was drenched with cold water. After making several attempts, they finally gave up.

Then researchers removed one of the monkeys from the room and replaced him with a new monkey. As the newcomer began to climb the pole, the other three grabbed him and pulled him down to the ground. After trying to climb the pole several times and being dragged down by the others, he finally gave up and never attempted to climb the pole again.

The researchers replaced the original monkeys, one by one, with new ones, and each time a new monkey was brought in, he would be dragged down by the others before he could

reach the bananas. In time, only monkeys who had never received a cold torrent of water were in the room, but none of them would climb the pole. They prevented one another from climbing up to get the bananas, but none of them knew why.”

You’ve known there’s something going on in your life for a long time. God placed that void in your life that only He can fill. But somewhere along the way, your family or friends have pulled you away. They just keep pulling you away from what will feed you and give you the life and nourishment like that bunch of bananas. Yet neither you nor they know why?

The letter A is the beginning of not only the English alphabet it’s also the starting point to your freedom. Be a wise child and listen to what God wants for you. And this brings us to the letter B.

B – Born Again

John 3:3 “3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God except if they are **born again.**”

God’s plan isn’t about receiving a bunch of bananas or about getting sprayed with a torrent of cold water. But it is about knowing that life on earth isn’t all that God has in store for you. Yes, God wants to take care of your physical needs, but He wants even more to take care of the spiritual need that

every human being has. No matter what our age or condition, God want you to be re-born. He wants you to live, not just for the here and now, but with Him for all eternity. And that begins when we understand that that will only happen when we are born, not of flesh and blood over again, but are born of the spirit. It's when we physically, mentally and spiritually give our lives back to the One who created, by confessing our sins, repenting of that sin and living God's way, not our own way. And this leads us to the third point, the letter "C"

C – Come

Matthew 11: 28 **"Come** to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

I want you to know that this third letter is so important in the life of a Christian. It's important not simply because it's close to the first on the list, no, it's important because it's a sign of posturing to the One who created us. In other words, when we have finally stopped living selfishly and all of the busyness and chaos life can throw at us, we find ourselves at a place of exhaustion – sometimes we don't know why or how we got there. But I will say this, God is finally getting through to you. You're becoming a child who is realizing the wisdom God speaks of is starting to sink in. You're understanding why you need to be born again and that salvation is not found in you, but is a gift from God for you. And it takes you're coming to

the place where you don't have life all figured out, and you finally trust God and come to Him, for it is in Him that you find the rest your weary soul has been seeking for so long. As you come to Him, He welcomes you with open arms. He calls you His child and life changes – freedom begins today! Your story has a positive spiritual ending. Not only have you received wisdom, but you have brought joy to God as you have been born again. His story and your story become woven back together like He intended. And you know have something to share. This brings us to the letter “D”

D – Declare

Psalm 71:18 “I **declare** your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.”

You see, when you were born again, this spiritual regeneration or rebirth was meant to be declared, not denied or concealed. God has called every son, every daughter in Christ to pass on in word and deed all the things God has done, all the things you have experienced, including the power of God unto salvation to “the next generation”.

Like the first message in this series “Freedom Passed On” God has indeed called us to pass on the baton of truth, God's Word, to our families, friends, neighbors, and yes, even our enemies. And, like last week's message, “Enthusiastic Freedom” we are compelled to let our light shine.

So, what is a person to do if they are not as outgoing as someone else? How can a person sitting in the seats or pews of a Church share their faith, after all, most have never been to seminary or Bible school? Well, this leads us to the next letter of our Freedom Begins Today ABC's – the letter "E".

E – Equipped

2 Timothy 3:16,17 “16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly **equipped** for every good work.”

The Bible, God's Word, His instruction book for life and living tells us that this book is not like any other. For the born-again believer, it is what God expects us to read, study and apply to life so that we “may be thoroughly equipped”.

When you started your work, what did you do before you started or in most cases before you started? You studied. You went to a school or training center or received training to do the work set before you. But what happened when you weren't trained correctly or didn't receive the right training? You felt ill-prepared, at the very least. Some of you might have even gotten a little frustrated at your boss or coworkers.

Well, this application is the same for your faith. If you're not trained, if you haven't prepared for the work of the Lord, you're going to feel ill-prepared to share your faith and you might even get frustrated with the Pastor when he asks you about your faith.

Here's what I know. You and I are accountable to God for everything He has entrusted to you. If you're a born-again believer, you're responsible for your faith – how you live and how you share it. Just like if you're a parent, you're responsible to God for how you raise your children, not how they turn out, but how you steer them spiritually. And God has given to us, the perfect “owners manual” so to speak equip you to be the best man or woman of God you can be.

F – Favor

2 Corinthians 6:2 “... I tell you, now is the time of God's **favor**, now is the day of salvation.”

Now, if you have been following the ABC's of today's message and you're not sure where you stand, the Bible want to pour out on you the most grace possible, the maximum mercy available. As you look at the world around you, you might think things are really bad, with the death of so many globally by the Corona virus pandemic, the 23 killed in Nova Scotia by a gunman, the financial crisis of the closed businesses, the explosion in Lebanon, just to name a few... I

want you to know, that this is nothing compared to what is to come. Now I say that, not to scare or frighten you. But in a few weeks, we are going to be starting our study of the Book of Revelation. And it is clear that there is more to come. So, you can wait for that series to take your faith seriously, or you can, by faith, look at today and say like God wants for you “Freedom Begins Today”. You can believe that God’s favor is on you, because there will be a time when God will pour out His judgement on the earth, and if you’re not a born-again believer, you will live through that terrible time called the Tribulation. For the born-again believer, you will be raptured, saved from that torment and you will join the Lord and, in the end, you will spend the rest of your everlasting life with Him.

Conclusion

A (A wise Child) Today it’s time to wise up – B (Born Again) Today it’s time to be born again – C (Come to Me) Today it’s time to come to Jesus, either for the first time or for the first time in a long time – D (Declare) Today, it’s time to declare your faith publicly, to your family, friends, and neighbors – E (Equipped) Today it’s time to equip yourself with the Word of God so that you can be share your faith – F (Favor) Today it’s time to receive the favor of God on your life and receive

Christ as your Lord & Savior. These are the ABC's to assure you that Freedom Begins Today, not tomorrow. Today.

Let's Pray

Prayers:

Miramichi Valley Bible Camp – Camps & Director

The people of Lebanon

Gloria P – back issues

Reminders:

Online Prayer Meeting: Wednesday's at 5PM FB Live

Don't miss our 8th message in our Summer Family Faith Series, "Freedom Roots" how you and your kids can be equipped with a Biblical world view that roots your faith. Same time 10AM Atlantic or 9AM Eastern time.

Benediction: Colossians 3:16-17

16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.