

Breaking Free
Romans 6:1-14
Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Question (get everyone involved in discussion):

- What's one habit that you've gotten rid of? Or one that you'd like to get rid of? (At this point in the discussion we are thinking of light-hearted, mixed-company-appropriate kinds of things!)

Transition: Today we're starting a series called "Breaking Free." We're going to spend the next month talking about some of the specific habits and patterns that we long to get free from. Today we're taking a big picture view, but starting next week, we'll get into a few specific kinds of sin that often hold us captive, and how we can get free from them.

- What do you think it means to be "free"? Define or describe.

Before Presenting Romans 6, Josh reviewed sin:

- How do boundaries relate to sin?
- Where do our boundaries come from? What are some examples?
- What does Pastor Josh say is "the foundational, most destructive 'sin'" that humans commit? Discuss.
- What are some ways that sin can "enslave" you?

Quoting Josh: "But today I want you to see that ***because Jesus is alive, you are free to live a new life now.*** If we're going to understand how this works, we need a little context here. Paul was writing to new believers in Jesus about the essence of the Christian faith: grace... how God credits us with perfect righteousness in his sight not because of anything that we've done, not because we've kept the religious checklist, but because Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life and died in our place. And now he's responding to their logical question. 'Hey, if God is going to forgive us when we sin, and God's favor/love/acceptance for us don't depend on our performance, shouldn't we sin big and then ask for forgiveness? Can't we have our cake and eat it too?'"

Read Romans 6:1-10 to see how Paul answers this question:

- The phrase, "Died to sin," is very important. What does it mean? How do you die to sin?
- What is Jesus' role in enabling us to die to sin? Discuss the connection.
- What does it mean to be united with Jesus and how does being united with Jesus affect our status with sin?

- How does baptism relate to our salvation? Doesn't salvation just come through faith? Remember Josh compared baptism and faith to aspects of the marriage ceremony: when we say our vows vs. putting on the ring.
- However, let's be honest with ourselves: If I've been given a new identity, why do we still struggle with the same temptations and patterns?
- How does the following statement from verse 10 set us free (at least in theory): "The death he [Jesus] died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."

Read Romans 6:10-14 to see how to put this theory into practice:

- In verse 11, the verb "count yourselves" means "to reckon." What do you think this verb means? What are you to do?
- What light is shed when reading the similar concept in Gen 15:6: When Abraham believed God's outrageous promise that Abraham would have a kid in his old age, "[God] reckoned it to him as righteousness."
- How does this reckoning relate to having a new identity and being part of a new (God's) family?
- Jesus was talking with his disciples after the Last Supper. He said, quoting a prophecy from Isaiah 53, "It is written: 'And he was numbered [counted/reckoned/*logizomai*] with the transgressors'" (Luke 22:37). How does Jesus being reckoned as a sinner--when he wasn't--help us when we are accused as a sinner, and we are?
- What is your emotional response to Jesus being reckoned a sinner so that you could be reckoned as dead to sin and alive to God? Discuss.

Prayer:

- Pray for one another that we can think the truth that we are dead to sin due to Christ's substitutionary death for us and that we can act daily as if this were true.
- What other needs exist in your group? Spend some time praying for them.