

The “easy” prison guards of our soul and small group ministry

Ah, freedom. As I write article I am sitting in a Starbuck’s at 7 a.m. That in itself doesn’t seem to out of the ordinary. Factor in now that I am not a morning person, it is my day off, I was up late and being here is not my choice. I am a prisoner! To what? My daughters schedule. As an incoming freshman she tried out for “cheer” at her High School. She made the squad! We were so happy...but reality was just beginning to set in. Like so many parents who have High Schoolers involved in school activities or teams, you become a prisoner to the schedule they need to keep. My freedom to choose, has been taken away.

When you talk about freedom, what do you think? To be honest, for so many of us we probably never think about it too much because freedom is always around us. To most of us, unless we are in prison or an addictive behavior that imprisons us, freedom rarely comes to mind. Being a “prisoner” probably comes more to our minds (if at all) in thinking about work or our schedule our kids impose upon us or sometimes ministry. It could be very easy to think that maybe nothing is keeping us prisoner from freedom. So for small group point people, what could be enslaving us making us a prisoner...without us even knowing?

For me the subtle things in life have the rippling effects in my ministry that can take my freedom, more than the “big” sinful issues take can crush our freedom and ministry. Don’t get me wrong; those “big” sins can be very damaging, enslaving, imprisoning and destructive. However, see if these “easy” things in life that seems insignificant can become the “big” issues in your life? Could these “easy” things actually hold us more captive than we think and in reality take our freedom in Christ? See if these “easies” resonate with you.

Its “easy” to:

- avoid conflict and the difficult conversations
- not answer the phone when you know it’s that same guy that you have talked to 10 times in the past week about the mess that he is in
- turn into a vegetable when the kids go to bed and not show my spouse the love and attention that she deserves to receive from me
- go to email in the evening, where I'll get my pats on the back and recognition of authority
- say that conflict between two volunteer leaders will work itself out
- let programs dominate our small group ministry
- not make space to have lunch with family
- not make space to have a date with my wife
- give in to the distraction and temptation that Satan puts in front of me
- not exercise
- not read my Bible or Pray
- to compare
- to care too much about numbers
- say yes to every member's ideas of what our small group ministry should do
- not involve the right people in the decision making process
- to be tenacious, but much more difficult to be wise and patient

Do you do what's easy, not what's right? Is it possible that all that "easy" stuff in my life is really not "easy" but actually a prison guard we don't realize is taking our freedom away? Is this "easy" taking our freedom and slowly constricting on our life? Is it suffocating our marriage, family, friendships, or small group ministry and we don't even realize it?

I would encourage you during this month where we as a nation we celebrate freedom, you look deep into your life and see if right outside your heart is a prison guard named "easy". Galatians 3:22 says, "But the Scriptures declare that we are **all** prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of **freedom** only by believing in Jesus Christ." Trust Christ to help you do what's right, not the "easy" that takes freedom.