

2025 DNOW SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM

Theme: SET FREE

Dear Leaders,

First off, thank you for saying yes to leading this weekend with us. You could be doing a hundred other things, but you chose to invest in students, and that means a lot to us. Our prayer is that this weekend, your small groups will see what it truly means to be Set Free and to live free in Christ. Freedom is one of the most used words in our world, but for followers of Jesus, it means something much deeper and lasting.

This weekend, we'll look at what Scripture says about how Jesus sets us free, not just from sin, but for something greater. Each session builds on the next, and you'll have opportunities to walk your students through God's Word, ask honest questions, and help them experience what real freedom in Christ looks like.

Here's how the sessions are laid out:

Session 1 – Set Free in Christ (John 8:31–32)

Session 2 – Set Free from... (Psalm 118:1–9)

Session 3 – Set Free in... (Romans 8:1–4)

Session 4 – Set Free to Serve (1 Peter 2:13–17)

As you prepare, remember that your presence matters as much as your preparation. Students need leaders who will listen, care, and point them to the truth. You don't have to have all the answers you just have to show them Jesus.

Here are your top 10 leader tips as you teach this weekend:

1. Allow personal stories to shine when appropriate.
2. Share both successes and struggles that connect to the session topics.
3. Keep the group conversational rather than turning it into a lecture.
4. Call on students to share, but don't pressure anyone who isn't ready.
5. If someone dominates the discussion, give them a helpful task like reading Scripture or asking questions to others.
6. Encourage students to be respectful and listen while others share.
7. Add short bits of context to Scripture so it makes sense to everyone.
8. Prepare as if you'll be leading solo. You may be asked to split into smaller groups.
9. Pray before each time you teach. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your heart.
10. Ask open-ended questions that lead to meaningful discussion, not just quick answers.

Know that you're being prayed for even now. We're asking God to work deeply in you so that He can work through you. Thank you for saying yes to helping students find freedom in Christ this weekend.

In Christ,
Chip Paul
Radiate Student Pastor

Session 1 – Set Free in Christ – Friday Night

INTRO

Welcome students to your first session of the weekend! If your group doesn't know each other well, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. You can make it fun by asking everyone to share their name and their favorite fast-food restaurant or something similar.

Transition to the lesson by saying something like, "This weekend, we're going to talk about what it means to be truly set free in Christ. Tonight, we're starting with where freedom begins with knowing Jesus and walking in His truth."

READ – John 8:31-32

In this passage, Jesus reminds His followers that real freedom starts with continuing in His Word and knowing the truth. The kind of freedom He offers isn't about doing whatever we want but about becoming who He made us to be.

QUESTION: What do you think most people mean when they talk about freedom? How is that different from the kind of freedom Jesus is talking about?

When Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free," He wasn't just talking about facts. He was talking about Himself. Jesus doesn't just **tell** the truth; He **is** the Truth. The more we **know** Him, the more we walk in **freedom**.

QUESTION: Why do you think people sometimes feel "trapped" even though they seem to have freedom?

Students might mention pressure, comparison, anxiety, guilt, or expectations. Help them see that sin and lies from the enemy can keep us bound, even when everything looks fine on the outside.

C.S. Lewis once said, "You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth becomes a matter of life and death."

Knowing Jesus isn't just **information**—it's **transformation**. When we follow Him and continue in His Word, our hearts and minds begin to change. That's where **freedom** starts.

QUESTION: What does it mean to "continue" in God's Word? How does that help us grow in freedom?

Tim Keller once said, "Freedom is not the ability to do whatever you want, but the power to do what you ought."

Following Jesus gives us a new kind of freedom. Not freedom from **obedience**, but freedom to **obey with joy**.

QUESTION: How can living for Jesus actually make life freer instead of more restricted?

As the group talks, help them see that freedom in Christ means being released from guilt, shame, fear, and striving for approval. When we walk in His truth, we can live with peace and purpose.

Re-READ – John 8:32

Emphasizing the last part.

Explain to your students that what Jesus is saying here is that He is truth, absolute truth, and His truth is a freeing truth. The truth that Jesus is the Son of God, sent to take away the sins of the world, and that we can

KNOW Him through saving faith, is a truth that breaks down every wall that holds us back.

What we're going to see over our time in small group and large group is that Jesus sets us free. Truly free.

- Jesus sets us free from sin.
- He sets us free from the pressure we put on ourselves to measure up to the world.
- He sets us free from stress and anxiety. He sets us free from the world's definition of success. Jesus gives us freedom from the pressures we face, pressures from outside and inside.

He does not make our problems go away, but He provides the assurance that in Him, there is no problem that can overcome us.

That is freedom, and That is what Jesus promises.

Takeaways

1. Freedom begins with **knowing Jesus**.
2. The truth of Christ sets us free from the **lies** we believe.
3. Freedom is not the absence of **limits** but the presence of **peace**.
4. God's Word helps us walk daily in **truth** and **freedom**.

QUESTION: What's one thing that stood out to you from tonight's session? How can you live differently knowing that you are set free in Christ?

Close your group time in prayer, thanking God for the freedom He gives through His Son.

Session 2 – Set Free from...– Saturday Morning

INTRO

Welcome everyone back for the morning session. If your group is a little slow to wake up, start with something lighthearted.

- ask about the funniest or strangest thing that happened last night at the host home.
- ask “What’s something that stresses you out but probably shouldn’t?” (examples: running late, schoolwork, your phone dying, etc.)

Transition by saying something like, “Yesterday we talked about how Jesus sets us free through truth. Today, we’re going to look at how God also sets us free from stress, worry, and expectations

- Life can be hard. But God’s Word shows us that His love and presence are stronger than anything we face.”

READ – Psalm 118:1-9

This passage opens with thanksgiving. The psalmist reminds us that God’s faithful love endures forever. When life feels heavy or uncertain, it’s easy to lose sight of that. But the psalm shows us that our freedom doesn’t depend on what’s happening around us, it’s anchored in who God is.

QUESTION: Why do you think the psalmist starts by giving thanks even before talking about his troubles?

When we choose **gratitude**, even in difficult times we shift our focus from **fear to faith**.

The psalmist says, “In my distress I called to the Lord; the Lord answered me and put me in a spacious place.”

That’s what freedom looks like. God bringing peace and space to a heart that feels trapped.
Freedom begins when we stop focusing on our **fears** and start focusing on our **faith** in God.

QUESTION: What are some things that make students your age feel trapped by distress or fear?

Help students identify what anxiety or stress can look like for them

- pressure at school
- family problems
- uncertainty about the future
- feeling unseen.

Remind them that God’s love is constant even when their circumstances aren’t. Even in the hardest moments, **God’s love reaches us**. He is our **refuge**, our **helper**, our **strength**.

QUESTION: How can knowing that God is “for you” change the way you face your stresses?

Tony Evans puts it this way: "God doesn't always stop the storm, but He will walk with you through it."

Being Set Free in Christ doesn't mean life will always **be easy**. It means that you never have to face life **alone**.

Takeaways

1. God's **love** and **faithfulness** do not change with our circumstances.
2. Freedom means we can bring our **fears** and **anxieties** to God and trust Him to hold us steady.
3. **Gratitude** shifts our hearts from distress to peace.
4. God is not **distant**; He is our refuge and helper.

QUESTION: What's one thing you can thank God for right now, even in a difficult situation.

Close your group time in prayer, thanking God for all the things he has set us free from.

Session 3 – Set Free in...– Saturday Afternoon

INTRO

This afternoon we're going to talk about one of the most powerful truths in all of Scripture, what it means to be free from sin and death and alive in Christ. This is where freedom becomes real.

Ask your group, "If you could describe freedom in one word, what would it be?" Let a few students share before reading the passage.

READ – Romans 8:1-4

Paul begins this passage with a bold statement: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." Those words are full of hope.

If you are in **Christ**, you are no longer **condemned**. You are not defined by your **past** or your **failures**.

You are free.

QUESTION: Why do you think so many Christians still live like they are condemned when Jesus has already set them free?

Sometimes we keep carrying guilt and shame that Jesus already took to the cross.

We let the enemy whisper that we aren't worthy, but God says there's no condemnation for those who belong to Him.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "Do not look to your hope, but to Christ, the source of your hope."

When you focus on what **Jesus** has done instead of what **you've** done wrong, your heart starts to walk in **life** instead of **death**.

Paul goes on to explain that the law couldn't save us, but Jesus could. Through Him, we now live by the Spirit.

Freedom isn't just being forgiven. It's being changed from the inside out.

QUESTION: What does it look like to "walk according to the Spirit" instead of walking according to the flesh?

John Piper said, "The Spirit doesn't just set us free from guilt; He sets us free to enjoy God."

When we walk with Jesus, freedom becomes a **daily experience**, not a one-time moment.

QUESTION: What's one way you can walk in the Spirit this week at school, at home, or with your friends?

Takeaways

1. There is no **condemnation** for those in Christ Jesus.

2. Freedom in Christ means we no longer live under **guilt** or **shame**.
3. The Spirit gives us power to live new lives marked by **peace, love, and obedience**.
4. Freedom isn't just something we receive, it's something we walk in **daily**.

QUESTION: What's one way you need to stop living condemned and start living free?

Close your group time in prayer, asking the Jesus to lead your group in walking in the freedom of life that Christ provides.

Session 4 – Set Free to serve– Saturday Night

INTRO

Tonight is your final small group session of the weekend. Remind students that freedom in Christ doesn't end with us. It moves through us.

When Jesus sets us free, it's not just freedom from sin; it's freedom for service.

READ – 1 Peter 2:13-17

Peter writes that we are to “live as people who are free,” but not to use our freedom as a cover-up for evil.

Instead, we use it to serve God.

QUESTION: How does our culture usually define freedom? How is that different from the freedom Peter describes here?

Freedom in Christ gives us a new purpose. Instead of living for ourselves, we live to reflect Jesus.

Freedom in Christ isn't just freedom *from* something – it's freedom *for* something.

Freedom for service and love.

QUESTION: What are some ways we can serve others at school, at church, or in our community because of the freedom Christ gives us?

Encourage students to think practically

- helping a classmate
- writing a note of encouragement
- volunteering
- forgiving someone
- showing kindness to someone who's hard to love.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.”

*Serving doesn't make us **less free**. It makes our freedom **complete**.*

QUESTION: Why do you think serving others helps you grow in your faith?

Takeaways

1. Freedom in Christ gives us a **new purpose** to serve God and others.
2. True freedom is found in **humility** and **love**.
3. Serving others shows the **world** what **Jesus** is like.
4. We are most like **Jesus** when we are **servicing**.

QUESTION: Who is one person you can serve this week because of the freedom you have in Christ?

End your final small group in prayer. Thank God for the freedom He gives and ask Him to help your group live out that freedom through service, love, and obedience.

At the end of this session, please make sure you:

1. CELEBRATE DECISIONS. Many times, a student will decide for Jesus, then be tempted not to share. You as the leader will be contacted after the large-group sessions about any students in your group that made decisions. Let's celebrate that people have gone from death to life!!!

2. ENCOURAGE BAPTISM. This is an absolute first move that we as believers make after we decide to follow Christ for the first time. In fact, our entire church is having a Baptism Celebration tomorrow morning – Middle school at 9:30 and high school at 11:00am. Contact Chip, Seth, Kevin, or Alaina if they are a YES for Sunday morning.

**If at ANY point in the weekend a student discloses any physical or sexual abuse or harm, you are required by law to inform a Radiate staff member IMMEDIATELY. You may contact Chip at 770-344-9427, Seth at 615-975-9919, Kevin at 661-431-3923, or Alaina at 763-753-3228.*