

SEE IT

Isaiah 61:1: "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...."

OBEY IT

We can learn three lessons from today's text.

1. Each of us struggles with overcoming something. Drugs, alcohol, pornography, gossip, constant bad moods, workaholism, inappropriate sex, irritability, materialism, legalism. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does tell us about the reality of being human. We're bad when we're born, and we get worse. The first step to being free is recognize what enslaves us. Offer a prayer right now and confess your weakness before God. As you go through your day give grace to those who are struggling. Remember the grace God has given you.

2. All can be set free.

Whatever your question, God has an answer. Whatever your need, God has the solution. Whatever your wound, God has the cure. Freedom is not only for the few and the privileged, but for everyone—for you. Do you believe that? This helps us not to discount anyone, no matter how deep their addiction or dysfunction. **ALL** can be set free. **All.**

3. Freedom is a process. The Bible tells us that it may take some time from the time you are declared free (justification) to the moment you start to experience the results (sanctification). It's like walking on dry land after being in a boat. For a while you still feel like you're at sea, though you're really on land. It's a very real feeling, though temporary. The fact that you may still feel the effects of the chains around your ankles doesn't mean that they are not gone. You're now free. Believe it. This helps us be patient with others. We don't compare ourselves with our fellow travelers, or criticize them because they sin differently than us. We are on a journey, let's encourage each other on the way.

SHARE IT

You probably know people who are battling an addiction. Connect with them today and let them know that you are available to talk or pray with or for them.

My Prayer Today: For people that struggle with addictions

1. Pray that God will break the chains of addiction.
2. Pray that those afflicted will believe they can be free.

My Thoughts _____

SEE IT

Mathew 9:1 Jesus climbed into a boat and went back across the lake to his own town. ²Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven." ³But some of the teachers of religious law said to themselves, "That's blasphemy! Does he think he's God?"

OBEY IT

Jamil is a risk taker. He is a gymnastics expert. He trusts that when he does the flips and jumps, someone will not let him hit his head on the cement floor. That is risk. That is faith. Mathew 9 shows several people taking a risk that was blessed by God. The four friends that took a risk and opened the ceiling in a house that was not their own. Result? Healing. Mathew took a risk when he was called and left everything on the table. Literally. Result? Growth. The woman who suffered from a non-stop menstruation took a risk and touched His garment. Result? Miracle. The two blind men took a risk and yelled incessantly when others told them to be quiet. Result? Sight. Do you see a pattern here? What can we learn from these stories?

1. Helping people is risky. I wonder what the owner of the house thought when he saw a hole in his roof. The four friends understood that Jesus didn't come to preserve structures, he came to save souls. So they made the hole. The question becomes not whether something is risky, but whether it's biblical and therefore worth it.

2. Criticism follows risk. Not everyone will appreciate or support your choice to minister on behalf of God. Sometimes even those closest to you will be your harshest critics. It is interesting that the Pharisees were never seen helping anyone, yet criticized anyone who tried to. Don't be dissuaded by criticism. It is the sandpaper God uses to polish his work of art.

3. God honors God honoring risks. That is a fact. The question becomes: What God honoring risk are you taking today?

SHARE IT

Action steps for today:

1. Instead of just thinking it, compliment someone publicly.
2. Give a sad looking stranger a happy music CD or card.
3. Ask someone "how are you?" Mean it. Listen to them.

My Prayer Today:

The only thing that consistently brings us close to God is taking a risk, because it forces you to seek God's intervention. Take a God honoring risk today and pray: "God help me be bold, despite of my fears."

My Thoughts _____