

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends
Exit Interviews: "Responding to Josh Harris", 11/03/2019

The Big Idea

It is *for* freedom that Christ has set us free (Gal. 5:1). What does true freedom in Jesus look like, and what do we do when the Christian life feels like it's full of rules and restrictions? After wrestling with these questions, many people have decided to call it quits on Christianity. According to recent research articles, that number is growing in North America at a rapid pace. What are these people (most of them young) rejecting? Once we take the time to listen and reflect, it's possible the god they are rejecting isn't the God with whom we live in relationship.

Where we are in the Bible

Galatians 5 highlights the struggle of the Church to abandon an old covenant in order to take up a new one that God was offering. Even after officially deciding that the new Gentile believers didn't have to be circumcised in order to follow Jesus, there were some in Jerusalem that disagreed. These men that stood in opposition followed Paul in his missionary journeys and attempted to discredit him by claiming his version of the Gospel was incomplete. Paul passionately argues that to live according to the law (Torah) is to remain in slavery, but to live in the Spirit is true freedom.

Other scriptures to consider

Acts 15
The Jerusalem Council on Gentiles

Romans 8:18-27
Future glory and freedom

2 Peter 2:19
Spiritual freedom and slavery

Finding a bit of ourselves

- In the message, it was suggested that "freedom from the law" in the early church is similar to the freedom that people seek when leaving Christianity in modern day. Do you agree with that? Why or why not?
- Do you know someone who has left Christianity? If so, reflect or discuss the reasons why they decided to leave. If not, discuss or reflect on Josh Harris' story and his reasons to have left the faith.
- Josh Harris, among others, lists something called 'Deconstruction' as a reason for leaving the faith. What is deconstruction? What are the potentially positive and negative aspects to deconstruction?

Where do we go from here?

- What can the Church do better for people that are questioning or struggling in their faith?
- In the message we are reminded of the "personhood" of God. What does that mean, and why is it important to remind ourselves of this?
- It can be said that faith is more 'caught' than 'taught'. Do you agree with this? In what ways can people 'catch' your faith as you live it out?
- In the message a word of encouragement is given to someone like Josh Harris. What words of encouragement would you give to someone like Josh that has, or is considering leaving the faith?

Prayer focus

Pray for increased faith and the flourishing of a relationship with God for...

- Atheists and agnostics
- Apostates and those that have left the faith
- Believers that are wrestling with questions and doubt
- Church leaders and their families

