



A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those “heirs of all the ages” who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.

Written by Mildred Tenney Handy

Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency, a project of The John Birch Society.

---

March 1973 — Volume I, Lesson Three

---

# The Source Of Freedom

## LESSON IDEA

The partnership between freedom and responsibility can be traced back into recorded history to the Garden of Eden. It is there we first learn that freedom is a gift from God — and that it always carries with it corresponding responsibilities.

## VISUAL AID

The Holy Bible, and enough magazines (those with illustrations or advertisements showing people in action) to give one to each participant in the Heritage Hour discussion.

\* \* \* \* \*

**AS AMERICANS**, we have inherited many wonderful blessings from past generations. For just a moment, let’s consider some of the items in our home that make life more pleasant and more enjoyable for us. What have we used today that was discovered or invented sometime ago, that our pioneer forefathers did not have? [*Ask each family member to name one or two items, such as automobiles, telephones, electric lights, phonographs, television, washing machines, plumbing, and so on. Then ask each one what life might be like without them.*]

It is hard to imagine living today without all of these marvelous conveniences, isn’t it? And yet the greatest of the blessings we have received is not an object or a machine, but freedom — the ability to think and act for ourselves.

Freedom means that we can make our own choices. As we discussed last week, we must learn to make responsible decisions, or we may lose some or all of

the freedom we have gained. As you get older, what are some of the major decisions you will have to make about your life? [*Give every child an opportunity to mention two or three choices he will make, such as which college to attend, what career he will select, and whom he will marry.*] Would any of you like someone else to make these choices for you? Why not?

If you did not have the freedom to select your own career, but instead were told what work you must do or task you must perform, do you think you would be as successful? What if you wanted to be a writer, but were told instead that you had to paint houses? Or you wanted to be a policeman, but were told you had to repair televisions? Or wanted to be a housewife and mother, but instead were forced to work in a factory? Do you think you would be as creative, as successful, as hard-working, or as happy if you could not choose your own career? Why? [*Again, give every family member an opportunity to answer.*]

**ONE OF THE** reasons freedom is so valuable is that under it, men and women are at their most creative. They work longer, harder, and better when they are free to exercise their various talents and abilities. Because we are all different, we enjoy different things and express ourselves in different ways. For example, how many different kinds of sports can we play? Can each of you name three different ones? What if there were only one or two to choose from? [*Let everyone answer.*] What are some of the different hobbies we can select? What different careers are available to choose from? Who determines which one you will select?

The freedom to be whatever we want to be is taken for granted by many Americans. Let’s take just a

moment now to look through these magazines, and see how many different pictures we can find that show people at work or at play, following a career or hobby they have chosen. See if each of you can find two examples of someone using their freedom to create or to relax.

Have you each found two appropriate illustrations? Good. Let's take another moment to discuss each one. Can you explain how the picture you have found is an example of freedom being used? If the person in it did not live in freedom, might there be guards watching? Would the picture even be possible without freedom?

Yes, the freedom to use the talents we have is very important. The faculties we possess — to reason, to develop our skills, to create and build, to examine and invent, to plant and harvest — are an inherent part of man and proclaim his individualism. We are glad that we do have the freedom to follow whichever path appeals to us, that we are not told which course we must follow or which work we must do.

### FOR YOUNGER AMERICANS

This entire lesson is appropriate for children at any grade level, and its fundamental principles should be easily understood. To stimulate additional discussion, however, you may wish to explore its theme further.

The story of creation and the Garden of Eden is always fascinating to young minds. Even those who have heard it many times before would enjoy listening to it again. You may wish to read Chapter Three of Genesis to them, which tells about the temptation, man's fall, and being driven from the Garden. Then raise some additional questions.

Why did Adam and Eve hide when they heard God in the garden? Do we sometimes want to hide when we've done something wrong, and are afraid we will be found out?

When God asked why they had eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Adam blamed Eve for it and Eve blamed the serpent. Is it natural for us to try to shift the blame to someone else when we have done something wrong? How did God punish the serpent? How did he punish Adam and Eve?

Do you think that Adam and Eve learned a lesson from what happened? Would they appreciate freedom more? Do you believe they would want to teach their children the importance of making responsible choices?

**WHAT IS** the source of this freedom? When was it given to us? Who or what gave it to us? Where did we get the right to be free? [*Encourage each person to participate in the discussion, but be prepared for some surprising answers. Three of the most common wrong answers appear below.*]

**The Constitution.** No, the Constitution does not give us freedom; it was written to define the freedoms

we have, and to establish laws and a system of government to protect those freedoms.

**The Government.** No, this is not correct, either. Remember, anything government gives us now, it can later take away. Government does not give us freedom; its purpose is to protect our lives and property so we may enjoy freedom.

**The Founding Fathers.** It is true that the founders of this country secured freedom for us, when they declared independence from England and then won the Revolutionary War. But did these men believe that they were giving us freedom? Remember what they said in the Declaration of Independence? [*Have someone read the following passage.*]

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Our Founding Fathers proclaimed that men possessed unalienable rights. What does "unalienable" mean? [*Cannot be surrendered or taken away.*] What were the unalienable rights we were endowed with at birth? [*Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*] Who gave us these unalienable rights, according to the Declaration of Independence? [*Wait until someone answers, "God."*]

Yes, the founders of this country declared that the right to freedom comes from God. They believed that no government, no matter how powerful, had the right to take it away. And that the purpose of government is to protect us, so we may enjoy the freedom God has given us.

**IN THE FIRST** chapter of the first book in the Bible, we are told that at the very time God gave life to man, he also gave man certain responsibilities and the freedom to make his own choices. Who was this first man? Where did he live?

The first book in the Bible is called Genesis, and it means beginning. It is the book that tells about the beginning of man's existence on earth. Let's read two short passages from Genesis, to see how God revealed that He wanted man to enjoy freedom and to accept responsibility. [*Ask two family members to read the following selections.*]

## Genesis, Chapter One

26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He them; male and female created He them.

28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

### FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

The belief that freedom is a right given to man by God, and that no government should interfere with this right, has been called “the essence of Americanism.” Prior to the founding of the United States, freedom always had to be won from government — usually through force of arms.

One of the most significant victories for freedom, before the Declaration of Independence was issued, was the signing of the Magna Carta by King John of England in 1215. However, this charter (which has been described as “the cornerstone of English liberty”) did *not* proclaim that liberty was a God-given right, but rather something to be granted by a king.

What rights did the nobles win from King John? Did the provisions of the Magna Carta extend to all English people? Were the terms of the charter adhered to by King John and his successors?

What are some of the similarities between the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence? What are some of the most important differences? Can any of the liberties we enjoy in this country be traced to the Magna Carta?

## Genesis, Chapter Two

15. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat;

17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmate fit for him.

19. And out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

**T**HE STATEMENT that God made man “in our image, after our likeness” tells us that man was given faculties similar to those possessed by the Creator Himself. In other words, the power of creativity, the acceptance of responsibility, and the desire for freedom are inherent in man, because God planned it that way from the beginning.

What are some of the responsibilities that God gave to Adam? [*Dressing the garden, naming the animals, being given dominion over all living creatures.*]

Once Adam accepted the responsibilities God had given him, did he have freedom? Was he given power over other creatures? Were any given power over him? [*Encourage each family member to answer.*] Yes, Adam was given dominion over all other creatures on earth, in the sky, and in the seas. The food he needed was freely available, so he didn’t have to work. Certainly we must agree that he had a great deal of freedom.

Did God place any limitations on the freedom Adam was given? Was there anything that Adam was not permitted to do?

Yes, Adam was told not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. All other fruit in the garden was his for the taking, including fruit from the tree of life. These two trees in the garden, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, symbolize a very great truth for us: God has given us certain laws and rules to live by, but He has also given us the freedom to choose whether or not to obey His laws. Adam was permitted to exercise his power of choice, without any coercion from his Creator. God merely warned Adam that he must bear the consequences of his choices.

We know that, as the story of the Garden of Eden unfolded, Adam and Eve did choose to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And because they did, they were driven from the Garden and not permitted to return. They had to endure much trial and sorrow because they broke God’s law. The simple yet profound message for us in this story is that God has given all of us the freedom to make our own choices. But He has placed us in a world founded on moral law — a world where certain choices will produce inevitable results.

From today’s lesson, which type of government do you think would lead to the most freedom for its citi-

zens: one that honored God and based its laws on His teachings, or one that ignored God, denied His existence, and taught that there is no intelligence higher than man's? Can you think of any examples from the world today that confirm this? [*Encourage each person to compare the differences between the United States and the Communist countries. What freedoms do we enjoy that their citizens are denied?*]

### *Concluding Thought*

It is significant to note that tyrants throughout history have tried to substitute worship of the State for worship of God. And the more they have attacked religion, the more they have enslaved their own citizens.

The Communists, for example, teach that belief in God is “the opiate of the masses.” They claim that only when acceptance of God and His moral laws is finally eliminated will man truly be free. Yet these are the very countries where man is given the least amount of freedom — where he is not permitted to act for himself, but instead is acted upon.

Is there a reason why belief in God and acceptance of His laws leads to freedom, but atheism leads to tyranny and suppression of the individual? What is it?

### *Looking Ahead*

Next week we will discuss one of the difficulties that freedom brings — the need to make choices. The more freedom we enjoy, the more choices we must make. If we did not possess any liberty, we would not have to make any choices at all. But since we do want to live in freedom, we must learn to make responsible decisions.

And some of these decisions can be very difficult indeed. In fact, for many persons they are literally questions of life and death, as we shall see next week.

---

## The Family Heritage Series

For parents who wish to teach their children the true meaning of liberty, responsibility, and our Americanist heritage.

**The Family Heritage Series** is an outstanding series of weekly lessons for the home, written to stimulate interest and spark discussion about the legacy we have received.

**The Family Heritage Series** is for all parents with school-age children. It is sure to be valued by all Americans who participate in its Heritage Hour discussions, and would be especially welcomed as a gift.

**The Family Heritage Series** is published by the Movement To Restore Decency, a project of The John Birch Society. Address all inquiries to The John Birch Society, 770 N Westhill Blvd, Appleton, WI 54914. Please visit the website at [jbs.org](http://jbs.org) for more information. For more books about this topic, please visit [westernislandspublishing.com](http://westernislandspublishing.com).

© 2025 by The John Birch Society