

Freedom Fellowship has identified 7 characteristics that we want to preserve into the foundation of our church called The Heart of Freedom Fellowship. Every life has purpose created by God - our heart at Freedom is that each one would discover, develop, use, and help others discover their purpose. In discovering our community purpose at Freedom, our first "non-negotiable" characteristic that defines us is "intimacy with God and intimacy with others." Intimacy is that deeper connection at different levels, emotionally, spiritually, developing a trust that goes deep. Our relationship with God is most important and then we desire to develop deeper relationships with others.

The second non-negotiable characteristic in the heart of Freedom is "people are priority." Freedom Fellowship believes Jesus is fully God and fully man, The Messiah, The Son of God and that He laid His life down on the cross to pay fully for our debt of sin. We don't have to work to pay for sin. Everything we do looks to Jesus Christ as our example. When we say "people are priority," we are looking at people the way Jesus saw us - with potential and purpose.

Luke 19:1-10 *He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

Jericho was a place of commerce but was also declared by God to be a cursed place. **Joshua 6:26** Jesus found Himself dealing with a broken person (Zaccheus) in a cursed place (Jericho). Jesus is willing to show up in these places to redeem us today too. Zaccheus is described as a tax collector, short, rich, but also added is that he was a cheat, lacking integrity, rejected by his own people and also rejected by Rome as he was a Jew. How often do we describe people with their past? These describe Zaccheus in the past. After his encounter with Jesus, he was saved, generous, son of Abraham in right standing, and given purpose by Christ.

The same happened to Jesus... **Mark 6:1-3** *Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.*

Mark 6:4 *Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household."*

Isn't this how we are today? Seeing and remembering failures or people and not their potential. How quickly we go to the past! We remember Zaccheus with his past – a little man with a big money problem and not to be trusted. But that's not the end of the story. For us either... are we stuck at the beginning instead of seeing what Jesus can do in the present, faithful to redeem, and with abundant and sufficient grace? "People are priority" means that we care for each other's potential more than one's past. Every one of us has potential. We find it difficult to believe in the redemptive power of Jesus. So we find ourselves trying to be good enough and we sometimes disqualify ourselves because of our past.

What is in your past? Does your past define you? Our culture digs up the past but we are not the same today. We have changed to reflect more of who Christ desires us to be. Remembering our past makes us live in fear. Letting Jesus define our future sets us free from our past and our bondage. Let's focus on our potential and the plans that God has for our lives.

Often times it's our own memories that keep us disqualified, unworthy and cut off of our own potential. Jesus knew all about Zaccheus and **Luke 19:5** *When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."* Jesus came to this cursed place for this broken man. Do you feel this way today? Jesus will show up in this place. So often we substitute our purpose for our performance and try harder. Jesus' purpose was to call out Zaccheus' purpose and led him to see his potential.

When the world saw greed, Jesus saw generosity. Jesus saw a man with a heart to give. It just took speaking potential into this life. Can we be this kind of community - valuing potential over past? calling out purpose in lives? helping others get free from past? getting ourselves free?

Zaccheus accumulated wealth because he had no purpose. Without purpose leads people to accumulate things like control, wealth, status, or position. All Zaccheus needed was purpose and that satisfied. Jesus will meet you!

What does it look like to call out potential and purpose in a life?

How do you convey that you believe in someone, in a child, in a spouse, in a friend?

What do need to be set free from in your past?

Do you see in yourself purpose? potential?