

Third Sunday after Pentecost

The Liberating Power of the Spirit

Old Testament: Exodus 5:1 (NRSV)

Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness."' '

New Testament: Galatians 5:13 (NRSV)

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

General Concept: The Spirit brings freedom from all forms of material and spiritual bondage.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **The Holy Spirit makes us free.**

ME/OE: **The Holy Spirit makes us free to overcome difficulties in life.**

Y: **The Holy Spirit liberates the community from ignorance and injustice.**

A: **The Holy Spirit liberates the community from all kinds of material and spiritual bondage that rob people of dignity and self-respect.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Chapter 5 of the book of Exodus tells of the story of the confrontation between the Pharaoh and Moses and Aaron. Moses demands the Pharaoh to set free the Israelites from their slavery in the Egyptian rule. The slavery of the Israelites under the Egyptian rule clearly made them suffer and feel helpless and desperate. Their slavery prevented the Israelites from celebrating their own religious feasts. These feasts were for their God. Their celebrations were not complete or meaningful under slavery. God led Moses and Aaron to confront the Pharaoh and ask him to release the Israelites from their bondage. The celebration of the feasts to Yahweh who is about to be revealed and introduced to them by Moses will not be meaningful without the concrete experience of liberation. The worship of God is not to be a forced or coerced act. Rather, it is to be an act of freedom of the people of God.

Chapter 5 of the letter of Paul to the Galatians tells about freedom in Christ. The primary issue of the church in Galatia concerns those fellow Christians who still adhere to the Jewish requirements and continue to insist that they undergo these Jewish legal requirements even if the church people in Galatia are non-Jews or are Gentiles, or Jewish Christians. This problem reaches the attention of Paul and he reminds them with great emotion to be aware of the true essence of being a Christian or a follower of Christ and what it means to be free in Christ. Freedom according to Paul is not a license to do what pleases a person even if it is wrong but it is the freedom to live a life where one is free to do what is right and to love others. It is a freedom to do what is right and avoid or even oppose that which is wrong, immoral and destructive. The Holy Spirit as an affirmation of freedom in Christ reminds a person to be a pro-active follower, to do what is right and to lead his/her neighbor to full freedom. Freedom comes with a sober sense of responsibility so that a person will fully express her/his freedom in love and service to one another.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The work of the Spirit is opposed to everything that denies people their liberty and the free play of their faculties to realize fullness of life as ordained by God. Since time immemorial, people have been subjected to many kinds of bondage that rob them of dignity and self-respect. It's not an accident of fate that some people are freer than most others. There are forces that keep them in that state.

Since the beginning of societies when people were divided according to who owns property, the struggle for liberation has been the major dynamic of social change. There is a soft and hard means of controlling people. Knowledge is a soft means of control through the dissemination of lies and half-truths which form the stuff for spinning narratives that are designed to explain and legitimize an inverted reality. This is an insidious means of insuring captivity of the mind.

Another form of captivity which is more direct and palpable consists of systems and structures in which large portions of the population are systematically excluded, exploited and suppressed in order to allow a minuscule number of people to monopolize society's economy and politics. This kind of oppressive social relations is being sustained by means of threats, coercion and violence. In fact, this is the underlying cause of all wars.

Religion can also be a form of captivity. Even the oppressed may learn to accept their oppression and desist from taking steps to free themselves in conformity to their religious beliefs. Those who thrive by exploiting others may have their conscience blunted by a misreading of the gospel. Faith-claims that foster acquiescence to injustice and inequality are actually generated from ideologies rather than inspired by the Spirit. This, too, is a form of spiritual bondage.

The Spirit is freedom. The Spirit is truth. The Spirit is God's justice spreading its benefits in persons, in the midst of society and for the whole creation.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. tell that the Holy Spirit helps us to know the truth;
2. explain that the truth makes us free; and
3. commit oneself to act according to what is true with the help of the Holy Spirit.

II. **Concept:** The Holy Spirit makes us free.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), picture of a ladybug, available materials in completing the outline of a ladybug

III. Learning Experiences

A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Gracious God, we thank you for loving us. Be with us as we study our lesson today. Help us to remember to do what is right and what is pleasing to you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: "This Little Light of Mine"

B. *Getting Ready*

1. Present a picture of a ladybug. Let the pupils describe it. If the children are familiar with these insects, ask them to share information about ladybugs. If not, tell the class that ladybugs help farmers take care of their plants by eating the harmful insects that destroy plants.
2. Provide each child a picture outline of a ladybug. Using available materials, let the N/K group complete the picture of the ladybug. For the YE group, have the children draw several ladybugs and classify them according to the number of black spots in the body.
3. After they finish their artwork, let them share how they felt when doing the exercise.

C. *Learning Time*

1. Before presenting the story, tell the class to stretch their bodies and be ready to listen to the story. Then tell them that there is another story about a person who likes to help others similar to the story about ladybugs which are helpful to farmers.
2. For the **N/K group**: Tell them that God asked Moses to go to Egypt to free the Hebrews from the cruel treatment of the Egyptians. Tell the story.

"Let My People Go"

(Based on Exodus 5:1)

God tells Moses to go to Egypt and free the Hebrews from the Egyptians. Moses and his brother Aaron go to Pharaoh and said, 'The Lord, the God of Israel, says "Let my people go. They will worship me in the wilderness." '

3. For the **YE group**: Tell the following story: Tell the background of the story:

"Let My People Go"

(Based on Exodus 5:1)

Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob, helped the Egyptians during the Great Famine. He called for his own people to stay in Egypt to save them, too.

After Joseph died, the Egyptians forgot about the good things Joseph did for them. Instead, the Egyptians made the Hebrew people, also called the Israelites their slaves.

The life of a slave is difficult. The Israelites cried to God for deliverance from the Egyptians.

God called Moses to free the Israelites. So Moses and his brother Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.'"

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who went to see the Pharaoh? (Moses) Who was with him? (His brother Aaron)
 - b. Who asked Moses to free the Israelites? (God)
 - c. When God asked Jesus to help God’s people, he filled Jesus with the Spirit of God. Ask: Do you believe that Moses was also filled with the Spirit of God when he was sent to Egypt to fee the Israelites? (Yes.) Why or why not? (God fills us with his Spirit when God asks us to do something.)
 - d. What did the Lord tell Moses to tell the Pharaoh? (“Let my people go!”) Why? (To worship God in the wilderness)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: “What does the Holy Spirit do to us when we are not treated well? (The Holy Spirit frees us.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Say: When the Egyptians treated the Israelites cruelly, God sent Moses to help them. God loves us so God sent Jesus to save us. When Jesus sees us fighting and hurting each other, Jesus becomes sad.” Relate the work of the helpful ladybug to what the children can do to make Jesus happy. Emphasize that being helpful and kind to others is a right thing to do.
2. Accept the answers of the children and have them act out these things.
3. YE: Tell the children to break the code using the following:

(1) A	(2) D	(3) E	(4) G	(5) H	(6) L	(7) M
(8) O	(9) P	(10) R	(11) S	(12) T	(13) Y	
_ _ _	_ _ _	_ _ _	_ _ _	_ _ _	_ _ _	_ _ _
12 5 3	6 8 10 2	11 1 13 11	“ 6 3 12	7 13 9 3	8 9 6 3	4 8 _ _ _ !”

Answer: THE LORD SAYS, “LET MY PEOPLE GO!”

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.”’ (Exodus 5:1b)
2. Offering
3. Closing songs: “The More We Get Together” and goodbye songs
4. Closing prayer: “Thank you, God, for the power of the Holy Spirit that gives us freedom. May we always remember to talk to you through our prayers. Be with us as we go home. Keep us safe from all harm. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. tell that the Holy Spirit helps us to know the truth;
2. explain that the truth makes us free; and
3. commit oneself to act according to what is true with the help of the Holy Spirit.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit makes us free to overcome the difficulties in life.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV)

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: "Loving God, grant us an open mind and grateful heart as we study your Word today. May we appreciate your great love for us by sending Jesus to save us and the Holy Spirit to comfort us. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: "O Holy Spirit" (HFJ # 182-83)

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to play a game called Blessing or Trouble. Prepare strips of paper and write different situations. If the class thinks the situation is good for them, let them say "Blessing!" and let them rejoice. If the situation is bad for them, let them say, "Uh-oh! Trouble!". Examples of situations are as follows:
 - a. You forgot your pencil case and you have to take a test at school.
 - b. You are in front of an ice cream parlor and your parents told you to get inside.
 - c. It's raining. You came home but your sister who has the house key is not there yet. You are locked out of your house.
 - d. You have stepped on a honeycomb.
 - e. Mom's friend told your Mom how behaved you were in the party.
 - f. You are swimming and suddenly you are drowning and the lifeguard is not around.
 - g. You enjoyed playing with your friends and lost track of the time. You came home late.
 - h. You are answering your homework and suddenly the lights went out.
 - i. Your grandparents sent you birthday money.
 - j. You and your brother are playing inside the house. You accidentally spilled the milk on the table.
2. Process the responses of the learners. Emphasize that trouble can happen when they break the rules and they are caught, or when unexpected things happen and they are placed in danger and they do not know what to do. Discuss what things they can do in times of trouble.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class that there are biblical stories where God's people are in trouble. Have them find out how the hand of God helps them in times of their difficulty.
2. Before presenting the story, tell the class to read Exodus 3:14-16. Discuss the trouble that the Israelites suffered in Egypt.
3. Present the story.

Moses Confronts the Pharaoh

(Based on Exodus 5:1-4)

Moses and his brother Aaron went to see Pharaoh. They confronted him and said, "The Lord God says, "Let my people go!"

But Pharaoh became angry with Moses and Aaron. He said foolishly, "I'll not let my slaves go to worship their God!"

Pharaoh called in the slave masters to make the lives of the slaves more difficult. That was really trouble for the Israelites.

The Israelites complained to Moses and angrily told him, "It's your fault that we have to work harder."

The Israelites did not realize the truth about God keeping his promise. This truth will set them free.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson. Let the children finish the sentences.

1. God heard the cries of the Israelites who were made slaves in Egypt. They were in great trouble. God's decision was to help the Israelites by _____. (calling Moses to free the Israelites)
2. Moses and Aaron obeyed God. They said, "_____, "Let _____!" (The Lord says, "Let my people go!")
3. When God called Moses, he filled him with _____. (God's Holy Spirit)
4. The Pharaoh did not like what Moses and Aaron said. He answered them angrily, "_____." ("I will not let my slaves go!")
5. When we are in trouble, we should remember the truth that God loves us. This truth _____. (will set us free)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: Who can free us to face the troubles in our lives? (The Holy Spirit)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Say: "When we need God's care, we know that God is always there to show his care." Tell the class to picture in their minds one troubling experience and share how God helped him or her.
2. Ask the class other examples of God's care to their loved ones or friends. Help them realize that troubles may come but these can be blessings for them.

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.'" (Exodus 5:1b).
2. Offering
4. Closing song: "O Holy Spirit" (HFJ # 182-83)
5. Closing prayer: "Our Father in Heaven, we are thankful for your unconditional love for us. Be present in our lives to experience your care. Like Moses, may we always be blessed to know the truth that will make us free through your Spirit. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen."

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. explain how the Holy Spirit helps believers to know the truth;
2. discuss that the truth will liberate believers from ignorance; and
3. commit oneself to participate in church activities that will help free people from ignorance and injustice through the guidance of the Holy Spirit .

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit liberates the community from ignorance and injustice.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), worksheets

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Merciful God, be with us as we study your Word and your ways. May your Holy Spirit continue to help us to know the truth and to equip us to do God's will. In the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: "O Holy Spirit" (HFJ # 182-83)

B. Getting Ready

1. Present the following biblical characters. Tell the students to choose anyone of these persons who stood in the gap to do God's will.
 - a. Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1-11)
 - b. Esther (Esther 4:13-14)
 - c. Noah (Genesis 6:22)
 - d. Deborah (Judges 4:9-10)
 - e. Paul (Acts 16:25-34)
 - f. John, the Baptist (Matthew 3:3)
 - g. Mary, mother of Jesus (Luke 1:38)
 - h. Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28)
2. Discuss the answers of the students and emphasize how they found courage to stand for God.

C. Learning Time

1. Let the class read Exodus 5:1 and Galatians 5:13.
2. Tell the students to discuss the verses giving emphasis on the following points:
 - a. Moses used words that did not come from him. His message bore God's words. He knew these words will ultimately prevail. ('Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness." ')
 - b. The change in Moses to acknowledge God did not happen overnight. For God's training transformed him into a patient, persistent, and courageous believer. He used these traits in successfully getting the Israelites out of Egypt even as the Pharaoh's heart was hardened and his ears deaf.
 - c. Paul reminded the believers that they gained freedom through the death and resurrection of Christ. This freedom is not to be abused but to be used in serving others.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson more lengthily.

1. What words came out of Moses' mouth? ("The Lord says", "Thus says the Lord")
What proofs can you give that the word of God prevailed in the case of the Israelites? (Moses got the Egyptians out of Egypt as God promised them.)
2. How about those that prevailed in your life? (Answers may differ according to the life experience of the students.)
3. How did the Spirit-filled patience, perseverance, and courage help Moses in fulfilling God's word of delivering the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt? (Moses did not stop informing the Pharaoh patiently about God's command. Moses persisted in pointing out God's command to the Pharaoh because the Israelites were treated unjustly. Moses had the courage to stand up for God when the Pharaoh took the matter negatively in his own hands.)
4. How can you use the truth that the Holy Spirit fills you with patience, persistence, and courage to stand up and stand out for God? (Answers may vary according to the life experiences of the students.)
5. What do you think Paul is pointing out when he reminded the believers about the gift of freedom given freely by Christ? (Servant leadership; Serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13))

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: Who empowers the Church to liberate the community from ignorance and injustice?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the class to share a time when they have served someone. Have them share the reaction of that someone. Emphasize that serving others is a way of serving God. Remind them also of the right attitude when serving others. Let them ask themselves: Do you like to be a servant even if it means hard work or it is inconvenient?
2. Ask for some jobs or occupations (church workers, doctors, nurses, construction workers, service oriented workers). Let them say whether these involve serving others. Tell the students to find a partner and role play a couple of occupations to see what it is like to serve and to be served. Have them ask themselves: Did they find it difficult/easy? What did they learn by serving?

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "O Holy Spirit" (HFJ # 182-83)
3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank you for your Holy Spirit who guides us in our plan to be servants this week. Help us to pray for one another so that we will be able to execute our plan in accordance to your will. Increase our faith and teach us how to be patient, persistent, and courageous in our service. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. explain how the Holy Spirit helps believers to know the truth;
2. discuss that the truth will liberate believers from material and spiritual bondage;
3. commit oneself to participate in church activities that will help people maintain their dignity and self-respect through the guidance of the Holy Spirit

II Concept: The Holy Spirit liberates the community from all kinds of material and spiritual bondage that rob people of dignity and self-respect.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), worksheets

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear Lord, we beseech your guidance as we study your Word and your ways. May your Holy Spirit help us understand your noble cause of liberating us from ignorance and injustice. Continue to equip us to recognize and do your holy will. In the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: "O Holy Spirit" (HFJ # 182-83)

B. Getting Ready

1. Present the following biblical characters. Tell the students to choose anyone of these persons who stood in the gap to do God's will.
 - a. Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1-11)
 - b. Esther (Esther 4:13-14)
 - c. Noah (Genesis 6:22)
 - d. Deborah (Judges 4:9-10)
 - e. Paul (Acts 16:25-34)
 - f. John, the Baptist (Matthew 3:3)
 - g. Mary, mother of Jesus (Luke 1:38)
 - h. Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28)
2. Discuss the answers of the students and emphasize how they found courage to stand for God.

C. Learning Time

1. Ask the class to read Exodus 5:1-5 and Galatians 5:13.
2. Discuss the verses by using the following table:

Life of Pharaoh			Life of Moses			Life of Paul		
Character	Spiritual Focus	Impact on his life	Character	Spiritual Focus	Impact on his life	Character	Spiritual Focus	Impact on his life
Ungodly person, Foolish, arrogant, Resisting grace from God	Rely on one's power and strength, "I do not know God." I believe in Ra, Phthah, Ammon.	Self-reliant; Failures on his reign	Believer of God, Patient, persistent, and courageous, Accepting God's grace	Depend on God's word for power and strength, "Thus the Lord says"	Strong faith and belief in God	Follower of Jesus Christ, Bold in declaring his faith, Accepting the grace of Christ Jesus	Depend on the word of Christ for power and strength, "The mind of Christ"	Strong faith in God

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Lead the class in the discussion of the lesson.

1. The Pharaoh of Egypt is said to be ungodly. What verse can attest to this? (Exodus 5:2)
2. How did the Pharaoh show his being foolish and arrogant? (Exodus 5:5)
3. How did the Pharaoh oppose the grace of God? (Exodus 5:2)
4. How did Moses manifest his dependence on God? (Exodus 5:1) Why do you think Moses always started his message with the words "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel..."?
5. How can we show our dependence on God when we begin telling ourselves "Thus says the Lord..."? (We always rely on God's words of wisdom and strength and not on our own wisdom and strength.)
6. What did Paul say about our freedom? (Galatians 5:13a)
7. Who do you think called us to freedom? (Jesus, through his death and resurrection)
8. What did Paul say about the godly way of using that freedom? (Galatians 5:13c)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: Who empowers the church to liberate the community from all kinds of material and spiritual bondage that rob people of dignity and self-respect?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Tell the class to relate the following sentences in serving others in love.

1. Jesus has a job for you.
2. Your life is a living message.
3. Be prepared to leave your comfort zone.
4. The hand of God through the Holy Spirit works through instruments of his choice.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "O Holy Spirit" (HFJ # 182-83)
3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank you for your Holy Spirit who guides us in our plan to be servants this week. Help us to pray for one another so that we will be able to execute our plan in accordance to your will. Increase our faith and teach us how to be patient, persistent, and courageous in our service. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."