

What to Do With Independence
John 8:31-32

This weekend we are celebrating our country's birth again. Many of us have had cookouts with friends and family. We have enjoyed outdoor concerts and fireworks. Whatever we have done, it has been to celebrate the freedom and independence we enjoy in these United States.

Independence is an interesting word for Christians. Self-rule and self-determination are two main ideas that are characterized by independence. While independence from England was the wish of our forebearers, Christian Americans have taken the notion of individual independence too far. We have confused our civic citizenship with our spiritual relationship.

Christians know that the only way to be truly free is to embrace the Truth – claiming Jesus Christ as Savior and putting your whole trust in His grace. Unfortunately, many Christians struggle in their relationship with Christ because they believe that their American independence applies to their Christianity.

We are reminded in James 4 that many of our struggles come from our wish to determine our own purpose and life direction. We want to say what is to be a part of our life and what isn't. James says:

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? ... You don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

He goes on to remind us that *“God opposes the proud but favors the humble.”*

What does all this mean? It means that when we are truly exercising our freedom to our highest benefit when we choose to use it to submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. For most of us, it will mean putting aside our own agenda and listening for what God would have us to do and be. It will mean giving up independence in favor of dependence.

God is not asking you to give up your freedom. He is just asking you to use it to give Him the authority to lead your life in the direction that will benefit both you and Him the most.

Friends, the Old Testament Hebrews messed up with God over and over because they wanted to determine their own future. In response, God extended grace to them time and time again. I encourage you to learn from their mistakes. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you exercise your freedom to move toward God through a relationship with Christ. Grace and joy will be yours all the days of your life; and, you will truly have a reason to celebrate.