

## **The Faithzone : FREEDOM**

This PDF version contains all the material relating to this section of the Video formatted for easy printing and comprising:

- Summary
- Transcript
- All questions/activities listed together
- Each question/activity listed on a separate page with pointers for discussion
- A collective worship

### **Summary**

Presenter: Iles Nevitt, singer and presenter

Freedom and equality, central to the Christian faith.

The story of Oludah Equiano, 18<sup>th</sup> century slave, Christian and abolitionist.

Modern forms of slavery: nuclear war, apartheid, poverty.

Christian Aid and Jubilee 2000 – the fight for a debt-free 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Discussion**

How would you define ‘freedom’?

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### Transcript

I'm Iles. I'm a singer and a presenter. When I can, I work with the charity Christian Aid and recently made a film with them about the impact of international debt on Jamaica.

I'm a Christian and, for me, if my faith means anything then it's about following the example of Jesus in treating other people as you like to be treated yourself. It's a basic belief that brings many Christians to see issues of freedom and equality as central to their faith.

But one person that I find really inspiring is this man, Oloudah Equiano, someone who not only fought for the freedom of others but had to win his own freedom first. Equiano was born in West Africa in the middle of the eighteenth century but as a child he was kidnapped from his home, sold into slavery and shipped, in appalling conditions, across the Atlantic to the plantations of Virginia.

There he was bought by a British naval officer and introduced not only to a life at sea but also to the teachings of Jesus. But Equiano was an industrious man and managed to buy his own freedom, settling in England and even marrying into society. Having been a victim of slavery himself, Equiano became a passionate abolitionist, travelling around the country, telling his story and campaigning for an end to the slave trade.

But his greatest contribution came when he published this account of his life – an eighteenth century best seller. Telling the story of one man's road to freedom, it didn't just raise awareness of the inhumanity of the slave trade, it made its readers realize that the Africans involved were people just like themselves.

Olopudah Equiano died in March 1797, just ten years before slavery was abolished in Britain.

Since then, lots of other causes have been embraced by Christians. In the nineteenth century, the terrible conditions of women's prisons led Elizabeth Fry, a Quaker, to campaign for reform. And in the twentieth, the threat of nuclear war, the horrors of apartheid and the plight of the world's poorest, all moved Christians to take a stand.

One way I got involved is to work through Christian Aid with Jubilee 2000, a campaign that sees the unpayable debt of the developing nations as a modern form of slavery. Jubilee 2000 is fighting for a debt-free start to the millennium for a billion of the world's poorest people. To me, our generation now has a real chance to learn from the past and to create a fairer global community by putting Christian principles into practice. Or as Equiano once wrote, "May the time come when people gratefully commemorate the auspicious era of extensive freedom."

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### Activities

1. Is freedom always a good thing?
2. Can rich and powerful people be 'slaves'? If so, how?
3. What do Christians mean when they claim that Jesus 'makes us free'?
4. Karl Marx ended the Communist Manifesto with the famous words: "*Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!*" Marx saw religion as one of those chains. Why do you think he was so antagonistic to religion?
5. How much do you know about Jubilee 2000? Do you think it has achieved its aims?
6. How would you define 'slavery'? Does slavery exist in Britain today? What about elsewhere in the world?
7. "*The worst enemy of freedom is a happy slave.*" Do you agree or not? Why?

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### Activity 1

*'Is freedom always a good thing?'*

In order to live together, humans (and animals) seem to need to have some kind of mutual understanding. These understandings range from unspoken agreements to harshly imposed rules. Some rules, like 'Thou shalt drive on the left hand side of the road' may seem more sensible than others.

Try discussing ideas about whether / how far societies need rules by using a relevant scenario, e.g. based on education:

- Should you be free to attend / not attend school
- Once at school, should you be allowed to choose whatever lessons / teachers you want to?
- Would a school work if this were allowed?

Society benefits by having an educated population. On the other hand, would having voluntary attendance solve the discipline problems of many schools?

Pupils love discussing the possibility of a 'free' school. The most famous example of such a school is Summerhill School, founded by A.S. Neill. The school's website provides thought-provoking material on the history and ideology of free education.  
<http://www.first-ask.de/summerhill2001/>

### Extension

Another good subject for discussion would be the issues surrounding free trade (see the issues raised in the Jubilee 2000 question in this section)

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### Activity 2

*Can rich and powerful people be 'slaves'? If so, how?*

In Roman society it was possible for a slave to be richer and more powerful than many free citizens.

But the Roman poet Juvenal wrote in his famous 10<sup>th</sup> Satire, the penniless traveller  
'serene and gay,  
walks the wild Heath and sings his toil away'  
while the rich man  
'...fears in dire vicissitude invade,  
The Rustling Brake alarms, and quiv'ring Shade,  
Nor Light nor Darkness bring his Pain Relief,  
One shews the Plunder, and one hides the thief'

(translated by Samuel Johnson in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*)

Pupils might like to explore this paradox – perhaps writing their own version of Juvenal's Satire e.g.

- The richer you are, the more burglar alarms, security guards and electronic fences you need.
- The more food you have, the more unhealthy you may grow.
- The more money you have in the bank, the less you can trust that people love you for who you are, rather than for what you own (film and music celebrities are good examples to use here).

### Extension

The idea of wealth as slavery is also the theme of many modern novels. Older students could discuss, e.g. the work of J.G. Ballard and the dysfunctional utopian societies he portrays in works like *Running Wild*. What drives the characters? Are they free? Does religion or religious thought appear in these societies? What effect might it have?

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### Activity 3

*What do Christians mean when they claim that Jesus 'makes us free'?*

St Paul interpreted Christian freedom as both

- freedom from the constraints of the Law (Galatians 4:21-31)
- freedom from sin and its consequences *'now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God... the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* (Romans 6:22-23)

Such theological ideas can be a bit bewildering! John Bunyan envisaged this slavery to sin much more concretely when he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in which he describes Christian, a man who becomes aware of his own unworthiness and starts to search for God. Christian carries his heavy burden of guilt on his journey towards salvation and, after many adventurous encounters and struggles, is redeemed. The burden falls from his shoulders.

William Blake's engraving (*click to*) gives a powerful sense of Christian being weighed down by his burden. Show the pupils this picture and get them to create their own version, only this time they could list all that they feel 'burdens' them: bullying, things they have done to hurt others, too much homework... What would need to happen for this burden to be relieved?

### Extension

The same activity could be repeated for people: people the pupils know, people in the local community, people in other parts of the world etc.

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### Activity 4

*Karl Marx ended the Communist Manifesto with the famous words: “Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!” Marx saw religion as one of those chains. Why do you think he was so antagonistic to religion?*

Marx most famously described religion as “the opium of the people”. His full statement can be found in his *Critique of Hegel* published in 1844. The full text of Marx’s statement can be found at

[http://www.baylor.edu/~Scott\\_Moore/texts/Marx\\_Opium.html](http://www.baylor.edu/~Scott_Moore/texts/Marx_Opium.html)

The paragraph in question is less critical than is sometimes thought:

*‘Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.’*

Nevertheless, religion is still seen as a fantasy which humanity has to cast off in order to be free. Marx, like St Paul, can be rather daunting.

An alternative way into these ideas for young people might be through the popular novels of Philip Pullman. Pullman’s trilogy *The Dark Materials* has an openly anti-Christian agenda, reworking ideas of God as a malevolent and oppressive being – rather in the tradition of William Blake and, for the early church, the Gnostics. Are the pupils familiar with Pullman’s work? What do they think of it?

A critique from a Roman Catholic writer can be found at

<http://www.geocities.com/amywelborn/reviews/pullman.html>

Is this a fair review?

There is an interview with Pullman on the Amazon site at

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/feature/-/94589/104-5722738-0767937>

### Extension

The debate about science and religion often uses similar arguments to political arguments against religion. A ‘rational’ viewpoint is seen as opposed to a ‘religious’ one. However, many scientists, notably Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne, argue strongly that religion and science represent different ways of seeing the world, answering different questions (e.g. ‘why’ rather than just ‘how’). Do pupils think it is possible to reconcile science and religion? Why?

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### **Activity 5**

*How much do you know about Jubilee 2000? Do you think it has achieved its aims?*

The official Jubilee 2000 website (REF....) gives further information about the campaign but is geared primarily for the use of adults. However, there is a sign about the campaign for younger people at <http://www.jubilee-kids.org/>

Why not create a 'Debt Monster' based on the idea of Mammon, as in Matthew 6.24? Click on the Debt Monster icon on the bottom of the Index page and you will find a zany Flash movie about Mammon and a couple of Debt Monsters, based on the experiences of Jamaica and Bangladesh, as well as some suggestions on how to create an equivalent Monster, based on the situation in Bolivia.

### **Extension**

The Debt Monster idea could be developed effectively as a collective worship.

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### Activity 6

*How would you define 'slavery'? Does slavery exist in Britain today? What about elsewhere in the world?*

The Anti-Slavery International – *'the world's oldest human rights organisation'*, tracing its root back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century – is still very active. Find out more about its current concerns and campaigns at <http://www.antislavery.org/>

This website also provides some on-line educational material (click on the 'resources' icon.)

Many people assume slavery ended sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Why not adapt the school assembly provided in this section, which looks at the issue of 'bonded labour' in the modern world?

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### Activity 7

*“The worst enemy of freedom is a happy slave.” Do you agree? Why – or why not?*

A neat paradox which begs for debate! The idea could form the basis of a discussion or worked out through a piece of creative writing.

For example, the 17<sup>th</sup> century poet John Oldham wrote a poem which debates whether or not to take a service job as tutor in a rich lord’s house. In it, he imagines a discussion between a domestic dog and a free wolf. The *‘sleek and gay’* dog boasts that

*‘...I’m fed  
With bones of Fowl, and Crusts of finest Bread:  
With Fricesse, Ragoust, and whatsoe’re  
Of costly Kickshaws now in fashion are,  
And more variety of Boil’d and Roast  
Than a Lord Mayor’s Waiter e’re could boast.’*

The wolf is impressed and agrees to try for a similar comfortable life with the lord but, as the sun rises, he sees that the dog’s neck is *‘all worn and bare’*. The dog confesses that, in order to live in luxury, he has to wear a collar. The poem finishes with the wolf saying

*‘A God’s name, take your golden chains for me:  
Faith, I’d not be a King, not to be free:  
Sir Dog, your humble Servant, so Godbw’y.’*

The idea of a debate between animals like this is, originally, derived from the writings of Aesop. Why not write a debate between a free, but hungry, wolf and a comfortable, but enslaved, dog?

### Extension

What other examples of ‘happy slavery’ can you imagine in everyday life? When can ‘happy slavery’ turn to ‘unhappy slavery’? Addiction - of all kinds - is one possible area of debate here.

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### Collective Worship - *YOUR FREEDOM*

*Four students move forward to begin the collective worship.*

SPEAKER 1: This morning we are going to see a short video.

SPEAKER 2: Then we will ask some questions about it afterwards to find out what you think about what's said in the video.

*Show the video which lasts about 4 minutes, then play the music as the four students begin addressing the students.*

SPEAKER 3: As you saw there, Olaudah Equiano wrote in his book: "May the time come when people gratefully commemorate the auspicious era of extensive freedom."

SPEAKER 4: It's obvious that freedom meant a lot to him after all those years in slavery. I'm glad he got his freedom and made an interesting life for himself.

SPEAKER 1: Can you imagine what it would have been like to be a slave in America which is sometimes, amazingly, referred to as 'the land of the free'?

SPEAKER 2: Just imagine; waking-up every single morning of your life – in chains – knowing your day ahead will be nothing but forced labour. It's probably worse than going to school.

SPEAKER 3: Slaves all over the world have endured terrible hardships. And, by the way, having to wash the dishes every now and then doesn't count as being a slave... no matter how much you don't like it.

SPEAKER 4: Did you know that slavery still goes on today. Talk about man's inhumanity to man – human beings seem to find it very easy to be cruel to each other – or some people do. (*SARCASTICALLY*) That wouldn't apply to anyone in this room, of course.

SPEAKER 1: As Iles said in that video: "Freedom and equality are central to the Christian faith", though it has to be admitted that, in the past, some church leaders – and ordinary Christians - have conveniently forgotten that when it suited them. Hypocrisy is still very much alive today – just as it has been for centuries.

SPEAKER 2: We're lucky because we live in a world where we have quite a lot of freedom. Not always total freedom but probably much more than ever before.

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: Do you really value your freedom?

SPEAKER 2: In Europe we have freedom of speech. Do you want the right to say and write whatever you like?

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: Do you really value your freedom?

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SPEAKER 1: Do you want the right to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work?  
Do you want the freedom to wear whatever you want to a party?

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: Do you really value your freedom?

SPEAKER 2: Do you want the freedom to travel wherever you want to go?

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: Do you really value your freedom?

SPEAKER 1: Do you want the freedom to only wash the dishes when you feel like it?

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: Which is never ever.

SPEAKER 2: Do you want freedom of association? - to have, as a friend, anyone you like and want to spend time with?

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: Do you really value your freedom?

SPEAKER 1: Well, I've got news for you! If you want those rights and freedoms there's a price to pay for them.

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: I knew there must be a catch somewhere.

SPEAKER 2: What price?

SPEAKER 1: You have to remember something very important!

SPEAKERS 3 & 4: Like what?

SPEAKER 1: If you've got rights so have other people. Other people have the right to freedom too!

SPEAKER 2: Of course other people have the right to say what they believe in and wear what they want and travel and be friends with anybody they like.

SPEAKER 1: You said "of course other people have the right" but it's amazing how quickly some people forget the "of course" bit of that sentence.

SPEAKER 2: Okay – got the point. There's only one way to really look after and ensure your freedom and that is...

SPEAKERS 1 & 2 & 3: To value the freedom of EVERY human being on earth.

SPEAKER 1: Remember what Olaudah Equiano wrote in his book: "May the time come when people gratefully commemorate the auspicious era of extensive freedom." Respect, bruvver! Think about it.