



# Made to Order

## *The Function and Freedom of Following*

May 3, 2026

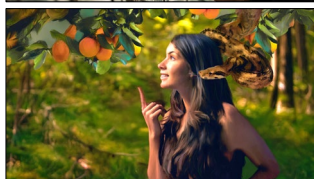
Today we're learning how the **freedom to live our best lives requires the discipline to follow God's exact orders**. Cuz our *human* hearts tend to see *independence* and *obedience* as *incompatible* – while our *spiritual Savior* insists that *real freedom* is only found in *total surrender*. So, if we want to see on *which side* of God's plan we really stand, we gotta ask *ourselves*: **Does your faith feel freeing?**



Cuz it kinda seems like the common *consensus* subconsciously *sees* God's *commands* as *restraining orders*. So when anyone says *religion*, we imagine a set of *rules, regulations, laws, and instructions* that are *more* concerned with *threatening consequences* than *actual assistance*.



But I get it, *earthly ears* don't hear **"Follow orders!"** as **"Find freedom!"** Following sounds like the *opposite* of *freedom*, cuz it sounds like *less choice* – and therefore *less of what we want* – and therefore *less of us!* *Obedience* sounds like it *restrains independence* and therefore keeps us from achieving the *full expression* of our *full potential* – so how is the *cornerstone* of *Christianity* a belief that *freedom* is found in *following*?! Well it *all* comes down to how we *define* *freedom*; cuz our *shallow, earthly ego* thinks *freedom* means **"I get to do whatever I want!"** But making *that* mistake means *forfeiting freedom*, cuz it allows any *snake* to *take control*.



[Like Paul says, *freedom is crippling if our choice isn't the best choice*] "I have the right to do *anything*," you say – but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do *anything*" – but not everything is constructive. – 1 Corinthians 10:23 NIV



Listen, **you're free to eat garbage, drink poison, and breathe smoke** – but because they kill you, *those choices* will *also* severely *limit future freedom!* Cuz **true freedom isn't about exploring possibilities; it's about fulfilling potential**. We're *most free* when functioning at *full capacity* – and that means the *right choices* matter *way more* than the *number* of choices.



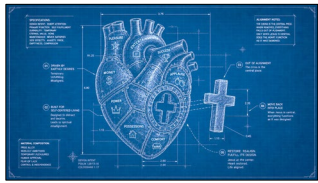
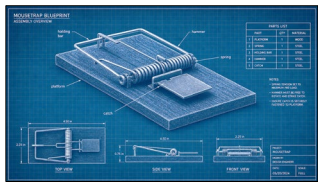
So, really *think* about this *world*, our *culture*, and *your life* and *hear* this: **freedom doesn't limit failure; but failure does limit freedom**. Cuz when *wrong choices* impair your *function*, they impair your *freedom!* Whether we like it or not, our *failures* carry *unavoidable consequences* – and *consequences* always lead us down paths with *fewer choices*.



Therefore, fish are *freest* in the *ocean*, *not* the *beach*; drivers are *freest* with *gas* in their tank, *not* *syrup*; and **we are freest in God's plan, not ours!**

After all, *He* created the universe as a *place* for *everything* – so it makes sense *He knows* how to *put* everything *in its place*. And the Bible has a word for that fully functional perfect created state: **shalom**.

We usually translate it as *peace*, but its *true* meaning is much *deeper*. It conveys *wholeness, fullness, and completeness* – where *nothing's* missing and *everything's* in *harmony*. It's the idea of making earth *as it is in heaven*; it's the place where *perfection* is *reality*, and **it's where we belong**. So, wishing someone "*shalom*" is the *ultimate* encouragement – cuz it means **"May you find your fit in perfection itself!"** And since living out our *created* purpose is how *we* hit our *highest* potential, *it's* where *we're* most free; so in the end, **we're free to the degree we have harmony with God's reality.**



But there's another side to that coin... cuz that *also* means **disharmony isn't just disorder, it's debilitating**. And living in *conflict* with reality *doesn't* mean you're merely *misaligned*, it means you're *malfunctioning*. Cuz **until every piece is where it's supposed to be, everything will remain out of order**. Literally. If just *one* part is *out* of place, by definition, the *whole* system is *out of order*; and *that* means *totally broken* cuz things can only serve their *purpose* and *achieve* their *potential* when they're *in* perfect *working order*. That is, it was *designed* to *do* something and by *messing* with *that* design – it *can't* do *that* thing!

The mousetrap is the classic illustration of this *principle*. Cuz it's *simple, functional, and effective*. Five pieces, each with a *place* and a *purpose* – and when they're where they're *supposed* to be, it's a mouse-killing *machine*. But, *remove* any *one* of the five pieces, and you *don't* catch 1/5 less mice – you *catch* zero. Cuz **things are either 100 percent in order or they're 100 percent out of order**.

And *that's* why we can *live, laugh, and love* – but still be slaves to *decline, decay, and death*: **our lives are out of order**; so our *world* is *totally broken*.

And **the true freedom of our full potential will stay out of reach until the right order is restored** and *Shalom* becomes *reality*. And as St. Augustine famously pointed out centuries ago, *that* process *begins* with getting *our* heart aligned with *God's will*; and the *premise* comes from *Proverbs*:

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. – Proverbs 4:23 NIV

For things to fall *into place*, it's gotta *start* with a firm foundation in the *heart*. Cuz **if our heart isn't following orders – it'll start giving orders!** And *that's* bad news cuz only the *Creator* is qualified to put things where they're *supposed* to be. Our *heart* is too *near-sighted* to see past our *earthly lives* and find our *best fit* in the *big picture*. So, like Augustine said, everything goes *wrong* when *our heart* **"loves more – what ought to be loved less."** And *that's* *brilliant* and *helpful*. Cuz it means *our* problem *isn't* just that *we love bad things*; often **our problem is loving good things in the wrong order**.

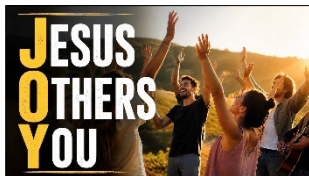
*Work* is good; *family* is good; *rest* is good. And *pleasure, money, and success*, can all be good, too – but when any *one* of those *lesser* things climbs into our heart's *highest* place, the *whole* life goes *out of order*. Cuz **a good thing in the wrong place becomes a cruel thing**. Cuz it robs you of what it was *designed* to *do*. Put your *career* above your *family*, and *both* will *break*. Make *money* your *top* priority, and you'll *stunt* *spiritual* growth. Even *ministry* limits your *potential* if you love *it* more that the Lord *behind* it! Cuz **everything can bless a life or consume it** It *all* depends on how *high* it sits in *your heart*!

But, *contrary* to *Buddhist* belief, being designed with *desire* is still *good*; **suffering is just the broken feeling we have when our heart's out of order.** And, Jesus came to help us rearrange it and find joy:

If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love ... I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is *this*: Love each other as I have loved you. [But *how was that*, in terms of *order*? *Good question!*] – John 15:10-12 NIV

[Good thing someone asked:] "Teacher, which is the *greatest* commandment in the Law?" [since we know it's *one of our loves*] Jesus replied: "'Love the *Lord* your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the *first and greatest* commandment. And the *second* is like it: 'Love your *neighbor* as *yourself*.'" – Matthew 22:36-39 NIV

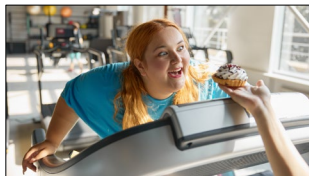
There you go – you want to get your heart in order so you can live a life of joy? **Jesus. Others. You.** J.O.Y. Follow that order and you'll get to enjoy the freedom of functioning at your full potential! Cuz you'll live in that flow state that only comes when you cooperate with your created purpose. So, **why aren't we all joyfully crushing life?** Well, since love lifts us up where we belong, everything down here wants to fight for every heart's top spot! Like James says:



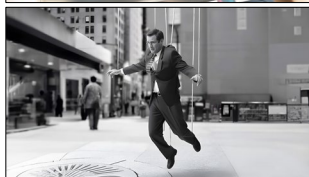
What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle *within you*? – James 4:1 NIV



And there it is. **Our big problem in life is the big battle in our heart.** Our desires don't *sit* quietly in order, they *fight* for the throne at the top! One part of you wants to be *healthy* so you can *live longer* and *do more* – but *another* part wants *cupcakes* for every meal. *One* part of you wants *peace* but *another* wants *the last word*. *One* part of you wants *integrity* but *another* wants *approval*. *One*, *holiness* – *another* *comfort*. **One part of you wants *God's future* but another wants *immediate gratification*.**



So the *mistake* we make when we define freedom as **"I get to do whatever I want,"** is *assuming* all our desires are on the same team. But *they're not*. And *that* kind of *freedom* is literally *self-defeating* because **a disordered heart is a civil war.** But, since it's *our heart* – it's *our choice* who *wins* and who *loses*. The only thing we *can't* choose is giving two *conflicting* desires the win. We *can't* choose *healthy* habits and *cupcake* dinners. Cuz no matter how hard we *try*, we *can't* change the *rules* of *reality* – and God *designed* it with room for just *one* winner in every *war*.



And spiritually it's the same – *courage* and *comfort* can't be our deepest desires simultaneously – so **we can't choose our will and God's will at the same time.** *One* will naturally win when our life leads us to *choose*. And *those* are the most *important* moments we can have – cuz each little victory moves one love ahead of another – as this life forces you to pick the pecking order of your heart! And each move is critical cuz at any given point, **what you love most leads you most.**

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. – Matthew 6:21 NIV

That's why this is *deeper* than *behavior*. This is *worship*. And **everybody worships something – cuz everybody loves something most**. And *whatever* gets your *worship* gets your *obedience*!

[Which is why Paul says] Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey – Romans 6:16 NIV

The higher the *love*, the *stronger* the *worship*; the *stronger* the *worship*, the *deeper* the *obedience*. So, whether you like it or *not*, we all *follow something* – and **what you follow decides your freedom**.



Which leads us to another *classic illustration*: **The Burmese Monkey Trap**. You've probably *heard* how it works – they *hollow* out a *coconut*, put a *treat* inside, and cut a *hole* just *big enough* for an *open hand* to *go in*. The monkey *reaches in*, *grabs* the *treat*, makes a *fist*... and suddenly *can't* get its hand *back out*. And the trap holds the monkey in place cuz it *refuses* to release the *treat*. It has *nothing* to do with the *strength* of the *coconut* – their *fate* depends on the *strength* of their *desires*. And until it *surrenders* a *material reward* for a *higher desire* – it *won't* be free. **That's us!**



We ask, **“Why do I feel so stuck? Why won't God let me do what I want?”** but often, it's not *God* that's holding us *back* – it's the grip *we have* on something *other* than *Him*. So, ask *yourself*, what's highest in *your heart* today. Is *your heart* giving your *image* more attention than your *Creator*? What about your *comfort*? Your *recreation*? Your *revenge*? **If so, let go!**



Cuz we *still* think freedom means grabbing *what* we want, *when* we want it – but *that* really means *servicing* some *master* whenever it *appears* and *paying* whatever it *asks*. Which is why **Jesus didn't come to remove authority – He came to replace authority!** Cuz listen *close* to what He said:

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

Did you catch that? **Rest comes with a yoke! His yoke**. Because **freedom comes with a commander!** And Jesus' *life*, *death*, and *resurrection* proved that *true freedom isn't* living *without* authority – *there's no such thing* – **freedom is living under the right authority**. Cuz following the *Creator's* design is what keeps *fish* in the *ocean*, *gas* in our *tank*, and *humans* *alive and well!* And when *ultimate joy* and *eternal life* are part of the *plan* – why *wouldn't* you follow *those orders* *above* all others?!

*Listen*, **none of God's commands are keeping life from you – they're making life possible**. We just tend to mistake *rescue* for *restriction*. Like a kid buckled into a car seat screaming about oppression while being saved from going through the windshield. That's us with God. But we need *every piece* of *His plan* right where it's *supposed* to be in *our life* – or we'll remain *out of order*.

So, **does your faith feel freeing?** If *not*, I got *good* news and *bad* news: the *good* news is if you can *fix* how you *feel* about your *faith*, your *whole life* will just *fall into order*. The *bad* news is **you gotta let go of whatever's in your coconut!** Cuz the life *you* were *designed* to live, *does have* freedom – but it's *freedom from failure* and *false promises*; and it's only found when your heart follows God's order.

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Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.