The Truth will set you free  
John 8:31-32

Jesus promised us freedom, but that freedom only comes to those who live in the truth. When we believe lies, we become slaves of fear, guilt, comparisons, and busyness. Discover the lies that bind us and the true freedom that comes from the promises of God.

Facebook game – “What’s the most surprising or ridiculous thing you’ve had to tell your kids to stop doing?”
There are so many ridiculous things you have to say as a parent
- absurd things you have to deal with
- demands you never expected

Parenting is hard – especially for moms who typically bear the brunt of all that craziness

My hope this morning: to make it just a little bit easier!

Read John 8:31-32,36
Jesus promised us FREEDOM
- If you know Jesus, He will set you free, you will be “free indeed.”

That’s an amazing promise… that so many of us fail to experience in everyday life
- Living lives of burden, not freedom
- Not just moms and dads – students, singles, empty nesters, everyone
- Weighed down by burdens that steal our joy, crush our freedom, and make life even harder than it already is.

I want to help you identify and cast off 4 COMMON BURDENS that weigh on most of us:
- The burden of Comparison, Fear, Guilt, Busyness
- We’ll wrestle with those burdens...
- ...discover the lies behind them
- ...learn truths in God’s Word that can set us free

Freedom from the burden of...
1. Comparison
- Theodore Roosevelt, “Comparison is the thief of joy.”
  o When we compare ourselves to other people...
  o our bodies, accomplishments, wealth, talents, popularity, kids, spouse, maturity...
  o ...It always leads to despair
- Why: because the public version of other people is always better than reality
  o What we show in public, at work, at church, on FB: an ideal version of ourselves
  o Not the real version – we don’t air our dirty laundry
- Example: Here’s our Christmas picture from 2 ½ years ago – the kids were 2
- We don’t share our lives as they actually are in public or on FB
  o we share the ideal version – the fantasy version – all the good stuff, none of the bad.
- Result: when I compare my life as it really is to the idealized fantasy I see of my peers in public or on FB... I always lose!
  o It’s what I call the Claire Huxtable principle!
- Cliff and Claire – great parents – funny – wise
- Claire – maybe not best role model for young moms!
  - full time partner in law firm; involved mom of 5 kids who never go to day care; takes care of husband & 4 grandparents; perfectly dressed!
- Moms – if you compare yourself to her... you will lose, every time.
- No real woman in all of human history who could compare favorably to her.
- Why? Because she isn’t real! She’s a fiction.
  - If you compare yourself to her, you’re comparing yourself to a fantasy...
  - Which is exactly what we’re doing when we compare ourselves to our peers as we see them in public or on social media.
    - comparing ourselves to a fiction that is impossible to live up to
    - we always lose – and that always leads to discouragement and depression
- So, first, let’s identify the lie behind this burden:
  - Lie: My success in life is based on how I measure up to my peers.
  - Their accomplishments, successes, talents, experiences set the bar for my life.
  - If I don’t measure up well to them, then God is disappointed with me.
- Now let’s answer that lie with the truth: turn to 1 Cor 12...
  - Paul has a lot to say about this lie in 1 Cor 12 – read this week
  - Read 1 Cor 12:14-18
  - Truth: Out of the whole body of Christ God created you absolutely unique.
  - Therefore, there is no one on earth you need to measure up to.
  - All that matters: that you walk the unique path God created for you
    - Not someone else’s path!
  - No one else’s life is an accurate measurement of your success as a Christ follower
  - We therefore have no business comparing ourselves to one another.
- Two practical steps:
  - Find a godly mentor and few godly friends to do life with
    - Spiritually mature people to do life with – who you know warts and all
    - Be vulnerable, be real with each other
    - Let them speak into your life – but don’t let everyone on Facebook!
  - Be careful with social media
    - A blessing and a curse – can feed the burden of comparison.
    - Me: Twitter – big name preachers always speaking at another conference
      - Made me feel small and insignificant
      - But I’m not seeing their real lives – just the victories
      - So I broke up with them! Unfollow; Unfriend
    - There may be some people you need to unfollow / unfriend
      - Not mean! It’s good if it frees you from this burden
- Fear
  - As our responsibilities in life increase, so do the stakes for failure
    - single man in college: failure hurts me & my parents, but not others
    - job: failure hurts those who count on me at work
    - married: failure hurts my wife
    - parent: failure hurts my kids and possibly their kids!!
  - For most people, that increase in responsibility leads to an increase in fear
    - People who were fun & carefree in college – always worried and weighed down
    - Worried about their job, the bills, the kids, their health...
  - Stats:
    - National Institute of Mental Health: 18% of Americans suffer from an anxiety disorder
    - 1/3 of working Americans worry “a lot” that they’ll lose their job
Closer to a half worry “a lot” about health care or overall financial issues

- Most of us know what it feels like to be overwhelmed by fear about the future
  - Me: summer after first year of seminary
  - ran out of $ paying for tuition; had big credit card bill due

- What was the Lie that held me captive to fear?
  - Lie: God is not powerful enough, wise enough, or loving enough to be trusted with my future.
  - Therefore, I must take care of myself.
  - I must anticipate every possible problem – research it – plan ahead for it – control all the variables – keep everything in line... because if I fail, my life will be ruined.

- 2 Truths from one passage: turn to Matthew 6...
  - Read Mt 6:25-30
  - 1) God is infinitely wise, powerful, and caring
     - Watches over and cares for every bird & blade of grass
     - If His power, wisdom, and care extend all the way down to a blade of grass – then how much more will He take care of you!
     - God always cares for you; knows what you need even when you don’t; has infinite power to provide it.
     - So you can trust God with your future and your family’s future.
       - He’s got it covered. He doesn’t need your help or your worry
  - 2) Worry doesn’t help at all
     - Worrying about the future accomplishes nothing – no benefit at all

- Practical step: Fine to say that worry is pointless. But what do I do when I feel worried – when I feel overwhelmed by anxiety?
  - read Phil 4:6-7
  - Give thanks for His past blessings; lay out all your future needs
  - Back to my story... God heard my prayers and provided just what I needed.

3. Guilt
- You know, I really thought I was a pretty capable person... until I had kids!
  - Still can’t believe the hospital sent me home with 2 infants
  - Didn’t know what I was doing – made lots of mistakes – still making mistakes!
- Mistakes we make as parents fuel this burden of guilt
- That guilt can be amplified by a lot of the articles and books written to parents
  - If you forgot to put sunscreen on your child... they’ll get cancer
  - If you ever yell at your child... they’ll grow up needing therapy
  - If you gave your baby anything but homemade, organic baby food... sickly
  - If you celebrated Christmas with Santa – your child is going to grow up an atheist.
  - If you didn’t celebrate Christmas with Santa – your child is going to be depressed!
- So many parents carry so much guilt over sins, mistakes, and shortcomings.
- And all of those examples are small – for a lot of us, the guilt is over larger issues...
  - Stupid things we did when we were kids
  - Job or educational opportunities that we blew
  - Financial mistakes we made
  - Relationships that we broke by lying or cheating
  - Sins that we allowed to grow into habits or addictions
- We’ve all done things in our past that we regret
  - things that hurt other people – that continue to cause pain even today
- That regret if left unchecked will grow into a guilt that will suffocate all joy in life.
- What you need to know if you’re a believer: guilt is never God’s will for your life!
  - God will convict you when you sin – temporary – to lead you to confession
  - But if you feel ongoing guilt even after confession – that’s not from God
- Guilt that lasts is built on a lie...
  o Lie: Some sins and failures are beyond what God will forgive or heal.
  o So I must carry the burden of my failures – they go beyond what God is willing to forgive and forget. They’re too big to be fixed.

- 2 Truths to battle this lie:
  - Truth 1: There is no sin God won’t forgive
    o 1 John 1:9
    o When Jesus died for our sins – not just for a subset of our sins – small, reasonable
      o for every sin – even the huge, horrible, tell-no-one sins
    o Result: God offers complete forgiveness to anyone who will simply ask for it
  - Truth 2: There is no failure God can’t redeem
    o Rom 8:28
    o If you love God then rest assured – He will bring good out of everything in your life
      ▪ even the bad, evil, painful
      ▪ God is big enough to bring good out of any and every failure
    o Nothing you’ve ever done is beyond God’s power to redeem and use for good.

- So you don’t have to carry that guilt anymore
  o That’s not what God wants for you
  o Confess your sins and failures to God and then let them go.

- Practical: What do you do when a memory of a past failure rekindles guilt?
  o This is where scripture really proves valuable – helps you take thoughts captive
  o Memorize 1 John 1:9 & Rom 8:28 - Meditate on them. Thank God for them.

4. Busyness
- Talking to a friend: We need to put an end to the glorification of busyness
- 1st thought: “Wow, that’ll preach. I’m totally stealing that!” She said yes, so here we are!
- 2nd thought: “Man, that’s convicting!”
  o I do live a life that to an outside observer seems to glorify busyness
  o I live as if my value is determined by how much I accomplish in a day
  o If I’m not busy, it feels like something’s wrong with me

- God’s Word says...
  o “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10)
  o “Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28)

- But do we even know what those words mean anymore!
  o “be still... rest...” – like a foreign language!
  o We’re hardly ever still, and quiet, and at rest anymore.

- Many of us are slaves of busyness – it’s like we’re addicted to busyness.
  o If we have to sit still for 5 minutes... pull out phone, email, got to stay busy!

- What lie is driving that incessant busyness in our lives?...
  o Could be one of the previous lies:
    ▪ Busy because we’re comparing ourselves to others – falling short – drive harder
    ▪ Busy because we’re afraid that we or our kids will miss out on something
    ▪ Busy because of guilt over past or present mistakes – stay busy to escape guilt
  o If any of those lies are behind your busyness – go back to the truths...
  o Here’s one more Lie behind busyness: I am indispensible.
    ▪ If I don’t do what only I can do, then my family/church/business is doomed!
    ▪ God can’t steer this ship straight if I’m not at the rudder.

- Truth: I am useful, but not necessary!
  o 1 Cor 3:6-7
  o Paul realized that in his incredible ministry, really wasn’t that essential!
  o He put in effort. Apollos put in effort. But God caused ALL the growth.
  o So Paul was useful to God, but not necessary.
So am I, and so are you.

- We can be useful to God as He builds our families, community, church...
- but He doesn’t need any of us – He’s God – doesn’t need our help

So often we overwork because we think too highly of ourselves and too little of God

- **I am not just saying that as your pastor, but as your fellow struggler!**
  - I will be out a lot this summer
  - Since opening Southwood 6 years ago, I’ve taken very little time off
  - Too often I’ve fallen to the lie that I am indispensable in God’s plan for Southwood
  - Led to unhealthy and unwise level of busyness
  - So this summer, I’m going to take time off to rest and be still
  - I encourage you to do the same.

- **Practical:** If you are often busy, find one thing in your life you can simplify this summer.
  - One less organized activity or event you can do with your kids
  - One less project you can start at work
  - A few extra days you can take off

  - Make your plan while the summer is young
  - Find time to rest, to be still, to be with God, to be refreshed.

**Life is hard – whether you’re a parent or not**

But it’s much harder when we add the burdens of comparison, fear, guilt, and busyness

If you’re carrying any of those burdens which most if not all of us are...

  - Review these truths and these verses, meditate on them this week
  - Jesus will use these truths in your life to set you free

Let’s pray for His help.