

There's more to life than meets the eye...

(The natural and supernatural realms)

1. Introduction

Have you got the idea of what Living Free is about yet? What the point of it is? It's about the church – that's you and me – recovering what has been stolen from us.

It's about us discovering (or re-discovering) our true design and purpose, by taking hold of the truth in the Bible.

And then walking with Christ into the freedom that he has won for us.

We recover our original design by knowing these truths:

- **Our identity in the Father's love**
1 John 3:1
See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognise that we are God's children because they don't know him.
- **Our inheritance in Christ Jesus**
Ephesians 1:11
Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.
- **Our calling as individuals and as church**
Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)
And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'
Ephesians 3:10
God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
- **Our commission to go to the nations**
Matthew 28:18-20
Jesus came and told his disciples, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'

All bible verses are from the NLT unless shown otherwise

Is there a verse in the Bible that sums up living freely?

There are plenty!

Here's the second half of one of them:

Hebrews 12:1b

...let us throw off everything that hinders, and the sin which so easily entangles, and let us run with confidence the race marked out for us.

The Living Free teaching is about us disentangling ourselves in order to confidently live the way God intends.

According to our original design.

The design which is available to each and every one of his children, as well as the design specific to you and your life.

This is the normal Christian life!

As we grow in God, our perspectives begin to change. We see things differently, we experience revelation through the Bible, through others and through God himself.

We begin to have a deeper understanding of the truth.

In particular, we begin to understand that Truth = what God says.

Reality

How we define reality influences everything we do, say and think. Your view of the world is shaped by experience, culture and inspiration from others.

We live in a physical, material, visible world, but there is a lot more going on 'out there' than maybe we realise...

Elisha and his servant

An account in the OT which reveals the existence of 2 realms.

The King of Aram was at war with Israel and he was in a rage because he found out that all of his plans were being discerned prophetically by Elisha. So he sent his men to discover where Elisha was:

2 Kings 6:14-17

And the report came back: "Elisha is at Dothan."

So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. "Oh, sir, what will we do now?" the young man cried to Elisha.

¹⁶ "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!"

¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!" The Lord opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

- The servant was at first only able to see the natural, earthly realm.
- As soon as he saw what was going on in heaven, his understanding changed. And hopefully his level of faith & trust!
- The reality of the supernatural gives us a different perspective on what is happening on earth.
- And it enables us to act accordingly – sometimes with a response that makes no earthly sense...

Heaven: the place of God's rule

- INFINITE
- ETERNAL
- INVISIBLE
- NO LIMITS!

The spiritual realm

Creates a spiritual atmosphere around the earth

Earth, sky, stars

- VISIBLE
- FINITE
- HAS LIMITS

Natural
Realm

- INVISIBLE
- FINITE
- LIMITED

Supernatural Realm

2. There are 2 Realms (...and 3 Heavens!)

We live in two realms at the same time:

The Natural realm and the Supernatural realm.

The Bible also describes 3 kinds of heaven in various places, which are distinct, but also overlap. Confusing!

So let's deal with those first:

First Heaven Part of the Natural realm	The physical universe, visible skies, stars & planets (Deuteronomy 4:19)
Second Heaven	The realm of war, a spiritual atmosphere surrounding the natural realm and where battles between angels & demons take place (Ephesians 6:12)
Third Heaven Part of the Supernatural realm	The unrestricted place of God's rule (1 Chronicles 29:11) The place where he dwells and from which he speaks (Luke 3:22)

The Natural realm (represented in the diagram by the earth)

Contains the earth, skies, planets, stars etc.

It has defining characteristics:

- **VISIBLE**
Material and perceivable.
We can see & experience it.
Scientists study it, artists paint it, poets and musicians write about it.
- **FINITE**
It has a beginning and end in time; it isn't permanent.
- **LIMITED**
It is subject to certain conditions and constraints of (for example):
space, the processes of nature, laws of physics, linear time.

We relate very easily to the natural, earthly realm because our experiences, memories and 5 senses are anchored there.

But there is another, much bigger & wider realm, which impacts the natural realm.

The Supernatural Realm (represented by everything else on the diagram)

Super = above and beyond

The supernatural realm is populated by supernatural beings.

God: the Creator (Gen 1:1)

Angels: spirit beings, servants & ministers of God (Heb 1:14)

Satan: a fallen archangel, the prince of this world (2 Cor 11:14; Rev 12:7-9)

Demons: spirit beings, servants & foot soldiers of Satan (Luke 11:15 Jude 1:6)

NB: This is also the authority structure in the supernatural realm.

i.e. God and his angels are more powerful than Satan and his demons.
(see Job 1; Luke 11:14-20; 1 John 4:4; Revelation 12)

Many places in scripture give us glimpses into what is, has been and will be going on in the supernatural realm.

Perhaps in particular, the books of Job, Daniel and Revelation.

There are 2 parts to the Supernatural realm

In the Bible both are variously referred to as heavenly places, heavenly realms, the heavenlies etc.

- **The spiritual realm**

- It is a conflict zone, a place of war (Rev 12:7-9).
- It creates a spiritual atmosphere around the natural realm.
It is a place where Satan and his demons have authority and rule (Ephesians 3:10).
- The earth does not belong to Satan, but he seeks to invade and control it wherever he can get an opportunity (1 John 5:19).
- What goes on in the spiritual realm affects what goes on in the natural realm.
What and how we pray affects events going on in the spiritual realm.

Important!

Bad things are not caused by a good God; they happen when humans either consciously or unwittingly give authority & permission to the dominion of Satan and his demons.

- **Heaven itself**

- The dwelling place of God (Genesis 28:17; 1 Kings 8:30)
- The place of his throne (1 Kings 22:19)
- The place of God's uninhibited and unrestricted rule (1 Chronicles 29:11; Job 41:11; Psalm 115:3)
- The place about which Jesus prayed: on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)
- The place where we are seated with Christ (Ephesians 2:6)
- The place from which God's authority extended to Jesus and extends to us (Matthew 28:18-20)

It contains everything (1 Chronicles 29:11)

It is INFINITE
ETERNAL
INVISIBLE
UNLIMITED

When we become Christians, our nature is no longer earthly, but heavenly.

- We don't have the world's mind-set any longer, we are like Jesus (John 17:14).
- Jesus was a heavenly man living in the polluted natural realm. And so are we...
- Consider the following statement:
Jesus did not come to make bad people good,
or good people better,
but natural people supernatural.

That's what happened to us when we became Christians.

A quote:

"Putting your faith in Jesus as Saviour connects you to something above and beyond what we could ever have access to in the natural realm."
(K. Nicholson: Living Free Session 2)

When we become Christians, our natural home is no longer earthly but heavenly.

Ephesians 2:1-6 (NLT)

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil - the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:20 (NLT)

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Saviour.

3. Why is it so hard for us to think like this?

Our Western mind-set is resistant to this worldview; we live in a culture which is not awake to the spiritual, because we over-rely on our 5 senses and our intellect to understand the world. Acknowledging the existence of the spirit world is seen as primitive and contrary to our enlightened wisdom.

Recently, even the Western church has become hugely influenced by a man-centred worldview.

The enemy has done a great job in convincing the modern, rational, logical and measured church that she just does not need to think about or engage with the heavenly realms at all.

However.....we need to have a biblical worldview which recognises the natural and the supernatural realms.

Without this, none of the Living Free teaching makes any sense!

We need to understand that events in the heavenly realms have a direct impact on events in the natural realm

We need to ask questions:

- What's really going on here?
- Is this 'just happening?'
 - Is my disintegrating relationship Just Happening?
 - Is the breakdown of society & community Just Happening?
 - Is division, tension or lack of joy in the church Just Happening?
 - Is my persistent depression/anger/lack of commitment Just My Personality?
 - Is the constant onslaught of stuff happening to my family Just Bad Luck?
 - Are wars, civil unrest and ethnic cleansing Just the Way it is?
...and so on.

We can use our God-given imaginations and ask him to show us what we really need to see.

4. What does this mean for us?

The bottom line is that we are supernatural beings.

Our spirit is fully alive, joined to Christ's spirit and we are indwelt by his Holy Spirit.

We have a taste for heaven! We cannot help it – it's in our nature.

We can and should live from heaven to earth.

And we are under attack from Satan and his foot soldiers, whose mandate is to steal, kill, destroy, accuse, deceive, devour, and diminish us.

But we **can** live on the earth in total well-being and still overcome the enemy!

Just like Jesus

- He did this as a man, not as God.
So do we.
- He was dependent on the Spirit of God.
So are we.
- At the heart of everything he did was his relationship with his Father....

Our mandate on earth is the same as Jesus' mandate

John 17:18

Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.

Which is...

I John 3:8 (ESV)

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

And Jesus gave us authority to do this

Matthew 28:18 & 19

Jesus came and told his disciples:

I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations....

It means.... Jesus' ministry is our ministry!

- Acts 10:38 (MSG)

Then Jesus arrived from Nazareth, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, ready for action. He went through the country helping people and healing everyone who was beaten down by the Devil. He was able to do all this because God was with him.

It means.... His authority is our authority.

- Luke 10:19

Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. ²⁰ But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven."

It means.... His fullness is our fullness

- Colossians 2:9-10

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.

So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

It means.... His power is our power

- Ephesians 1:18-22

I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance

¹⁹ I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. ²² God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

5. So what shall we do?

- We could ignore the existence of the spiritual world.
And just try to get through life as best we can until we die, hoping we don't come across anything too awful to have to deal with...
- We could spend most of our time focusing on the need to protect ourselves from the evil one.
But guess what we would be thinking about most of the time??!
- Or we can turn our hearts towards the one who is our all-sufficient, all-knowing all-powerful Father and Saviour.
We can seat ourselves in heaven and live from the truth that is found there.
We can handle our sin, disappointments, difficulties and oppressions from a heavenly place and with a heavenly mind-set, using heavenly weapons to disarm spiritual forces of evil.

And we can bring God's Kingdom to earth - just by doing that!

If the church "gets" that we are seated in heavenly places with Christ and lives according to that truth..... man that's powerful!

And THAT'S the point of Living Free!!

Questions & things to consider

1. Are there situations in your life that you feel uncomfortable about, or which are stressful to you?

Ask God how he sees it and what it looks like in heaven....

Or if you have had a difficult/traumatic experience in the past which still causes you pain, ask your Heavenly Father to take you back there, to see it from his heavenly perspective...

(do this with someone you trust if you think that would be more helpful)

2. Imagine yourself in the throne room of Heaven, approaching God the Father:

What does it look like?

How do you feel?

What is he saying to you?

Do your responses line up with scripture?

3. If you have recently had Freedom Prayer part 2 (stronghold prayer), did you get an idea of what was happening in the spiritual realm?

4. Have you ever had an experience which gave you a glimpse of the supernatural?

5. Before Jesus began his ministry, he was baptised. At that time, the heavens opened and God said:

'This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy' (Matthew 3:16-17)

Does this tell you anything about the nature of God as your Father, and how he relates to you?

6. During a typical day, how often on average do you ask God 'What's happening in the spiritual realm?'