

Ladies, Is This the Truth That Really Sets You Free?

I'll begin with Beverly, and eventually you will see where I'm going with this. She is half Australian Shepherd, half Border Collie, and she just got her 12-week shots. My daughter has brought her new dog to stay with us for a week while her husband's away, so we are tag-teaming the puppy thing.

I heard you groan.

Because you know. Puppies are so cute, but they pee everywhere they shouldn't; nip at you with razor-sharp teeth, under the guise of playing; and they run fast in the other direction whenever you say, "Come."

We don't have a fence, so while my daughter has been at work I've decided Bev has got to be on a leash if I'm going to get her out. Bev does not like the leash. The first time I hooked it to her collar, she went boneless on me. Then she tried to chew on it.

"Now listen, Bev," I reasoned with her, "I know you don't like this, but the leash is your ticket to freedom. Freedom, I tell you!" So I've kept trying her on the leash for short bursts of time, and you know what? This last time she didn't fight it. As I got her out of her little kennel, I said, "Look, I brought Freedom with me, Bev." And *click*. This time we went far, and she sniffed new things she had never sniffed before. She ran places she had never run before. (I did too.) She even saw her first mushroom, and it was quite a discovery.

Over the last few days, while Bev has been taking a nap, sprawled out on her stuffed pig, I have been listening to a Timothy Keller sermon about freedom. He says freedom is not what you think. We're happiest when we're in a love relationship, and as soon as you fall in love with somebody,

the first thing you give up is your freedom—willingly. You start checking in with the guy before you make plans. You stop doing things that annoy him. You start thinking about what he wants to do before you indulge in what you want to do.

That brings me to the point I want to make today, which is a very special day in my life. Today is Matt and my 25th wedding anniversary! My dad would say, “Your Anna-very-sorry?” Funny, Dad.

We’re celebrating 25 years, and I want you to know that the best decision I ever made was to tie the knot.

“Ball-n-chain” I think the guys call it.

But from my experience? **Best constraint ever.** After 25 years, Matt and I are still swoony in love and flirtier than ever. I think we were supposed to be crushed by the empty nest thing, but—sorry kids—your dad and I are really happy with each other.

Do you know what our wedding rings said to us all those years ago? “You can call me Freedom.” While I do have to be thoughtful and bend toward that guy now, at the same time, I’ve run farther toward joy with him than I ever could have imagined. I’ve experienced the love of Christ through Matt’s care. He has encouraged me. He has been kind and protective. We’ve laughed together.

We’ve given up a lot of freedoms because we’re married, but because we’re married, we’re the most free we’ve ever been.

Now really this post isn’t about marriage, although someone reading this maybe needs to be encouraged to tie the knot—to take the risk of a lifetime of constraint. But you know the reason I write is so that you can know God. So if there’s someone out there who has been unwilling to settle down with God, to go all in, then I say to you that knowing God is the way to the freedom you want.

But listen, before you freak out and want to nip at my hands the way the pup did, listen to these words of Jesus:

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:25).

Imagine Jesus with a leash in his hands, asking you to give up your freedom so you can have more. It’s a demeaning thought at first, but what if it leads you to a wonderful adventure?

“Therefore if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Stop fighting Him, I beg you.

Hold still, at least long enough to consider where Jesus is offering to take you, an idea I stole from Timothy Keller.

Quit squirming away and say hello to Freedom.