

Setting People Free

Welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. —Philemon 17-18

The ministry of emancipation is what Jesus and the Holy Spirit are all about. The problem is, we want to control things. I doubt there is a much greater sin than deliberately leaving a person in the bondage of guilt when it lies within our power to emancipate that person.

Emancipating another person requires several steps. We must:

- * Forgive that person totally by refusing to tell what we know.
- * Keep the person from feeling intimidated.
- * Enable the person to forgive himself or herself.
- * Let the person save face.

If you want to make a friend forever, let that person save face. Allow another a sense of self-esteem, a sense of dignity and self-worth. When Prime Minister Joseph of Egypt looked at his eleven scared brothers and said, “It was not you who sent me here, but God,” he was letting each of them save face (Gen. 45:8). They had tried to destroy him twenty-two years before, and their guilt was unthinkably deep. Joseph knew that. He set them free. “God intended it for good,” he told them (Gen. 50:20). How that must have felt!

We can control people not only by guilt, but also by keeping them under our thumb in order to manipulate them. The Holy Spirit does not manipulate us—He sets us free. Many strong leaders (owing largely to their own insecurity) keep their followers under control by making them feel disloyal if they do not dot every i and cross every t as they would do. Such leaders, I believe, are in danger of quenching the Holy Spirit

and robbing people of freedom. The Holy Spirit is in the business of emancipating, and when we enjoy His ungrieved and unquenched presence, we will keep it by giving up personal control of people.

We have the high privilege of being Jesus to others—setting them free.

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