

FREEDOM IN THE TIME OF COVID - WEEK 2

Scripture used: [Mark 5:18-20 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Tilden continued his powerful message about overcoming the practical challenges of living a life of freedom as God intended. This week we're focusing on what happens when we say YES to God's unique plan for each of our lives. He reminded us about the story of the demon-possessed man who was told by Jesus to return home. That was a different call than the one Jesus gave to the rich man who was told to sell his possessions and follow Jesus. The two men would have preferred to switch places, but that was not God's plan for them. Pastor Tilden then shared a time of powerful fellowship with our brother Ben Lenail. Ben immigrated in the 80s, met and married in Seattle, then moved to Silicon Valley. An athlete and outdoorsman, Ben noticed some physical issues in 2010 and was eventually diagnosed with a rare neurodegenerative disease. Only given 2 years to live, Ben turned to God. He read scripture to find freedom from pain, from loss, and from fear of the unknown. He studied Jesus as a model for using his gifts in service of others. This led him to pursue a huge range of opportunities, from starting a foundation to research his condition to ministering people who have terminal illnesses. 8 years later Ben is still with us, blessing so many people as a result of his choice to fully embrace God's purposes!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **We get the life God planned for us — not the one we planned for ourselves.** Letting go of this original plan can be difficult. We think we know what's best, but that is not true. Pastor Tilden explained that there is something powerful and joyful when we realize that what God planned is better than what we planned. Once healed, the man who had been demon-possessed went back to Decapolis and "all the people were amazed" when he shared the Good News about Jesus.
- 2) **Our deepest pain often uncovers our unique callings.** Ben struggled a lot with the limitations that his disease placed on him. The thoughts of "Why?" and "Why me?" constantly popped into his head. He had to take these questions to God, which strengthened his faith and deepened that relationship. By turning toward Him, we can remember the Bible's most powerful truths. God loves us. He will not leave us, or forsake us. His plan comes inside of the brokenness of life, even inside of sickness or pain, things He does not intend, but He can work His plan in spite of their reality in this world.
- 3) **We have to say YES to God's calling for our lives.** We are not called to the same purpose as anyone else. God has carefully shaped opportunities for each one of us to be a part of His plan. It does no good to look at someone else and wish we could have their life, their spouse, or their money. God has an amazing purpose for us, and we don't want to miss out on it!
- 4) **Remember that nothing in our lives is ever wasted.** God's economy is not like ours. There is nothing that cannot be turned toward His plan for redeeming the world. Every action, every thought, and every gift can bless others.
 - a. **It's not a dead end. It's an open road!** Ben likes to say this to people when they have recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Like Ben when he first learned about his condition, they are struggling to adapt to a different reality. Ben described it as breaking from the "old me" and cultivating the "new me."

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What is your immediate reaction to Ben's testimony? Are you inspired? Scared? Why? What is God trying to say to you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Pastor Tilden asked us to consider two important questions about this week's message. First, what is our biggest fear when it comes to saying YES to God? Second, what would we miss out on if we said NO to God? Also, consider the 3 practical challenges to overcome as we seek to fulfill God's purpose in our lives. Which one of these challenges is most relevant to you? How do you struggle with it?
- 3) **DO** - [II Chronicles 16:9 \(NIV\)](#) tells us that "the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." It won't be easy to follow God's plan, but it is possible. This week we must pray to God, asking Him "Lord, give me strength for my calling!"