

Stage 5 and 6 Unit

THE FREEDOM TRAP



UNIT DESCRIPTION	This unit considers how the modern pursuit of freedom is shaping our ever-evolving relationship with consumerism, unpacking the ‘traps’ that come with our growing sense of entitlement to personal liberty. As society increasingly celebrates autonomy, self-expression, and limitless choice, we are invited to reflect on the consequences of this cultural shift – particularly its impact on our mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Students will explore how our shared desire for freedom has morphed into a modern obsession with individual autonomy and consumption, often at the cost of deeper meaning, community, and wellbeing. Through the lens of Christian faith, students will compare cultural messages with the Gospel invitation to live a life of love, purpose, and true freedom. The unit is built around a series of thought-provoking video clips featuring Max Jeganathan, whose insights challenge students to think critically about freedom, identity, and the traps of modern life. These clips – along with related questions and activities – can be used for class discussion, staff devotions, or more structured lesson plans. Through inquiry, reflection, and collaborative group work, students will evaluate how faith offers a more liberating vision of human dignity and flourishing, in contrast to the subtle (and not-so-subtle) traps of modern freedom.
CHRISTIAN INTEGRATION	In today’s world, freedom is often equated with escaping anything that feels limiting – whether it’s inconvenience, boredom, or discomfort. We seek personal liberty through constant consumption: new products, new experiences, endless content, and curated identities. Yet, Scripture challenges this view. Not everything that we are free to do is necessarily good for us (1 Corinthians 10:23), and unchecked freedom can become a trap that enslaves us to our own desires (1 Corinthians 6:12). The Bible presents a radically different vision of freedom – one that liberates rather than indulges. From the Israelites’ deliverance in Exodus to Jesus’ victory over sin and death (Romans 8:2), the Christian story is one of freedom that leads to wholeness. This freedom isn’t about doing whatever we want, but becoming who we are truly called to be: people of love, service, and self-giving. Christians are called to use their freedom not for self-interest, but to build healthy, life-giving relationships and communities (Galatians 5:13). True freedom means considering others before ourselves, resisting the temptation to treat people as means to an end (1 Corinthians 8:9), and living in a way that reflects Christ’s example of sacrificial love. In this unit, students will explore how faith provides a deeper, more fulfilling vision of freedom – one that challenges the individualistic messages of the modern world and invites us into a life of purpose, identity, and communion with others.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	• What is freedom? What does it mean to be truly free? • What is freedom for? Why have we been given a free will and free choice? • How can we keep express our freedom in healthy and uplifting ways?
UNIT LEARNING OBJECTIVES	– Students will be able to explain the difference between freedom and autonomy – Students will identify the potential ‘traps’ which often accompany the modern expression of personal freedom – Students will explore the tension between Christian values and societal beliefs around individualism and consumerism – Students will be able to reflect on and evaluate how ‘free’ they are and what they could change in their lives
UNIT SUCCESS CRITERIA	– Students can clearly explain the difference between autonomy and true freedom from both a modern and Christian perspective – Students can identify a range of ways in which the expression of freedom can be damaging and dangerous for them personally – Students can explain what the Bible teaches about a healthy expression of freedom – Students can reflect meaningfully on their own freedom, developing steps they can take to live with greater purpose and integrity
ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS	800 Word Extended Response – ‘What does it mean to be truly free?’ (DOCX / PDF) Creative Writing – Students write a fictional letter from Paul to a modern audience warning about the modern forms of ‘enslavement’, outlining what it looks like to be truly free. This could also be presented as a blog or a short-form clip for a platform like TikTok, Insta or YouTube. (DOCX / PDF) Personal Action Plan – Students complete further research on their chosen question/issue, presenting their evaluation of the evidence or arguments that they discover. They can produce a formal or informal report, which may be written, recorded or presented in class. (DOCX / PDF)

For a deeper understanding of the ideas explored in this unit you can read [“The Freedom Trap”](#) by Priyan (Max) Jeganathan (107 pages). This book is part of the [Re:CONSIDERING](#) series – a collection of short works published by Acorn Press in partnership with The Centre for Public Christianity.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

These can be utilised at any point in the unit but may be most useful for assessing student understanding after viewing the five 'Freedom Traps' clips.

Small Group Presentation: "Mapping a Modern Freedom Trap" *(students develop their research, collaboration, and reflective thinking skills)*

In small groups, students explore a 'Freedom Trap' of their choice (e.g. social media addiction, fast fashion, tech obsession, FOMO, choice anxiety, decision fatigue, the drift to uniformity, worldly success metrics etc.) and prepare a 3-minute informal class presentation.

Each group will:

- Define the trap and describe how it promises freedom
- Brainstorm and record its physical, emotional, social, or spiritual impacts
- Pose one discussion question for the class based on their findings
- Reflect on what a Christian response to this issue might look like

Teacher Feedback Focus:

- Are students showing an emerging understanding of the "freedom trap" concept?
- Are they beginning to connect cultural trends with spiritual implications?
- Are they participating and listening respectfully in group and class settings?

Class Mini-Debate: "Consumerism as freedom" *(students build confidence in public speaking and reasoning, while also developing their Biblical and cultural literacy)*

As a class, students engage in a guided [Mini-debate](#) to explore the statement: **"Consumerism is the truest expression of our freedom."** This is designed to be a formative classroom dialogue, structured to encourage critical engagement with cultural assumptions, so students can practise speaking and listening in a faith-integrated context.

In pairs or small teams, students will:

- Brainstorm arguments for or against the statement using real-world examples
- Explore Christian perspectives on consumer culture, identity, and purpose
- Participate in a class discussion or debate, using respectful questioning and rebuttal

Teacher Feedback Focus:

- Do students demonstrate understanding of consumerism and personal freedom?
- Are they using evidence and examples effectively?
- Are they beginning to speak thoughtfully about the role of faith in cultural critique?

LEARNING ACTIVITIES		Resource	Register
Introduction	“Freedom for All” This opening clip invites an exploration of our understanding of freedom in the modern world. It prompts students to think about what freedom really means – not just as a personal right, but as a shared human longing. <i>Central theme: True freedom is about far more than just doing whatever we want.</i>		
	Individually students finish the sentence “Freedom means...” in a personal journal or on a doc (or for a more collaborative approach use a Digital Discussion Platform). OR... Display the Westpac Billboard and discuss its idea of freedom, before students create a mind map for the word ‘FREEDOM’ in small groups. Once completed, students individually write a definition of freedom.	The Freedom Trap Slides PDF: Freedom Mind Map Template	
	Watch ‘Part A: Introducing Freedom’, using the discussion question “What does it mean to be free?” (at the end of the clip) to stimulate a written response or a Think-Pair-Share. Then discuss the following questions: • <i>What does freedom mean to you in your everyday life?</i> • <i>Why do you think people care so much about having freedom?</i> • <i>Where do you think the desire to be free comes from?</i> Students analyse the data for Australia from one or more Freedom Indexes and identify the measures used to rank a country’s level of freedom. As a class discuss the importance of these measures.	Clip: Introducing Freedom (0:00 – 1:10) • Freedom in the World – Australia • Human Freedom Index 2024 – Australia • World Press Freedom Index – Australia	
	Watch ‘Part B: Personal Freedom’, using the discussion question “What’s the best thing about living in the modern world?” (at the end of the clip), then discuss the following questions: • <i>Do you think having no limits would make life better or more stressful?</i> • <i>How good are we at knowing what will make us happy?</i> • <i>Which personal freedoms matter most to you right now?</i> In small groups students complete a Step Inside activity. Allocate each group a character, students identify and share how each would respond to the statement “<i>True freedom means having no limits</i>”. (e.g. a teenager, a parent, a politician, an influencer, a judge, a sporting coach, a teacher, a police officer, a doctor etc.) Students reflect on the superpower they most wish they had. “<i>What would you do if you were unlimited?</i>” As a class discuss which limits are good for us.	Clip: Personal Freedom (1:11 – 3:28)	

	Extension: Students read “How much land does a man need” by Leo Tolstoy (there are a range of online PDF versions available). Students discuss or compose a written response outlining what Tolstoy’s message is. <i>For a creative response students could write a short modern retelling of the story.</i>		
	Watch ‘Part C: Freedom v. Autonomy’, using the discussion question “What is the difference between freedom and autonomy?” (at the end of the clip) to stimulate a Think-Pair-Share. Then discuss the following: • <i>Why do we all want to “do things our own way”?</i> • <i>What are some of the things that can go wrong when people purely focus on their own autonomy?</i> • <i>Why is ‘autonomy’ a poor substitute for freedom?</i>	Clip: Freedom v. Autonomy (3:29 – 5:00)	
Additional discussion questions for each ‘Freedom Trap’ can be found in the ‘Discussion Guide’ .			
Trap #1	“Too Much Choice” Students explore how the abundance of choice in modern life can create stress, reduce satisfaction, and hinder meaningful decision-making. They will consider cultural expectations, psychological effects, and spiritual responses. <i>Central theme: How choice overload can reduce freedom.</i>		
	Teacher introduces the topic of ‘Freedom Traps’ with a short personal story or example (e.g. “Have you ever spent 20 minutes scrolling Netflix and still ended up rewatching <i>The Office</i>?”) Students respond to the question “Have you ever felt overwhelmed by having too many options?” Teacher briefly defines ‘decision fatigue’ – the mental exhaustion we feel after making too many decisions. Students watch the “Too Much Choice” clip and then participate in a class discussion. Depending on time and dynamic this could be a mix of whole-class and/or small group responses to the following questions. • <i>How much choice is too much?</i> • <i>Why do we believe that more choices make us more free?</i> • <i>What are some everyday examples of decision fatigue in your life?</i> • <i>Can too much choice distract us from more meaningful decisions?</i> Students reflect and respond to the prompt “What is one area of your life where you could simplify your choices or habits to gain more clarity or peace?” Responses can be written or a think-pair-share. Extension: Encourage a personal or group challenge to simplify one area of life (e.g. phone use, clothing, schedule).	The Freedom Trap Slides Clip: Too Much Choice (1:15)	

Trap #2	“Living With The Consequences” Students explore the idea that every decision carries a cost — whether immediate or delayed — and that freedom comes with responsibility. Students think critically and ethically about how their choices affect themselves, others, and the world. <i>Central theme: Every choice comes with an opportunity cost and unavoidable consequences.</i>
	Students discuss the question “Have you ever said ‘yes’ to something and later regretted it because you missed out on something better?” Students watch the “Unavoidable Consequences” clip and then write a definition of ‘opportunity cost’ in their own words (what you give up or forego by choosing to do something). Facilitate a class discussion based on the following questions. This could be a mix of whole-class, small groups or think/pair/share responses: • <i>How do we measure the true ‘cost’ of our choices? How do we evaluate the consequences?</i> • <i>Why do some decisions feel “worth it” in the moment – but not later?</i> • <i>Have any of your choices ended up having an unexpected impact? What happened?</i> • <i>In what ways does our culture downplay or distract us from the real cost of our habits or lifestyles?</i> Students complete a journal entry using the prompt: “What is one decision I could make more intentionally this week?” Students create a cost-benefit chart with a partner or in small groups around a common teen choice (e.g., social media use, gaming, overcommitment to work or sport, or buying trends etc.). The Freedom Trap Slides Clip: Living With The Consequences (1:42)
Trap #3	“The Impact on Others” Students will reflect on how their choices and freedoms are not exercised in isolation – and how a selfish use of personal freedom can unintentionally limit or harm others, considering how the Biblical vision of freedom is relational and rooted in love, rather than self-interest. <i>Central theme: True freedom is willing to be responsible for the good of others.</i>
	Students respond with a think/pair/share to the prompt “Can you think of a situation where someone’s freedom came at someone else’s expense?” Students watch the “The Impact on Others” clip and then participate in a class discussion. Depending on time and dynamic this could be a mix of whole-class and/or small group responses to the following questions. • <i>In what ways should our freedom be limited for the good of others?</i> • <i>Do you think humans are naturally selfish? Why or why not?</i> • <i>Can you think of a time when someone’s choice affected you in a negative way?</i> • <i>Have you ever made a choice that helped you but ended up making things harder for someone else?</i> The Freedom Trap Slides Clip: The Impact on Others (1:19)

	Students compose a written response to the prompt <i>“Is what small way could you use your freedom this week to increase someone else’s freedom or wellbeing – not just your own?”</i> Display Galatians 5:13 and invite students to rewrite the verse in their own words, with a specific relationship in mind (family, friendship, work colleague or sporting team context etc.). Extension: Students compose a short story, poem, or social media post imagining a scenario that would happen in a world where everyone used freedom for others, not just themselves.		
Trap #4	“The Metrics of Success” Students will explore how modern definitions of success can shape our sense of identity and freedom. They will critically reflect on the pressures these cultural metrics create and evaluate whether they align with a biblical idea of the good life. <i>Central theme: True freedom needs us to redefine success.</i>		
	Facilitate a Human Barometer activity where students indicate their perspective on the following statements: – “Success is mainly about achieving good results, making money, or having good experiences.” – “Most people my age feel pressure to “keep up” with others.” – “People should be free to define success however they want.” – “God offers a more meaningful way to define success than society does.” – “Social media has made it harder to feel successful.” Students watch the “The Metrics of Success” clip and then participate in a class discussion. Depending on time and dynamic this could be a mix of whole-class and/or small group responses to the following questions. • <i>What are the healthiest measures of success?</i> • <i>What are the most common ways success is measured in today’s world for young people?</i> • <i>What do we lose when success is only measured by results or image?</i> • <i>What’s the emotional or mental toll of constantly trying to “measure up”?</i> Display the Ralph Waldo Emerson quote and invite students to compose their own description of success. Students complete a journal entry to write a reflection piece using the prompt: “I’m rethinking what success means to me because...”	The Freedom Trap Slides Clip: The Metrics of Success (1:32)	

Trap #5	“Technology Addiction” In a world where technology constantly promises more freedom, connection, and control, students will explore the paradox: that the tools meant to empower us can also reshape our identities, habits, and relationships in limiting and even addictive ways. <i>Central theme: True freedom uses technology in healthy ways.</i>
	Invite students to complete a silent individual reflection, responding to each question: – <i>In what ways do technology and my devices make my life better?</i> – <i>In what ways do technology and my devices make my life worse?</i> Lead a quick survey-style class response to get the class thinking collectively: <i>(show of hands or 1-5 fingers)</i> • <i>Who checks their phone within 5 minutes of waking up?</i> • <i>Who has ever deleted an app just to stop using it so much?</i> • <i>Who has ever ‘lost time’ and missed a meal because of gaming or social media?</i> • <i>Who’s ever felt anxious when they didn’t have their phone?</i> • <i>Who’s tried a screen-time limit or “do not disturb” setting? Without success?</i> Students watch the “Technology Addiction” clip and then participate in a class discussion, using the following: • <i>How would you describe your relationship with technology?</i> • <i>How do you think technology has changed the way we form and maintain relationships?</i> • <i>How much of an impact has technology made on you? Your attention span, rest/sleep, creativity?</i> • <i>What are your tips for “true freedom” in terms of using technology in a healthy way?</i> Display 1 Corinthians 6:12 and invite students to discuss how we are ‘mastered’ by our technology, and how we can make sure that we stay in charge of the technology in our lives. The Freedom Trap Slides Clip: Technology Addiction (1:38)
	<i>In the clip Max mentioned the work of Andy Crouch. CPX interviewed him while he was in Australia in 2022 and put together a series of clips dealing with topics such as screen addiction, the pressures of social media, what true friendship looks like, and more.</i> <i>Check out our Teens & Tech Unit.</i>

Explore	“What is Freedom For?” This clip suggests that true freedom is about living with purpose. It contrasts self-focused autonomy with a vision of freedom that leads to flourishing, meaning, and connection. <i>Central theme: True freedom is found not in unlimited choice, but in discovering and living out our purpose.</i>
	Watch ‘Part A: Free or Flourishing?’. Students participate in an Image Prompt Discussion using the stimulus “<i>What does it mean to flourish?</i>”. Students journal a reflective response to “<i>If I decided to use my freedom to focus on truly flourishing, what would I do differently?</i>” Optional discussion questions for the clip: (if you don’t do the above activities) - What does a good thriving life look like to you? - What kinds of choices might you need to make, if you want to live a good life – not just a fun one? - What kinds of ‘limits’ can be healthy for us? What boundaries do we need to flourish?
	Watch ‘Part B: So what are we here for?’, using the discussion question “How would you describe the ‘purpose’ of your life?” (at the end of the clip) to stimulate a written response or for another activity like a Think-Pair-Share. Then discuss the following questions: - Can you think of a time when putting others first helped you grow as a person? - How could caring more about God or other people actually make your life feel more free or meaningful? - Why do you think it's hard for us to focus on our relationship with God or care deeply about others sometimes?
	Bible Engagement: Students can work through one, or all, of these studies individually or in groups. ‘A Blueprint for Freedom’ (<i>Exodus 20.1-17 – The Ten Commandments</i>) ‘What is Freedom For?’ (<i>1 Corinthians 8 and 10.23-11.1 – looking at food sacrificed to idols</i>) Display the quote from the book (p.83-84). Students reflect on why God would choose to embrace limits, and restrict his freedom, willingly. Display Philippians 2.3-13 and discuss the following questions: - What does Paul identify as the motives behind an attitude of entitlement and autonomy? (v.3-4) - How would you describe Jesus’ attitude to his personal ‘freedom’ and rights? (v.6-8) - What does v.13 say is the true source of freedom? - In what ways does this passage challenge how people today usually think about freedom, success, and identity?

Apply	“Live Free!” This final section shifts from big ideas to everyday action. It presents four practical ways to step out of the traps of modern freedom, inviting students to reflect on how small changes can move them toward a life with more intention, purpose and connection. <i>Central theme: True freedom is expressed by being more intentional in making wise and loving choices every day.</i>	
	Watch ‘Part A: Slow down and pay attention’ using the discussion question “<i>How intentional are you in the way you spend your time and money?</i>” (at end of the clip). Students participate in a guided reflection. Display each question slide separately. Students reflect (without writing anything) for 2 minutes, and then write a response. - Who do you admire for how they use their time and money? What do they do that you respect? - When was the last time you fully relaxed and took a complete break? What did it look like? - What is one small change that I could make this week, to be more present and available to my friends and family?	Clip: Slow down and pay attention (0:00 – 0:33) The Freedom Trap Slides
	Watch ‘Part B: Limit choice for a simpler life’. Students write an individual response to the discussion question at the end of the clip “<i>What aspects of your life do you wish were simpler?</i>” Students participate in an Image Prompt Discussion using the stimulus “<i>What would a simpler life look like?</i>”. Students discuss each of the following with a partner or in small groups: - What choices in your life have you found to be the most overwhelming at times? - Who inspires you with their simpler approach to life? What do they seem to value? - Why do you think we fill up our lives with so many activities and distractions? - If you only had capacity to do one thing this week, what would be your priority? - What three things could you do to make your life simpler?	Clip: Limit choice for a simpler life (0:34 - 0:57) The Freedom Trap Slides
	Watch ‘Part C: Being Kind’, and discuss the question “<i>How does kindness challenge the values and priorities of our world?</i>” (at end of the clip). Then discuss the following questions: - What makes something kind? - Who is the kindest person you know? What makes them stand out? - If someone looked at your life this week, what do you think they would rate your kindness out of 10? - What gets in the way of us being able to (or even wanting to) be kind and loving to others? Students set themselves a kindness challenge – reflecting on, and identifying, three things they could do for someone else in the next week. (<i>This could be recapped in a later lesson.</i>)	Clip: Being Kind (0:58 – 1:19) The Freedom Trap Slides

	Watch ‘Part D: Investing in Relationships’ and discuss the question at the end of the clip “<i>What is the best thing you already do for your relationships?</i>” and the following questions: • <i>Who do you wish you spent more time with? Why?</i> • <i>What makes a good friendship last—even when life gets busy or hard?</i> • <i>What does building healthy relationships cost us? Are they always worth it?</i> • <i>Why do you think we sometimes take the people closest to us for granted?</i> • <i>Who is one person that could really benefit from your care and attention at the moment?</i>	Clip: Investing in Relationships (1:20 – 1:49) The Freedom Trap Slides	
	Extension: Students research Bible verses that reflect one or more of the ‘freedom tips’ explored above. These are shared with the class using a Digital Discussion Platform – pasting the verse and reference. Students create a visual representation of a verse or quote that they think represents something they have learnt from the unit.		