

## Lesson 6: Freedom for Excellence

### PURPOSE

To motivate students to live freedom for excellence in their lives.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

1. Identify and distinguish between freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference.
2. Recognize examples of freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference in their lives.

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Two Kinds of Freedom Dialogue
- Case Studies on Two Kinds of Freedom
- [Video](#) Believe in Good (Ad 2014)
- Interim Quiz 1

### VOCABULARY

- Freedom for excellence: using one's freedom to make excellent choices for one's self and others
- Freedom of indifference: choosing carelessly by failing to consider whether one's actions are excellent or non-excellent for self and others

### PROCEDURE

**Step 1:** Review the previous lesson. Recall that the power to think can be used in both excellent and non-excellent ways. Emphasize the 5 habits of excellent thinking and the 5 habits of non-excellent thinking.

**Step 2:** In earlier lessons, the class learned that the power to choose is one of the most important human powers and that it distinguishes humans from all other living beings. However, it is not always easy to use our freedom for excellence.

Engage the students in the discussion by asking the following questions:

- What is freedom? How would you define it?
- Does freedom mean doing whatever you want or not having to listen to anyone?
- Are we free when we choose to do something wrong (for example, stealing something simply because no one will find out)?
- Is freedom linked to responsibility? If so, how? If not, why not?

Listen to the students' answers and ask a volunteer to write key words or ideas that they mention in their responses.

Ask volunteers to read and act out the parts in the [Two Kinds of Freedom Dialogue](#). The dialogue describes a conversation between students in which they argue over what to do in a difficult situation. Their conversation surrounds the question of freedom and our power to think and choose. After the students finish reading, explain that freedom can be understood in two very different ways. These two kinds of freedom differ from one another, and their differences have serious implications for the person who acts according to either idea of freedom. The two ideas are called freedom of indifference and freedom of excellence.

Write the vocabulary definitions on the board:

Freedom for excellence: using one's freedom to make excellent choices for one's self and others

Freedom of indifference: choosing carelessly by failing to consider whether one's actions are excellent or non-excellent for one's self and others

The first idea of freedom, freedom of indifference, hinges upon the idea that freedom simply means that people can do whatever they want. People who argue for freedom of indifference state that to be free means that people can do whatever they want. As long as they have different options to choose from and can choose on their own, they consider themselves free. In this view of freedom, the choice one makes does not matter so much as the idea that each person has the ability to make that choice if they want to, if they feel like it, if they can. According to freedom of indifference, the defining characteristic of freedom is the capacity to choose, regardless of whether or not a choice is in fact good or bad, an excellent or non-excellent decision for myself or another, in the end.

The second idea of freedom, freedom for excellence, hinges upon the idea that freedom is not simply the exercise of choice itself, but that true freedom lies in choosing the good and the excellent over the bad and non-excellent. Along with this idea of freedom comes the idea that it is important whether one chooses the good or the bad and that in fact, choosing the bad actually makes someone less free. How? The concept of freedom for excellence, since it is focused on the impact of a choice, means that even if a person is completely able to choose, if they choose something bad, they are not acting in accord with the excellence they could attain as a human being with dignity. According to freedom for excellence, one should constantly try to choose the good and the excellent in each situation one finds oneself.

Discuss the questions at the end of the [Two Kinds of Freedom Dialogue](#) with the class. Help students understand the two concepts of freedom by using the Answer Key provided as a guide.

**Step 3:** Help students to better understand the two types of freedom by providing the following example.

Ben knows he has an important exam the next day. He is faced with the choice of whether to finish studying and go to bed early or to stay up late watching videos on Youtube and playing on his phone. Even though he has the ability to choose whether to stay up late watching videos, if Ben does choose to do that, he will be tired during the exam and may have a harder time focusing, resulting in a lower grade. If Ben chooses to stay up late and watch Youtube videos or play on his phone, this can become a habit. This habit doesn't support his excellence as a student, but can negatively impact his performance at school. In the end, by choosing to waste time, Ben will become disappointed and discouraged instead of feeling happy or proud. Therefore, the excellent choice in the short term is to study and go to bed on time. By choosing the excellent choice again and again, Ben will create a habit of using his freedom to choose excellence that will positively impact his health, mood and performance at school.

Ask the students if they can come up with real-life examples of situations in which they considered exercising their freedom for excellence or indifference. Lead a class discussion to help students recognize the proper way to use their freedom in the situations they mention.

Emphasize that choosing freedom for excellence is often more difficult than choosing freedom of indifference. Freedom of indifference can look like “not making a decision”, which is still a decision of indifference to what is excellent.

Making excellent choices isn't always easy! It requires both patience and effort. The task of living freedom for excellence is a demanding one, and to become excellent we need to practice exercising freedom of excellence in many small ways each day. Just like other types of exercise, it takes practice to build new muscles and what they call "muscle memory". Muscle memory is like a habit. In playing soccer every day, it gets easier to jog up and down the field without getting out of breath. In going to bed on time each night, after a while, it becomes easier and won't be a struggle to make that choice. Sometimes it takes hundreds of times to practice a habit before it becomes natural to us. Like remembering to say "please" or "thank you". On the other hand, if one chooses to play video games every single night, it also becomes a habit that can be difficult to change over time.

**Step 4:** Divide the students into two groups and ask them to each read one of the [Case Studies on Two Kinds of Freedom](#) and answer the questions associated with the text.

After groups finish their discussions, ask them to share their conclusions with the rest of the class. Then, lead the class discussion using the answer key provided with the exercise as a guide.

If time permits, watch [Video: Believe in Good \(Ad 2014\)](#), to illustrate the Case Study examples.

**Step 5:** Summarize. Recall the definitions and key distinction between freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference. Highlight that our powers to think and to choose can help us pursue freedom for excellence. Choosing freedom for excellence in our everyday lives can change our lives for the better, and the lives of others around us.

#### **FOLLOW-UP & HOMEWORK**

Ask the students to complete [Interim Quiz 1](#) at home and bring it to the next class. Let them know that solving the interim quiz will help them in the Final quiz which will be given during the last class.

**TWO KINDS OF FREEDOM DIALOGUE**

Roles: Jack, Mill, Grace

**Jack:** [holds a phone in his hands] Guys, look what I found!

**Grace:** Woah, is that what I think it is!?

**Jack:** Yeah, it's Mark's phone, unlocked. [smiles]

**Grace:** [smiling too] Let's see who he's texting! Or should we send someone a snap?

**Jack:** Haha, he has tons of messages from Bianca.

**Grace:** Let's post some of them to the group

**Jack:** Let's find some really embarrassing ones to post.

**Mill:** Guys, let's not do this, it's not right. Imagine if someone did this to you.

**Grace:** C'mon, no one will find out it was us, and the story will get deleted later.

**Mill:** It doesn't matter if no one finds out, it's still not right.

**Jack:** Who are you to say what's right and what's wrong!? What if it makes me happy?

**Mill:** It will hurt Mark and it's not respectful to Bianca, either.

**Grace:** You don't know how to relax and have fun!

**Jack:** Well, you can't prevent us from doing it. We are free to do it and you don't have the right to interfere.

**Mill:** Whether I have the power to stop you or not doesn't matter. What matters is that it's not a great thing to do and so you should decide for yourself not to do it.

**Grace:** This is why we don't ask you to join in on a good joke. You always make a big deal out of everything.

**Mill:** If you do it, you will also feel bad later.

**Jack:** I won't feel bad. It's not even that bad! It's just a joke.

**Mill:** Guys, you both know you wouldn't like it if someone found your phone and posted all of your photos or texts. So, you are just making excuses.

**Jack:** Ok, whatever. Here, have his phone, who cares. Just don't pretend like you're so much better than us.

**Mill:** I don't. I'll return the phone and then I'll show you something funny.

**Grace:** I hope it's really funny to make up for this boring argument.

**Millie:** It is.

**QUESTIONS FOR A DISCUSSION:**

1. Are Jack and Grace truly free if they choose to publish Mark's photos and messages online without his consent? Even if they get away with it? Why or why not?
2. Is true freedom connected to making excellent choices?
3. Which type of freedom does Mill advocate for?

**Dialogue – Answer Key for the Teacher**

- 1. Are Jack and Grace truly free if they choose to publish Mark’s photos and messages online without his consent? Even if they get away with it? Why or why not?** Secretly publishing Mark’s photos or messages cannot be considered a truly free action since the choice to do what is wrong does not express true freedom. Publishing the messages is wrong since it is done without Mark’s knowledge and consent and it will hurt Mark. Grace and Jack will also likely feel bad afterwards if they do something that disrespects their classmate.
- 2. Is true freedom connected to making excellent choices?** True freedom is necessarily linked to making good choices. In doing things that harm ourselves or others, we actually become less free as we tie ourselves to habits that limit our growth and development. We become dependent on things that do not support our excellence as a person.

*Another example:* Let’s say I copy someone else’s notes as opposed to taking my own in class, doing my work and asking questions when I don’t understand. In copying a friend’s notes, I am becoming less free, because I won’t remember the material and I won’t do as well on the test. If I fail a test, I won’t feel good about myself, but I may say, “whatever” so that I don’t look stupid but instead pretend I don’t care. In choosing to use my freedom for indifference, I am failing to truly use my powers. A person is only free when they are able to use their powers to think and choose personal excellence for themselves and others in their life.

- 3. Which type of freedom does Mill advocate for?** Mill advocates for true freedom, which is connected to making good, or even excellent choices. These choices may be harder in-the-moment, but practicing habits of excellence make a person excellent as a human being.

**CASE STUDIES ON TWO KINDS OF FREEDOM****Case Study 1:**

Joe and his friends passed by two younger classmates fighting in the school hallway, during a passing period.

When Joe saw the two students fighting, he thought, “What should I do?”

One choice that came to mind was to ignore them and keep walking, passing by. The other choice that came to mind was to let the teacher on duty know that there was a fight going on, so that the teacher could interfere and help the students move on with the day.

Joe decided to go with the second choice. He called the teacher, who was able to stop the fight and thanked Joe for alerting her to the incident. In the end, Joe was happy with her decision to help rather than stand by and do nothing.

**Questions for a discussion:**

1. Did Joe choose the better option? Why or why not?
2. How did Joe use his freedom in this situation?
3. Do you think the second option, the one that Joe chose, was harder than the first one? Why? Are excellent choices in other situations usually harder than non-excellent choices?



**CASE STUDIES ON TWO KINDS OF FREEDOM****Case Study 2:**

Alex and her friends were walking around their neighborhood when they saw an older blind lady who was trying to cross the street. The cars were passing by rapidly, and it was clear that the elderly lady couldn't see the traffic lights very well. She was struggling and hesitant about what to do.

Alex immediately recognized what was going on, but was in a rush. She and her friends were all en route to hang out at another friend's place after school. Besides, she didn't want his friends to think she was this little do-gooder.

She could feel sorry for the older blind lady, but pass by since she had things to do. It's like, where was the crossing guard or someone else to help her? She'd probably be OK... Then again, she could just take a minute and offer to help the lady cross the road.

Even though Alex wanted to help, she knew her friends were waiting, so she decided to keep moving.

When Alex and her friends were hanging out that night, she kept thinking about how she wished she had just taken the two minutes to ask if the lady needed help. She felt embarrassed that she cared so much about what her friends might have said.

**Questions for a discussion:**

1. Did Alex make the best decision? Why or why not?
2. How would you react if you were Alex?
3. Do you think that the better option was harder for Alex? Why? Are excellent choices often harder than non-excellent choices?

**Case Studies – Answer Key for the Teacher****Case Study 1:**

**1. Did Joe choose the better option? Why or why not?** Yes. Joe chose the better option because he didn't passively stand by or ignore the fight. Someone could have been really hurt if the fight hadn't been stopped when it was. Joe decided to choose the excellent thing and use his freedom in that moment to alert the teacher. That teacher was then able to speak to the students and resolve the situation for everyone involved.

**2. How did Joe use his freedom in this situation?** Joe had the freedom to decide whether or not to ignore the situation and move on with his day or to choose to do something to stop the fight. He used his freedom for excellence to try and calm the situation down.

**3. Do you think the second option, the one that Joe chose, was harder than the first one? Why? Are excellent choices in other situations usually harder than non-excellent choices?** The option Joe chose was probably the harder one, because he had to step outside his comfort zone to talk to the teacher. He didn't want to be a snitch or get anyone in trouble. But he also thought that worse than the guys being angry with him would be if either of the guys had really hurt each other. Although the option to "tell" on the guys was harder, it was the better one. Excellent choices are often harder to do than non-excellent choices, because they often require getting outside of one's comfort zone to say something or to take action.

**Case Study 2.**

**1. Did Alex make the best decision? Why or why not?** Alex was faced with the pressure of her friends, who were trying to quickly cross the road and go to someone's house to hang out. On the other hand, she was torn since she felt empathy for the older blind lady. But, she did not use her freedom in a proactive way, but instead a passive way as she passed by without saying or doing anything. In the end, she was not happy with herself for this choice.

**2. How would you react if you were Alex?** Encourage the students to recognize that it is good to feel empathy towards another person and any real friend wouldn't make fun of someone who has the self-confidence and courage to offer to help others. Since the friends were in a group, any one of them could also have shown courage by asking if the older lady needed help.

**3. Do you think that the better option was harder for Alex? Why? Are excellent choices often harder than non-excellent choices?** The better option - to help the lady across the street - would have definitely been harder for Alex, since she would have had to stop, tell her friends to wait a minute, ask the lady if she needed help, and delay arrival to the friend's place. Excellent choices require effort, but they make our lives - and the lives of other people around us - better.

**INTERIM QUIZ 1****A. True/false questions**

1. T / F Poor people have the same amount of human dignity as others.
2. T / F Humans share the powers to think and choose with animals.
3. T / F The word “intrinsic” means: everyone has human dignity.
4. T / F Objects have dignity like subjects, but to a lesser extent.
5. T / F Facts are often based on hearsay or gossip.

**B. Essay questions**

6. What is the difference between freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference?

**C. For each definition, write the correct vocabulary word as a question.**

*For example, if the statement is “The first letter of the alphabet”, the answer would be: “What is the letter A?”. Or, “A gel used in conjunction with a toothbrush to help clean and maintain healthy teeth”, would be: “What is toothpaste?”*

7. The human ability to knowingly select between options.
8. Using one’s freedom to make excellent choices.
9. Valuing persons for their intrinsic worth.
10. A system in which things are arranged above and below one another according to their importance or perfection.
11. The universal, intrinsic, and inalienable value of human persons.
12. The human ability to know and connect ideas.

**D. Multiple choice questions. There can be more than one correct answer.**

13. With subjects, we should:
- a) Use them for our pleasure or benefit
  - b) Value them for their intrinsic worth
  - c) Respect them
  - d) Buy or sell them
14. Mark the true sentences about human dignity:
- a) We have it just by being human
  - b) We receive it from our parents
  - c) It is given to us by society
  - d) It is connected with social status
15. Which of the following are opinions:
- a) My mom is the best in the world.
  - b) The USA has more than 300,000 citizens.
  - c) All persons have dignity.
  - d) Vanilla is much more delicious than chocolate.
16. Which of the following are facts:
- a) Studying is boring.
  - b) Smoking is bad for your health.
  - c)  $2+2=4$
  - d) I sometimes feel like gossiping, so it is ok to do it.
17. Which of the following is true:
- a) Subjects we can love, objects we can only like.
  - b) Objects can be bought or sold.
  - c) We should have respect for the dignity of objects.
  - d) Pets are subjects.
18. Inalienable means that:
- a) All persons have dignity
  - b) No one can take dignity away from us
  - c) Dignity is with us our entire life
  - d) Dignity is not earned

**Interim Quiz 1 - Answer Key for the Teacher**

1. T
2. F – only humans have powers to think and choose.
3. F – “intrinsic” means that human dignity is within us our entire life.
4. F – objects do not have dignity.
5. F – opinions can be based on gossip and hearsay, not facts.
6. Freedom of indifference says that to be free means simply that we can choose whatever we want. With freedom of indifference, it doesn’t really matter which choice we make. We are truly indifferent to which choice we will make as long as we can make the choice. Choice can be anything, good or bad, excellent or non-excellent. On the other hand, freedom for excellence says that we will be truly free only if we always choose what is excellent. This means that we can be truly free only when we constantly choose that which is true and good.
7. What is the power to choose?
8. What is freedom for excellence?
9. What does it mean to treat persons as subjects?
10. What is hierarchy?
11. What is human dignity?
12. What is the power to think?
13. b), c)
14. a)
15. a), d)
16. b), c)
17. a), b)
18. b)