

I grew up in a church tradition that was fairly rigid. Though my parents were very open about the fact that many of the things others tried to force on us were merely issues of preference, it still made it hard for me as a teenager to begin to sort through what it would mean to live a God honoring life. I did wrestle with questions like: Could I wear blue jeans to church? Could I read the New American Standard version of the Bible? Could I go swimming on Sunday? Those questions hardly seem important now. But they caused some soul searching back then. Of course the more I studied and learned and grew the more I realized that there were many areas of personal preference where godly Christians differed. So as I meditated on 1 Peter 2:16 it made me think of the BALANCE necessary to live the TRUTH of the Bible out in our everyday lives. As I thought about this verse I had to ask myself, do I ever use my “freedom” as a way of covering over or making excuses for sinful behavior in my own life?

1 Peter 2:16 (JBP) *As free men you should NEVER use your FREEDOM as an EXCUSE for doing something that is wrong, for you are at all times the servants of God.*

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 (NIV) "Everything is permissible" - **but NOT everything is BENEFICIAL.**
"Everything is permissible" - but NOT everything is CONSTRUCTIVE. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

If I am truly seeking to be ALL that God has called me to be. Then I will USE my “freedom” to consciously choose to SERVE God. I will use my “freedom” to purposefully choose to SERVE my brothers and sisters in Christ. I will not let *“any unwholesome talk come out of my mouth”* instead I will try to make sure that the things that I say and do will be *“helpful for building OTHERS up according to THEIR needs”* (Eph. 4:29). WHY? Because I want what I say and do to be of help and encouragement to others and I do NOT want to GRIEVE the Holy Spirit by my words or actions. (Eph. 4:30)

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