

FISH MAG



JAN-MAR
EDITION 2025

YOUR **PLACE**
YOUR **PEOPLE**
YOUR **PURPOSE**



I REJOICED WITH
THOSE WHO SAID
TO ME,
**"LET US GO TO THE
HOUSE OF THE LORD."**

PSALM 122:1

NOTE FROM THE PASTORS



Dear Freedom Family and Readers of Fish Mag,

Thank you for your overwhelming support. Our debut edition was an unprecedented hit. We've been getting such great feedback and it has reached the hands and homes of people all over the country. We are excited to launch this next edition with you, sharing some incredible stories, testimonies within our church and beyond. Continue reading & sharing this free copy to anyone God leads you to.

For many of us, the past few years have been very discouraging and tiring at times. In this 'post-Covid', crime-ridden, war-filled, polluted, AI-induced world we live in, is there any hope left? If you had to describe our culture in the eloquent language of any 5 Star hotel or Michelin starred restaurant, I think it would be something like this:

'This astonishing world is delicately laced with the bittersweet notes of sorrow, the subtle burn of anxiety, flavored with the lingering notes of impermanence. Every day, you will find yourself refreshed in the steep vintage of trouble, pressure, pain - all masterfully encompassed in this complex bouquet of life with its ever present shadow of mortality'. Wherever you look – political, economic and environmental – you struggle to find encouragement. I think, as Indians, we have this widespread assumption, not much spoken about, that everything is falling apart in this country. Adding to that, behind this veil of suffering, is the lack of dignity for life itself.

Here in Chennai, apart from the inferno-like-weather, one of the gifts we truly enjoy is the beach. I remember growing up we would build sandcastles by the beach and wait for the incoming tide to sweep away our prized creations. For most of us, that's how life feels, waiting for the unknown tide to sweep us away. The recently published World Happiness Report 2025 ranks India at 118th out of 147 countries, with an average life evaluation score of 4.389 out of 10. Inevitably, this mood affects motivation. People turn on the 'survival mode' switch and choose to 'protect' their own self and their assets.

Yet into this uninspiring, unfriendly and discouraging world, **comes Easter.**

The Easter story focuses on two points: the cross, revealing God's love for us; and the empty tomb, revealing the triumph of Jesus in the resurrection. The cross speaks of what God has done for us; the empty tomb speaks of how we should live for God. Easter should not be seen only as something that offers us hope after death, it also has a profound and transforming importance before death. The empty tomb and the resurrection are not simply an idea for a TV docuseries on 'Ancient Mysteries'; rather they are a humanity-altering event that should inspire, empower and encourage.

Twenty years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Apostle Paul writes about that impact of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. He concludes with this victorious conviction: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55 NIV) and he implores us - 'Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain' (1 Corinthians 15:58 NIV). Paul is saying here that there is not just simply life after death, but life – and abundant life – before it. **Because Christ is risen, existence has purpose.**

"Let nothing move you" Paul insists, not even the fear of death. The resurrection of our Lord has meaning, and because of that it's worth investing everything we have in it. The good news of Easter is not simply about an antidote to death – it is about an antidote to the drained and discouraged life we are pressured to lead. It is an injection of **Life into life.**

So if you remember one thing from this editorial, let it be this: if that tomb had been full, our lives would be tragically empty. **But it is empty so that our lives may be full.**

**In Christ,
Praveen & Shana Emmanuel
Pastors, Freedom Church Chennai.**



**THE TOMB IS EMPTY
SO THAT OUR LIVES
MAY BE FULL.**

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If you would like to contribute to the content in our future editions of the FISH magazine, kindly email us at chennai@freedomchurch.cc



HUMANS OF **FREEDOM**





TRUSTING THE MASTER PLAN!

God's plans and purposes are the best!

Growing up in the UK, my parents were supporting an NGO that provides Christian Adventure Camps for Schools, Churches and underprivileged kids in South India. Even as a young 8-year-old kid I have fond memories of travelling to Bangalore with my family. There was a deep passion and love for India that was sown in my heart which blossomed later when I visited that same NGO after college.

I returned to the UK and started attending Freedom Church in Hereford. After a few years of being away from church, I felt like I was slacking in my faith and spiritual growth. It was at that time in my life that I signed up for the Academy which is a yearlong leadership course conducted in every Freedom church campus. I just knew I wanted to come back to visit friends and family back in Bangalore.

Freedom Church Bangalore was planted by Freedom Church Chennai and they are the capital cities of two neighbouring states of South India. Though these two cities are about 300 kilometers from each other, their differences are evident in the geography, cuisine, culture, people etc. There was a strong bond between the people from Freedom church Chennai and Freedom Church Bangalore and I found myself shuttling between the two cities along with my new friends. I love the crispy dosas, spicy sambhar and the sandy beaches, but I was definitely put off by the insane high temperatures in this coastal city of Chennai.

Chennai Church leaders Rehan and Zubi hosted fun fellowships with card games and yummy food. This is where I met Sajjan. Much of our communication happened over WhatsApp and though long-distance relationships are a challenge, we got to know each other on a deeper level.

Born and brought up in Chennai, I Sajjan belong to a traditional Christian household. With life's twists and turns I started questioning the true meaning of life.

I wanted to know my purpose and what it meant to be a Christian. I met Pete from Freedom Church in our local gym and he invited me to church. That Sunday I heard the message about the prodigal son. God spoke directly to my heart and I responded in complete surrender. There has been no turning back and my journey of faith took a new direction and momentum. My life transformation was phenomenal and every decision since then has been focused and centered on Jesus.

I met Esme in our mid week church gatherings and activities. Though I was intrigued at first, I prayed about it and asked God to lead my thoughts and desires. We both felt in our hearts that God had something beautiful for both of us together. It was a tough journey towards planning the wedding as Esme had to go back to the UK. Long distance, different time zones, multiple visa failures etc were just some of the challenges we faced. Through all the difficulties God was leading us, teaching us, transforming us. In every step we were growing in our faith as we put our trust in God and His plans and purposes for us.

We had the best day of our lives (yet!) on 30th September 2024 where friends (including the wonderful Praveen and Shana who we are so incredibly grateful for), both our families came together in the UK to celebrate. We wished we could have had our Indian friends there but on short notice, very unrealistic!

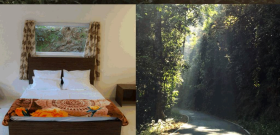
7 months later we are living in Chennai and super excited with a baby on the way (crazy, I know...!), we couldn't be more grateful that God decided to bring together two completely different people and cultures to create something amazing. The waiting, the pain, the tears, the separation was all so worth it. Though it seemed random, God was sovereignly working making sure that His plans and purposes were accomplished in our lives. Our all-wise God knows the end from the beginning and He is a good God with good plans for each of us when we seek Him. In **Jeremiah 29:11** we receive this beautiful promise :- **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.**

- Sajjan and Esme Chenchala



If you want to become best friends with Esme, get her a Dosa. If you want to become best friends with Sajjan, . DO NOT get him a Dosa! He prefers anything with meat and masala.





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2025



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WITHOUT **WATER**

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TAKE AWAY FROM **OUR** **SUNDAY** **PREACHES**

Each week, our pastors bring messages of hope and inspiration. Messages that aim to bring you closer to a life-changing relationship with Jesus



PREACH 01:

Kings & Queens Part 1

A Life-Changing Message by Pastor Shana Emmanuel

Pastor Shana—an incredible preacher whose messages are both simple and profound—delivered a sermon that left a lasting impression on my heart. She shared deep insights on what it truly means to be the people of God and how we are called to represent His Kingdom in our daily lives.

Anchored in **Genesis 2:15**, she explained that the whole earth is God's temple, and we are the priests chosen to lead and be living examples of His Kingdom. This means that how we live, work, and interact with others should reflect the worship and culture of God's presence.

The message highlighted three key aspects of our identity as God's people:

- 1. We Represent** – Genesis 2:15 teaches us that we are placed in this world to work and take care of God's creation, making our surroundings a place of worship and honor to Him.
- 2. We Rule** – Genesis 1:6-31 reminds us that God made us intentionally, giving us authority and purpose in His creation. Our role is not just to exist but to lead in a way that reflects His goodness.
- 3. We Are Royalty** – 1 Peter 2:9 affirms that we are chosen, a royal priesthood. We carry a royal identity, and that should shape how we see ourselves and how we treat others.

This preach deeply impacted me, especially when Pastor Shana spoke about how **all relationships have a trajectory over our lives**—how we handle them determines the quality of our faith and character. Instead of allowing negativity and gossip to shape my relationships, I was reminded that I have the power to **speak life and positivity** into them.

I realized that when someone speaks ill about a friend, it often lingers in my mind and changes the way I think and act toward that person. It affects my relationship with them, even if I had no prior issue. But when I heard this message, it shifted my focus—I began choosing to see the good in people instead of letting negativity influence my perception. Even when others speak badly about someone, I now remind myself to look for the truth and **view them through the lens of grace, love, and their God-given identity.**

Some of the reflective questions that stood out to me were:

- How do I represent and rule on behalf of my King?
- How could I do more to cultivate togetherness with others?
- Who in my life do I need to see more as **Kings & Queens**?

This was a powerful wake-up call for me to love people better by truly knowing who they are, recognizing their value, and leading with grace.



PREACH 02:

Live Better - Live With Vision

Pastor Praveen delivered a powerful message that challenged me to reflect on **where I am stuck, and what God is calling me to do next.** His words resonated deeply because they spoke to my personal struggle with vision—something I have always found difficult to define.

For so long, I feared the question: “*Where do you see yourself in five years?*” or “*What do you want to be when you grow up?*” That fear felt crippling, and I convinced myself that living in the moment was enough. But after coming to church, I realized that God **wants me to set a vision**—not just for my future, but for my life **with Him at the center.**

Pastor Praveen highlighted that to **find vision, we need to come to Jesus**. Vision doesn't just happen—it comes from asking intentional questions:

- Where do I want to be?
- How do I grow from last year?
- What are things I need to lay down?

To **pursue vision**, we must practice **urgency** and embrace **humility**, because humility **makes room for vision**. Most importantly, we must **fix our eyes on an eternal vision**, not just earthly success.

He also posed a profound question:

“What is the one thing I need to do to store up riches in Heaven?”

The answer? We have to **give Jesus all of ourselves** to truly follow Him.

To navigate life with vision, we need three key things:

1. **The Plan** – A **map** to recognize obstacles ahead.
2. **The Compass** – A guide, the **Holy Spirit**, who directs us.
3. **Companions** – The **Church and godly friends**, who support and encourage us.

This message was transformative for me. It made me reflect deeply on the **vision God has placed in my heart for this year** and the obstacles I might face. As a family, we took this to heart—we began writing down the things we want to see happen in our lives. **We now keep sticky notes on our bathroom mirror, reminding us daily of our vision and goals.**

I'm learning that vision is not about fear—it's about faith. And with God's guidance, I am stepping out to **live better, desire better, and pursue the vision He has for me.**

- Shared by
Jessica Smith



Jessica Smith makes a mean coffee! She's now a pro-barista and manager of Kat & Kin Coffee Roasters. She is also our official choreographer/performer of anything and everything dance related at Freedom Church. Jessica is our Kids Pastor and mumma to two beautiful girls. You will find her hanging out with this handsome guy called Neil





SON.
BROTHER.
WARRIOR.

BARBARIANS

SON. BROTHER. WARRIOR.





Barbarians is our ministry for men. It started with a simple question

What does it mean for men to live a life that is devoted to Jesus and His kingdom?

Barbarians is about being the men that God has called us to be. Men who are ready to answer the call, hungry for more of God and want to get onto the Battle Line.



Bikes, Boats & Barbarians

It was one of those blazing hot days, and we were all geared up for a ride, 50 kilometers out from Chennai to a place called Pulicat Lake. Helmets on, spirits high, we rode with responsibility, but yeah, we let the throttle breathe wherever the road allowed. Pulicat is where the ocean greets the lake, a mix of calm backwaters and open adventure. We were ready for it.

We kicked off the day with a prayer, setting our intentions right. From the planning to the ride, to jumping into a boat that cut through the waters toward an untouched island it felt like something out of a movie. We dove into the sea, got covered in sand, and just soaked in the raw beauty of creation. There's a sense of awe when you realize every single thing in nature has a purpose. And we, as men, also have a purpose just like in nature. Barbarians is an opportunity we get as men to gather to sharpen our purpose and build a strong brotherhood through honest conversations, passionate worship and a hunger for Christ.

After cooling off in the waves, hunger hit hard. But God had us covered. We had the chance to taste some fiery, home cooked, local seafood that was fresh and unforgettable. Through it all, what stood out wasn't just the ride or the scenery but the spirit of brotherhood. We enjoyed sharing stories of how God's been working in our lives, spurring each other to keep striving, to live with purpose and to reflect Christ in everything we do.

Freedom Barbarians meet once a month at different locations. If you would like to join us reach out to us on social media or email us at chennai@freedomchurch.cc



SHE PAINTS



Every month all the women in our church gather together to focus on what God is speaking into our lives. In SHE we are daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, warriors as we champion and equip each other to pursue God given dreams and plans. In March we had a **SHE Social**, wherein we focused on building sisterhood, connecting and enjoying time together, getting creative, inviting friends along too.

Canvas of Grace

We had a lovely evening filled with colourful smiles and bright acrylic colours, food, fellowship, fun, giggles and loud laughter. Leeza Harris graciously guided us into a magical experience of paint, brush and canvas and let us unleash creativity and design. She taught us about painting surfaces, types of brushes, what kind of tools to use and much more. We learnt the technical differences between liquid paint and creamy paint and the dictionary definition of “shade” and “tint”. Overall it was a blessed evening filled with absolute joy.

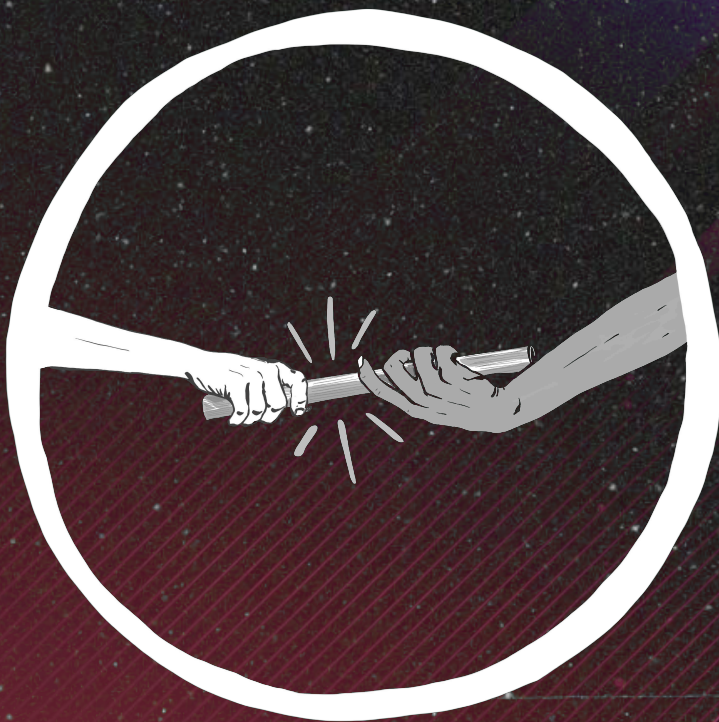


"Honour her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate"

Proverbs 31:31



RAISE THE **NEXT**



We lovingly disciple, we release leadership, we inspire kingdom influencers and plant new churches.

We share the truths and opportunities given to us, changing the world through a legacy of multiplication.



Freedom Kids is the enriching children's ministry at Freedom Church.

At Kids Church, every Sunday is a vibrant and joy-filled experience where children encounter God in a fun and engaging way!

Our amazing **WAVES team** (ages 10-14) lead us in a powerful time of worship, setting the atmosphere with their voices and hearts. The **Adventurers** (ages 6-10) and the **Cubs** (ages 3-5) join in, lifting their voices in song and actions as we praise God together! It's a beautiful sight to see children leading children in worship.



Learning to Give with a Cheerful Heart

We have started nurturing the practice of giving and tithing, teaching our children the joy of generosity. They are learning that giving isn't just about money—it's about the heart! We encourage them to give cheerfully and understand that God loves a cheerful giver.

Fun & Engaging Lessons

Each Sunday, our lessons are packed with excitement! Through interactive age appropriate sessions, hands-on learning, and creative storytelling, we help kids grasp the heart of each lesson in a way that sticks. Every session is designed to make learning about God's love both meaningful and fun! Every Sunday is a chance for our kids to grow in faith, worship, and generosity—while having a blast!





EPIC®

E _____ P _____ I _____ C _____

Engage Purpose Inspire Change

EPIC is a dedicated space for the Youth of church to come together to have clean fun, build their faith and grow together. At Freedom Church, we deeply value and believe in the purpose of young people.

They are not just the generation of tomorrow but an important part of the church today. E.P.I.C. meetings are exactly that—EPIC! Through discipleship, worship, game nights, paintball, ice cream, biryanis, and more, we take great joy in teaching young people about Jesus.

We also help them understand that, in a world that appears to offer so much, **He truly is better.**

ALPHA YOUTH



The Alpha series was started by the HTB church in London as early as 1977. The Alpha Youth was repackaged to effectively reach the younger generation. It is an 8-week course and it is all about helping young people dive into life's biggest questions around faith, purpose, and identity. It breaks down the core principles of Christianity in a way that feels fresh and accessible, creating a laid-back vibe where deep conversations happen naturally—over food, games, and casual hangouts. It's a safe place where everyone feels at ease, and no question is off-limits.

What makes this experience stand out is its focus on love and compassion, not on getting stuck in theological debates. It's all about helping young people share God's message with their friends in a way that is real and genuine. Whether you're already a believer or just curious, it's a space where you can connect with a God who is loving, holy, and just. Through open conversations and shared experiences, we end up with new perspectives and answers to questions we never even thought to ask.

We started the course in Freedom Chennai in March 2025 and it has been an amazing journey. We've seen so many young people's lives changed—one person even gave their life to Jesus. New friendships have been formed at Alpha, which is truly awesome to witness. This isn't just another event; it's a community where young people can find real belonging, purpose, and truth. It's a space where hearts and minds are transformed, and where the love of Jesus leaves a lasting impact. This journey of discovery and growth can seriously transform lives, and I believe it's something everyone should experience.

- Zubiana Osman



Zubi is the real deal. She is Freedom's Youth Pastor, Bangalore Church planter, Volunteer Coordinator, Alpha Leader, Social Media Head, Anna Nagar Group Leader, SHE coordinator and so much more. She is the Jack of all trades and master of all. The next time you see her, please show her your appreciation by gifting her a nice ripe mango or a boba tea.



Sean's experience in Youth Alpha.

I agreed to attend Alpha Youth after receiving an invitation, not knowing what to expect. At first, it felt a bit simple—just video clips and basic questions like “What is love?” or “Who is your favourite person?” But as the sessions went on, the questions became more profound, like “If you could meet your creator, what would you ask?” This shift had a real impact on me. The best part was hearing different perspectives as people shared their personal journeys and beliefs. It created a space for connection, reflection, and meaningful conversation. I made new friends, gained fresh insights, and realized how many blessings I often overlook. Youth Alpha was a journey from light-hearted questions to deep, soul-searching conversations, and I'm grateful I had the opportunity to take part in it.

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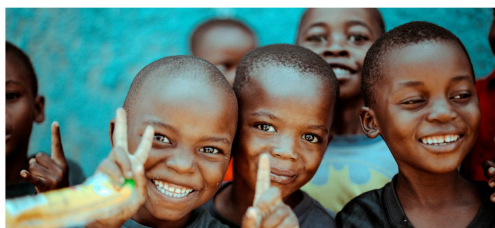
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01

CROSSWORD

Enjoy solving this crossword puzzle by filling in the answers to the clues provided. Words can only be filled in horizontally (across) or vertically (down) and must intersect where they meet. Answers to the puzzle will be given in the next edition of the FISHMAG.

02

WORD SEARCH

Find names of the Books of the Bible hidden in the text. The names may be part of another word or a combination of a alphabets from a few consecutive words. Use a pencil to underline or circle the Book names as you find them. Answers to this puzzle will be given in the next edition of the FISHMAG

03

COLOURING PAGE

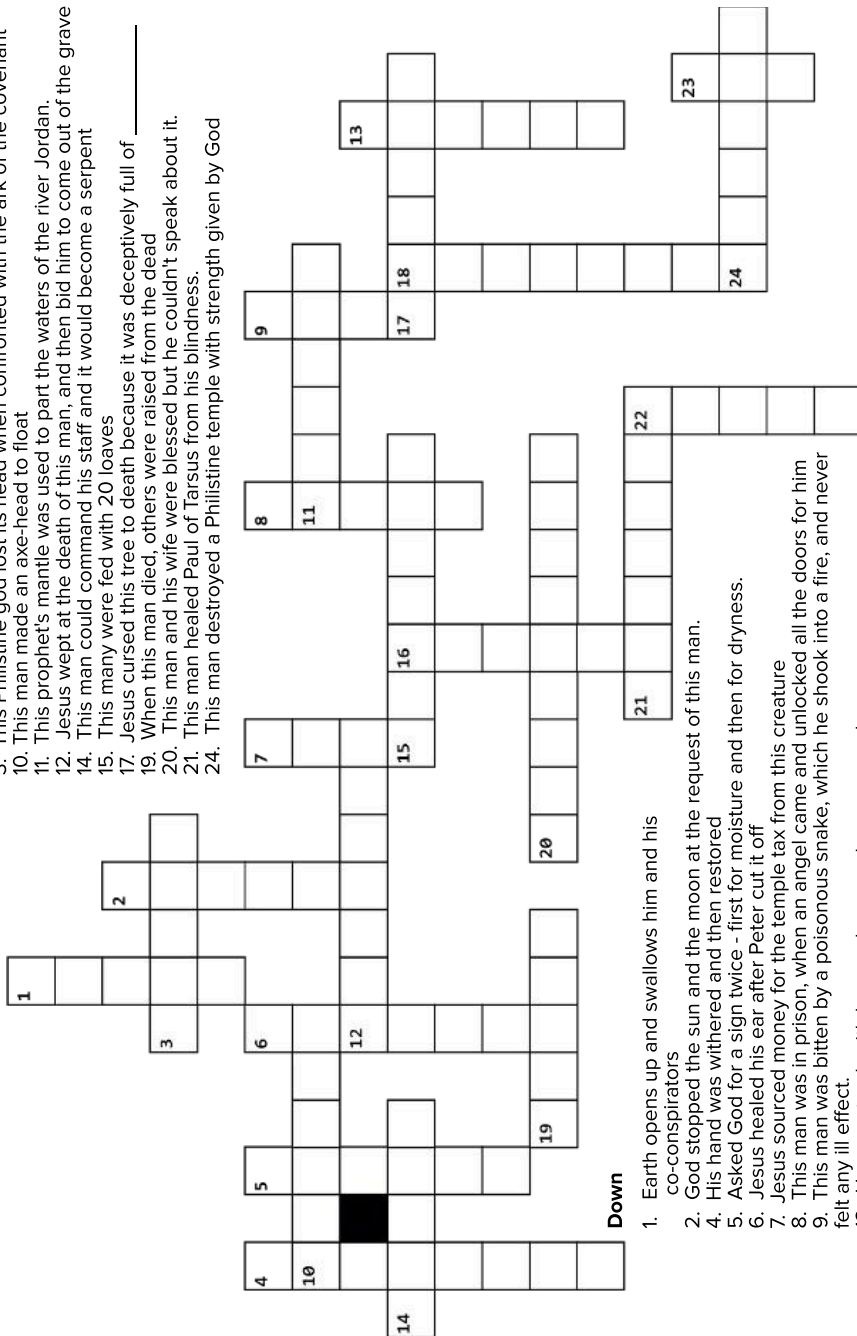
Here in Freedom Chennai, we are memorizing a specific verse each month. While you enjoy the stress-reducing benefits of coloring, may this activity strengthen your faith as you meditate on each verse. Please do send in your finished artwork as a scanned image to chennai@freedomchurch.cc on or before 30th June, along with your Name, Age and Contact Phone number. The best three entries will receive a special prize.



PUZZLE - MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE

Across

3. This Philistine god lost its head when confronted with the ark of the covenant
10. This man made an axe-head to float
11. This prophet's mantle was used to part the waters of the river Jordan.
12. Jesus wept at the death of this man, and then bid him to come out of the grave
14. This man could command his staff and it would become a serpent
15. This many were fed with 20 loaves
17. Jesus cursed this tree to death because it was deceptively full of _____
19. When this man died, others were raised from the dead
20. This man and his wife were blessed but he couldn't speak about it.
21. This man healed Paul of Tarsus from his blindness.
24. This man destroyed a Philistine temple with strength given by God



Down

1. Earth opens up and swallows him and his co-conspirators
2. God stopped the sun and the moon at the request of this man.
4. His hand was withered and then restored
5. Asked God for a sign twice - first for moisture and then for dryness.
6. Jesus healed his ear after Peter cut it off
7. Jesus sourced money for the temple tax from this creature
8. This man was in prison, when an angel came and unlocked all the doors for him
9. This man was bitten by a poisonous snake, which he shook into a fire, and never felt any ill effect
13. He was struck with leprosy because he was greedy.
16. This man was healed from his leprosy after dipping himself in the Jordan 7 times
18. This young man fell asleep during a sermon, fell down dead and was raised back to life
22. An image of this animal healed those who had been bitten by it, when they looked upon it
23. This man's sheep were consumed by fire from God



There are 30 books of the Bible in this paragraph. Can you find them? This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new record. The local paper, The Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "The books are all right here in plain view, hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus. There really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph waiting to be found. God Bless.

*Those who hope
in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like*

eagles

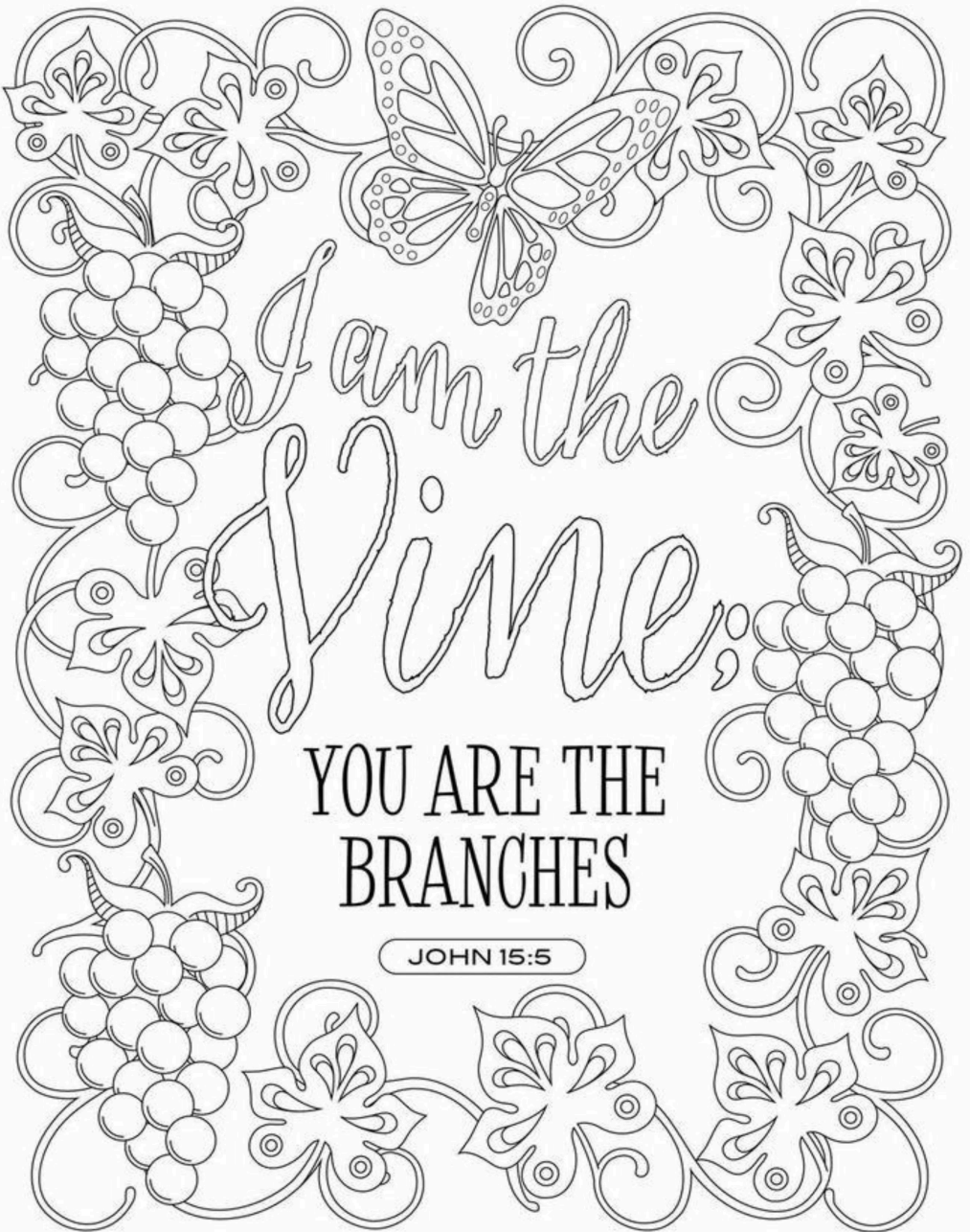
Isaiah 40:31





*Create in me
a clean heart,
O God*

Psalm 51:10





The Academy is a once-a-week course held every Thursday evening here in Freedom Church. It is designed not only to teach you more about the Bible and the church but predominantly about who you are called to be. One of the most powerful components of the Academy is that you pursue being more like Jesus with other like-minded believers who are there to spur you on in your faith.

I am Praveen Charles, married to the lovely Vidhya and dad of two amazing boys - Eric & Noel. I work in the field of communication design and head a design studio for a global IT company. With just a month left in our Academy batch, I never thought I could commit with my busy schedule. But as the Bible says, "If you seek Him, He will make a way in the wilderness." God's grace has truly made a way!

○ **2017 San Francisco**

Back in 2017, I was working alone in the US while my family was in India. A close friend visited for work, and during a day trip, we had a conversation that stayed with me. We drove up a hill, parked 100+ feet above sea level, and sat on a rocky spot gazing at the pacific ocean, questioning our purpose in life a pre-midlife reflection.

At the time, work and church (SJC) were the only things going well. I was providing for my family, had cleared my debts, and my wife was caring for our two sons and my grandmother. We were both worn out by life's demands, feeling like ships sailing without direction, burdened by growing responsibilities and a fast-paced life.

○ **2019 Chennai**

Two years later in 2019, I was back in India and met the same friend. He reminded me of our mountain conversation and shared how Freedom Church and Academy helped him find his purpose in God.

That friend, as you guessed, was Pastor Praveen (aka Pastor P). I was genuinely happy for him and felt deep down that God had heard our talk that day. I always believed Christ was the answer, but hadn't fully committed.

Pastor P invited me to join Freedom Academy, a one-year course. I declined, saying I already knew God well unaware that pride was holding me back.

Then the pandemic hit, like an emergency brake on a speeding ship. Life changed suddenly. Though we still had jobs, I was spiritually unprepared disconnected from church, God, and people, stuck at home.

2023 Freedom Church, Chennai

In 2023, I started attending Freedom Church and instantly felt it was similar to the church I was attending in the US. I enjoyed the worship, people, and messages.

I once shared my hectic work schedule with Shifali who was the then groups leader. She said, despite being a airline pilot, she never missed a single Academy class by God's grace. That commitment inspired me. If it's for God's work and purpose, He will change any circumstances. Spiritually, I was at my lowest, lonely, broken, and caught in the world's ways. It felt like my life was a ship caught in a storm, completely out of control. One night, God spoke to me through Psalms 46:10. It was assuring and helped me to wait on God.

"Be Still and Know that I am God" Psalm 46:10

The following week, there was an announcement at church for Academy sign-ups. I applied, though unsure how I'd manage it. I remembered how Pastor P had invited me back in 2019, but I ignored it. God gave me the courage to respond although it took me 5 years to say yes. As I connected more at Freedom Church, I met gifted people and joined the Velachery Midweek group led by Ben and Shifali—an inspiring couple who constantly encouraged me with their own Academy journey.

2024 Freedom Academy

6th June 2024, Academy began. Every Thursday, 3 hours flew by as passionate teaching came from our pastors and leaders. Freedom Academy gave deep insights and helped me to understand and reflect on:

Identity in Christ, Biblical values, Freedom DNA, Five fold ministry, spiritual warfare, overcoming sin, leadership and so much more...

I realised that Jesus longs for a true relationship—"like a father and son." During this time I grew stronger inside, discovered spiritual gifts, and finally got answers to questions I never dared to ask.

Would you like to know my favourite? FREEDOM WEEKEND. It was time away to hear what God truly wanted for me. I had never fasted more than two meals. Pastor Shana instructed a 3-day fast (Wed–Fri). I was unsure if I could do it.

I kept declaring the verse: **"Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," — Matthew 26:41**

I prayed, surrendered, and lasted over 3 days. My spirit grew stronger, and I truly experienced that man lives by every word of God. Freedom Weekend was life-changing. The pastors gave us truth and tools to break free from bondage and walk in liberty.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Galatians 5:1–2

During the weekend we were given individual tasks and group activities, followed by a powerful deliverance prayer. We brought our dark areas into the light, surrendered them, and learned that **forgiveness is key**.

What followed was a **peace** that only God can give. This is just the beginning - a launch into how God will use me for His glory.



2025 Freedom Weekend

25-01-25 marked a significant milestone in my life. Though I don't recall my water baptism date, this day will always be special.

I only wish I could set up an altar of thanksgiving to God, just as Israel once did.

My second favorite part of Academy was discovering my identity in Christ. We are called to reflect Christ-like character, showing the fruits of the Spirit daily:

LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL. Galatians 5:22-23

I hope my experience has encouraged you and my prayer is that you will find Freedom Academy to be a blessing to you. If you think it's not for you, like I did, you're ignoring God's call. Come, taste and see that the Lord is good. Jesus continues to pursue us, sending people to fulfill His purpose. Through Academy, I found the missing piece of the kingdom treasure map that recalibrated my spiritual compass.

Praveen Charles

Batch of 2024-25, Freedom Academy+

○ 2025 Calling for Freedom Academy



2017, Pastor P and me on the hill top
Jenner, Fort Ross, CA



Praveen Charles AKA Charlie is a Design Director in an IT company. He is an avid biker, lives by the motto "Life is a triumph" (YKYK;). He is also an amazing cook and makes a mind blowing Crab masala. Follow the man at www.charlietheman.com



“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

-- Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

Shining Up The Chrome

Marriage, much like a well-loved car, needs routine maintenance—not because it's broken, but because time, life, and everyday wear can dull even the brightest chrome. My husband and I knew that a strong marriage doesn't just happen. It's built, day by day, with effort and intention. That's what led us to ***The Marriage Garage***—a place dedicated to strengthening relationships, deepening connections, and rediscovering the joy of togetherness.

A Look Under the Hood

From the moment we entered the venue, I was struck by the thoughtful arrangements—the delicate flowers, elegant table settings, and meticulous attention to detail. It reflected the care and effort the hosts had poured into the event, setting the tone for what was to come. At the heart of this experience was the understanding that marriage is ***the perfect design of the perfect Designer***.

It was created to unite two people in oneness, to showcase Jesus to the world, and to represent Him while ruling together. We shared this time with other couples who, like us, desired not just a good marriage but a ***godly*** one—one that reflects Christ's love, His character, and His leadership through servitude.

Tuning the Engine

As the day went on, we participated in activities and discussions that revealed unexpected truths about our dynamic. We played a lip-reading game where we had to understand what the other was saying—we nailed it on the first try, proof of how in ***sync*** we are. But then came the balloon game—a test of teamwork and coordination—and we lost miserably. We laughed, realizing that while we're mentally aligned, our physical coordination could use some work.

For my husband, the highlight was the one-on-one conversations we had. ***"It really improved the way we understand and perceive each other,"*** he said. These conversations allowed us to talk about things that don't usually surface, drawing us closer. Post-lunch, we were asked to write love letters to each other starting with ***"Remember when...."*** I found myself reliving our best memories—the moments of joy and laughter, quiet victories, and the love that carried us through the years. I was both humbled and grateful as I reflected on God's goodness in our journey.

A particularly meaningful exercise involved expressing what we love about each other. It was a powerful moment for me, realizing how easy it is to tell the world how wonderful he is, yet I don't tell him as often as I should.

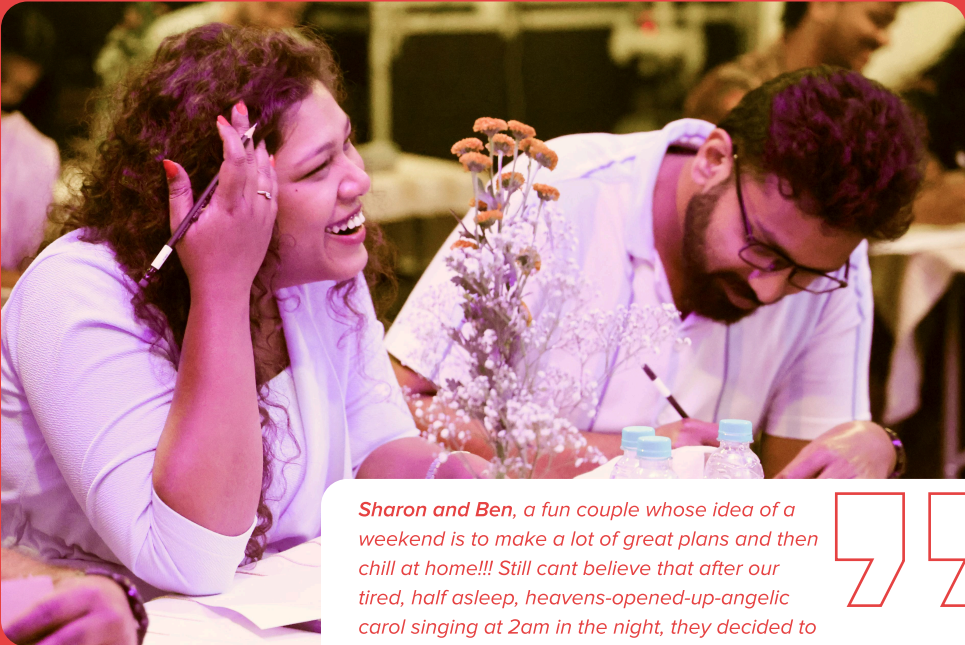
Brake Checks and Blind Spots

The experience went beyond fun and games. We gained valuable insight into the subtle threats that creep into relationships—pride, entitlement, and shame—creating tension if left unchecked. I was deeply moved when Pastor Praveen spoke about how confession has the power to break down walls and how genuine conversation, with honesty *with* kindness, is the heartbeat of a thriving relationship.

The Drive Forward

“What is your vision for your life and marriage?” This question echoed in our hearts. If marriage is truly a reflection of Christ, it deserves our full commitment, honor, and care. We don't want to treat it casually or dismiss its struggles. Instead, we want to live out our vows with purpose, aligning with God's perfect design.

We left not with a list of fixes but with practical ways to nurture our relationship—*to shine up the chrome*, so to speak. We do life together, and that is a beautiful thing.



Sharon and Ben, a fun couple whose idea of a weekend is to make a lot of great plans and then chill at home!!! Still cant believe that after our tired, half asleep, heavens-opened-up-angelic carol singing at 2am in the night, they decided to come to Freedom and make it their home.





FREEDOM GLOBAL

BRAZIL **PINDAMONHANGABA**

Freedom Church Pindamonhangaba

Freedom church is an international movement of churches with about 32 locations across the globe. We are absolutely delighted and excited as and when God orchestrates the birth of a new location. We would like to introduce Pastors Demetrios and Elis who are getting ready to launch Freedom Church Pindamonhangaba, Sao Paulo, Brazil on the 18th of May 2025.

Demetrios and Elis serve with unreserved commitment to Jesus with a deep passion for seeing people encounter the love and freedom found in Jesus. During the years 2016 to 2022, they lived in the UK and were part of Freedom Church in Birmingham. Under the pastoral care of Josh & Meg Cooke they were mentored, trained, and sent to plant a church in Brazil.

Pindamonhangaba (Pinda), Sao Paulo is an epicenter of other major religions, eastern spirituality, witchcraft and sorcery. God has placed in their hearts the vision to build a healthy church that will fight the spirit of religion in the Valley area. Their vision is to see people set free from dogmas and human traditions, going deeper in their relationship with Jesus.

God has been surprising them every day with His favour, bringing people from various walks of life to join this mission. Currently the launch team has grown to 80 people—including kids! Here in Freedom Church, we believe that one cannot discount the valuable contribution of children in God's work. God is moving mightily as He purposes, plans and prepares this church planting team for establishing His Kingdom in the city of Pinda.

Currently, they are looking for a house to serve as their hub during the week, while they will operate as a portable church in a cinema on Sundays. They are praying for leaders to be raised in different areas and for the bureaucratic process to be completed so they can be registered as a charity in Brazil and open a bank account.

Their goal is to raise \$100K towards the launch. By God's grace, they have already raised \$35K, and continue to trust in His provision to reach this target.

As we celebrate the launch of this location in Pinda Brazil, the birth of a “new baby” in the family of Freedom Global, we request each of you to uphold Pastors Demetrios and Elis and all of their church planting team in your personal prayers. Please pray for God's hand of protection, provision and for the Holy Spirit to work in and through their lives for the glory of God and the expansion of His kingdom.

- Demetrios and Elis
Pastors, Freedom Church Brazil



Planted in Faith, Growing in Purpose: Journey of Freedom Church Tamil



Arul Selvan is a third generation Christian whose grandfather and parents have been in ministry in several states of India but more intensely in South India. His mother passed away when he was a little boy so he and his six siblings grew up in a Christian orphanage. Here he was taught the ways of the Lord with much discipline and a strong biblical foundation. The hostel screened a Christian movie called “Burning Hell” through which the Holy Spirit stirred within his heart and at the age of 14 he gave his life to Jesus.

After completing his education and getting a bachelor's degree, his sister arranged his marriage to young Kumari from another branch of the same church. They were blessed with two beautiful girls – Roselin and Merlin. He wanted to give his girls the best education so he tried to supplement his income

by working as an insurance agent but it was meagre. While he was waiting at the bus stand, he bumped into his classmate who was driving an auto. His friend suggested that he could drive an Auto Rickshaw for a better income.

Driving an auto taught him endurance and built his character. The elements of blistering Chennai heat and yearly cyclonic rain challenged him physically and mentally. Through the struggles he was able to fulfill his dream of giving both girls good education and they became engineers. But more importantly as a family they were able to love and serve Jesus.

Arul met with a serious bike accident and was in the hospital bed for 50 days. This was the first time in his life that he was taking rest – a forced rest. He used this precious time to heal, take a good look at his life, evaluate his spiritual growth and finally he rededicated his life to God. During this time God revealed to him that the calling over his life is to be in pastoral ministry. Three years went by and nothing happened and so Arul decided he would fast and pray for God's direction and confirmation to serve Him.

In 2016, on the 65th day of his fast, Arul had a special customer hail for his auto. It was a young lady, who was part of the Freedom's Church Plant Team. It was a casual conversation from the outside, but in his heart, he was praying if this was a sign from God. **He prayed that when she gets off at her destination, if she**

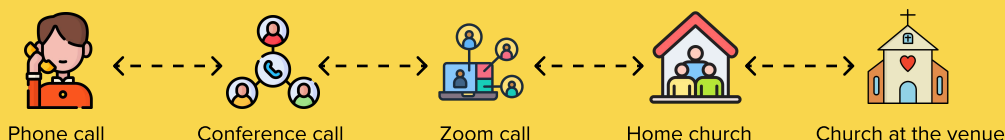
invites him to church, then it's God's confirmation that this is the place where he is called to serve. As she alighted, she invited him to Freedom Church and handed him a card with location and timing. He received the card with tears in his eyes, God was speaking loud and clear. He parked his auto in a quiet corner and began to worship God in thanksgiving and praise.

Not knowing anything about Freedom Church, he informed his family about how God had shown the place where he should be serving. He discussed and prayed with his wife and daughters, because **following God's call meant he was all in.** The following Sunday, they walked into Freedom Church as a family and were overwhelmed with the loving welcome showered on each of them. It was a completely different experience, the language, the culture, the style of worship. **But because they were there in obedience to God's calling, they found peace and felt at home right away.** On their drive back home, the girls would translate the entire sermon for Kumari who does not know English.

They loved everything about Freedom and over the next few weeks as a family they started serving as volunteers. Arul and his daughter Roselin joined the first ever batch of Freedom Academy in Chennai. It was a huge leap of faith because it was held on Saturdays from morning to evening. He would serve the church, learn at the Academy and ride his auto late nights to make up for his daily earnings. For many years, Arul was driving a rented auto. In 2018, Freedom bought him a new auto rickshaw and he was able to step up his income by saving on the rental.

During the Covid lockdown of 2019, there were a handful of Tamil speaking people who were unable to benefit from the online adaptation of Church. They did not have smart phones or other devices to connect with. Arul started making 'conference calls' on his mobile and gathered people. Initially he was able to connect only 5 people on a single call. When things were really hard during the pandemic, Arul and Kumari were able to minister to many families through phone-prayer. During the lockdown restrictions, they were able to educate people about video conferencing. People slowly learnt how to download and use Zoom on their friend's or neighbor's phone and that's how the Freedom Tamil Church was born.

After the lockdown, Arul and Kumari started gathering people in their house. One by one the group started growing and soon they had to move out. In March of 2022, Arul and Kumari, were officially prayed and appointed as Pastors of Freedom Church Tamil by Pastors Praveen and Shana. They had their first service the same month and now the church is growing each passing year.



OUR JOURNEY

After a year of training and guidance, Freedom Tamil church currently operates with its own set of leaders, volunteers, worship team and administrators. Pastors Arul and Kumari are leading the Tamil church with Freedom's wildfire-passion, culture, DNA and are on a mission to bring "Anyone Anywhere into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ".

Please join us to pray for our Tamil Church to grow in Christ-likeness, in numbers and salvations. Also pray for Pastors Arul and Kumari, their daughters Roselin (and her husband Joshua) and Merlin. If you know anyone in Chennai who wants to join a Tamil church family please reach out to chennai@freedomchurch.cc and we will be happy to share more information.

Freedom Church Tamil's Vision and Plan:

- **To start Tamil Academy this year**
- **To start Tamil Apha Youth this year**
- **'Raise The Next' – leadership training**
- **To plant two more Freedom Tamil Churches by the year 2027**



CELEBRATING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS



This year we celebrated the 3rd year anniversary of the Freedom Church Tamil. The focus of the joyous occasion was primarily on expressing our gratitude to God almighty. We wanted to honour the dedicated volunteers who have been pouring their heart and soul into the church. We acknowledge their valuable input into the church's growth and success throughout these past 3 years.

The theme of the celebration was "Invite," which was showcased through a heartfelt skit based on the true story of one of our church families. This family came to the church through a simple invitation, and today, they are a blessing not only to our congregation but also to their children and grandchildren.

We had a remarkable turnout, with 127 attendees, the highest number we've ever had for an anniversary week, marking a significant milestone in our church's journey. We look forward to God's grace and mercy as He works His plans and purposes in Freedom Tamil in the years to come.

- Merlin Arul

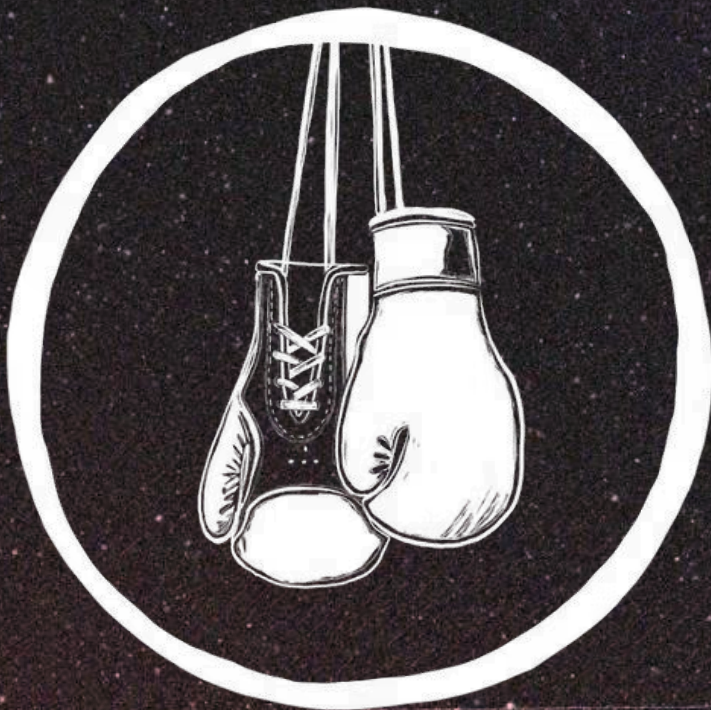


Merlin came to Freedom in 2015 as a young college kid. She has a big heart for our Tamil Church and has been serving passionately since Freedom Tamil's inception in 2022. She loves selfies and MS Dhoni. She dreams of that one day when she will get both – selfie with MSD!!!





PUNCHING ABOVE **OUR WEIGHT**



With audacious faith, we set impossible goals, take bold, confident steps and watch our God move. We are giant-killers who refuse to limit the Holy Spirit.

DR. ANGELIN'S STORY



The Road Less Traveled



Hi! This is Dr. Angelin and this is my testimony

My journey with Freedom church started after my MBBS, when I was confused about a lot of things in life, my purpose, my career and relationships. I randomly stumbled upon a story on Instagram about a church which seemed to be very non judgemental, accepting, comforting, exciting and fun - this is how I'd describe Freedom Chennai. I was very curious and texted the person who'd put up the story, got the details and went to this church. I loved it and I ended up going every week and it's been 6 years since. This church makes me look forward to Sundays and spending time with God and God's people in the community. It changed my perspective on a lot of things and made me realise my purpose, made me feel more closer to God and gave me peace inspite of the extremely stressful lifestyle as a doctor.

After completing my MBBS in 2018, I wasn't sure what to specialise in. I was thinking of pursuing Radiology or Dermatology but it so happened that all the doors were shut except the one to Obstetrics and Gynecology. I took it as I felt it was God leading me to it. There were times in those three years when it was quite difficult and not sure why God led me to this but he did finish what he started by helping me complete the 3 year long course with a Gold medal and lot of beautiful memories. Following this he helped me finish my Fellowship in Minimal Access Surgery. I'm grateful to God for both.

After my specialisation, I kept praying on what God has in store for me next.

And God led me to this rural mission hospital called Makunda serving a tribal population in the district of Karimganj, Assam. And it was a beautiful 9 months filled with a lot of crazy work experiences and beautiful memories with friends and colleagues. This was not a bond or any obligation that I was forced to do. I did this voluntarily to learn and help mission hospitals that do the Lord's work.

I worked as an Obstetrics and Gynaecology Consultant and the place pushed me to my maximum and beyond. Managing an obstetric care unit with almost 700 deliveries per month as a single consultant for a while was not easy neither was working in Borrows Christian memorial hospital as a single consultant with no paediatrician/ medicine/ surgeon/ anaesthetist/ blood back up. This is the sad plight of many mission hospitals which we are hardly aware of.

Being born and brought up in a city, it was quite a challenge. It was a place with new people, new language, new food and in the middle of geckos and snakes.

You see miracles every day of the Lord who heals, sick patients fighting for their lives come back healed wonderfully. We see the healing touch of God every day. These hospitals don't have the best facilities because of lack of money- but the Lord's healing hand is always there, delivering physical and spiritual healing to everyone who works and comes to these hospitals for treatment.

One day I saw a patient and her name was Talitha. She was a teenage girl and I was quite curious about her name and asked her about it. Her mother told me that when she was born, she was preterm and had a tracheo-oesophageal fistula (which is a connection between the food pipe and the wind pipe in our bodies). She had aspirated and was very sick and she was on life supports when she'd come to Makunda Hospital.

Being a preterm newborn with a fistula on life supports, years ago in a village with poor medical access, the chances of survival seemed very dim. The doctors in Makunda had operated on her and she'd survived miraculously. The mother hence names her "Talitha" cos she believed that her daughter almost died and she was brought back to life. You see the miracles of the new testaments happen in front of you and it is just amazing!

Being someone who had just finished their residency training, I was no specialist in infertility. There were two nurses from the hospital that I worked in who were trying to conceive. I told them I'm no Infertility specialist but they still insisted I treat them. I treated them honestly and with the best of my ability and prayed with them. With God's grace, both of them conceived and I can say confidently that it was God's presence and his miracle that made this happen and this gives such joy to me! Our God is a God who provides even when it feels barren and impossible.

Small things like praying before starting surgeries and having ward prayers every day is small beautiful things that make sure God's healing hand rests upon every patient. I learnt, the more we depend on God, the more we see miracles happening. I'm extremely grateful to the Lord for leading me to these two beautiful mission hospitals in the last 9months - Makunda Christian leprosy and General Hospital and Borrows Christian Memorial Hospital, Assam.

- Written by

Dr. Angelin Emmanuel



Angelin is part of Freedom since 2019. She loves discussing what God ministered to her through the preaches with her mom and sister. Even though her work and commitments take her all over the country she never misses to catch up with our online Church. You can also connect with our online stream every Sunday at 10:00 AM on <https://youtube.com/@freedomchennai>



FROM THE SHELF

Surely God is impressed with my garments, I often thought. Occasionally I strutted into his presence so he could compliment the self-tailored wear. He never spoke. His silence must mean admiration, I convinced myself. But then my wardrobe began to suffer. The fabric of my trousers grew thin. My best works started coming unstitched. I began leaving more undone than done, and what little I did was nothing to boast about. No problem, I thought. I'll work harder. But working harder was a problem. There was a hole in my coat of convictions. My resolve was threadbare. A cold wind cut into my chest. I reached up to pull my hat down firmly, and the brim ripped off in my hands. Over a period of a few months, my wardrobe of self-righteousness completely unraveled. I went from tailored gentlemen's apparel to beggar's rags. Fearful that God might be angry at my tattered suit, I did my best to stitch it together and cover my mistakes. But the clothes were so worn. And the wind was so icy. I gave up. I went back to God. (Where else could I go?) On a wintry Thursday afternoon, I stepped into his presence, not for applause, but for warmth. My prayer was feeble. "I feel naked." "You are. And you have been for a long time." What he did next, I'll never forget. "I have something to give you," he said. He gently removed the remaining threads and then picked up a robe, a regal robe, the clothing of his goodness. He wrapped it around my shoulders. His words to me were tender. "My son, you are now clothed with Christ".

"for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Galatians 3:27 NIV

Max Lucado, Grip of Grace (pages 7-8)

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COFFEE WITH HOPE

- PART 02



“You’ve hidden well...” she began, offering him coffee. “...since Calvary.”

Ambrose swiftly covered his recoil with nonchalance. Swiping the cup from her hands, his gaze narrowed behind the rim. “Have I now? I’m a man of the present times. A mere voice of an anguished generation, speaking freedom from the injustice you call God.”

“Undoubtedly a loud voice,” she drawled, gesturing to the audience for emphasis. “Of prodigal slaves.”

Vulgar swears flew across the room. People rose to their feet, fists raised in the air, barking rebukes. Ambrose made no attempt to pacify their rage, seemingly revelling in the uproar.

Albeit, Hope remained composed.

“Slaves?” He echoed. “You’ve got quite a bite, darling.”

She carefully replied, “Salt makes real the wounds you deny.”

Ambrose sharply said, “Wounds heal with time. We’re healed from the shackles of inferiority proposed by your kind.”

“The healed have no fear,” Hope softly stated, turning her gaze over to a red-faced audience. “Yet you fear to come home, run from your past, and deny your heart ointment.”

“Run home to what?” He laughed. “Closed doors?”

“To a waiting Father.”

“To enslave us in His fables again.” The Host accused.

“Fables don’t have testimonies,” She pointed out. “He has numbers you can’t count.”

Scoffs sounded. But a few expressions waned, blankly meeting her eyes.

Then it happened. A gruffy man from the crowd stood up.

“Where then is my testimony?”

Ambrose arrogantly smirked. He gestured to the man, inviting him to the clearing between them and the crowd.

Blue eyes glistening with emotion, his face spoke a wealth of grief. Obscene tattoos covered his bare arms and he reeked of alcohol. He was at a loss of words, silently demanding an answer to coax the raging tide within. Then his shoulders shook, knees visibly trembling.

Hope's face spoke a bittersweet tale as she asked, "What's your name?"

"Phineas." Came the stiff reply.

She offered him a reassuring smile. "Tell us."

Composure slowly broke, sadness crashing. "My wife. I lost her to cancer while we waited on divine healing. I lost my reputation..." Tears stained his cheeks. "... my peace..." Then he furiously wiped them away. "... I can't sleep. It haunts me... I... I've waited far too long to believe otherwise now," He brought a hand to his chest, fingers splayed and pressing into the fabric with much unspoken emotion. "It hurts in a place alcohol can't reach."

As silence reigned, people exchanged glances. Some even bowed their heads, thinking of their own circumstances.

Ambrose looked expectantly at Hope with insensitive haughtiness.

Unexpectedly, Hope remained lip-locked, holding Phineas' gaze. She offered no comfort. No essay. Worked no miracle. She wore an empathetic expression, voice like the gentle caress of a spring breeze over a dry winter.

"Do you want to be healed?"

Phineas honestly confessed, "I fear."

Hope dipped her chin, urging him to speak.

He did. "I've come so far through grime and dirt. Did unspeakable things. Made victims and spat upon the name of God. What if I don't find now what I'm looking for? What if I'm turned away? What if I'm not enough to be forgiven?"

"All the Father sees," She gently began, "Is nail pierced hands and the broken body of a man who died so you can come back home. Without condemnation. Without shame. Without fear."

Phineas shook his head in disbelief, barely holding back a river of sobs.

Ambrose cut in, "Surely you don't mean Jesus, yet another fable."

The rage in the room had dwindled. They were mournful.

"Do you want to see nail pierced hands?" Hope pushed. Though she held Phineas' gaze, the question loomed over every pondering person. Where rebellion reigned, willingness now gleamed. A hum of desperation grew.

He quietly whispered, “I want to be healed.”

Her lips curved, “Then go home. There’s a saviour waiting in your rundown room. You’re seen. You’re heard. There’s a place in you only He sees. Give him yourself, your faith, and be healed, transformed. Become new.”

A strangled noise escaped Phineas as he choked on the emotion in his throat.

There was no extravagant miracle. No fancy magician tricks. No promise he could physically see.

Merely an invitation.

His knees hit the floor and he bitterly wept. None dared to speak; even Ambrose as he beheld the audience.

Sometimes, healing is less about words and more about opening your heart.

The man arose and rubbed his face, waiting. As if for a command.

“Go.” Hope said.

Without hesitation, Phineas spun around. Each footstep to the exit was a footfall closer to confronting his desperation. What had happened, he never understood. Howbeit, the truth of a better tomorrow waiting in his room was unwavering in him.

He ran, dashing out of the exit and down the twisting stairwell.

A home. He needed it now. He found no reason to wait anymore.

Baffled, the people fell into neglected spaces of their mind, their pasts resurfacing. The reality was terrifying. Under layers of the spite they’d built was blaring rawness screaming for help, freedom, and a touch of healing.

Their budding fragility was tangible to Hope. She tenderly addressed them, her voice carrying urgency. “You should, too. You won’t find what you’re looking for here. Go back home.”

Ambrose openly seethed as people obliged, caught up in their heartache. Many resolved to be seated, resisting the beckoning.

Yes, many stayed. Yet the leaving few were a threat to Ambrose’s agenda. They could influence generations.

The clock marked 11.55pm. The show would soon end.

“Is this what this is about?” He glared at his guest. “Winning?”

Hope shook her head, dismissively. “We’ll meet again, old friend. Perhaps then, you’ll drop this façade called Ambrose.”

She rose to her feet, extending a hand. Reluctantly, teeth bared in fume, he parroted, squeezing her hand.

Audaciously, she yanked him forward and lowly taunted, “I’m gracious like spring, but don’t forget I also know to throw a punch. Thirty-two left tonight believing to find Jesus and they will. I landed a pretty good blow to your ego, eh?”

Ambrose pulled away. He sharply exhaled, composing himself. “I still got time.”

The echo of the large clock chiming midnight filled the space.

Hope shrugged and turned on her heels. She paced past the rows of gawking audience. Heading for the exit, she looked over a shoulder at the Host and saluted. “Keep telling yourself that. Until next time, Sin.”

Sparing him no time to react, golden flames broke out at her feet, licking up her silhouette. And then there was nothing. She had disappeared without trace, a trace of stardust in the place she once stood in.

Ambrose slumped into his chair, fingers digging into his scalp. The cameras were off and the silence in the room was heavy. The people shot him questioning looks, bewildered by the turn of events.

Meanwhile, in the biting weather outside, Sebastian’s head hung low. His wife, Lauren, and their daughter followed behind. They were among the few who left earlier.

Hope’s words were so foreign. Confounding even. It contradicted everything they’d built their lives around, whispering reconciliation across burned bridges and embers in depths that were once cold and void. They were rich and well known. Even so, their lives were burdensome for something was always missing.

Sebastian clutched the skull at his neck. He knew what was missing.

A familiar face brushed past him. Another. Again. People who left early.

Tossing the necklace to the frosty ground, he reached for his wife’s hand. Together, they trudged away from the shadow of the infamous building of the Variety Hour Show. The passion for violence and blasphemy it entertained was all they knew for years. It filled their souls – but wearied them.

Peace. That was what they needed.

Doubt shone.

Was peace really waiting inside their little bedroom? Would they truly meet a saviour? Would He truly welcome them with open arms? He knew the story. Of how Jesus died on the cross. Would his sinful little family be enough for the mercy of a man like that?

And if yes, why? Why would a God choose forgiveness and sacrifice over people with vengeful souls and foolish mouths?



Church bells loudly chimed, announcing it was midnight.

They hadn't realized they'd walked this far down the block, caught up in their thoughts and feelings.

Tuning into reality, a hoarse voice floated into earshot. He looked towards the gates of the church where a radical stood, preaching to the busy populace. His words had a touch, engraving itself, letter by letter, into Sebastian's heart. Into a place that made his shoulders lighter and knees tremble.

Snow quietly began to drop.

Sebastian turned his eyes to the sky, tears falling.

Hope.

He no longer doubted that there was a man waiting for his family back home. A man with nail pierced hands and a heart that beat with love, mercy, and healing.

"Repent and believe the good news," The man was bellowing. "For God so loved the world that He sent his only son, that whoever believes in Him will not die but have eternal life."

- Written by

Angeline Judith Leonard



Angeline Judith Leonard – affectionately called Angie is part of our Freedom family since 2023. She is a school teacher by profession. You can occasionally find her tutoring....I mean..... encouraging people at Café :) . She is also an incredibly gifted writer. If you missed out on reading Part 1 of "Coffee with Hope" please reach out to chennai@freedomchurch.cc and we will send you a free PDF of the previous edition of the FISH magazine.





JUDAS ISCARIOT

Often people use the phrases: “Betrayed with a kiss” and “Sold for 30 pieces of silver” when referring to a grave betrayal by someone close to them. Even persons with little or no Biblical knowledge use these saying to denote sadness and despair when faced with treachery and betrayal. In the Biblical context every Christian knows about the disciple who betrayed Jesus – he was Judas Iscariot.

Judas of Sicarii, his last name is said to be from the Latin Sicarius (assassin or murderer) suggesting that he belonged to a radical Jewish group of those times, some of whom resorted to violence in hope of overthrowing the cruel Roman yoke. Judas was, according to the Gospel of John (John 12:6) in charge of the finances; a book keeper and treasurer of sorts. From the Gospels we understand that Judas was very conscious about spending money and often grumbled about wasting money. There is also a passing reference in the Gospels that he dipped into the common purse. We can conjecture a few scenarios here: perhaps he joined Jesus because he saw vast crowds following Jesus and thought it would be good business opportunity to make some money or maybe he thought he could collect a fee from the crowds who came to listen to Jesus or he could even have planned that he can charge a commission from those healed by Jesus!

Judas, in the beginning, joined Jesus sincerely, believing him to be the long-awaited Messiah come to save the Jews from the Roman rulers. He, like the other disciples believed that the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God had come to fulfil prophet Isaiah’s prophecy and thought His coming was concerning the freedom of the Jews from Roman bondage. He must have mulled over the words of Isaiah (9:6-7) with great hope: Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

Judas may also have imagined that when Jesus is crowned King, he and the other disciples will get choice posts in the government, having been close to Jesus. The Gospels shows us that often the disciples argued and sometimes quarrelled, too, as who among them was the most beloved of Jesus. We are told that one of the disciples even asked, having left everything for Jesus what would they gain in the end. It is only towards the end of Jesus’ ministry was it revealed to them that Jesus had come to establish a spiritual kingdom that would outlast emperors and empires.

The betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot has some significant points for us to ponder over.

Judas came to Jesus looking for benefits, he did come to serve with Jesus and suffer with Jesus. He did not have any plans for following Jesus to do God's will. Instead, he wanted earthly advantages by staying close to someone who he thought would be a temporal King. Like him, some people approach Jesus for material blessings: a good job, a partner or spouse, beneficial partnerships and relationships etc. In that case the direction we choose and the aspirations we have for ourselves are completely misplaced. Maybe Judas thought if he sticks with Jesus when He becomes King, he would become a minister, too!

Judas was deeply disappointed when he realised, as did others when Jesus told them of His ministry and His purpose on earth; that Christ had come to die on the Cross, to lay down His life for all mankind - the Jews and the Gentiles. For him, as a Jew it must have been abhorrent to think the non-Jews could be children of the Eternal God, When Jesus revealed that He will go to Jerusalem where He will be tried and then crucified, Judas must have been totally forlorn. That is when, according to the Gospel, Satan entered his heart (Luke 22 :3-6) and he went to discuss and make a deal with the priests how he was ready to betray Jesus knowing that they were seeking Jesus to kill him.

Jesus knew how every event would unfold. At the Last Supper He told Judas to go quickly and do that which he desired to do. He also told Peter that he would deny Him thrice before the morning comes and the cock crows thrice. When Peter saw the prophetic words fulfilled, he was so filled with pain and sorrow that the Gospel of Luke records that "he wept bitterly "(Luke 22:62). He was full of shame and guilt for having denied that he knew Jesus or was one of His disciples.

After betraying Jesus, Judas was also full of remorse for the Gospel of Matthew records in Matt 27: 3-4 "When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."

Judas realised what he had done, that he had betrayed the Son of God and handed Him over to the Chief Priests and the Elders to be tried and by now it was apparent to him that the prophecies concerning Jesus will be fulfilled. King David the Psalmist in Psalm 22 had prophesied it all!

Psalm 22: 16-18

The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

In his eyes Judas must have fallen low as he saw the result of the treacherous act he had done. Unlike Peter, who was contrite, Judas took matters into his own hands. He sought to retrieve Jesus from the trial by going to the Chief Priests and returning the blood money, the thirty pieces of silver. According to Exodus 21:32 a slave's death was compensated by thirty pieces of silver. Jesus was considered so lowly by the priests that even though he was a Jew by birth the priests considered Him no better than a slave and an outcast.

Judas tried to right the wrong that he had done, in his own strength and when he failed, he took his own life. Many people try everything in their power to set right their lives instead of coming to Jesus and when they are unable, they become miserable; for only through Jesus can we get any Hope of Salvation and taste His Mercy for Redemption from our sins. Failing to find a way out on their own strength and failing miserably, they slip into a dark place and sometimes, even take their own lives.

Jesus said on the cross: Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Luke 23 :34) it included every single person that had sent Him to the cross. The Romans who scourged Him, pressed the crown of thorns on His head, spat on Him, cursed Him and nailed Him to the cross were asked by Jesus to be forgiven by God. Had Judas come to the foot of the cross he, too, would have received the forgiveness.

The wretched but penitent thief nailed to the cross on the right of Jesus, who said Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43) received forgiveness.

In whatever condition we are, when we approach Jesus with a contrite heart and in a posture of penitence for our sins and wrongdoings, He forgives us and redeems us. **He washes us clean of our sin forever.**

The Psalmist King David sings in Psalm 51 :17 about how God desires a truly repentant heart: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

We all need like Peter, come to him with our broken heart and contrite spirit and Jesus heals and delivers us.

- Dr. Geeta Madhavan



Lovingly known in Freedom as “Geeta Aunty”, she is a lawyer and professor. She is the first woman in India to have done her Ph.D. in Law on international terrorism awarded by The Hague in Netherlands. An erudite scholar, international speaker, visiting faculty to many universities and to us she’s our dear aunty/sister/mother who loves Jesus with all of her heart and lives to testify Him daily.

PS: She has her own Wikipedia page.



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