

Unmet Needs and Finding Freedom

Bring the need into the light. Practice a healthier response.

LISTEN & WATCH www.BTLdiscipleship.guide/freedom [QR code]

BIG IDEA	Unmet needs can lead us toward harmful coping habits or addiction. Jesus invites us toward freedom through surrender, truth, a plan, and trusted people.
MEMORY VERSE	<i>So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.</i> John 8:36
ACTION STEP	Name one unmet need and harmful pattern. Write a Freedom Plan, share it with one trusted person, and practice a healthier response for seven days.
OUTCOME	I have named the need beneath a pattern, shared my Freedom Plan, and begun practicing it with support.

The Way of Jesus Read before you meet • about 5 minutes

The need beneath the pattern

God made us for connection, love, belonging, and safety. When those needs go unmet, we adapt. We may become invisible to avoid conflict, overachieve to earn love, or use food, shopping, screens, substances, or constant activity to quiet loneliness or inadequacy. The need deserves care. The way we try to meet it can hurt us and others.

A harmful coping pattern is not automatically an addiction. Some patterns become addictions and need specialized care; others are habits or protective responses that have grown costly. Begin with curiosity: What happened? What did I reach for? What relief did it promise? What need was underneath? Notice both the immediate relief and the longer-term cost.

Bring the whole need to Jesus

Jesus said, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Bring Him the behavior, the hurt, and the need underneath. Freedom grows through surrender, truth, a plan, and people. Walk with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), practice a healthier response, and receive help. God often cares for us through friendship, rest, boundaries, and skilled support.

Honest community helps us heal

James writes, “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16). A trusted person can pray with you, help you see a pattern, and encourage your next step. Share at a pace that respects your safety. This is Growing in Community: learning to receive care while walking toward freedom together.

Five steps toward freedom

1. Name the need and the pattern. Write the trigger, the need underneath, the behavior, the relief it promises, and its cost. Share with a trusted person. A diagnosis is not required to begin.
2. Choose a healthier response. Meet loneliness with a call to a friend, exhaustion with rest, or fear with prayer and a safe conversation. Choose one practical response that addresses the need.
3. Prepare barriers. Make the harmful response harder to reach: use a timer, move the phone, change a spending routine, or set a boundary. Make your healthier response easier to begin.
4. Build your team. Choose a trusted friend or discipler. Invite a pastor or counselor when useful, and specialized recovery or medical support when addiction or dependence is involved.
5. Surrender daily. Pray, “Jesus, here is my need and the way I have tried to meet it. Help me receive Your care and take a healthier step today.”

A word of care

If you are physically dependent on alcohol, drugs, or certain medications, stopping suddenly can be dangerous. Talk to a doctor before you quit. Recovery communities (such as Celebrate Recovery) and Christian counselors are gifts from God, not a sign of weak faith. Colonial’s pastors can help you find the right support.

When You Meet *about 60 minutes*

Who leads: The disciple opens in prayer, leads Connect, and now leads Read. The discipler leads Practice and Pray & Plan.

Connect • 10 min

- When you feel stressed, lonely, unsafe, or worn out, what do you reach for? What are you hoping it will give you?
- How did your hidden service go? (No details needed!) Who did you lift up?

Read • 20–25 min

Read aloud: John 8:31–36 and Romans 6:11–14

1. According to Jesus, what makes a person a slave? What sets a person free?
2. What need might your usual response be trying to meet? When does that response begin to cost you or others?
3. Romans 6 calls us to offer ourselves to God. What healthier response could you practice with His help? Who could help you meet the need?
4. What small sign of growing freedom could you notice this week? What might take longer and need more support?

Practice • 15 min

- **Map one pattern, big or small, using My Freedom Plan (Tool 4). Name the trigger and unmet need, the behavior and cost, the promised relief, and God's truth. Choose a healthier response, practical barriers, and trusted people to help.**
- Choose what you are ready to share. Ask for consent before offering advice, keep personal details private, and let your partner set the pace.

Pray & Plan • 10 min

- Pray over each other's plans.
- Agree on a simple check-in rhythm for the week. Ask, "What did you need, what did you try, and how can I support you?"

For disciplers: This lesson may need two weeks. That's fine. Move on when the outcome is complete, not when the calendar says. Schedule a 30-day check-in on the plan.

For groups: For the Practice, split into same-gender pairs or triads. Never pressure anyone to share. Leaders: know where to refer people for professional help before this meeting.

Live It *This week's action step*

Complete My Freedom Plan (Tool 4) for one harmful pattern. Name the need, choose a healthier response, prepare barriers, and share with one trusted person. Practice for seven days.

My pattern and unmet need

My healthier response

My trusted person and check-in rhythm

Go deeper (optional): Read Psalm 62:5–8. Tell God the need you usually try to quiet, and name one person from whom you can receive care.

Pass It On *within 48 hours*

Offer a friend your attention. Ask, "How are you really doing?" Listen, ask what would help, and pray if they welcome it.

Five Days with Jesus *10–15 minutes a day*

Use **R³** each day: Read, Reflect, Respond.

☐ **Day 1 • John 8:31–36**

What truth does Jesus invite me to trust? What need or harmful response can I bring to Him today?

☐ **Day 2 • Romans 6:11–14**

What would offering myself to God look like in the moment I usually reach for relief?

☐ **Day 3 • Galatians 5:16–25**

Which fruit of the Spirit can shape a healthier response to my unmet need?

☐ **Day 4 • Hebrews 12:1–2**

What habit or weight is making life harder? What support would help me lay it aside?

☐ **Day 5 • 1 Corinthians 10:13**

What practical way forward can I prepare? Whom can I call when I need help taking it?

Awareness: H.A.L.T. and the need underneath

Pause when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. Ask, “What do I need right now?” Eat, rest, seek a safe conversation, or ask for support. Pray as you take that practical step. Notice what helps and adjust your plan with your trusted person.

Ready to Move On?

- ☐ I can name one harmful pattern and the need it is trying to meet.
- ☐ My Freedom Plan includes a healthier response, barriers, and trusted support.
- ☐ I have shared the plan, practiced it for a week, and identified my next step.

Review these steps with your discipler before moving on. You can continue this plan while learning the next lesson. Healing may take time, and ongoing support belongs in the journey.

My Freedom Plan

Use this page for one harmful coping pattern, whether it is a habit or an addiction. Name the unmet need and choose a healthier response. Share with someone trustworthy. For addiction, trauma, or serious distress, seek qualified help alongside pastoral care. If your body may be dependent on a substance, talk to a doctor before stopping.

1. Name the need and the pattern

Trigger / unmet need	Behavior / cost	Relief it promises	Truth / healthy response

2. Choose a healthier response

When the trigger comes, I need _____. One healthier way to care for that need is:

3. Remove & re-route

Barriers I will prepare, and ways I will make my healthier response easier to begin:

4. My team

Trusted friend or discipler _____

Pastor, counselor, or recovery support (as needed) _____

Doctor (if my body is dependent) _____

Our check-in rhythm _____

My 30-day review date _____

5. Daily surrender

Morning and evening: "Jesus, I bring You my need and my response. Help me receive Your care and practice a healthier way."

When the pattern returns

Reach out to your trusted person. Receive God's grace, notice the need and trigger, and review what would help next time. Take the next step together. A setback is an opportunity to adjust the plan and receive support.

Sources & Acknowledgment

The original pathway

This booklet adapts and substantially rewrites material from *Discipleship Pathway* (2024) by Rev. Megan Koch and Rev. Phil Wiseman of Table Church in Des Moines, Iowa, used with the authors' blessing. The original identifies its license as Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

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The Colonial adaptation

Prepared for Colonial Presbyterian Church by Pastor Jeff Sparks for the Be the L.I.G.H.T. Discipleship Pathway. This adaptation keeps the original ten lesson themes; adds a Launch session with a gospel foundation and a Commissioning session with a multiplication plan; restructures each lesson around a weekly meeting, one action step, and a five-day reading plan; and draws on Colonial's *Be the LIGHT Abide Guide* (P.R.A.Y., R³, BLESS, and the Abide Plan), earlier micro-course drafts, and Kent Mathews' evangelism training at Colonial (listening, validating, clarifying, and "know, tell, do, and be the story").

Also informed by

Zúme Training (the Model, Assist, Watch, Leave pattern and the emphasis on obeying and sharing between sessions); *Rooted* by Mariners Church (short daily readings and shared experiences); and *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer (one practice at a time, and a rule of life).

Quotations

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies* (2021). Dallas Willard, on "pitching its message too low." Henri Nouwen, on downward mobility. Robert Louis Stevenson (attributed), on seeds and harvest. The *Didache* (early Christian teaching, 1st–2nd century), on weekly fasting.

Scripture

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which is in the public domain. Read the full passages in any trustworthy translation or audio Bible.

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