

# Are You Free to Run a Marathon?

## TRUE FREEDOM IN CHRIST

What does it mean to be free? According to many Philosophers and Theologians we can classify freedom into two basic kinds: 1) We can be free *from* things and 2) we can be free *for* things. Both of these kinds of freedom are rooted in the unique way God created us. We can be free from many things. We can be free from being chained to a wall – this is physical freedom. We can be free from disease – this is health. How many freedoms “from” can you list?

Another important kind of freedom is freedom “for” something. For example, if I train myself as a runner, one day I will be free for running a marathon. Currently, I am not free for running a marathon. I know I am not free for running a marathon because if I tried to run one right now, I would probably faint from over-exertion or get muscle cramps that would stop all movement. To be free for something means that I need to prepare myself to be free for it. Of course, the effort to gain this freedom presupposes a strong desire for this new freedom. It also presupposes that this new freedom is a good thing for which to be free. What other freedoms “for” can you list?

The most important freedom “for” is the freedom for knowing and loving God, and only human beings have this freedom. Our freedom for knowing and loving God is based on the fact that God made us to know and love God. Blessed John Paul II said, “This gift [of freedom] finds its full realization in the unreserved giving of the whole of one's human person, in a spirit of the love of a spouse, to Christ” (*Redemptor Hominis*, no. 21). In other words, we are most free when we give ourselves entirely in love to Christ in the same way we give ourselves entirely to a spouse.

In order to be free for knowing God, I need to make time to read about Him in the Bible or in the lives of His saints. Do I do that? In order to be free to love God, I need to meet Him in the Sacraments and I need to pray every day for His help so that loving Him comes easily for me. If I do not know God by study and love Him by being in a relationship with Him and living according to His commandments, then loving God will be like the marathon for which I did not train.

The well-trained marathon runner is free to attain a personal best time. True freedom for every person is living the life of charity that Jesus lived. We have been given a capacity to live as Christ lived – in charity and union with the Father. It is a valuable freedom that we want to have. If, with God's help, we do not develop that capacity, then we are not truly free. We are missing out on our greatest and truest freedom.

In order to help develop our true freedom, we can create a “training plan.” For instance: daily prayer, daily examination of conscience, attending Mass often, regular Confession, performing acts of service, and most importantly, living the virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

**Q. What do you do every day to be free for knowing and loving God?**

**Q. In order to be free to give myself entirely to God, what do I need to be free from?**

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