

Theme: “No one is free, until we are all free”

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No one is free, until we are all free. No one is free, until we are all free. These words were thought by a man who thought of others before himself. These words were spoken by a man who used his voice to bring hope, courage, and healing to the world. These words were demonstrated by a man who lived his life to ensure that all would have the opportunity to be free, regardless of their color, religion, or gender. These words were birthed from the very soul of one of the greatest civil rights leaders to ever live – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Through this quote, he emphasized that freedom is not an individual matter, but that the freedom of the individual is based upon the freedom of the collective whole. We truly cannot be free from our own oppression until our brother or sister is freed from their oppression, and it is our responsibility to free them, even if our brother or sister is the oppressor. However, how can I free my brother? How can I free my sister? Where does freedom even begin?

Freedom begins in the heart, and to be free in the heart and free the heart of another, we must love. We must love one another with agape love. “Agape love is unconcerned with the self and concerned with the greatest good of another” (Roat). When we unselfishly seek the best for others, despite their differences, we have set ourselves free from selfishness and hate. We don’t see them for the color of their skin, the god they serve, or even the gender they identify as, but we see them for the human they are and give them what every human being needs – the love of God. Dr. King said that “when you rise to love on this level, you begin to love men not because they are likeable, but because God loves them” (Legate). However, what about those that are looking to mentally abuse us, always tearing us down and never wanting to see us succeed? Do they deserve love, do they deserve freedom? When this thought bombards our minds, we must allow Dr. King’s words to ring through our ears and penetrate our very souls: “No one is free,

until we are all free.” Even when someone hates us without cause, we must realize that they are not free in their own heart. However, we must go deeper than understanding where they are not free, we must make it our personal responsibility to set them free from their hate by choosing to forgive them for it. Forgiveness shows that despite being mistreated, we still care for the well-being of our oppressor and desire to see them released from the hate that is oppressing them.

This demonstration of love doesn’t make any logical sense and is incomprehensible to the human mind; however, it is this demonstration of love that can free someone else’s heart, bringing light to their internal darkness, and it is the “only thing that can turn an enemy into a friend”

(ChristianQuotes.Info).

Nevertheless, even though freedom begins in the heart, it is maintained through the mind. We may be free in our hearts, but our minds give us the power to operate in our freedom. When we operate in our freedom, we are not held back and able to elevate to our highest potential. Instead, we can become all that we were destined to be without any restraints or hinderances. The mind can be our greatest weapon, but often, it is the greatest battlefield that many continue to find themselves lost and defeated. However, education can free our minds, giving us the power to think, speak, and act appropriately, helping us to articulate our heart’s innermost dreams and desires. We must seek to be educated, and if we are already educated, we must educate each other rather than withholding the precious knowledge that we possess. As a human race, we cannot strictly educate one group of people and not educate another because this will produce a ripple effect on everyone. The growth of humankind is based upon the education of all people of all races of all diverse backgrounds. Education not only has the capacity to free the mind of one, but it also has the power to free the world. Thus, we must set aside our differences

and stand side by side to love and educate one another to ensure the freedom of all people, transforming Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream into reality.

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