

## Independence Day

### **Leader Guide**

The Union of Sinners and Saints

<http://theunionofsinnerandsaints.com>

**Album Title:** *The Union of Sinners and Saints*

Suite 28 Records

**Song:** Independence Day

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### **Theme**

Freedom

### **Objective**

The objective of this Bible Study is to lead your students to a greater understanding of what it means to live a life of freedom from the chains of sin. It is important for us to get a fresh glimpse of what it means to be truly free. This Bible Study will open the door for your students to embrace a life redeemed by Jesus and be motivated to leave a lasting Spiritual mark on their home, their school, their community, and their world.

### **Warm Up**

A great game to help illustrate the message in the music is a called Follow the SECRET Leader. After all the students arrive, instruct everyone to get up and walk around the room. They are to look for the right person to follow and copy. Ahead of time appoint a leader to be “it.” On “GO” everyone including all the leaders are to walk around, weave in and out of people. Some of the other leaders can pretend to be it by doing silly things and saying silly things. Students need to pick who they will follow as they are trying to guess who they should follow.

Set a time limit of 2-4 minutes. At the end see if the leader that was “it” has anyone following them. If students are following that “it” leader, ask them why they chose to follow that leader. Also ask why other students chose to follow the other leaders.

### **Transition**

As Christians we sometimes underestimate the wonderful power of grace. We know we need grace. Without it we'd never come to Christ in the first place. But being a Christian is more than just coming to Christ. It's about growing and becoming more like Jesus – it's about pursuing holiness. The pursuit of holiness is hard work, and that is where we turn from grace to discipline-and often make a big mistake.

Grace is every bit as important for growing as a Christian as it is for becoming a Christian. The pursuit of holiness must be anchored in the grace of God; otherwise it is doomed to failure. Grace is at the heart of the gospel, and without a clear understanding of the gospel and grace we can easily slip into a performance-based life-style that bears little resemblance to what the gospel offers us. It is truly sad how many Christians don't have a good grasp of what the gospel message is.

**How much is Christ-like compassion & aid to the needy actually making a difference in our community?  
How well are we reflecting and emulating the mission of Jesus?**

**How much is our culture in its darkness and need actually finding hope from those of us who proclaim Christ and his Kingdom of love and compassion?**

## **The Video**

The Union of Sinners and Saints *Independence Day*

## **Transition**

You may need to build another bridge between the song and the Bible study section. This will likely involve asking some open-ended questions about what the group just saw, or going back over the lyrics and generating some feedback.

## **Bible Study**

It may seem strange to think that traditional evangelism is in its last gasps when some North American churches seem to be increasing in number. Indeed, if the measure of success is church attendance, donations, people's participation, numbers of programs, or square footage of church space, then many of today's churches would be considered overwhelming successful. But are these factors valid measurements for the success of a church? If not, what is? The apostle Paul established some indicators. He stated that the leadership of the church was responsible "to equip God's people to do his work..." so they would be "...mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13, NLT). "Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live...so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, NLT). The disciple James went on to add: "Dear brothers and sisters, what's the use of saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions?" (James 2:14, NLT).

## **Read Romans 7:18-25**

Throughout the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul, we see a recurring theme of sin being compared to chains or shackles. I never really saw the significance of this analogy until I worked at a correctional facility. Shackles, or Fetters used in many Old Testament passages, refer to forged pieces of iron that were put around the feet of prisoners. They were usually connected by a small chain. Shackles were intended to immobilize a prisoner by restricting his movement. It was a method used by guards to control prisoners and provide security to the community. This method of control is still in use today. Modern shackles resemble a large pair of large handcuffs that are placed on the ankles and are connected by a small chain. They are often attached to a set of handcuffs that are connected to a waist chain. This restraint system is effective and tamper resistant if applied properly. Shackles are meant to be placed snug on the ankles. Once the prisoner begins to walk it becomes painful as the Achilles Tendon begins to flex. It can be quite painful. If the shackles are not double locked, they will tighten with each step causing the grip of shackles to increase.

**So what does this have to do with sin?**

**Why did Paul use this term to refer to sin's grasp on us?**

**Why did Paul use this choice of phrasing?**

Paul intentionally chose this illustration to help his readers see the power that sin has over us and the importance of what Christ did to break the shackles of sin in our lives. From the Garden of Eden to this very day, Sin has been Satan's way to trip us up and even enslave us to a way of life that is contrary to what God had intended. Sin, like shackles, can grip our lives and limit the direction of our lives. The more we try to fight sin in the flesh, the tighter its grip becomes. It is impossible for us to break free on our own.

Inmates get on a cycle that seems impossible to break. They come to jail for some small crime and they are put in shackles. They do their time and then are released. For a moment they are freed from their shackles. The problem is that shackles, like sin, are designed to be put on and taken off. We choose to sin thus allowing those

shackles to be placed on us. At times it seems like the more we try not to sin, the more we do. It is a cycle. Paul even said that the things he wants to do he can't and the things that he did not want to do he found himself doing.

**Read Romans 8:1-4**

**Read Psalm 2**

The Psalmist in Psalm 2 talks about shackles being broken. The only way to render shackles useless is to break them. We are unable to do this on our own. We must rely on Christ to break the shackles of sin in our lives and set us free.

Have you ever been put in a situation that is beyond your control? In Matthew 6:25-30, Jesus calls us to a life of simplicity. We are called to be free in Christ. All He asks us to do is follow Him.

**What “shackles” need to be broken in your life?**

**Why do the very things that set us free hold us hostage?**

**What are some things that Christ has freed you from?**

**Read Matthew 6:25-30**

Following Christ should be a life of simplicity and freedom, but we have made it so complex. Pray that God will help you break the shackles in your life. My prayer is that we would be able to focus on the day at hand as we follow Christ and not miss Him in the midst of the busyness and details. He says that if we have the right relationship with him we will be truly free. If we walk in the truth and light, we will “Be Free Indeed”. In order for this to happen we must do what he called His disciples to do which is to “Simply Follow”.

## **Wrap Up**

When we hear the call to follow Christ, it is more than just a physical or mental decision to follow him. In Matthew 4:19, we see that when Jesus called his disciples it was a request to come and follow a Rabbi and teacher. In the Jewish culture, young men would study the law and the prophets. Then periodically have interviews with Rabbis to see if they had what it took to be Disciples. There were several stages that a young man would go through to see if he had “the right stuff”. If he passed the test, he would follow the Rabbi and take on his “yoke” or teaching. If he did not pass the test, he would be encouraged to take on the trade of his father. The fisherman that Jesus called on that shore in Galilee had failed the test. They were working in the trade of their fathers. So when the Rabbi came by and said, “Follow Me”, they left all to follow. They realized that he saw “the right stuff” within them. This was a physical following. Peter would later be called to an inward following.

**Read John 20:21-22**

In John 20:22, we see the resurrected Jesus talking with His disciples and giving them a blessed gift. He breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit”. This was a down payment of what was going to happen at Pentecost. They were sealed and filled with the Holy Spirit at that moment, just as we are the moment we commit our lives to Christ. When the Holy Spirit was given to them it was an invasion of the soul. It invaded the very core of their being. An invasion is a military offensive consisting of all, or large parts of the armed forces of one geopolitical entity aggressively entering territory controlled by another such entity, generally with the objective of either conquering, liberating or reestablishing control or authority over a territory, forcing the partition of a country, altering the established government or gaining concessions from said government, or a combination thereof. An invasion can be the cause of a war, be used, as a part of a larger strategy to end a war, or it can constitute an entire war in itself. Due to the large scale of the operations associated with invasions, they are usually strategic in planning and execution. This invasion ended the war between God and man. God

strategically planned this invasion before the foundations of the world were created. We have been liberated from the power and bondage of sin. Our relationship has been restored.

Later Jesus restores Peter by asking him a series of questions to check Peter's motives. Earlier in the Book of John, Peter vowed to give his life to follow Christ, but later denied him. Peter was quick to commit the flesh to something that it was not capable of. After Peter had been broken and come to the end of himself, he realized that apart from Christ he could do nothing. Now after the Holy Spirit was given and Peter was restored, we see Jesus give a command that he also gives to us today. In John, 21:19, we see Jesus command Peter saying, "Follow Me". Apart from the Holy Spirit, we cannot truly follow Christ. We must inwardly be broken and surrender daily to the Spirit in order to fully follow Christ.

Ask students to consider the following questions:

**What are some ways that you can "Simply Follow" Christ?**

**What areas of your life need to be "unshackled"?**

**Are you experiencing "true freedom"?**

**When was your "Independence Day"?**

As you close, remind your students to daily consecrate their life and their days to follow Christ on the path of the simple. Pray for them to be unshackled from the sin that entangles, and for them to celebrate their own *Independence Day!!!*