
The Paradox of Freedom

Due to popular response, this July 2009 bulletin is being re-distributed.

Americans celebrate our freedom from tyranny in the month of July.

As we begin the second half of the year, it struck me that our personal and professional effectiveness for the balance of the year (and for the rest of our lives, for that matter) can be enhanced by acting more intentionally on our freedom of choice.

Most of us have the freedom to choose. We can choose where we want to live. Where we want to work. What type of work we want to do. Who we want to associate with at work and live with at home.

The paradox of freedom is that to be most effective at fully developing our thoughts into specific goals and then implementing a plan to achieve our goals, we must choose between what we are willing to accept and what we are unwilling to accept.

In other words, we have the freedom to choose our priorities. Likewise, we have the freedom to set aside those things that serve only to distract us from executing our priorities.

It's been said that the essence of a great strategy is sacrifice. To be the best at one thing, we must intentionally choose NOT to do other things.

We must focus our thoughts. And we must focus our actions. We must be disciplined in our thinking and in our execution of those thoughts. We must work at it.

Consider this thinking from Elton Trueblood, author of 33 books (most notably *The Predicament of Man*), chaplain to both Harvard and Stanford, and presidential advisor:

"The basic paradox of freedom is that we are most free when we are bound. What matters is the character of our binding. The one who would be an athlete but who is unwilling to discipline his body...is not free to excel on the field or the track. His failure to train rigorously denies him the freedom to run with the desired speed and endurance. Discipline is the price of freedom."

So as we continue to enjoy our many freedoms, we must continue to think intentionally about the values, beliefs and actions we live out every day in our professional and personal lives.

We must be willing to make tough choices in order to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves.

That's the paradox of freedom. ■