

Lifelines

Dr. Ed Jordan © 2026

Pastor, Gwynn's Island Baptist Church, Gwynn, VA

July 4, 2026

Topic: *Intertwining freedom and responsibility*

Partners Forever: Freedom and Responsibility

By Dr. Ed Jordan © 2026

Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand, walking together; if not then they both disappear. I just read a really good quote by “Anonymous” that stated: “No freedom without responsibility; no responsibility without freedom.”

Reread that quote slowly. Freedom in a country requires the citizens to be living, thinking, responsible people. Responsible people respect and follow the laws of the land, live in ways to preserve the laws, culture and freedom they experience, and actively do constructive things that strengthen the freedom they are privileged to enjoy. A majority of the people in a free country must live responsibly, or everyone's freedom is diminished.

For example, when communities and streets are filled with crime, no one is free to live safely. Irresponsible living by criminals removes the freedom of the responsible people to be able to live in their community, freely and safely. But when many irresponsible criminals are held accountable for their irresponsible behavior, residents who live responsibly can once again enjoy living freely, and enjoying everyday activities, like going to the parks, taking walks in the neighborhoods, and meeting up with friends. Responsible living is necessary to produce the freedom necessary to create a free country, community or culture.

But when people hate having rules and laws that they must obey, or refuse to take responsibility for their actions, then they begin to disdain the rule of law, the constitution, our system of government, the police, and even the need to work for a living. As a result, the irresponsible people destroy the freedom of others by tearing it all down through their destructive actions. The result is to prove the axiom: “No freedom without responsibility; no responsibility without freedom.” If a person cannot live responsibly, they cannot remain free. Thus, living free and enjoying all the benefits of a country or community requires that the people live responsibly. They must choose to control their emotions and behavior, choose to do responsible things which build up the country or community, instead of doing irresponsible things which threaten everyone's freedom, and the survival of a free society.

We must not be fooled into thinking that we can pass off our responsibilities to others. It is a fool's errand to think that many of the so-called “new” ideas floating around today will ultimately benefit a free society. Free stuff is never really free. We can't gain what we need by taking it from others; we have to work hard for it. Parents must take responsibility for their own children, rather than wanting the government to raise and teach their children values for “free.” When laws are broken, perpetrators must face consequences; if not, the cycle will be repeated. Those to whom we entrust the safety and governance of our communities and then deliberately abuse that trust, should be accountable for those actions; if not, individual freedoms and rights are abrogated.

Freedom must, and I mean “must” in the moral and ethical sense, *must* be borne with the obligation to behave in a responsible manner. While it may seem easier to relinquish that responsibility to others, be they individuals or governments, it turns out that it's the easiest way to lose your freedom.

Jesus discussed the relationship between freedom and responsibility in John 8:31-32 (CSB): "Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you continue in My word; you really are My disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Then in John 8:34 (CSB) Jesus continued, saying: "... Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin."

Jesus told those who believed in Him that to remain free, they needed to continue to follow Him and His teachings, and to responsibly embody God's truth in their lives. If we disregard the truth, or throw aside the parameters within which truth flourishes, we commit sin and become slaves to sin, which really means falling short of God's ideals/truth. In Romans 6:16, Paul stated: "You are the servant of the one you follow and obey, either to sin leading to death, or you serve God, leading to life."

For real freedom to be manifested among us, each one of us must commit ourselves to live responsibly, and thereby foster greater freedom in our family, neighborhoods, towns, cities, state and country. Will you do your part to live responsibly, and encourage others to live responsibly? If so then this Fourth of July we can "let freedom ring!" Pray for our nation to return to being the beacon of freedom for years to come! Happy 250th Birthday America!

Award-winning columnist Dr. Ed Jordan is pastor of Gwynn's Island Baptist Church, Gwynn, VA. He can be reached at szent.edward@gmail.com. Dr. Jordan's new book: "Doing Love! It can change your life!" can be purchased on Barnes&Noble.com or Amazon.com.