

Tim Hawkins

FREE
TO BE
ME

How the death of Jesus changes everything

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I Want To Be Free

Wouldn't it be brilliant to be free? To have nobody else telling you what to do. Imagine what it would be like if you didn't have to keep the rules that somebody else had made up for you. You could do your own thing. Be your own person. Dream your own dreams.

That's what I wanted when I was at school. Everybody else had their own expectations as to what I should be like. My parents wanted me to be successful. My teachers wanted me to work hard. My friends wanted me to be the same as they were. They didn't like people who were different. But there was something within me that just wanted to do things my own way.

When I started school as a little 5-year-old boy, nobody wanted any of us to stand out as individuals. They dressed us all in the same school uniforms so we all looked identical.

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We sat in rows of desks and all did the same lessons. The boys played boy-games and the girls played girl-games. And if I didn't want to be laughed at by all my friends, I quickly learned that I wasn't meant to hang out with the girls. They picked on me and said I'd get 'girl-germs'. But there was a particular girl that I liked. And I thought it would be really cool to be the first boy at school to have a girlfriend. But I had a problem. Not only was it not 'cool' for a boy to hang out with the girls, but how on earth would I ever let her know that I liked her? Life, girls and relationships can be tough for a 5-year-old boy.

So, I devised a cunning plan. I worked out how I would let her know that I liked her. I decided that ... *I would sit down in her lap.* Okay – looking back now, it was probably a silly idea, but as a 5-year-old boy – I thought it would work.

I planned my moment. It was lunchtime, and everybody was sitting down outside having their lunch. I saw the girl of my dreams eating there. I carefully manoeuvred into position. Now was my moment ... I got close to her and I made my move. In an attempt to claim the crown for being the first boy in school to get a girlfriend, I walked straight in front of her – and sat down in her lap! I had struck a blow for individuality! I was finally doing my own thing!

The one thing I didn't realise was that for lunch that day she was eating a meat pie. She had the meat pie precariously balanced on her lap. When I sat down in her lap, I sat square in the middle of her meat pie! When I stood up, I had huge chunks of gravy, meat and pastry all over my little

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blue shorts. All the other kids laughed at me and called me 'pie-pants'. I was ridiculed by the boys; laughed at by the girls; and reprimanded by my teachers. It's a tough life for a 5-year-old boy who wants to be an individual.

You might not have done anything as silly as I did, but I'm sure you have felt the frustration of simply wanting to escape from everybody else's expectations. Everybody else wants you to fit in with their plan. There are rules to be obeyed; expectations to be fulfilled; regulations to conform to ... It seems like everybody else has a plan for what sort of person you're going to be. And I'm sure at some stage you have wanted to run away from it all and just yell out 'I want to be me!'

Have You Ever Wanted To Run Away?

You might be dealing with some serious stuff. There could be huge hassles with your boyfriend or girlfriend. Maybe everything is a bit tense at home and you're looking for any opportunity to hang out somewhere else. Perhaps you and your mum had a shouting match this morning. Maybe things aren't going well between your mum and your dad and you're not even sure they're both going to be there for you when you get home. Maybe your grades aren't great at school. Maybe *life* isn't great at school. Maybe there's something from which you're struggling to break free.

Teenagers have to deal with so much pressure these days. There's a whole variety of people who will tell you that you're not good enough. There's an endless supply of