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Freedom and Faith

An oppressive culture that considers nine year old girls women and riding a bicycle as grounds for divorce exemplifies the necessity for freedom. The film The Day I Became a Woman praises the value of freedom and depicts the horrendous effects of oppression, yet provides no solution to these injustices. Christianity offers an explanation and possible solution to this dilemma. Christianity teaches that God created mankind with an independent will that people then used in a morally corrupt manner. One way this moral corruption manifests itself is through people oppressing others. Christians believe that God desires mankind to live harmoniously by loving one another. Although Christian thought would embrace The Day I Became a Woman’s implication that the pursuit of freedom is worthwhile, Christianity would argue that hope exists for the oppressed, despite the film’s undertones of disparity.

Both Christianity and the film suggest that the pursuit of freedom is worthwhile, even in the waiting. Hava’s family deems her a woman at the age of nine and expects her to accepts this new
status as a subordinate woman. Often, the pursuit of freedom entails waiting. Hava resolves to pursue freedom despite her grim circumstances. Hava convinces her mother to let her spend the last two hours of her childhood as Hava chooses. Through the last two hours of Hava’s childhood, the movie demonstrates the worth of freedom, while the weight of Hava’s future remains the motivation and underlying backdrop to these scenes. Hava’s pursuit of freedom is worthwhile as evident in her time spent with her friend, Hassan, whom she may never see again. The film juxtaposes Hava’s last hours of childhood as an attempt at joyful child play with the looming future of her coming oppression. Societal mandates oppress Hava and strip her of childhood freedom, because womanhood forces itself on her at the age of nine. However unfair one’s treatment may seem, the Bible encourages people to submit to authorities while holding onto hope, promising that God is sovereign and aware of the abused power. In the Old Testament (the first part of the Bible), the Egyptians enslaved the Hebrews for 400 years (New International Version Bible Ex. 1.8-14). God considers the Hebrews His people, and even they suffer brutality from the Egyptians, yet they hold onto hope of deliverance. The Christian God, when He saw fit, freed the Hebrews (Ex. 12.31-32). Christian belief holds that God’s timing is perfect, and that He endorses freedom (Rom. 8.28 and Gal.5.1).

Christianity suggests people should respect each other’s inherent worth just as Ahoo fought for her freedom to decide. Ahoo fights for the basic freedom to ride her bike independent of societal restraint. Her husband, along with several men from their community, vehemently demand Ahoo to cease riding; Ahoo’s...
husband eventually divorces her because of her refusal. Ahoo attempts not to undermine her husband but rather asserts her right to exercise. Christianity claims that all people are seen as equal in God’s eyes evident in His love for all of mankind. Christians attest that God gave people intrinsic worth, because God made humanity (Gen. 1.27). In the New Testament (the second part of the Bible), Christian faith argues that there are some gray areas in regards to non-sinful (sin being anything a person thinks, says, or does that does not please God) moral issues (Rom. 14.1-13). It argues that Christians’ convictions will vary on certain topical issues. The Bible deems certain actions blatantly wrong (sinful), however there are certain actions left open to interpretation. This concept, coined the “weaker brother principle”, argues that because one Christian (the “weaker brother”) feels convicted about a certain action does not mean that another Christian is less of a Christ-follower for partaking in said activity. This passage communicates that ultimately only God has the power to judge people’s actions for He knows their hearts and motives (Rom. 14.1-13). Christians believe that Ahoo is a woman made by God, therefore she has worth, the ability to reason, and an independent will. She is able to make her own decision to ride or not ride her bicycle, because riding a bicycle is not blatantly deemed a sin in the Bible. Her husband should not judge for her bicycle riding solely because he holds a different conviction. Anyone who oppresses a woman over an activity so trivial as riding a bike disrespects God, because of the dignity He has given that woman.

In the absence of freedom, people should practice resilience to overcome cultural oppression, exemplified in both the film and
Christianity. Hava pleads for her last two hours as a girl, she wants to play with her friend Hassan one last time. Her mother and grandmother concede, but after those two hours her childhood is over. After her abrupt divorce, Ahoo proceeds to pedal her way towards freedom. She continues to stand her ground, despite how society now deems her an outcast as a divorced woman. The Bible encourages people to persevere for worthy causes, such as the Hebrews enduring slavery while clinging to their hope for freedom. In the Old Testament, foreigners capture the prophet Daniel and force him to live in a new culture (Dan. 1.1-8). This new culture prohibits praying to the Christian God, yet Daniel in his resilience continues to pray three times daily. The preacher Alexander Maclaren, comments that such “an obstinate piece of humanity was found in the Hebrew youth [Daniel]” (Maclaren). Maclaren argues that Daniel clings to his convictions to obey God; Daniel’s adherence to his values is crucial to this story. The rulers of this foreign land arrest Daniel and, as punishment for praying, throw him in a den of lions, yet God protects Daniel from any harm (Dan. 6.10-24). As seen in the life of Daniel, the Christians believe God delivers people from cultural oppression when they persevere for His namesake. Christianity welcomes all nationalities, because God loves all mankind, desires to give them hope, and opposes cultural oppression (Rom. 1.16). Additionally, the New Testament endorses the notion that perseverance produces hope (Rom. 5.3-4).

Through the endings of the women’s stories, the film suggests these women will always suffer from oppression; Christianity, however, offers hope for all the destitute. At the end of the movie, Hava is shown wearing her chador, the ultimate
symbol of her transition to womanhood and her oppression. At the end of Ahoo’s portion of the film, her brothers are obstructing her bicycle path making it unclear as to whether she finishes the race or not. The Bible, however, promises hope for the destitute, contrary to these discouraging endings. In the biblical account of the healing at the pool, Jesus heals a lame man that had been lame for thirty-eight years (Jn. 5.1-8). Previously, the lame man stayed by a pool holding out hope for healing. An angel came and stirred the pool from time to time, and the lame man, not fast enough to reach the water first, remained lame until Jesus healed him (Jn. 5.8). This biblical account exemplifies the Christian adherence to hope. Christians believe that God can work even amidst troubling circumstances, such as the longevity of this man’s lameness.

Although Christian thought would embrace *The Day I Became a Woman*’s implication that the pursuit of freedom is worthwhile, Christianity would argue that hope exists for the oppressed. Hava’s family and society deem her a woman at the age of nine. The Christian faith, however, offers hope for her oppression displayed in the biblical account of the Hebrews eventually receiving freedom. Ahoo’s husband undermines her worth and dignity by chastising and divorcing her for riding a bicycle. Christian belief argues that only God can judge someone’s convictions and actions. Even when waiting for freedom, both the film and Christianity support resilience and perseverance. Despite the ending of the film’s grim suggestions, Christian belief claims to offer hope for the oppressed.
Works Cited
