

Sermon Discussion Guide:

Culpeper's Lock and Key: Rekindling the Story of Religious Liberty to Shape Us Today

1 Timothy 2:1–2

View sermon here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0x7Sxo0skxU>

When have you felt grateful for the freedom to worship, pray, or express your faith?

Why do you think freedom of conscience and worship can be difficult to protect in any era?

In the 1760s and 1770s, Baptist preachers in Culpeper were jailed for preaching without a license. They faced persecution from an established church allied with the state. Leaders like James Ireland, John Leland, and others championed the cause of religious liberty for all people—including those who did not share their faith. Their faithfulness influenced the founding of our nation and helped secure freedom of conscience for generations to come.

What part of that story stands out to you most—and why?

How does religious liberty protect the integrity of the gospel?

The sermon noted that early Baptists were “liberal on liberty” and “conservative on evangelism.” What might it look like for us to live in that same tension today—committed to both gospel truth and freedom for others?

How do current cultural or political labels make that difficult?

John Leland warned against confusing the church's mission with political power. In what ways do we see that confusion today? How can we maintain the church's integrity while still being engaged citizens?

The early Baptists sought religious freedom not just for Christians, but also for Jews, Muslims, and even those who did not believe. How does that expand your understanding of Christian witness?

How does offering liberty to others strengthen, rather than weaken, our gospel mission?

Those early Baptists faced jail, violence, and ridicule—yet they didn't respond with bitterness or isolation.

What can we learn from their courage and trust?