

The background features a repeating pattern of geometric shapes: teal circles, orange circles, and circles divided into segments of brown, black, and green. Some teal circles have a white gap, and some orange circles have concentric lines. A large, solid peach-colored circle is centered on the page, containing the text.

freedom day

27 APRIL 2021

Freedom Day is the commemoration of the first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994. These were the first post-apartheid national elections to be held in South African where anyone could vote regardless of race. Prior to this, during apartheid, racial segregation which was enforced by the ruling party, prevented any kind of inter-racial activity.

It marks the end of over three hundred years of colonialism, segregation and white minority rule with the establishment of a new democratic government led by Nelson Mandela and a new state subject to a new constitution.

The elections took place in a peaceful and festive atmosphere, though there were threats of political violence. Of South Africa's 22.7 million eligible voters, 19.7 million voted in the 1994 national election. With so many people voting, there needed to be four days made available to allow everyone to cast their vote.

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Why do we remember this day?

Freedom Day celebrates more than voting rights. It is commemorating and honouring those who paid a high price for bringing that freedom. The holding of the first non-racial elections was the culmination of years of struggle, a negotiated settlement which led to the unbanning of the liberation organisations, the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles, and all-party negotiations which from an interim constitution was drafted. Since political freedom in 1994 South Africans have strived to correct the wrongs of the past. We are still faced with a number of challenges such as crime, poverty, unemployment, racism and sexism amongst others. Freedom Day affords South Africans the opportunity to make a pledge towards fighting against the legacy of racism and economic inequality as well as renewing their loyalty to their country and their commitment to its future.

As Christ-followers, what can we do on this day?

- Ask someone who voted on that day in April 1994 about their experience. Ask them to expound and share what progress or lack thereof has been made since this day.

- For those born after 1994 (the 'born free' generation), discuss what it'd be like to be restricted in casting a vote or not being treated equally.
- Ask yourself and those you're with this day - Are you living in the reality of the unity that Christ has won for us, or is your life functionally still separate from others who are different to you?
- Think about South Africa's current challenges: crime, poverty, unemployment, racism, sexism. How can you be active in supporting change in these issues? What's one step you can make to be God's light in these dark places so that others experience freedom and justice?