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Choosing to Say Goodbye

By Anne Hamilton © June 24, 2012

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There's a time when you have to say goodbye, and a time when you choose to say goodbye.

For the first time, I chose to say goodbye to my friend Curtis today.

I had to say goodbye when he was ripped away from me in a car accident thirty years ago. And all this time I've been resenting that accident.

But recently the song, "Freebird"* by Lynryd Skynyrd has kept echoing in my head. If I heard it on the radio, I would listen for its entirety. I would pull off the road to listen to it. I couldn't get that song out of my mind.

I had heard it at so many high school dances in the 70's. It was a classic.

Today I wanted to hear that song. I listened to it over and over on YouTube. I let the song sink in and I cried for a long time. And my heart changed. I needed to hear the words and more important, I needed to feel them.

"If I leave here tomorrow
Would you still remember me?
For I must be traveling on, now,
'Cause there's too many places I've got to see.
But, if I stayed here with you, girl,
Things just couldn't be the same.

'Cause I'm as free as a bird now,
And this bird you cannot change.
Oh... oh... oh... oh...
And the bird you cannot change.
And this bird you cannot change.
Lord knows I can't change.

Bye, bye, baby it's been a sweet love,
Though this feeling I can't change.

But please don't take it so badly,

'Cause Lord knows I'm to blame.
But if I stayed here with you girl,
Things just couldn't be the same.
'Cause I'm as free as a bird now,
And this bird you cannot change.
Oh... oh... oh... oh...
And the bird you cannot change.
And this bird you cannot change.
Lord knows, I can't change.
Lord help me, I can't change.

Lord I can't change,
Won't you fly high, free bird, yeah.

I always thought I was the free bird because I'm the fiercely independent one. But today I realized that Curtis was the free bird, and that's why I love this song so much. It's imprinted on my mind, like the news of his death and my turmoil after his loss.

And what if he said to me, "If I leave here tomorrow, would you still remember me? For I must be traveling on, now, cause there's too many places I've got to see"?

And what if he's saying in that song, "Bye, bye, baby it's been a sweet love...though this feeling I can't change. 'Cause I'm as free as a bird now, and this bird you cannot change."

I can respect that. I can love him for that. I can thank him for that.

And now I can let him go. On to his travels, and his places to see.

'Cause I'm as free as a bird now. And this bird you cannot change.

We were together for a little while and forever.

I can be a free bird.

*Song by Ronald W. Van Zant and Allen Collins.