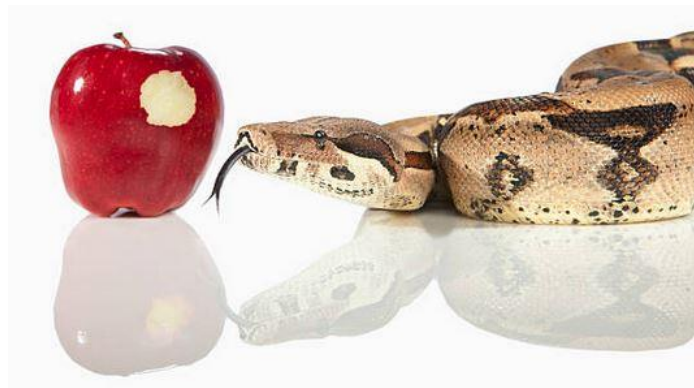


Free Will Gives Us a Choice

The Choice We Make Reveals the Source of Our Values

We are all well aware of the choice Adam made in the Garden of Eden. The Lord had instructed Adam not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil (refer to Genesis 2:16-17). Adam was surrounded by a lovely, rich, bountiful garden with only one restriction. He chose to go against God's command and do it his own way. Adam knew what the right thing to do was and yet he chose to go the other way.



At times I am troubled by why people would go against a command from God. But I also know that seeking to make our own choices is human nature. We want to be in control and we resist people telling us what to do. Yet, we instinctively know what is the right thing to do, and don't always do it. Many teenagers go through a stage of rebelling against authority. It is not just teens, but all of us. Listen to this verse from Romans: *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.* (Romans 7:15-20).

When researching for this devotion I saw this interesting commentary. "From the beginning of time, God had a plan. His plan was that he would create a being that could either choose or not choose him. God wanted romance, not slavery."

God offers salvation to those who believe and repent of their bad choices (sin). Whether or not we acknowledge them and ask for God's forgiveness is a choice we all get to make. God doesn't want us blindly following Him. He wants us to really want a relationship with Him. We are not robots, merely carrying out a program in our mind's operating system. To make choices contrary to God's wishes is being a slave. It is a slavery to sin. *Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin* (John 8:34).

The free will choices we make reveal the source of our values. Do we try to live in concert with the Ten Commandments? What would Jesus do (WWJD) when facing the options we have? The devout Christian considers what the Bible says about something and then tries to live and act like Jesus. Jesus came to earth to be an example for us to follow and to provide a means to restore our relationship with God when we fail. People who discard the values of their faith often use the excuse, "We live in a free country so I can do what I please". This reveals that their values are based primarily on pleasing themselves. The freedom we have is whether to choose our will or God's. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray that *"thy will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven."* (Matthew 6:10).

One of the positive results of Free Will is a stronger commitment because we make a conscious choice. We are more likely to be obedient to it, even if it requires some sacrifice on our part. We waffle less because we know what is "the right thing to do," and we draw on God's strength to withstand the temptations (read Matthew 6:13). *No*

temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Every hour of every day we have choices to make. Should I be kind to my spouse? Should I take a shortcut at work if I think no one will notice? Should I respond to someone in need or ignore them and do something else? Should I use foul language when I am angry? This list is endless, but all of the Godly values are clearly spelled out in God's Word. It comes down to whom you serve – the Lord or yourself. *But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.* (Joshua 24:15). We honor God by making the right choice.

God wanted us to make the right choice for the right reason. "If the only goal of God was to create mankind without choice, he would have bypassed both the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane. God could have simply made robotic puppets that were programmed to sing his praises. Instead, God placed man in the Garden of Eden and gave him a choice. A choice between the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, or that of the Tree of Life." Now the choice is ours to make.

Living in a free country we have the freedom of choice both spiritually and in how we live our everyday lives. For the Christian, they are one and the same. Make the right choice, even when others do not. Christian theologian Oswald Chambers said, "Never look for righteousness in the other person, but never cease to be righteous yourself." It is my hope and prayer that we all base our choices on the righteousness taught to us by the source -- God's Word and Jesus' example.

Questions: What is the source of your values? Whom do you serve?

Prayer: Our country is going through a difficult time when people are pushing for their own will to be done, instead of obedience to your will. We are making sinful choices opposite of your teachings. The freedoms we enjoy are not to choose our will over yours, Lord. We pray that we will enjoy the freedom from sin as we center our thinking on You. Amen.