



Choice

What Choices Are Most Important to You?

Suppose you come to an intersection early in the morning while it is still dark. The signal has turned red, and you slow down as you come to a cross street. There are no cars approaching either from the right or the left. No pedestrians are in sight and there are not any cars getting ready to turn left in front of you. You are already late, and the light seems to take forever to turn green. What do you do? Do you wait patiently or slip through the intersection and make your way to where you are going? This may not be the most monumental ethical decision you will face but it is one that involves choice. Choice has been one of the hotly debated topics in Christian circles for centuries now and even though it may seem obvious how you should think about choice, it would be a good idea to look into it and see how it impacts you.

The words "chose", "choice" or "choose" are not used very often in the Bible. Choice usually has to do with a good option as in "choice sheep" rather than a decision being made. Surprisingly, "choose" or "chose" are most often used to speak of God doing the choosing rather than any particular person. There are however a few times when God's people are told to choose. In Deuteronomy we find this admonition. **This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** (Deuteronomy 30:19-20 NIV) This is probably the most famous of the passages using the verb choose, perhaps because it is such a clear-cut decision to make. Choose life...choose God or choose death...choose to pull yourself out from God. It is the decision above all others...it is either God and life for you or not.

The leader of the Israelite nation after Moses passed away was Joshua and towards the end of his life he made a similar challenge. **"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."** (Joshua 24:14-15 NIV) The choice once again, although presented a bit differently is to choose the Lord or walk away from Him. Or as Joshua puts it, decide if you will serve God. You cannot sit on the fence here and it truly is up to you. It's God or not. Moses in the Deuteronomy passage insisted the way of God is the way of life and to not choose Him means death.

What is significant here is that choose means that you actually can and do. Because words mean something, choose has built within it the freedom to go one way or another. If the decision is not yours, then there is no choosing, it is accepting. One is active, you do it. Choose. The other is passive. When you accept, you merely roll with the punches so to speak. Just because the term choose, or chose is not found often in the Bible, at least not with regard to people, does not mean choosing is not taking place, that the opportunity to choose does not abound within Scripture. Let us take a look at a few of the ways choice is observed.

Consider what came up when Paul and Barnabas had been thrown in a Philippian jail. At midnight as the missionaries were singing and praying and everyone in the jail was paying attention, an earthquake struck and the doors in the jail flew open and all the chains on the prisoners fell off them. The jailer, panicked that the prisoners would escape and he would be punished for it by death, came rushing into the prisoners' quarters, ironically desperate for a miracle. Relieved everyone was still in the jail, the jailer fell at the feet of Paul and Barnabas, crying out, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer was simple. **They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household."** (Acts 16:31 NIV) The choice was up to the jailer. Believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved or don't. Paul and Barnabas were of course talking about eternal life and the jailer was most likely only wanting to find out how to escape being executed for a mass jailbreak while on his watch. The answer was though the same. Believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved...both from punishment as well as from eternal death.

We also see choice in John the Apostle's teaching on how to know you have eternal life. **And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.** (1 John 3:23 NIV) It might be argued that it is not a choice if it is a command and yet it is. Every law is in a sense a command, a command with a choice. The reason laws are needed is because choice is a part of how God has designed us. From the very beginning choice was established. God gave Adam and Eve free rein throughout the Garden. They could choose whatever they pleased. Even the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a choice. Choose to eat from it and die. Stay away from that one tree and live. God's plan from the beginning was to give Adam and Eve personal knowledge of good. All about them was good and especially their life with God and with each other. This was personal knowledge of good...knowledge of good that was consumed and experienced. The knowledge of evil was by extension what was not good, what was outside Adam and Eve, outside of God and outside of life in the Garden. The knowledge of good came from what they had, what was their life by experience. Evil was what was not in life, at least not in their lives. They knew evil from a distance by paying attention to what God warned them to avoid.

Regardless of what you think of abortion, the argument that abortion should be available because it is a matter of choice, and more importantly a woman's body and she can do with it as she pleases sounds at first like a logical view except that it is not how things are. We have laws because we do choose. The Ten Commandments were given to very specifically set boundaries around where good is, how the body was to be managed rightly. You can choose to steal from your neighbor using your body, but it is wrong. Likewise you can commit adultery or mistreat your parents with your body, but it is wrong. All laws are established to control the use of your body. You cannot just beat your dog, run stoplights, or take your friend's cell phone as you please. Yes you have a choice, but that choice is not independent of others, you do not operate within a vacuum. Choice has to be controlled because evil is now in the world and evil is an option at every turn. Laws should be, and most are, in place to prevent the spread of evil and the hurt it brings to others. You do not have the right to bash someone over the head simply because its your body and you feel you have the choice to do as you please. Laws do not restrict choice; they bring however a consequence to choice.

Before Adam sinned there was no law, only choice. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself were natural, normal. Without evil all choices were good and right. It was boundless, the freedom given. "Just don't let evil in the world", Adam was essentially told. "Your choice could destroy everything you have here. Death will come marching through the door if you taste the evil personally; if you take it into you." Choice is never free of consequence. With evil present, choice can tear apart lives, can bring death to ourselves and others. You choose to believe in Christ for salvation. You choose to trust Him to take the evil out of you by setting you free from sin. You choose to follow and obey Him. Never take lightly your opportunity to choose. Remember that your choice can either bring good or evil, life or death. Be careful to not forget that choices bring consequences and the more you align every choice with God...His love, His compassion and His holiness and purity, the more you bring to others and yourself too the taste of heaven and the goodness found there.