

CHOICES



Choices! Options! We no longer make consumer selections based on what we need or what we can actually afford. We make choices by careful examination of multiple options. “Multiple Choice” has taken new meaning.

Have you ever taken a small child to a “fast food” restaurant? The first five minutes is spent reducing the options on the children’s menu to an irrevocable single choice. The next two minutes are devoted to whether or not the child should be allowed to change his choice.

But then the real discussion takes place. The child must then decide between “Duckie McQuack” and “Horsie McStallion.” That decision will inevitably take 3-4 minutes, and you’ll think you’re out of the woods for sure. Not on your life! “Duckie McQuack” comes in 3 sizes and 13 decorator colors. “Horsie McStallion” comes in 3 different poses (running, eating oats from a bucket and head turned to the left or right – oh dear, that’s 4 poses). But “Horsie” comes in only 12 colors.

Two hours later, meal finished, you leave “Fast Foods” to go look at “Fast Cars.” I don’t think you want to know what your options will be when you get there. Fortunately, the child will be content having just eaten and having chosen “Duckie McQuack” as his companion. Or was it “Horsie McStallion?” Whichever, we’ve made enough choices for one day.

God does not specialize in “multiple choice.” He has not given us a list of several options for each command He has issued. Rather, He has made it very clear that for each of His commands to us we have **only** two options: obey or disobey Him. His sincere desire and expectation is that we **choose** to obey Him. He delights in our voluntary loyalty to Him.

God has always given mankind those same two options with respect to His commandments. His first command to Adam and then to Eve, was to refrain from eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. That was His expectation for both Adam and Eve. But God warned Adam and then Eve, that if they disobeyed His command, they would certainly die. (Genesis 2:16-17)

A little later, when Eve, then Adam, ate of the forbidden fruit, they did not die physically. But it is clear that they suffered spiritual death, made evident by a knowledge of their nakedness, by their attempt at covering themselves and by their reaction to hide from the presence of God out of shame and guilt. The death that God promised for their disobedience was also inclusive of the physical death that comes to all mankind, generation after generation.

“So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.” 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 NLT

What influences affect our choices to disobey or obey?

TO DISOBEY

(1) THE DEVIL/TEMPTER:

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent **deceived** Eve by his **craftiness**, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”) See also: Genesis 3:1-6)

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away **by his own desires and enticed**. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:14-15) The connection of the devil as the tempter is seen in Revelation 12:9: “...that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, **who deceives the whole world..**”)

“And Adam was not deceived, but the **woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**” (1 Timothy 2:14)

(2) THE WORLD:

A Pervasive Source of Temptation “What sorrow awaits the world, because it tempts people to sin. Temptations are inevitable, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting.” (Matthew 18:7 NLT)

A Source of Corruption: “Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.” (James 1:27 NLT)

Hates Christ and His Followers: “If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.” (John 15:18-19 NLT)

Is An Enemy of God: “You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4 NLT)

(3) OUR SINFUL NATURE: Is Hostile Toward God: “For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.” (Romans 8:7-8 NLT)

Prevents Us From Doing Good: “The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.” (Galatians 5:17 NLT)

TO OBEY

God’s Word, The Holy Bible: Where we can read and study God’s truth and where we are warned about the dreadful consequences of rejecting that truth.

Reading about the Rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16) and the punishment given the arrogant leaders and their families should cause all of us to live daily in the fear of the Lord. God caused Korah, Dathan and Abiiram and their families to be swallowed (buried) alive into the earth. The only known survivors from any of their families was the children of Korah (Numbers 26:11), no doubt a Sovereign act of mercy by God. Interestingly, there are Psalms written by “The Sons of Korah” – not the original Sons of Korah but very likely descendants of

them. Psalms designated as written by the Sons of Korah include Psalms 42 through 49, and 84-85, 87.

There are other similar accounts in Scripture that exert a Godly influence on us to choose and obey God. When the children of Israel were ordered to refrain from keeping spoil from the Battle of Jericho, a man named Achan disobeyed and did so. The consequence of his disobedience was drastic: he, his children, his animals, his tent and the spoil he had kept were all burned. All of the people and animals were actually stoned to death first, then burned with the merchandise.

Jesus the Christ: Since we are dealing in God's Truth as a primary influence upon our choice to obey God, we have only to look to God's only Begotten Son Who said: "I am the way **the Truth**, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

"For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) Our job is to believe the truth that Jesus conveys to us so that we will consistently allow it to influence our choices toward God.

The Holy Spirit: In keeping with God's truth as our guide for making the choices that are of serious concern to us, it is no accident that Jesus referred to the Holy spirit as "the Spirit of Truth." (John 15:26; 16:13). In speaking of the Holy Spirit serving as His replacement until His future return, Jesus said this: "However, when He, **the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority**, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:13) The Holy Spirit tells the truth just as Jesus and the Father tell the truth.

The Holy Spirit is now with us, guiding us into the truth just as if Jesus were still here. He brings us persuasion of our sin so that we will confess and repent of it. He brings guidance to us with that same persuasion (conviction) to help us make the right choices based on the truth of God.

The Church: A few days before the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the 120 disciples in the Upper Room were faced with an extremely important choice. (Acts 1:13-26) Technically, the concept and term "church" had not yet been instituted, but this group of believers approached their decision with all the dedication and unity of an ad hoc church.

Their decision was to choose a replacement Apostle for the deceased Judas Iscariot. This "church" was accustomed to prayer and supplication so when two candidates for this office, Justus and Matthias, were presented to the assembly for choice by lot (ballot), they prefaced the election by prayer. "And they prayed and said 'You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two you have chosen to take part in this ministry and Apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.'" (Acts 1:24-25)

After this prayer, the vote was taken and Matthias became the replacement Apostle. The choice had been made. Although this was a choice that involved the collective "church," leading officials and members of churches everywhere also help individuals make personal choices when called upon to do so.

CONCLUSION

Finally, Joshua challenged the Israelites with a monumental choice when he said: "...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..." (Joshua 24:15). It was an invitation to choose between God and false gods.

God does not sovereignly make for us our choice to serve and worship Him. It is ours to make, and it will not be "Multiple Choice."