

Health and Healing

The Power of Choice

Lesson #2 for April 10, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-13; Deuteronomy 30:10-19; Psalms 119:11; Colossians 3:2; Hebrews 11:8-10.

1. This lesson is about choices—choices we make on a day-by-day basis—and the consequences and implications of those choices. There are many examples in the Bible of people who made good choices, e.g., Abel, Abraham, Daniel, Joseph, and Jesus. There are also many examples of people who made bad choices, e.g., Cain, Samson, Saul, and Judas. In today's society, people are making many choices which still have consequences.
2. Who gave us the power to choose? We talk about freedom, free moral choice, and the right to choose. Millions of people down through the centuries have died fighting for freedom. Often, that has meant political freedom. Dictators, despots, and even many ordinary people have tried to suppress the freedom of others. (Do parents have the right to “suppress” the “freedom” of their children?) Looking back at the history of our universe, we know that Lucifer made bad choices and so did Adam and Eve. Why did God allow them to do that? Couldn't He have prevented it? Why is freedom so important to God?
3. To be really free, one must have choices. To really love, one must also be able to hate. Choice is not just chance. In order to choose, we must have some idea of the future consequences of our choice. That means we must have an orderly universe. Science would not be possible without an orderly universe. So, in this basic sense, law is essential. And if we live in an orderly universe, choices have consequences. The antediluvians made so many bad choices that God had to destroy them in order to maintain contact with the human race. God is preserving a permanent record of all the bad choices by the inhabitants of the universe as well as the consequences of those bad choices so that this demonstration of the results of sin will never need to be repeated. Our little planet has become the lesson book of the universe.
4. Why did Lucifer/Satan rebel in heaven? His position in heaven was beside the throne of God—in the highest position of any created being. In many ways, he was treated as equal with God the Son. Shouldn't he have been extremely happy in that position? (See Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, “Why Was Sin Permitted?” pp. 33-43) Satan became jealous. He moved away from the throne of God. He suggested doubts to other angels. When the other angels began to realize where he was headed and they wanted to go back to God's side, Satan told them they that they had already gone too far to go back. Eventually, Satan caused war in heaven. What could possibly have caused war in heaven? The war on this earth is really over who is telling us the truth. How is “war” conducted in heaven? In *Paradise Lost*, Milton suggested that they threw mountain chains at each other! Dr. Richard Nies suggested that when the conflict arose, God the Father, the recognized head of heaven, stepped back out of the spotlight and allowed each one of the angels to make up his own mind if he would follow Satan or Christ. When each had made up his own mind, God the Father reappeared, and those who were opposed to God fled from His presence. This is the best explanation that I have ever heard. Ellen White tells us that God called all of the angels together and explained what the consequences of rebellion would be. Lucifer/Satan almost gave in and repented, but his pride would not allow it.
5. Read Genesis 2:16,17. Was God threatening Adam and Eve? Or was He warning them? God refused to take away Satan's freedom to approach our first parents. But, He tried to protect them by limiting Satan to that one tree. And we know what happened. (Genesis 3:1-6) Thus, we see that because God is love, (1 John 4:8,16) His greatest desire is to have His children love Him back. The only way that is possible is for Him to allow real freedom. God refuses to run a universe full of robots; so He has to allow freedom.

6. Review the story of Adam and Eve. Eve wandered away from Adam. They were told to stay together. But when they discovered that they were separated, neither one of them noticed or chose to do anything about it. Eve approached Satan's tree, either accidentally or intentionally. She heard a strange voice speaking to her. Instead of running, she waited to hear. When she recognized where the voice came from, instead of sounding an alarm, she stayed to listen to that voice from the tree. She chose to believe a talking serpent instead of believing her wonderful heavenly Father. She accepted the fruit that the serpent offered. She took it to Adam and convinced him to eat some also. When tempted, apparently, neither of them suggested that they should first discuss the matter with God or one of the holy angels before eating. After eating the fruit, they had a feeling of excitement. Martin Luther stated that if Satan had tempted Adam first, he would have said, "No!" At which of those steps did Adam/Eve first sin? Was it when they no longer trusted God? How long was it before Adam and Eve fell? How often are we led down a rosy path today? In the area of entertainment? In the area of diet?
7. Read Genesis 3:7-13. Almost immediately after eating of the fruit, Eve and Adam felt a sense of fear and guilt. They had never felt those emotions before. Where did those emotions come from?
8. When we fall into sin, how likely are we to blame someone else? Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent. Both, in effect, blamed God! Do we ever blame God?
9. How did Jesus succeed even as a small child and always correctly exercise His free will? How did He prevent Satan and all his evil host from getting the best of Him? Was Jesus somehow protected by God? (1 Corinthians 10:13) Think of all the Bible examples that we have!
10. Read Deuteronomy 30:9-20. God begs us to choose life. How do we do that? Would any of us consciously choose death? Do we choose death unconsciously? What are the factors that lead us into sin?
11. How many conscious choices do we make every day? Most of our choices are automatic. If we had to stop and think carefully about which socks to put on, what clothes to wear, how to put our clothes on, which utensil to use to eat with, etc., we would be exhausted even before we got to work in the morning. Most of our choices every day are done with very little mental effort. Technically, those choices are not free choices. How many truly free choices do we have? Probably relatively few. God "paid an enormous price" to give us the right to freely choose at critical junctions in our life. What caused Joseph to grow up from a spoiled child into a trusted advisor? What choices did he make that affected that process? What choices did Daniel and his three companions make that impacted the rest of their lives? (Daniel 1:8-16) What choices did Abraham and Moses make? (Hebrews 11:8-10;24-28)
12. Abraham made some bad choices: 1) He took a secondary wife in order to get an heir. (Genesis 16). 2) He lied about his wife on two different occasions. (Genesis 12:10-20; 20) But, Abraham also made some very good choices: 1) He went out of his way to entertain visitors. (Genesis 18:1-15) 2) Late in his life in response to a dream, he took his only son, Isaac, and prepared to sacrifice him. (Genesis 22) Why did God ask him to make such a choice?
13. All of us are sinners. (Romans 3:10,23; 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8-10) But, God has made provision for our sins. He has made it possible—although sometimes difficult—to come back. If we sin and then repent, are there still consequences? Absolutely! If you kill someone, that person is still dead even if you are sorry and repent! But, perhaps more important and much more common are other decisions that affect us only. Every time we sin, we are injuring ourselves—making it easier for us to sin again.
14. Read the second commandment. (Exodus 20:4-6) Why did God tell us there and elsewhere that the consequences of our sins extend to the third and fourth generation? Are there ways in which our sins impact our children and even our grandchildren? By eating of the fruit of that tree, Adam and Eve doomed the rest of the human race to live outside of the garden. None of us have had the choice of going back. (Romans 5:12) While our actual DNA may not change, which genes will

be expressed may change rather dramatically in response to what we do or what we are exposed to.

15. Consider some examples of choices that might affect our children and grandchildren. Dietary choices are very often handed off to children because they learn to eat what we eat. Are we setting good examples? Are our food choices the best ones? Are we setting healthy examples for our children?
16. And what about things we drink? Research has demonstrated that approximately 7% of people who take their first drink of alcohol will end up as problem drinkers or even alcoholics. Do we set examples which clearly show our children the truth in this matter? There has been considerable advertising supported largely by money from the alcohol and liquor business to suggest that one drink a day might be healthy for the heart. Those studies are clearly flawed. Careful studies have demonstrated that drinking plain water is much healthier! That has been demonstrated by research which, of course, has not been publicized widely. Furthermore, even if the alcohol were good for your heart, it is certainly not good for your brain or your liver. Why don't they mention those facts?
17. Do you feel like you are locked into habits that you inherited from your parents or grandparents? Do you wish that you could eliminate some of those habits? How much effort does it take to change one's eating or drinking habits?
18. There are several passages in Scripture which suggest that God will take into account where we were born. (Psalm 87:5,6, *KJV*) What does that imply to you? In the end, will God's judgment be perfectly fair? Will everyone agree with the results of His judgment? (Philippians 2:6-10)
19. What does it mean to choose to follow Jesus? Is that the single most important decision we make in our entire lives? Does that involve a single decision made on one occasion and then it is all over? Or does that involve repeated decision-making on a daily basis?
20. Do we choose to accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit? How do we do that?
21. Notice Ellen White's comments about choice:

Every soul has a heaven to win, and a hell to shun. And the angelic agencies are all ready to come to the help of the tried and tempted soul. He, the Son of the infinite God, endured the test and trial in our behalf. The cross of Calvary stands vividly before every soul. When the cases of all are judged, and they [the lost] are delivered to suffer for their contempt for God and their disregard of His honor in their disobedience, not one will have an excuse, not one will need to have perished. It was left to their own choice who should be their prince, Christ or Satan.—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 96.

God does not compel men to give up their unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which they will accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 458.

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