

Sync'n Think'n

Living the Lord's Life

May 5, 2024

Today we're learning *how to choose who should choose how we do what we do*. Cuz every day is just a *series* of decisions and who you *are* is *decided* by *this* question: **Who calls your shots?**



Well, we all *want* to say *we* do, cuz *that's* the core of *free will*; **our ability to choose**. And if we give anybody else authority over *our* daily decisions, we don't feel like *we're* living *our* life. And we become so *protective* over *that* control, that we can *prefer* our *own* *wrong* choice to someone else's *right* choice; all to *prove* to ourselves, **"I have the right to do anything I want!"** But as Paul points out, *that's* a *problem*:



"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. – 1 Corinthians 10:23 NIV



And that is where a *painful* paradox is born: the **prison of free will**. *Sure*, free will *sounds* liberating at first, but because *every* choice *changes* the very *life* we live, ultimately, **it's the consequences of our choices that command our actions**. Cuz there are infinite *possible* *outcomes* in every situation – but what actually *happens*, depends on *our* *decisions*; one choice might make us *money* while *another* might make us *friends*. And at the end of the day, we pick the one that *sounds*, in *some* way, *best* to us. Which means **our desires make our decisions**.



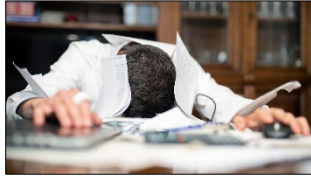
In fact, studies have found that the average adult makes 33,000 to 35,000 decisions *each* day – and *most* of them happen *automatically*, based on *existing* *beliefs* of what we think is "good" or "bad". But because our *human* *heart* is more *selfish* than *smart*, it's easy to *misjudge* "good" or "bad" and *miss* *out* on the choice with the most "constructive" or "beneficial" outcome. And so, when we weigh the *consequences* of our *choices*, it *often* creates **analysis paralysis**. **"What if I make the wrong choice?" "What if I miss the bigger benefit?"** That *fear* can *freeze* us! Cuz an *unknown* *consequence* mixed with *free will* and a *flawed* *heart* creates more *concern* than *confidence*; and leads us to live a life of *worry*! Cuz **when there's no clarity on superiority, we're filled with anxiety!**



And then, we're left with two equally *undesirable* options; **stay stuck in fear** or **turn over control**. And as *threatening* as it sounds, **turning over control is often our best option**. It's a *tough* life lesson, but we *all* learn it the *longer* we *live*. I mean, it's so *universal* almost every successful *sitcom* *eventually* has an episode where *someone* turns to an *outside* source to make *their* decisions: Rachel puts Monica in charge of her love life, April and Andy flip a *coin* to plan their wedding, and Sheldon rolls *dice* to determine what to *eat* and *when* to go to the bathroom. And although it's a comically *absurd* idea, we love those episodes cuz they're *relatable*. Because we've *learned* **being the boss is a bummer!**



Again, it *sounded* great at *first* – but being *in charge* is *more* about *responsibility* than *authority*, and that's *always* a recipe for *anxiety*. And the cycle continues in every *adult*, cuz every *kid wants control until we grow up and get it*. Cuz at *that* point, we're all *forced* to admit the unfortunate reality: **the authority we want always includes the responsibility we fear**. And only *then* do we see in *hindsight* how we *had* it better before we were the ones calling the shots!



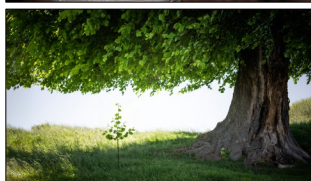
But, that leads us to the answer of *this* million-dollar question: **How do we feel the confidence of control without the risk in responsibility?** Well, are you ready? We **go back to being a kid!** But not just *any* kid – a kid of the King! Cuz the King's kids *know* they *have* ultimate *authority* on their *side* but *no responsibility* to *choose* how it's used.



But, that means we have to let go of the idea that *we're* ultimately in charge of *our* decisions; cuz **kids obey and kings command**. And as long as we hang on to our *control*, we're *competing* as another king, not *complying* as a *kid*. Which is why Jesus put it *plainly* to test *our* identity:



Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. – Matthew 18:3 NIV



So, **how do you hear that?** Stern *warning* or open *invitation*? Our answer is a spiritual dipstick that'll reveal our *heart*. Cuz *competing kings* who want to *keep* control, are *worried* by this as a *warning* while *complying kids* who are ready to *let go* of being the boss, hear this as a welcome *invitation* to *free* ourselves from the *anxiety* in our *free will*. So *we're* told:

Humble *yourselves*, therefore **[as kids]**, under *God's* mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares *for* you. **[as kids]**– 1 Peter 5:6-7 NIV

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to **[your King,] God [the Father]**. And **[once you ask Him to make your decision, it's off your shoulders! And]** the *peace* of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your *hearts* and your *minds* in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7 NIV

And doesn't that just sound *great*? So **why are any Christians still filled with worry?** Well, I hate to break it to you, but **adults stink at being kids**. Cuz after struggling *first-hand* with the *responsibility* of *authority*, we're *wary* of putting *anyone* in *that* position. And *here's* the pickle, **we don't just give up control, we have to give over control; to someone**. And *choosing* our *authority* is essentially choosing our *parents*; cuz it changes *who* we *are*. The way **kids are defined by their parents**.

It's called pedigree; the qualities passed from *parent* to *kid*. But it's *not* just *genetic* connection. *Paul* never had kids, but he calls *Titus, Timothy, and Onesimus* *his* sons [Titus 1:4, 2 Tim 1:2, Philem 1:10-12]. *Peter* says *Mark* is somehow *his* kid [1 Pet 5:13] and *Jesus* Himself tells the *Pharisees* that the *Devil* is *their* dad [John 8:44]. *Why?* Well *Jesus* *explains* the reasoning when the *Pharisees* fight back:

"Abraham is *our* father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said *Jesus*, "then you would do what Abraham did." – John 8:39 NIV

Because **family is more about sharing character than sharing DNA!** And I guess that explains why my own dad used to call me a “son-of-a-gun”. Cuz whether it’s *genetic disposition* or *deliberate discipling*, **offspring are identified by the likeness they live in**. In fact, “paternity” and “pattern” share the same *Latin root* cuz kids so commonly *conform* to the example of their *parents*.

[So, no wonder Jesus said] The Son can do *nothing* by Himself; He can do *only* what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. – John 5:19 NIV



And *before* Jesus, nobody lived a life *so patterned* after God, that their *character alone* prompted God to claim *paternity*. But *after* Jesus, that pattern for living as God’s kid was *revealed*; as an *open invitation*:



To all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name [as the **Son of God**], He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God [by living in His likeness]. – John 1:12-13 NIV



So now it’s simple: follow *Jesus*, join the *family!* Right? Well, as we all know, that’s easier *said* than *done*. Cuz **our desires make our decisions** and even our *seemingly Christian decisions* can contain *ungodly desires* mislabeled by our self-serving heart. Think about how our political appeals can confuse *Christian character* with *personal preferences*, how charity can be more about *taking credit* than *giving help*; or how the fish on our bumper can symbolize *superiority* instead of *service*. **Competing desires can compromise the pattern we want**. Like Paul says:



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. [So what can we do?] – Romans 7:20 NIV

Let us *throw off* everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. – Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV

Get it? **To disentangle from deceitful desires, we must totally entangle with Christ’s character!** There can be *no other influence, authority, or identity* apart from Jesus. To put it like Paul:

I [and all those **former desires**] have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The *life* I now live in the body, I live by *faith in the Son of God*, who loved me and gave Himself for me. – Galatians 2:20 NIV

And *that’s* the secret; that’s the profound *perspective* that *changes* us from living in *fear* of free will *failure* to living *confidently* as a member of *God’s family*: “***I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.***” We don’t even *exist* anymore to *make* mistakes! Jesus *totally took* the wheel!

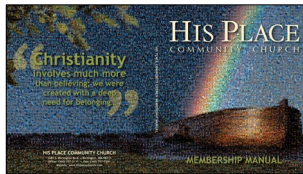


Y’ever hear of *Quantum Entanglement*? It’s a phenomenon in *physics* where two *particles* have an *encounter* that leaves them connected in such a way that, *from then on*, they each *only* move according to the *other* regardless of distance. If one rotates clockwise, so does the other, at the exact *same time*, even if they’re *trillions* of miles *apart*.

Even Einstein called *this* **“Spooky action at a distance”** because *this* sort of *connection* seems to *defy* the laws of *space* and *time*. It’s more like *one* thing existing *simultaneously* in *two* places.



Well, **“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”** takes *that* kind of entanglement. After our encounter, *we* are connected in such a way that *regardless* of the *space* and *time* between us, *our* every move, *from then on*, depends on Jesus, like *He* was living simultaneously in *two* places.



It’s *seems* subtle, but there’s an *dramatic* difference: **We don’t live our lives like Jesus, Jesus lives His life in us.** Cuz that’s the way it works when *He alone* gets to call *our* shots. Like it says in our membership manual, we’re here to be *transformed*, inside and out, into **what Jesus would be if He were me.** Because after an encounter with Jesus, **our choices aren’t just based on what Jesus did, but on what would Jesus do?** As you. Right now. Where you *are*. Cuz it takes *more* than an *influence* to be a kid of the King; **real resemblance comes from obedience.** I know.



I spent *years* living in the painful *prison* of *my free* will and in that time, I became a hip bartender, a *drummer* in a cool band, and a fun *father*. But by just choosing things that *sounded* “best”, somehow I got more *anxious* and *angry* than ever. Until, like a sitcom character, I put God in charge of my choices. And though I’m *still* working to throw off *old sins* – it’s *obvious* the life I’m living *now*, *ain’t Noah’s*. I know what *his* life was like. And so did his old *acquaintances*. And on *occasion*, one of *Noah’s* old chums crosses *my* path and *after* a bit, they end up asking something like **“Who are you?”** And I get to say, **“Oh, I’m a child of God now!”**



Cuz when *God’s* your dad, **He doesn’t just change your character, He replaces it.** It’s like when an actor leaves a TV show and the role gets recast – everyone *says* the *old name*, but it’s plain for all to see **it’s a new person.** It’s now *Jesus* playing the role of Mike the math teacher, Susan the dentist, or Rachel the graphic designer. And we’re each *guaranteed* a golden globe for a *perfect performance* without having to *stress* about the *way* we play *our character’s* life – cuz Jesus said:

I am the way and the truth and the life [we should live]. No one comes to the Father except through Me. **[Cuz no one except Jesus can flawlessly play the Father’s kid!]** – John 14:6 NIV

We just have to give Him complete control to call our shots. And if we make that *one* choice *every* day, we’re *released* from worrying about all other *options* because **becoming a Christian is the one decision that decides all other decisions.** From then on, *Jesus* makes all *your* moves. So **who do people see in the life you lead?** If it’s ever *you*, stop whatever you’re doing and ask the Son of God to step in. And then check again *tomorrow*. Cuz the more we *do*, the more we’ll naturally disentangle from all other desires as our lives get utterly entangled with Jesus’ will,

[Those who are willing to receive Jesus’ help; AKA Christians,] do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. – 1 Peter 4:2 NIV

That’s being God’s kid. Cuz **we’re adopted by God when we adopt the will of God.** Through Jesus.

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.