



Free Will

Copyright © 2020 by Harold D. Thomas
All rights reserved worldwide.

This topical Bible study is for God's glory
and the spiritual enlightenment of the reader.

Content may be printed, shared, used for Bible studies
or sermons, and translated based upon these conditions:

- (1) It is made available for free and not sold in any format/medium.
- (2) A reference to www.UniqueBibleStudies.com is provided (so that others may find the website).

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®.
Used by permission.
All rights reserved.

All words spoken by Jesus Christ are in **red text**.

Every human being has an attribute and an ability to utilize a designed component of their being that no other living forms on earth possess. We have the mental capacity to independently and voluntarily make a choice or decision, and act autonomously at one's own discretion. Simply stated, we have a free will.

Because we have a free will, we continually make decisions regarding:

- What we do and where we go.
- What we say and how we behave.
- What we disbelieve and what we believe.
- Whom we disdain and whom we love.
- Choices in life that have undesirable eternal consequences or unimaginable everlasting benefits.

God created humans in His own image (Genesis 1:27). As such, one aspect of our design was the inclusion of a free will. The reason why He did this is revealed by answering the questions below.

Which of the following do you prefer?

1. A programmed robot that says "I love you."
2. A person who make a conscious realization and a free will decision to say "I love you."

Given the two options above, which declaration of love:

- Has real meaning?
- Can provide an indescribable and wonderful feeling as it touches the depths of your heart and soul?
- Are you more likely to love in return?

In truth, love cannot be mandated; it cannot be preprogrammed; and it cannot be driven by fear. Real love is developed over time as a mutual reciprocal process. As we are loved, we willingly express love in return.

["We love Him because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19](#)

As we become aware of the depth and breadth of God's love, we experience deep and indescribable feelings in our soul and spirit—because this type of love is spiritual. Based upon our free will, we reciprocate our love to God in the form of worship and obedience—which is what He desires.

Jesus said, **"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."** John 4:23-24

Jesus also said, **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."** John 14:23

This is why God designed humans with an ability to make free will decisions. Like us, God does not want humans with preprogrammed instincts to unwillingly seek Him, love Him and worship Him. God desires autonomous, independent and willing hearts of those who make a decision to choose Him over everything else.

Jesus declared, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment."** Matthew 22:37-38

Angels Have a Free Will

Angelic beings were also designed with a free will. This was exemplified by Satan's expression of pride and rebellion against God—which resulted in his demise—including those angels who decided to follow Satan.

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’” Isaiah 14:12-14

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:7-9

Those who decide to choose God, do so willingly...on earth and in Heaven.

How We Make Decisions

When we make a decision, it is usually based upon perceived benefits (or what do I expect to gain/what's in it for me?). Benefits are viewed as positive in that they are perceived as improving one's life. We “mentally visualize” ourselves enjoying a pleasurable experience, or reducing/eliminating something negative in our life. These mental images of benefits create a desire, and sometimes include an emotional response that assists in motivating our behavior to obtain the benefits.

However, on the other side of the “decision coin” is the variable of cost (what will I lose/pay to obtain the benefits). Costs are perceived as negative in that we must give up something of value (or experience negative consequences if it involves sin) to obtain the benefits; including money, effort, time, possessions, guilt and shame, and so forth. In addition, there are times when the costs associated with our decisions have a direct effect on others, thereby causing them to also give up something of value.

Regrettably, many times we make decisions based upon benefits only and fail to consider all associated costs—which can result in a loss that far exceeds the initial perceived value of the benefit. Consider Eve who understood the consequences (or cost) God warned about: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:17) However, she listened to the deceptual lies of Satan, and “Saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” (Genesis 3:6) The costs associated with eating the fruit disappeared from her decision process once she focused on the potential benefits the apple could provide. Eve's perceived benefit of gaining wisdom may have also included overcoming hunger and the experience of tasting something different. These perceived benefits created an emotional response of desire—which drove her behavior, she ate the fruit and spiritually died.

Consider some of your past decisions. Did you focus on the benefits? Did you consider the costs? Did you make the correct decision? If not, what would you have done differently?

As we mature in life, if we desire to learn from our past blunders, and if we make a conscious decision to minimize future mistakes, we will deliberately use a comparative analysis (and rational thought process) to “think through” decisions in life (i.e. this is what I will gain and this is what it will cost me).

Comparative Decision Analysis	
Benefits	Costs
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

What’s interesting is we perform multiple comparative benefit/cost analysis throughout our day and don’t realize it. In fact (for most of us) the very first thing we do in the morning is a comparative analysis. Do I sleep a little more or do I get up? We think (subconsciously in a semi-dream state) for a moment about the warmth of the bed, and how wonderful it would be to get just a few more minutes of sleep (i.e. benefit). Then we think about the costs: about being late, or not doing what we need to do, and possibly getting in trouble. Based upon the benefit and cost we either hit the snooze button or we get out of bed.

Another aspect of a comparative analysis is that the degree of our investigation is directly correlated to the amount of cost associated with a decision. The higher the cost, the more analysis occurs. For example, the amount of benefit/cost analysis that occurs when ordering lunch from a menu is much less than when we buy a car. And, although the amount of analysis may be different between ordering lunch and buying a car, the foundational component of the analysis (what are the benefits and what are the costs) are basically the same. The difference is in how much effort we apply to our analysis before we make a decision.

Besides, we like being in control. We like to call the shots, and we prefer to have the final “say” of what occurs in our lives. Unfortunately, because we were born with a sinful nature, our choices and decisions are usually tainted, skewed, and predisposed to fulfilling selfish desires—which can lead to significant mistakes and spiritual death.

Not My Will, But Yours God

To those who take the time to evaluate their lives: where they’ve been, where they are, and where they’re headed—and to those who realize how they messed things up—these are they who will develop a growing distrust in their ability to make sound and correct decisions in life. However, this is a very good thing. This realization creates both a willing heart and an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to demonstrate why we need to completely let go of the “reigns” and trust God. This is especially true if we are experiencing a compelling desire deep within our heart, and we “know that we know” it’s driven by the Holy Spirit. However, letting go may not pass a benefit/cost analysis and/or it may be outside our “comfort zone.” This scenario usually involves an internal struggle, but we eventually come to a conclusion and pray “Not my will Lord, but your will.”

[“Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.” Proverbs 16:3](#)

[“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6](#)

Relinquishing our free will is a conscious and deliberate decision. It is not easy. It’s similar to an experience some of us had as a child when learning how to swim: anxiously standing on the side of the pool, preparing to do something we’ve never done before, and completely relying upon someone else to protect us. Our Father is in the water in front of us with outstretched arms telling us “I’m right here, I will catch you, you will not be harmed, *trust Me.*” It’s hard to leave the safety of the pool side; it’s what we’re accustomed to; but we know the benefits of trusting in our Father’s promises and jumping into our Father’s arms exceeds the amount of fear we’re experiencing. And so we decide to trust Him and make the decision to let go, as we lean forward past the point of control and jump—resulting in a wonderful experience of protective safety and joy in our Father’s arms.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.” Isaiah 43:2

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8

As we grow and mature in Christ our benefit/cost analysis transitions from being self-focused to externally-focused. Instead of considering “what’s in it for me” we consider “what type of benefits will this provide others?” In addition, as we grow in our love for God, we also consider will this please Him? Jesus Christ exemplified this when he prayed.

“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.” Luke 22:42

Jesus knew the benefits—and cost (i.e. the “cup”)—of the cross. He knew of the unprecedented and indescribable suffering he would endure. He knew of the torture. He knew chunks of His flesh would be ripped from His body from scourging. He knew a crown of thorns would pierce His scalp in a vain attempt to humiliate Him. He knew He would hang on a cross with nails piercing his hands and feet. However, He also knew the punishment and pain He would endure is pale by comparison to what would happen next:

- God would turn away from Him and He would be absolutely alone.
- Meanwhile, He would:
 - “Taste” (undergo, experience, go through) punishment and death for all who believe.
 - Fulfill His purpose on earth and for all of eternity.

“Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” Mark 15:33

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” Hebrews 2:9

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” John 5:24

Jesus Christ, God’s Son, died on the cross so that you, me and everyone who believes can be eternally forgiven for all our sins, including past, present and future. However, whether or not one believes is each person’s free will choice.



Jesus said,

“I am the resurrection and the life.
The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;
and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

John 11:25

A Decision Assistance Tool may be downloaded from the Free Will page. The purpose of the tool is to simplify, organize and quantify your thoughts; clarify decision variables; and minimize emotions—all with the intent of making it easier to recognize the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit—Who is our desired decision maker.

I pray you make free will decisions that bring you closer to Jesus Christ, as you grow in God's grace, and as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

God Bless You!
Harold D. Thomas