

STAYING STRONG – CHOOSING WELL

Life With God In Recovery

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So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.. (Genesis 1:27 NLT)

God created women and men in His image and in His wisdom, included the supreme privilege of free will – the ABILITY TO CHOOSE. It was God’s intention that humans would have a relationship with Him built on holiness and righteousness. In the creation process humans were made last, not because they were unimportant but rather because they were the great masterpiece of God’s work. They were not made in the likeness of anything that had already been made but in the likeness of the creator Himself. God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life, and he became a living being. When God saw what He had made He said it was “very good.”

God made men and women true and upright; we’re the ones who’ve made a mess of things. (Ecclesiastes 7:29 MSG)

When Adam and Eve CHOSE TO DISOBEY God’s instructions they separated themselves and all humans from God, and from the relationship He had planned with them. Jesus came to earth to do what was impossible for us – to give new life to all of us and restore the broken relationship with God. Reconciliation with God can only be attained through CHOOSING TO BELIEVE AND TRUST in the death and resurrection of Jesus as payment for our sins. Humanity once again has the OPTION TO CHOOSE whether or not we will believe what God says.

Then they asked him, [Jesus] “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” (John 6:28-29 NIV)

The choices we make affect our own life and the lives of our loved ones. When we do not acknowledge that God exists then we are CHOOSING TO REBEL against God. We may not be aware that our actions reflect this rebellion towards God as He may not even be on our horizon. However, if we are not loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we are CHOOSING TO DISOBEY God and that has a negative impact on every relationship. Our unkind actions and the gaps created by failing to reach out with care and blessing, affect everyone in our circle of family and friends.

God describes this condition this way: ***Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster ... love the Lord your God and keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you ... But if your***

heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. (Deuteronomy 30:15-18a NLT)

To a sensible person these would seem like easy choices – life over death; prosperity over disaster; blessings over curses. Unfortunately, many of us CHOOSE TO FOLLOW OUR OWN WAYS AND DESIRES and suffer the harmful consequences. Why? We don't want to give up our sinful pleasures, and we want to maintain control of our circumstances. Many of our sinful practices are destructive and yet we CHOOSE TO CLING to them because we enjoy them. Sin can be very pleasurable for a time! Getting our own way seems like the most convenient and pleasant path for a time. That's why we choose for it. God, through the death of His beloved son, has shown us the cost of our sinful choices. Jesus died a punishing death on a cross to pay the price for our sin. God desires us to come to Him and CHOOSE TO ACCEPT HIS FORGIVENESS. He is pursuing us with His love. His grace is sufficient to fulfill the deepest longings of our soul. When we CHOOSE TO WALK IN GOD'S WAYS and become a doer of His word, our hearts will be filled with His peace and our lives with His blessings.

Regrettably many people who come to God think they can live any way they choose as long as they attend church, read the Bible, complete an honest set of steps, pray on occasion, and call Jesus "Lord." They believe these activities put them in right standing with God regardless of the fact they consciously continue to sin knowing they are disobeying the word of God. We cannot serve both our sinful nature and God at the same time. Our God is a Holy God and will not accompany us in the presence of sin.

The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil. Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (1 Peter 3:12, Matthew 7:21 NLT)

Too often we CHOOSE TO DO JUST WHAT WE FEEL LIKE DOING when we feel like doing it. If our desire is to have a relationship with God, we cannot behave in this way. A person who chooses to live for God must surrender their life to the ways of God. They must CHOOSE TO FOLLOW GOD'S PRINCIPLES as the Spirit of God directs them.

When we are truly surrendered to God, regardless of our feelings, we will CHOOSE TO OBEY Him because we are committed to doing what He says. We will study and reflect on His Word in the Bible and seek guidance from our pastor or other

responsible Christians to understand what God is saying. When we do things God's way our lives will demonstrate the fruit of the Holy Spirit who lives within us. However, if we CHOOSE TO RETURN TO OUR FORMER WAY OF LIFE we will no longer exhibit the qualities of the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23 NLT)

If we are missing any of these attributes in our lives, it's likely because we are making SELF-WILLED CHOICES and doing things our own way rather than God's way. A CONSCIOUS CHOICE TO FOLLOW GOD'S way brings change in our lives. It may not be instant change but as we choose to obey God, our relationship with Him and others will prosper and we will grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus and be complete in Him.

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. (Isaiah 55:6-7 NIV)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What effect has my history of choices in pre-addiction, in addiction, and now in recovery had on my life?
2. How has making a conscious choice to learn and follow God's ways supported my new life in recovery?
3. ***"Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster"*** – what does this choice look like in my life today?
4. What needs to change in my beliefs and desires so my choices more and more reflect God's life in me?

Heavenly Father, You made me and know me. You know all my ways and are familiar with the former path I chose. My relationship with You, my family, and my friends have suffered because of my fleshly desires and self-centered choices. Your Word says You will give me the desire and power to do what pleases You. My desire is that the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control would be evident in my life. From this day forward I choose life because I choose You. Thank You for caring for me. AMEN