

## How Does Our Free Will Work in God's Plan? (Part I)

**Joshua 24:15:** *If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*



The Bible plainly teaches us that God, in His unfathomable wisdom and power, has a clear plan for the destiny of ALL humanity. We also know, according to **1 Peter 1:20**, that His plan for the sacrifice of Jesus was clearly in place even before the earth was created. Now, if God's plan was clear to Him even before humanity existed, how does that fit into our understanding that each and every one of us has free will? Wouldn't His foreknowledge, by its very existence, make us all puppets in His hands? If He knows how it will all turn out, then aren't we just playing a predetermined role? Actually, nothing could be further from the truth! As we dig into these questions, we will see that God's plans and purposes are firmly built around the free will of all of His intelligent creation. Understanding this is life changing!

We face this every day. We pray for guidance but still have to decide. We feel the pull of temptation and the pull of God's spirit—and our will chooses the direction. And when life goes wrong, we wonder, *Was this God's plan or my mistake?* These are real questions, and understanding free will gives us a steadier perspective.

The account of Joshua is so important because his life shows how free will operates within God's will—through real decisions, real pressures, real consequences. Our theme scripture with its well-known phrase, *but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD* is Joshua speaking to the Jewish nation. God had chosen him to lead the people after the death of Moses (**Numbers 27:18-23**), and the people accepted that choice (**Joshua 1:16-17**).



When Joshua was younger, he and Caleb were the only spies who returned from the land of Canaan with complete faith and confidence in God's ability to further deliver His people (**Numbers 14:6-9**). Now, many years later at the end of his life, Joshua calls for the nation to remain faithful. He had done all he could for them by leading, teaching and modeling faithfulness. He had already made his own choice to serve God, but he couldn't force that choice upon them. The decision was now theirs alone.

Let's go back to the beginning of Joshua's leadership, as that beginning teaches us principles of how human free will works within the context of God's will in this present age of sin and death. We can look at our own ways and compare them to God's ways to get perspective. The people of Israel had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and were now ready to receive what God had originally promised them.

**God chose His faithful servant, Joshua, to be their new leader:**

**Joshua 1:1-2:** *1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.*

This was a transition of power. Moses died, and Joshua was being raised up in his place with many responsibilities.

This is an important lesson for us as we begin to understand free will in the context of God's will. When we make choices to put God first and follow through on them, as Joshua did, God can use our standing before Him as a tool to further accomplish His will.



God's introduction of Joshua to leadership shows us the principles of godliness at work—and how human free will responds to them.

**When God speaks, that is His will. That which He says, He does—period!  
God's will is perfect and His will accomplishes His plan.**

When God tells Joshua he would be taking charge but that God would be with him, we know this promise is true.

**Human Free Will Principle: We are free to choose a path and to live by our choice.**



We can think of free will like holding the steering wheel of a car. God provides the road—His plan—already laid out before us. Joshua stepped onto a road God had prepared long before he was born, and God promised to walk that road with him. Joshua's free will didn't create the road, but it determined how faithfully he traveled it.

**Jonathan's  
Memory**

Rick, I remember when I first came to you with the idea of starting Christian Questions as a weekly radio program. It really came down to two paths: keep looking for a witness opportunity that felt familiar and manageable OR step into a weekly radio program we had no idea how to do. Rick, you dismissed the idea a few times before we finally aired that first episode in June of 1998. And honestly, it was one of the hardest—and scariest—decisions we've ever made. We were stepping into something completely unfamiliar, but it became one of the most spiritually rewarding things we've ever done. That was a moment where we had to "put our hands on the steering wheel" and choose a path.

**Rick's  
Memory**

It felt like we were driving in completely uncharted territory. *What are we doing behind these microphones in this radio studio?* It was a very important free will decision. We could have chosen not to do it; I even said, *I don't know, who is going*

*to do that? We don't know how to do that—and that was true, but it ended up not stopping us from going in the right direction.*

This fits into the Joshua experience. He had not led the people before. He was always behind Moses, doing what Moses told him to do. Now, all of a sudden, Joshua is out in front.

**Let's return to the Joshua account:**

**Joshua 1:3,5:** *3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 5 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.*

This is the moment when Joshua's leadership begins. God would be with Joshua just like he had been with Moses. What a powerful message! Joshua could step forward knowing he wasn't stepping into the unknown alone. God is giving him the assurance of this.

When we have freely chosen to do God's will, we have chosen to be in His care—just like Joshua. God will oversee all that comes to us.


**God's promise is His will. That which He has promised He will deliver—period!  
 God's will is committed and His commitment accomplishes His plan.**

When God's will is committed, it means *I will be with you; I will not fail or forsake you.* His promise is His will! That is something we can really hold on to.

**Human Free Will Principle: Freely doing God's will opens us up to freely receiving His protection.**

But we need to define "protection" because faithful people still suffer. Trials aren't miraculously removed. Even with these incredible assurances from God, Joshua's life was anything but easy. By the time we reach our theme text in chapter 24, he has faced battles, setbacks, failures within the camp and the weight of leading a nation that didn't always want to follow. God's presence didn't remove the challenges.

God's protection acknowledged that leadership would be hard for Joshua. The decisions he would need to make would be difficult. He would fall and have to get back up. God's protection was that if Joshua would look to Him, God would guide him through all the falling down, trouble and trials.

King David is another good example of this. He found his protection in being able to go back to God no matter what. (**Psalms 18:1-3, 32:7, 37:23-24** and many others, for example.) He knew he would be able to stand on his own two feet only as long as he followed God's will in God's way. That is where our protection comes in.

Our protection doesn't keep us from getting hurt. It walks us *through* our hurt.

**Let's go further in comparing God's will and the principles of our human free will:**  
**Joshua 1:6-7:** *6 Be strong and courageous, for you (Joshua) shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the Law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.*

This was a massive responsibility for one man. Joshua was carrying the weight of an entire nation's future, and he had to do as well as, or better than, Moses had. Why does God demand courage if He's in control? Joshua still had to step into the promise with obedience and faith. God's will requires our active participation. Without it, there would be no character development, no faith and no genuine obedience. We'd be automated.

The Hebrew word for *strong* here doesn't just mean "be tough" or "try harder." It means to grasp firmly—to seize with resolve. Joshua had to take hold of the strength God was providing. The Hebrew word for *courageous* here carries the sense of standing firm—remaining steady when pressure comes.

So, strong and courageous = active strength + steadfast courage. A simple way to illustrate this is strength is like taking hold with our arms—grasping firmly what God provides. Courage is like standing firm with our legs—remaining steady when obedience is tested.

### STRONG AND COURAGEOUS = ACTIVE STRENGTH + STEADFAST COURAGE.




It is a "whole body" experience! Going back to the early days of Christian Questions, we had to learn to grab hold of the opportunities God provided. Then we had to learn to stand firm. It was not easy, and it took a long time!

When we have freely chosen to do God's will, by necessity we will need to stand firm with courage. Doing His will is NOT easy in this world! It's not supposed to be easy.



The key point is that His protection doesn't necessarily shield us from all of life's bad experiences. It helps us walk through them and grow through the experience.

**Verse 7**—*do not turn from it to the right or to the left*—adds moral courage as another layer. Joshua would face pressures, obstacles and discouragements, and God was preparing him to stand firm in obedience. Strength seizes what God provides; courage holds steady when obedience is tested.


**God requires our strength and courage when guiding us in His will, as His character drives His will.**  
**God's will is time tested, and that test of time proves His plan.**

Sometimes it doesn't look like His will makes any sense. We can't see how a circumstance can possibly be God's will. But just wait. We need time to gain perspective overall and to see the bigger picture. God's plan is time-tested and always the best way. Why? God knows the big picture.

**Human Free Will Principle: A God-driven character is required to appropriately do God's will.**

But is our character "time tested"? How well has Christianity overall done in this test over the course of history? How many times have we seen preachers get involved in money scandals and moral scandals? Why? Maybe they start out with energy and enthusiasm, focused on spirituality, but over time, what happens? That's the key. Over time, do we stand up with courage, holding on to God's truth, standing firm, not turning to the right or the left? Or, do we waver back toward other things?

Our **human free will principle** can choose to do this. We can choose to waver because we're feeling too comfortable, or we can choose to stand firm in what we know to be the truth according to God's Word.

**Let's go further:**

**Joshua 1:8-9:** *8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

More *strong and courageous!* Joshua was stepping into Moses' role (big sandals to fill!), and God was commanding him to actively grasp the strength needed for leadership. Joshua could do that because he held God's Law as that straight-line standard. Anything that didn't align with God's Law—and therefore God's will—was counterfeit. His strength came from anchoring every decision to God's revealed truth.



*The LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

We can see that as God prepares Joshua for leadership, He tells him everything he needs to know, everything he needs to rely upon, and everything he needs to watch out for. He gives Joshua the assurance that He will never leave his side; Joshua will not be alone. *The LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

Having freely chosen to do God's will, as Joshua did, obligates us to continually check ourselves against God's Word, so we can continue to follow His leading at every turn. Our continuous following keeps God's presence in our lives! We don't want to end up in a scandal. We want to end up faithful. To do this, we need to keep His presence in our lives.

**God's will is plainly reflected in His Word. His word reflects His plan and His character.**

**God's will is harmonious and the harmony of His Word and actions display the glory of His plan.**

Sometimes we can read God's Word but the actions and experiences in our lives don't seem to add up. That is when we have to step back and tell ourselves to just wait for it to continue to unfold. The harmony between what God has said and what He does, in its entirety, shows a glorious, magnificent, overwhelmingly powerful, loving and just plan for all humanity.

**Human Free Will Principle: Freely doing God's will requires our intellect to be in harmony with His Word.**

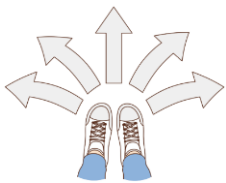


**Why is intellect so important? Isn't just the way we feel enough?**



No! Simply feeling inspired is great, but is not an adequate basis for doing God's will. God makes decisions based on justice, wisdom, love and mercy. We have been created in His image and this is how we should be making decisions. Faith built solely on emotion and feeling does not last. What is true, and our understanding of that truth, is what drives godly decisions.

While emotions tied to our faith are essential, we cannot rely solely on emotions to guide our decisions. Do we see the situation intellectually as strongly as we feel emotionally in support of it? If we don't, then why not? We need to be careful with emotions.



#### **Our Free Will Within the Context of God's Will:**

**We truly do have choice, and every choice carries consequences. When our decisions grow out of a godly, well-rounded character and an intellect anchored in God's Word, we are far better equipped to withstand the challenges that inevitably come. With that strength in place, we can continue to walk in God's ways.**

We have to have it all together. That's why God was so specific with Joshua about everything he needed to know, understand, look for and do as a result.

Just by looking at one experience with Joshua, we can begin to grasp the great power and responsibility of our free will.

**Now that we have a basic understanding of free will in our world, the next question is, has free will always worked this way?**

We can freely choose our path. When we choose God's way, we open ourselves up to God's protection. Continuing in His providence requires a godly character and a God-driven intellect. Veering away from any of these things can easily redirect our free will to an alternate path that will draw us away from our God.

Adam and Eve were faced with these very challenges. Remember, this was the first time in human history that free will was being exercised. There was no past failure to learn from, no cautionary tale, no example of what happens when you choose against God.

Now that we've learned from Joshua about leadership, let's go back to the beginning to Adam and Eve. In that context, God would introduce humanity to their responsibility in an environment truly designed for success.

**This environment had everything they needed, and it was all presented in a perfect package called the Garden of Eden:**

**Genesis 2:8-9:** *8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. 9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

The only thing not present in that whole perfect environment was an example of what happens when human free will goes against God. Why? Because it had never happened before! It was the beginning of mankind, so there had never been an opportunity.

Here is part of the wisdom of God that we generally don't look at: Eden was a perfect package with everything Adam and Eve would need, and it was built around their free will.

**God laid out the rules, and the consequences of obedience and disobedience were plainly disclosed:**

**Genesis 2:15-17:** *15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. 16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*

Clear boundaries with clear consequences. Free will was real, but so were the outcomes. Think back to our steering-wheel metaphor. Free will is the steering wheel in our hands. This was the map. In Eden, God placed the map directly in Adam and Eve's hands—His literal word told them exactly where safety was and where danger lay. Their free will was meant to follow that map with trust.

They were put in a position where they knew and understood everything necessary about their situation. But they were naïve; they lacked direct experience. In their perfection, in being created in God's image, Adam and Eve were given God's protection. They were clearly told what not to do.

At this point, their characters and intellect were God-driven because that was how they were created. They did not know anything else BUT to be God-honoring, God-following and God-worshiping. They knew the rules, were clearly given the consequences, but had never experienced them.



We are often asked: *How could Adam and Eve have sinned if they were perfect?* Please see the [Bonus Material](#). Our website, ChristianQuestions.com, has an entire Q&A section to check out as well.



Another frequently asked question: *Since God knows the future, why did God put the forbidden tree in the garden, knowing it would ultimately bring sin, sorrow and death?* Please see the [Bonus Material](#).

Human free will would be tested. WHY? Why couldn't God just give them everything they needed to live happily ever after? Why allow them to choose the 'not so' happily ever after? The END RESULT (remember, often when we look at the moment, we don't see the sense of why something is happening) of God's plan was, and always will be, to have human free will work within the same parameters as God's own will, because we were created in HIS image. God was teaching His human creation to learn to always choose correctly, appropriately, justly, lovingly and wisely.

Let's look at how God's will worked in all of this:

✦ **God's will is perfect.** God's plan was always for the human will to learn to fully embrace perfection.

Adam and Eve had perfection, but they had to learn to embrace it through experience.

✦ **God's will is committed.** God's plan was always for the human will to learn godly commitment.

Adam and Eve understood God's directions but needed to learn how to commit to Him through all kinds of experiences.

✦ **God's will is time-tested.** God's plan was always for the human will to learn to be proven (tested, exercised and demonstrated as trustworthy) and faithful not just at the beginning, but consistently over time.

The common denominator is to learn! He wanted them to learn, as He wants us to learn, through experience.

✦ **God's will is harmonious. But His plan did NOT always outwardly reveal this important trait!**

This is why when we look at the experience in the Garden of Eden, we might question WHY God would set it up that way. But the harmony of His plan was not yet to be revealed. It would unfold over time.

The harmony of God's plans was always there, right from the beginning. Our wise Father who knows all was always there. His plans were in place and human free will needed to be exercised for the learning to begin.

**Now the test. Enter Satan, misusing his God-given influence:**

**Genesis 3:1-3:** *1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden? 2 The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.*

Eve repeated God's command back to him—she knew the rules and the consequence, but her character and intellect were as of yet untested.



Here is one more Bible Q&A: *Why didn't God stop Satan from deceiving Eve?* [Please see the Bonus Material.](#)



**Hint: In God's plan, free will is everything! God's free will is expressed in how He handles situations. His free will is for us to learn and then master our wills so that we can react as He does.**

**Satan next introduced a second choice and suggested an alternative ending. This is key in the test and the understanding of free will:**

**Genesis 3:4-6:** *4 The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die! 5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*



The serpent's lie planted a seed of doubt—a subtle suspicion that God might be withholding something good. That tiny shift in thinking opened the door for Eve to step outside of God's boundaries. But when Eve listened to another voice, she set the map aside and steered by her own understanding. Without the map, even a perfect human can drift off course.

Eve now had “new information.” It contradicted what God told Adam, but this new information was very enticing. This is free will at work—not in a good way—but it is working according to God's plan.

*6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise...*

Her perspective changed. She now evaluated God's command through self-interest instead of trust. Suspicion brought doubt. Eve ate the fruit and Adam ate with her.

Eve (and now Adam) clearly had a choice and weighed their options as humans. The problem was that they started to put themselves before God. In the deception, Eve had chosen to see God as limiting and not protective, and Adam simply chose to disobey, just as Satan had already done!

We can see how much happened with that one little choice to step away from God's clearly stated provision for them. They took what was perfect, what was sound and what was given to them by their Creator for their ultimate good and chose to step away from it. Because of "new information," which was a lie, their whole perspective changed. God knew this was an important test, and that it had to happen for their ultimate learning about how damaging their decision could be.

**When our free will is exercised, and we have chosen against ultimate good, the results put us out of harmony with God, and we will rationalize hiding from Him:**

**Genesis 3:8-11:** *8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, Where are you? 10 He said, I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself. 11 And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?*

In their sin, their characters and intellects had responded to another voice. Suddenly they felt exposed before God. Of course they hid—they were vulnerable. They were guilty. They were afraid of God who had only ever protected them.

We were created in God's image. When we follow God's instructions, we reflect His image in us. His laws are the framework for the best possible life—the life our Designer created us to live. But our fallen nature pushes back. Something in us whispers that God is holding us back from something better. That suspicion is the same seed of deception Eve faced, and it still tempts us today. Complete obedience saves later regret.

Take a moment of emotional reflection: Every time we choose suspicion of God over trust, or self over God, or shortcuts over obedience, we replay a tiny version of that moment in Eden. And yet, God's response to Adam and Eve—seeking, calling, covering—reminds us that His plan always includes redemption. To get to redemption, though, there had to be a consequence to teach them the way back.

## Rick's Experience

Many of our listeners know that our youngest daughter, Amy, was raped when she was only 15 years old. That created a lot of very hard experiences in our lives. In the process of recovering from all that, she and I had to work together as father and daughter.

There was one period when this really set her off, and she was spiraling downward. She got into a situation where she told me a series of lies to cover for herself so she could do something she was absolutely not supposed to do. As parents, sometimes we find out, and sometimes we don't, when our kids lie to us. This time we did.

I remember very vividly that I was home, downstairs in our family room. I told Trish to send Amy down when she got home. She came down the stairs, and I looked at her and said, "You lied to me."

She knew, and she just nodded her head. I said, "You lied to me more than once." And she nodded her head. And I said, "After all we've been through, and what we agreed—that no matter how difficult it is, the truth is going to get us through this—you still lied. That was a betrayal of our agreement." As her dad, I needed to make a statement.

But I was really upset, so I said, "Okay, I'm done." I got up, walked up the stairs, out of the house and drove down the road. She was mortified.

I did that for two reasons: One, I needed space because I was really upset—we were too close to losing our daughter.

The second reason I did it was to have her feel the pain of separation. I wanted her to feel what it was like for me to walk out. Now, I was obviously going to come back. And when I did later, it served as a tool to bring us back to working together.

The experience in Eden, like the experience Amy and I had, reminds me of the importance of our free will staying in the context of our Father's wisdom. It was a great learning experience for both of us and turned out to be one of the turning points that actually saved her life.

It's important for us to recognize why free will needs to be part of our experience and what the consequences can sometimes be of not following God's will.



### **Our Free Will Within the Context of God's Will:**

**Adam and Eve had a choice, and they each, in their own way, chose sin. Despite these choices, God's love provided an eventual way to reclaim them. After all, God's plan has always been to ultimately develop an unbreakable righteousness within humanity.**

We have the picture of our steering wheel as our free will, and our map, of course, is still God's Word, the Bible. Whose voice are we listening to?



Eve listened to the wrong voice, and so can we. Today, deception is everywhere. So much is fake or engineered to mislead that we can't always tell what's real. Our only protection is the same one Adam and Eve and Joshua had—staying close to God's Word. Anything that doesn't align with biblical principles is counterfeit—no matter how convincing it looks, or how good it feels.

But that means we must be firm in our biblical principles, or our free will can be steered by the wrong voice.

We have looked at the experiences of Joshua and Adam and Eve, and we're just getting started! We need to do a second part to get to the core of how to apply all of these learning tools.

God's will always, eventually, prevails.

When it comes to human free will, we learned from Joshua that the choice to serve God is ours. While serving God with those choices brings us His protection, we also need to develop and apply a godly character and God-driven intellect.

Adam and Eve showed us how easily it is to be distracted from our highest purpose by doubts and suspicions. These alter our perception and lead to compromised choices.

In Part II, we will apply these free will lessons in two ways.

1) To our lives as Christians.

*How do we attain and maintain enough godliness to make the right choices?*

2) To the lives of the rest of the world in the context of the day of judgment.

*Will it be an end for them, or a new beginning?*

Human free will is important!

**So, how does our free will work in God's plan?**  
**For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...**  
**...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



## Next episode

Episode 1437: How Does Our Free Will Work in God's Plan? (Part II)



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### Bonus Material and Study Questions

#### Recommended additional study:

**Ep.1220: Can Faith Take Me From Failure to Victory?**

*Powerful lessons of faith overcoming adversity from the life of Joshua*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1220-failure-victory/>

**Ep.1362: Why the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge?**

*Uncovering many reasons those two trees were in the Garden of Eden*

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1362-tree-of-life/>

**Ep.1266: Why Doesn't God Just Destroy Satan?**

*Satan's history and God's righteous reasons for keeping him alive*

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1266-destroy-satan/>



For children, parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://christianquestions.com/YouTube):

- **Who was Joshua?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/video-cq-kids-who-was-joshua/>
- **Why didn't God stop Satan from tempting Eve?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/satan-tempting-eve/>
- **Why did Jesus have to die for Adam's sin?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/why-did-jesus-die-for-adams-sin/>

## BIBLE Q&A

### **If Adam and Eve were perfect, how could they have sinned? Wouldn't a perfect man and woman have acted in a perfect manner?**

In **Genesis 1:26-27**, the Bible says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... and God created man in His own image..." We know that God is a spirit being with a spirit body, so the statement that man was created in His image does not refer to Adam's body. It therefore must refer to the qualities God gave him in his ability to understand and reason. God possesses these qualities on a much higher level than human beings, but our capacities are similar in type to God's and elevate mankind above the animals. God pronounced His creation "very good" in **Genesis 1:31**. If in God's eyes it was "very good," it must have been very good indeed! Adam was created sinless and, we believe, with a perfect physical body. If he had continued to obey God and eat the perfect food God provided for him, there would have been no death.

But the similar mental faculties that God gave Adam did not guarantee immunity from temptation. In addition to creating him as a sinless, physically perfect man, God gave him free will. He was not designed as a high-functioning robot. God had made clear the law He expected Adam to follow; the explanation of the law and Adam's understanding of his responsibility to obey it must have been sufficient enough for him to be justly condemned because of disobedience. He was capable of perfect adherence to God's instructions. Otherwise, it would have been unfair of the Father to give Adam the death penalty.

So, why did Adam sin? The Bible doesn't tell us, but there may have been several factors involved. The penalty for disobedience had been described to him, but he did not yet have participatory experience with sin and death and thus may not have been fully able to appreciate the results of his misconduct. He had knowledge of but no familiarity with consequences.

The best clue we have as to why Adam chose to disobey is in **1 Timothy 2:14**: *For it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. Adam did know that Satan had lied. He did feel guilt after he transgressed or he would not have attempted to hide from God. The best explanation as to why Adam chose to follow Eve in her disobedience may be because he could not bear the thought of life without her. In his perfection, he would have had a great capacity for love and may have willfully chosen to die with her—a form of suicide. At this point there was no mention of a redemption, no hope of resurrection. The prospect of living forever without his beloved companion may have overwhelmed him. This was Adam's first test of character and he failed it. He chose loyalty to Eve over loyalty to God, and thereby condemned the entire human race to death.*

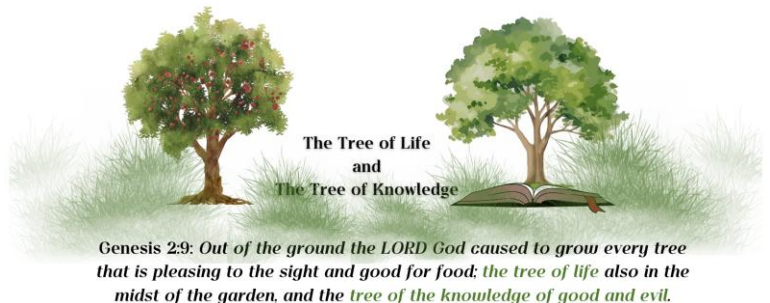
## Bible Q&A

**Since God knows the future, why did God put the forbidden tree in the garden, knowing it would ultimately bring sin, sorrow and death?**

God placed the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden not as a trap, but as a deliberate teaching tool designed to help Adam and Eve develop moral character, free will and wholehearted devotion to Him. Scripture shows that God desires worship that flows from genuine love and understanding—*true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth* (**John 4:23**). For humanity to reach that level of mature, willing obedience, they needed the opportunity to choose righteousness over evil, even when disobedience appeared attractive.

The tree provided that opportunity. It established a clear boundary that would teach obedience, patience and restraint. While the Tree of Life represented the gift of ongoing physical life (**Genesis 2:9**), the Tree of Knowledge was intended to teach them how to live that life in righteousness. By giving a specific command not to eat from it (**Genesis 2:16–17**), God gave His children the chance to choose loyalty to Him over their own impulses.

Without a meaningful alternative, Adam and Eve could not have exercised real moral freedom.



This is why the presence of the tree was essential. God does not create “robots.” To be made in His image, humans had to possess the ability to reason, choose and even disobey. If God had made the understanding of good and evil instinctual, they would have been incapable of choosing otherwise, and moral freedom would have been impossible. Real choice requires at least two options and the possibility of choosing wrongly. Without the forbidden tree, Adam would have had no meaningful way to demonstrate sincere, unforced allegiance to his Creator.

This also created the valuable lesson of the permission of evil. God did not author evil, but He permitted it so humanity could learn—through experience—how terrible sin truly is. Adam and Eve had information about sin, but they did not appreciate its horrors. Now, however, all mankind knows firsthand the suffering, pain and destruction that sin brings. This experiential knowledge is part of God’s long-term plan to produce an eternal appreciation for righteousness. Scripture affirms that God uses even painful experiences to produce lasting discernment (**Romans 8:28, Hebrews 5:14**).

This educational process continues into the future. During Christ’s 1,000-year reign, when *Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness* (**Isaiah 26:9**), Satan will be bound and humanity will be healed physically, emotionally

and spiritually from the effects of sin (**Isaiah 35**). At the end of that Millennium, Satan will be released briefly to test the restored human race (**Revelation 20:7-9**). By that time, mankind will fully understand the difference between good and evil. When confronted with temptation, most will choose obedience, demonstrating the wisdom of God's permission of evil. Those who stand firm will be proven to love God with mature conviction, having His law written in their hearts and minds (**Jeremiah 31:33**).

Finally, the tree shows that God's plan was proactive, not reactive. Because He is omniscient, man's fall did not surprise Him. Jesus is described as *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (**Revelation 13:8**), revealing that the remedy for sin was already in place before Adam and Eve were created. In this light, the tree served to initiate the process by which humanity would eventually gain an obedience not based on innocence or ignorance, but on experience, understanding and freely chosen loyalty.

### **BIBLE Q&A**

**Why didn't God stop Satan from deceiving Eve? Why did God remove Satan from heaven because of pride but then let him come to earth?**

When God sent Lucifer down to earth, Lucifer was not yet sinful. The name "Lucifer" carries the sense of "morning star" or "light bearer." He became Satan when he lied to Eve. "Satan" means "adversary," and he became the chief adversary of God.

**Ezekiel 28:12-15: (ESV)** *12 Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. 14 You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. 15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.*

In these scriptures, the king of Tyre must be symbolic because there was no king of Tyre in the Garden of Eden. These scriptures explain that God placed Lucifer in Eden as an anointed guardian angel. His purpose was to guard and bless Adam and Eve. Instead, Lucifer saw his chance to become a ruler over the human race. That was when unrighteousness was found in him.

Why did God permit Satan to stay as the evil ruler of mankind? Adam and Eve were created perfect (**Deuteronomy 32:4**) with free will in God's image. They had the perfect ability to resist the temptation to disobey God. But they did not appreciate the horrible results of sin. They had only experienced the peace and joys of righteousness in Eden. When they sinned, they began to experience the consequences of evil.

Now, all of mankind is learning that disobedience/sin brings pain, suffering, and death. But there is a purpose to God's permission of evil. In the resurrection, Christ will rule with an iron rod. No sin will be permitted and the willing will learn righteousness.

**Jeremiah 31:3:** *No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*

Finally, in the little season of Revelation 20:3, Satan will be loosed from the bottomless pit and try to tempt people to sin again. But this time, the results will be different. People will have experienced the consequences of disobedience. The great majority of mankind will choose to love God and righteousness. They will be rewarded with perfect human, everlasting life. (See **Revelation 21:4.**) Satan will then be destroyed forever.

**Isaiah 14:15:** (NKJV) *Yet you (Satan) shall be brought down to sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit.*

# Study QUESTIONS

See:  CQRewind  
SHOW NOTES

## Ep. 1436: How Does Our Free Will Work in God's Plan? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1436-how-does-our-free-will-work-in-gods-plan-part-i/>

1. In Joshua 24:15 Joshua states, "...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." How is this an example of free will operating within God's will? (Numbers 27:18-23)
2. Joshua 1:3,5 contains God's promise, "I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." Define what God's protection *actually means* for those, like Joshua and like us, who choose to serve the LORD. (Psalms 18:1-3, 37:23-24)
3. What are the Hebrew meanings of "strong" and "courageous" in Joshua 1:6-7. What does this reveal about free will's role in obedience? What does verse 7, ("Do not turn from it to the right or to the left") add to our active participation in shaping our free will to operate within God's will?
4. Do you have a current or former situation where you needed to practice "grasping what God provides and standing firm"? Did you succeed? How could you have improved your reaction?
5. Why must our intellect and understanding—not just our emotional response—be in harmony with God's word for our free will to function rightly? (Joshua 1:8-9) How can you do better at this in your life?
6. Why did God place Adam and Eve in Eden, the perfect environment for them to succeed, but then not prevent them from failing? What was Eden missing that made the test necessary? Do you think God gave them enough information to not fail? (Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17)
7. How did Eve's perspective change after receiving "new information" from the serpent? (Genesis 3:1-6)
8. Do you see your free will being "steered" when you read and study God's Word? Do you ever notice the "pull" of another voice, as Eve experienced? What helps you keep your godly perspective in these cases?
9. Adam and Eve made the choice to step away from what was perfect, from what was given them by their Creator for their ultimate good. How did that make them feel? What provision did God put in his plan as part of His response to them—seeking, calling, then covering? (Genesis 3:8-13,21)