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Know Your Choices

The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength

We are going to take a brief detour in our study of Nehemiah this week. Next week we will study Nehemiah chapter 8. In verse 10 of that chapter, Nehemiah says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." In order to understand fully this concept, we are going to lay a foundation by going all the way back to the beginning and discussing the choices that each one of us has to make that lead to this joy or not.

Choices

Every day we make choices, some small and some quite consequential. And indeed there are some choices that we can make consciously or not that can have eternal consequences. If you agree with that statement, then it might be a good idea to investigate those choices.

Beginnings

Basically we have been given a choice between two fundamental ways of explaining the beginning of everything. Both require a bit of faith. We must choose which is the most reasonable option to put our faith in. Either:

1) There was an electron-sized particle known as a singularity that has existed for all eternity and contained all known energy and matter that exploded and formed everything that we see and don't see.

Or

2) There is an infinite God Who has existed for all eternity Who created something out of nothing and made everything that we see and don't see.

Genesis 1

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Life

We must choose whether life came from either:

1) Non-life

Or

2) An all-powerful, Creator God Who created life

Colossians 1

¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

All life comes from other life.

--Law of Biogenesis

Order

When we look around and admire the complexity and beauty of nature and all that we see and don't see, we must choose whether it is all a result of either:

1) Random Chance

Or

2) An intelligent Creator

Emotion and Virtues

We not only observe creation and make our choices regarding its beginning and significance, but we can also observe the human experience and end up having to choose between the ideas of either:

1) There is no explanation nor meaning for laughter, sadness, appreciation of beauty, justice, mercy, love, sacrifice, etc.

OR

2) Emotion and virtues and the rest have their origination in a personal God

Genesis 1

²⁷So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Meaning

This leads to the question of any real meaning in the world and our existence. We must choose

from the ideas that either:

1) All is random and there is no real meaning to life—or anything for that matter

OR

2) God created all of creation with meaning and purpose

"The sudden appearance of life is not only the most puzzling feature of the whole fossil record but also its greatest apparent inadequacy."

**—George Gaylord Simpson
(Crown Prince of Evolution)**

"One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous generation of a living organism is impossible. Yet here we are – as a result, I believe, of spontaneous generation."

**—George Wald
(Noble Prize Winner/Harvard)**

God

If we choose that there is a god, which god? Either:

- 1) A god made up by us or others
- Or
- 2) A God revealed in the Bible

Communication

A choice then has to be made as to if a God would communicate with us in any way. We must choose that either:

- 1) There is a God—but He does not communicate with His creation in any way.

OR

- 2) There is a God—and He has and does communicate with His creation.

If we come to the conclusion that the reason we even have a concept of a god is because somehow He has communicated with us, then we must choose between either:

- 1) There is a God Who communicates with His creation through _____ (and you fill in the blank)

OR

- 2) There is God Who communicates with His creation through the creation itself and through written words called the Bible and through His Son, Jesus.

Bible

If it is a possible choice to conclude that there is a God and He communicates to His creation through the Bible then we must choose between either:

- 1) The Bible is not true
- OR
- 2) The Bible is true

Jesus

Because the Bible claims it is the story of mankind who found themselves enslaved to sin and its consequences and is also a story of God's redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ, we must choose between either:

- 1) Jesus is not Who He says He is
- OR
- 2) Jesus is Who He says He is

John 14

¶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Meaning

Our decision about Jesus Christ brings us back to another decision regarding meaning. Because if Jesus is Who He said He was, then His teachings about meaning to life are important. After reading His teachings and those of His followers, we must now decide if what we think, what we say, and what we do either:

- 1) Have no real meaning

Or

- 2) Have purpose and real meaning

Eternity

This leads to contemplation about eternity. We must choose between either:

- 1) Who we are will cease to exist as we are nothing more than physical matter and neurochemical processes.

OR

- 2) Who we are will *not* cease to exist as what we are includes, along with the physical, the immaterial (soul/spirit).

Commitment

If our choices lead us to the conclusion that there really is a loving, powerful, holy, creator God Whose story is communicated to us through the Bible regarding His Son, Jesus, we then have another couple of choices. We can commit to either:

- 1) Living a life that is consistent with no real purpose or meaning that is not accountable to anyone or anything

OR

- 2) Living a life with the goal of fulfilling our God-given purpose.

Decision

If we choose to commit to living a life with meaning and purpose, then we must make a decision between two more options. We can either:

- 1) Reject that we are in need of a solution to a problem—the problem being sin in our lives that requires justice

Or

- 2) Receive the free gift of a gracious solution to the problem, Jesus Christ, and what He did on the cross for us.

Ephesians 2

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God

**"I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; and consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption....For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom."
—Aldous Huxley (Atheist)**

