

# The Power of Choice<sup>1</sup>



## SABBATH—APRIL 3

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 3:1–13; Deuteronomy 30:10–19; Psalm 119:11; Colossians 3:2; Hebrews 11:8–10.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Daniel decided not to make himself ‘unclean’ by eating the king’s food and drinking his wine” (Daniel 1:8, NIV).

**JACKIE AND CAROL (NOT THEIR REAL NAMES) WERE SISTERS.** Jackie was older by two years, but they grew up together in a loving home. By the time she reached her teens, Jackie was a serious student. After graduating from high school, Jackie went to the university to study business. Today, she is in her mid-thirties and holds a responsible position with an investment company. Jackie also is married, and lives comfortably in her own home.

Carol chose to have an easy life and enjoy herself. She dropped out of high school and began to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Today Carol is a single mother, living on government assistance. Carol also is in a program because of drugs. She is jealous but secretly proud of her sister’s success.

Both girls had the same opportunities, the same chances, and the same set of choices. Jackie chose one way, Carol another. Each now is living with the results of her choices.

Choices—we all have them. We all have to make them. And we all have to live with the results of the ones we make.

So, the important questions for us all are, What will our choices be? How can we know how to make the right ones? This week we will learn more about the power of choice.

**To view and/or download a Hope Channel show on this week’s lesson, visit [www.lifesbeat.org](http://www.lifesbeat.org).**

1. choice—choosing or making a decision to do or believe one thing over another.

**SUNDAY—APRIL 4****FREEDOM IS REAL  
(Genesis 2:16, 17)**

People often talk about freedom. Political<sup>2</sup> groups often preach about freedom. One state in the United States boasts the motto: “Live free or die.”

Really, freedom is a very deep subject. The word means different things to different people in different situations. It is not always easy to pin down exactly what people mean when they talk about freedom.

But one thing is sure. When God created humans (men, women, and children), He made them moral<sup>3</sup> people. For humans to be truly moral, they must be free to make choices between right and wrong. If people did not have this right, they really could not be free.

**What is suggested in God’s words to Adam in Genesis 2:16, 17? How is Adam’s moral freedom<sup>4</sup> shown in these verses?**

In Genesis 3:1–6, we find the moral freedom given to both Adam and Eve. Why would God have warned them against eating of the tree if they had not been free to choose between right and wrong? So, we find perfect people in a perfect world. They had moral freedom. At the very beginning of human life, people clearly had the freedom of choice.



**Why would God have warned Adam and Eve against eating of the tree if they had not been free to choose between right and wrong?**

**Read Genesis 3:1–6. What are the places where Adam and Eve both used free will?<sup>5</sup> How could they at different times have made better choices? What can we learn from these verses about the kinds of choices we make?**

Human free choice must be something very important to God. Think about what our abuse (wrong use) of that freedom cost God. The gift is so holy and important that God (Jesus) would die on the cross. He could have left us to our fate (eternal death) because we misused this gift. But He did not.

**What basic mistake did both Adam and Eve make? How can we avoid making almost the same mistakes in our situations? In what ways do we face almost the same temptations?<sup>6</sup>**

2. political—having to do with ruling a country or a state; having to do with government.

3. moral—righteous; holy.

4. moral freedom—the freedom to choose right or wrong.

5. free will—the freedom of making choices.

6. temptations—things that can turn us away from God and that try to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

**MONDAY—APRIL 5****THE RESULTS: GUILT AND FEAR  
(Genesis 3:7–13)**

**Read Genesis 3:7–13 and answer the following questions:**

**(1) If you could describe in one word what Adam and Eve experienced, what would that word be? Why? How do we in our own experience today sometimes face the same thing?**

**(2) What other emotion did Adam and Eve experience that they had not known before? Again, in what ways do we experience the same thing? Why?**

The Watergate<sup>7</sup> scandal<sup>8</sup> in the United States was announced by the press in the early 1970s. During that time the White House spent a lot of time trying to cover up the mess. President Richard Nixon finally had to resign.<sup>9</sup> This was not because Nixon permitted the break-in to the Democratic Party's office or had a part in planning the break-in. Instead, Nixon was wrong in trying to cover up what others had done.

In a way, the verses tell us that Adam and Eve were doing a cover-up job. They were trying to hide from

God what they had done. Or they were trying to put the blame on anyone but themselves.

Of course, most people who know the Lord know that it is impossible to hide anything from Him. When the hairs of our head are numbered (counted) (Matthew 10:30), we cannot fool Him about our actions. But we can fool ourselves. How easily we find ways to try to put the blame on others. *If only my boss had not done this, then I would not have done that. If only my husband or wife had not done this, then I would not have done that. If only God had taken away the temptation when I prayed, then I would not have fallen. If only this, if only that . . .*

Sure, we sometimes face powerful temptations. The situation is worse, too, because we already come with sinful and fallen natures.<sup>10</sup> They make it that much easier for us to weaken when tempted<sup>11</sup> and tried. As bad as sin is and as bad as the results often are, we make it worse when we refuse to accept responsibility (blame; guilt). After all, how can we overcome sin if we do not accept blame for our own actions?

**How open are you to accepting responsibility for your wrong choices? Or do you always find ways to blame others for it? If so, when are you going to stop?**

7. the Watergate—an office, hotel, and apartment building in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., where a political scandal took place in 1972. Several men hired by the Republican Party tried to break into the Democratic Party office in the 1970s to steal records from the office files.

8. scandal—a wrong act that shocks people and causes shame and disgrace.

9. resign—quit job.

10. fallen natures—the fallen or sinful qualities or aspects of humans (men, women, and children) that we are born with. Without God, our natures are sinful, fallen, selfish, proud, unkind, and so on.

11. tempted—to experience the desire to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

**TUESDAY—APRIL 6****CHOICES: GOOD AND BAD  
(Hebrews 11:8–10)**

Much of our natures changed after the fall of Adam and Eve, but we still have the power of choice. We still have free will. What we do with that free will is up to us. We can surrender<sup>12</sup> to God and obey Him. Or we can choose to go our own sinful way.

**What does Hebrews 11:8–10 tell us about Abraham and his choices? What can we learn from those choices?**

**What were some of the wrong choices that Abraham made in Genesis 16 and Genesis 21:9–14? What were the results of those choices?**

“Polygamy<sup>13</sup> had become so common that people did not think of it as a sin. But it broke the law of God. And it destroyed the holiness and peace of the family. Abraham’s marriage to Hagar led to evil among his own household and among his future children and their families.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, patriarchs and prophets,<sup>14</sup> page 145.

Read Daniel 1:8–16. The words “Daniel purposed [made up his mind; chose] in his heart” (NKJV) show that Daniel’s choice was both wise and

strong. The results of this wise choice influenced<sup>15</sup> the whole life of Daniel. And this also led to Daniel’s special blessing and attention by the Lord. Daniel gave his life to the Lord daily in his prayers and devotions (study of God’s Word).



Having more than one wife was very common in Abraham’s day. But this practice broke the law of God.

**It is one thing to say we should make right choices. But it is another to have the heart’s strong desire to do it. According to Psalm 119:11; Philippians 4:8; and Colossians 3:2, what are ways we can program (train) our minds to make the right choices?**

In the end, we are free to choose for the Lord or free to choose against Him. There is no middle ground. We are on one side or the other. This does not mean we do not make mistakes or fall (think of Abraham, for example). It means we must “pur-

12. surrender—giving one’s whole life to Jesus to love and serve Him and to obey His holy law.

13. polygamy—the practice of having more than one wife or husband at the same time.

14. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses, were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times; prophets are men or women who are given messages by God to give to His people.

15. influenced—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

pose in our hearts” to try to do God’s will (plan), no matter what happens. We must “purpose in our hearts” to choose what is right. What is right is what God commands us to do. What is important is if we fall, if we make the wrong choices, God does not cast us off. The danger is we can feel so guilty, we can feel so bad that we are in danger of giving up. So, our only hope is to put ourselves at the foot of the Cross and claim the forgiveness offered in Jesus.

### WEDNESDAY—APRIL 7

#### CHOICE AND THE NEXT GENERATION<sup>16</sup> (Deuteronomy 30:10–19)

**What is the important message of the Lord to His people in Deuteronomy 30:10–19? What points impress you? More important, how do you understand the idea that their choice will influence<sup>17</sup> the lives of their children? What does that mean? How can our choices influence our children?**

The results of life choices influence both ourselves and our children. Our influence is much more than we imagine, especially on our children. One example is drinking alcohol. Much has been said recently about how one glass of alcohol a day is “good” for health. This idea is

encouraged by the liquor companies for making more money. But only a few people know that these studies do not have their facts straight. In reality, these claims are not true.

Alcohol remains one of the great curses of the human family. With all the warnings we have been given about it, how foolish it would be for us to let our guard down now.

It is known that about 7 percent of persons who take a first drink will become alcoholic, or problem drinkers. The choice to introduce alcohol into our homes may or may not have much influence on us as persons. We may not be damaged greatly by it. But what of our children? What about the example you leave? If you drink, your children may want to drink more. Is it worth choosing something that may steal the life of your child? Studies have shown that children raised in homes where alcohol is present are much more at risk of alcohol problems than children raised in nonalcoholic homes. That simple fact alone should make us even more careful about the examples we set.

Read again Deuteronomy 30:10–19. Your choices influence both yourself and your children. And if you do not have children, why risk making a choice that may cause more health problems? God gave us these health principles (rules) for our good. Do we have the faith to trust Him at His Word?

16. generation—all the people about the same age and born about the same time. Your parents belong to one generation. You and your friends who are your age belong to another generation.

17. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.



Alcohol remains one of the great curses of the human family.

**There are many examples of people who have been destroyed by alcohol use. Why be foolish and risk that for yourself? Why do something that influences others in the wrong direction?**

### THURSDAY—APRIL 8

#### CHOICE AND CHANCE (Psalm 87:5, 6)

All have the power of choice. But not all have an equal set of opportunities (chances for success). Some choices limit future possibilities and opportunities. Some people suffer disadvantages<sup>18</sup> through no choice of their own. Think about the disadvantages that cloud the lives of some; for example, children born into homes where drugs are used, where husbands beat up wives or children, or where poorness is great. Think about the negative

results of sinful living. We all have been stuck in situations that are not of our own choosing.

**What is the message in Psalm 87:5, 6 for all of us about some of the situations that are not of our own choosing? How, too, should these verses help us better understand the meaning of Matthew 7:1, 2?**

God knows our situations. God knows that many of us have been brought into horrible situations we wanted to avoid. God alone fully knows the backgrounds of us all. We all have met people struggling with some terrible problems and issues. They are issues often brought on by choices that others made; for example, the choice of a parent to leave the family, the choice of a spouse to commit adultery,<sup>19</sup> or the choice of a friend to betray someone who had trusted him or her. The number of situations are as endless as they are scary.

But the good news in all this is we can make one choice that is the most important of all. We can choose to follow Jesus. We can choose Jesus as our personal Savior. We can repent<sup>20</sup> from our sinful ways. And when we are baptized,<sup>21</sup> we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through this gift, God now enters and influences our hearts and minds to direct our actions and

18. disadvantages—unfavorable conditions.

19. adultery—breaking the marriage vow by having sex with a person who is not one's spouse; not being faithful.

20. repent—to say you are sorry for sinning and to turn away from sin with the help of the Holy Spirit.

21. baptized—to be put completely underwater and brought back up out of it. This shows that Jesus has forgiven this person's sins and has given him or her a new life.

to lead us to bear fruit. We become branches of the True Vine (Jesus).

According to Galatians 5:22, 23, the fruit of the Spirit does not come separately but in groups. It is the result of the Spirit taking control of our will, as much as we choose to let Him. Through the power of God working in our lives, we can choose to let the Lord remove some of the negative things that we had not chosen to have.



God knows that some struggle with problems brought on by the choices others have made; for example, children born into homes where drugs are used.

**What are some of the things you have struggled with that are the result of choices that others have made for you? How has God worked in your life to remove some of the negative results of those choices? What better choices can you yourself make that could help you to heal?**

### FRIDAY—APRIL 9

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, “Good Angels More Powerful

Than Evil Angels,” page 96, in *Selected Messages*, book 1.

“Every soul has a heaven to win, and a hell to avoid. And the hosts of angels are all ready to come to the help of the tried and tempted soul. He, the Son of the eternal God, went through the test and trial for each one of us. The cross of Calvary stands clearly in front of every soul. The cases of all people will be judged. The lost will be sentenced to suffer for dishonoring God by disobeying Him. But no one will have an excuse nor will need to have faced an eternal [forever; without end] death. It was left to their own choice who should be their prince—Christ or Satan.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 96.

“God does not force men to give up their unbelief. Before them is the choice between light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which they will accept. The human<sup>22</sup> mind is gifted with power to tell the difference between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from a wild guess. They will decide from carefully studying verse with verse in the Bible.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 458.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① In class, discuss the whole question of freedom. What does freedom mean? Is someone who chooses to

22. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

be a slave really free? How free are we, really? What are the limits of freedom? When can freedom be a bad thing?

② Think about all the negative results of alcohol. Think of the lives ruined through its use. Why is it smart never to get involved with it at all?

③ Some people have been born into loving, Christian homes with parents who loved them, cared for them, and taught them about Jesus and His grace.<sup>23</sup> Others have been born into homes where the parents abused (mistreated; hurt) them and neglected (did not take care of; ignored) them.

Even if they did talk about Jesus, they certainly did not reflect (show) Christ in their lives. Their actions showed them to be agents (workers) of Satan, not of Christ. What hope does the gospel<sup>24</sup> hold out to these people? What promises can you give them about Jesus?

④ There is no question, some people have been born into horrible situations with results that will bother them for the rest of their lives. At the same time, why must we be careful not to spend the rest of our lives blaming our parents, or our poor upbringing, for our problems? How can we learn to, through God's grace, get over them?

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23. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

24. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.