

17

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

Freedom to Choose



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Freedom to Choose

Agency Is an Eternal Principle

God has created us with the ability to choose between good and evil. We are free to choose to follow Jesus Christ, who will give us liberty and eternal life, but we are also free to choose to follow Satan—a choice that leads to captivity and death (see 2 Nephi 2:27, page 59). The right to choose between good and evil and to act for ourselves is called agency.

Agency was one of the main causes of the conflict between the followers of Christ and the followers of Satan in the premortal life. God wanted to create a world where we—His children—could choose between good and evil for ourselves. Satan rebelled against God “and sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3, page 9). Because of this, Satan and his followers were cast out of heaven.



Why We Need Agency

Agency makes our life on earth a period of testing. When God planned the mortal creation of His children, He said, “We will [test] them . . . to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25, page 38). Without the gift of agency, we would have been unable to show our Heavenly Father that we are willing to follow His commandments. But because we are able to choose, we are responsible for our actions (see Helaman 14:30–31, page 403).

When we choose to live according to God’s plan, our agency is strengthened. Right choices increase our power to make more right choices, while wrong choices limit the freedom of our future choices.

As we obey each of our Father’s commandments, we grow in wisdom and strength of character. Our faith increases. We find it easier to make right choices. And each time we make a right choice, we are choosing to live with God and Jesus Christ forever.

Agency Requires Opposition

We cannot choose righteousness unless the opposites of good and evil are placed before us. Lehi, a great Book of Mormon prophet, taught that in order for God to accomplish His great purposes on our behalf, He had to allow us to experience “an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11, page 57).

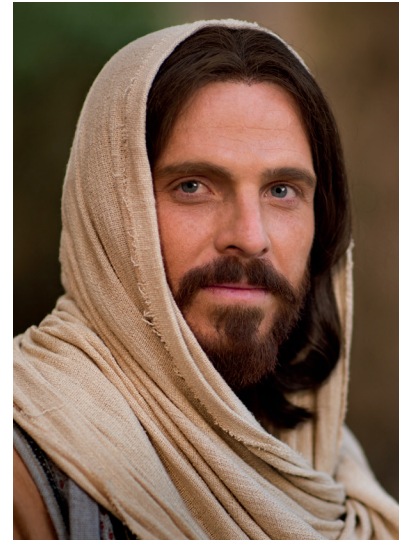


Satan does all he can to destroy God’s work. He seeks “the misery of all mankind. . . . He seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:18, 27, pages 58–59). He does not love us, he does not want any good thing for us (see Moroni 7:17, page 522), and he does not want us to be happy. He wants to make us slaves to sin, and he uses many disguises to enslave us.

Even though we are free to choose our course of action, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions. The consequences, whether good or bad, follow as a natural result of any choice we make.

Heavenly Father wants us to make choices that will lead to increased freedom, away from Satan’s captivity. We must watch and pray always, asking God to help us withstand temptations and make good choices. As we rely on Him, our Heavenly Father will strengthen our ability to resist temptation.

God’s commandments direct us away from danger and toward eternal life. By choosing wisely, we will gain exaltation, progress eternally, and enjoy perfect happiness.



“Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh. . . . And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil.”

2 Nephi 2:27, page 59

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Additional Scriptures

- **Alma 41:3, page 310** (we are judged by our works and desires)
- **Moroni 7:12–17, pages 521–22** (how to tell between good and evil)



Personal Experience

I was born in the Church to a strong LDS family. My father was a teacher, a farmer, a businessman, and a local politician. My mother was the most saintly of people. Their example and that of my older siblings was truly inspiring. Our family was held in high regard.

My dad went on a special assignment to another state and was diagnosed there with colon cancer and died suddenly. Soon our family was in rather desperate financial straits. I felt that the foundation of my existence had been crushed.

As a young teenager, I lied about my age and obtained a job in a faraway place doing construction. I made terrible choices and fell into many vices. I eventually got married, had children, and tried living a good life, but the addictive behaviors I had developed led me into an uncertain and unhappy existence.

My parents had given me a set of scriptures when I was 12. I never read them. But after I went to jail, I rediscovered the scriptures and decided that I would make them and their teachings about the Lord and His gospel my foundation. Now I know that choices matter.

My Heavenly Father has been good to me as I have repented and been blessed by the atoning blood of Christ. My life is in order. I will strive forevermore to do the right things and not go after Satan's counterfeit.

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What are some of the lessons you have learned from making good or bad choices?

Why do we have trials and opposition? What have you learned from your experiences with opposition?

Why did Heavenly Father give us agency?

Is there anything else that you have learned from this lesson that you would like to share?

Name _____ Offender # _____