



Opening Question:

What choices have you had to make recently? How important are they?

Why are we human beings unique in creation? We have minds to reason. We can communicate our thoughts through language. We have the ability to act on what we can imagine. But what makes us unique is our ability to choose. We have free will and we can use that ability in a very special way. We can make moral choices.

But what makes a choice moral? Consider this analogy. It's like the difference between a window and a mirror. When we see through a window, we can focus on others. But in a mirror, we can only see ourselves. Many moral choices are like the difference between a window and a mirror. What's more important? God and others? Or ourselves? That's the dividing line of morality.

Free Will and the Temptation of Jesus

Jesus exercised his free will. He made his primary moral choice when he was tempted in the desert.

God's Spirit led Jesus into the backcountry so the devil could test him. He lived on little food for forty days. After that, he was very hungry.

The devil came to tempt Jesus. "If you're really God's Son, just say the word. These stones will turn into bread for you."

Jesus replied: "Scripture says: 'People need more than bread to really live. They need every word that God speaks!'"

Next, the devil took Jesus into Jerusalem and stood him on the top of the Temple. "If you're really God's Son, jump off. Scripture says:

'God will command his angels to take care of you.'



It also says:

'His angels will take you by their hands so you won't even stub your toe as you land.'"

Jesus replied: "Scripture also says, 'All of you! Do not test your God!'"

Finally, the devil took him onto a very high mountain top.

He showed Jesus the riches and power of every country on earth. "I will give you all this, if you fall on your knees and worship me."

Jesus replied: "Go away, Satan! Scripture says, 'Worship the Lord your God! Only serve him!'"

At this point, the devil left Jesus.

Matthew 4:1-11a (see Luke 4:1-13)

The devil tempted Jesus with three choices: possessions, popularity, and power. Jesus, the devil implied, you can be the Christ of possessions. Change this stone into a barley loaf that looks like a gray river rock. After you feed yourself, feed others. Provide others with their daily needs. They'll love you for it and make you number one. He rejected that thought.

Next, the devil wanted Jesus to be the Christ of popularity. Be the superhero, Jesus. Float down from the top of the Temple. Dazzle the people

with other amazing feats. Be the center of attention. But he rejected that idea, too.

Finally, the devil wanted Jesus to be the Christ of power. Be like Caesar, the king of kings. Rule over other kings in a vast empire. Not only rule but be the high priest to the pagan gods just like Caesar was in Rome. It didn't matter that the Jews considered the pagan gods as demons and Caesar as a devil worshiper. Worship me, the devil said, just like Caesar. And I'll make you all-powerful just like Caesar. But, again, Jesus said he would not look down and focus on himself. He would look up to God. Jesus exercised his free will and made a moral choice. He placed God first.

Moral Choice

Like Jesus, we use our free will and make moral choices. In this way, we share in God's image. When we use our free will, we are conscious of both our actions and the surroundings where we act. We also use our reason. We automatically consider our experiences in the past and our expectations in the future. But we do act within limits. We live within space and time. We can suffer from ignorance, fear, and anxiety. We have social constraints like traditions, norms and civic laws. We, however, can't use these limits just as an excuse. We do act freely. And there are consequences. We need to take responsibility, whether we take credit or blame.

We can break the moral act down into three factors:

- The object of the choice which is the moral act in itself.
- The intent of the choice which is the desired result of the act.
- The circumstances of the act: its context can accentuate or diminish responsibility of the act.

When we consider the Temptation in the desert, we can now see Christ is the example of faithful choice in the face of temptation. He also give us the Spirit to overcome temptation. He shows us what choices to make and gives us the power to achieve them.

Remember the analogy of the window and the mirror. When we make the moral choice for God and others, the analogy actually changes. As we see through the window, we can actually see ourselves more clearly in the mirror. Why? Because we are looking through their eyes. When we focus on God and others, we see ourselves as we truly are.

Now we look into a dark mirror. But, soon, we will see everything face to face. Now I don't know everything. Soon, I will know everything in the same way God sees me.

1 Corinthians 13:12

Closing Question:

What are the most important moral choices one can make?

Reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraphs 1701-1715, 1730-1763.

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