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# CHOICES, COMMANDMENTS AND GOD'S

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*Our choices determine happiness or misery in this life and in the life to come.*



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**IN THE PREMORTAL** council in heaven, the Father's plan included agency as an essential element. Lucifer rebelled "and sought to destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3). Accordingly, the privilege of having a mortal body was denied Satan and those who followed him.

Other premortal spirits exercised their agency in following Heavenly Father's plan. Spirits blessed by birth to this mortal life continue to have agency. We are free to choose and act but not free to control the consequences of our choices. Hence, our choices determine happiness or misery in this life and in the life to come. "Choices of good[ness] and righteousness lead to happiness, peace,

and eternal life, while choices of sin and evil eventually lead to heartache and misery."<sup>1</sup>

We cannot blame circumstances or others for a decision to act contrary to God's commandments. We are all responsible and accountable to God for how we develop Christlike attributes, talents, and abilities, and we are responsible for how we utilize the time allotted to us in this existence.

## WHY WE HAVE COMMANDMENTS

We knew in the premortal existence that the exercise of agency could result in opposition and conflict—the war in heaven is evidence of this truth. We knew that in addition to war and violence there would be significant



# SINS, ETERNAL PLAN

sinful conduct across the entire world. We also knew that Jesus Christ was willing to pay the price for these sins. His suffering, which was beyond comprehension, would result in victory over sin and spiritual death. His Resurrection would overcome physical death. We had confidence that following mortal death, we would all live again.

The Savior, who paid a price for all of us beyond what we can fully comprehend, did not achieve the Atonement so we can concentrate on non-eternal materialistic goals or, for that matter, frivolous, self-indulgent fun and games. Think about the Lord's purpose when He stated, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

Some seem to say or imply, "Wouldn't a loving Father in Heaven be satisfied if I am less than I ought to be? Would He really deny me blessings just because I like to drink alcohol and coffee?" Unfortunately, that is the wrong question and displays a lack of understanding of the Father's plan. The real question is "How can I be the righteous,

loving person my Father and the Savior would want me to be?" The scriptures declare, "[Where] much is given much is required" (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3).

In a world where rewards and trophies are often received for merely participating, standards and expectations may seem unfair or even cruel. This is particularly true for those who insist on following their own path without complying with the Father's plan, regardless of the consequences.

Many justify sinful conduct and use as their defense, "Jesus taught us to love everyone." This, of course, is true, but often those who advocate this position seem inclined to ignore His equally important admonition, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

It is not appropriate for us to negotiate the terms of our relationship with the Godhead. Having a broken heart and contrite spirit is the initial requirement for starting on the covenant pathway initiated by baptism. Humble supplication to Deity is called for. As we are taught by King

Benjamin: “For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have . . . of every kind?” (Mosiah 4:19).

## RESPONDING TO THE CHOICES OF OTHERS

We must be kind and compassionate and treat everyone with respect, even when they choose a path that we know is not consistent with the Father’s plan and the Savior’s teachings. But if we really want to be kind, we must also teach repentance. It is

not kind, and we don’t do anyone a favor, when we refrain from urging those we love to change their lives and accept the Savior’s Atonement. There are incredible, eternal blessings that await those who repent.

The Savior Himself made this clear in speaking to the Nephites when He said, concerning those who would repent, “Him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (3 Nephi 27:16). He went on to say, “And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing

entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end” (3 Nephi 27:19).

## IF YOU NEED TO REPENT

Please know that you can become clean. You can find the joy you desire in this life. You should never assume that you are beyond redemption. You are not. At your core you are a child of God. You can have hope and joy. You can change your heart and repent. You can forgive and be forgiven.

## RIGHTEOUSNESS TAKES FEAR AWAY

The scriptures are clear that in the last days there will be “wickedness and abominations” (1 Nephi 14:12). However, the Saints, small in number and scattered upon all the face of the earth, will be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14). The Lord promised that He will “preserve the righteous” and we “need not fear” (1 Nephi 22:17).

To paraphrase Romans 12:12, “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.” In doing so, you can enjoy and achieve all that the Savior has promised you. **NE**

*From a Worldwide Devotional for Young Adults given on September 11, 2016.*

### NOTE

1. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 12.



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