

Lesson
2

Agency: The Power to Choose

Purpose To encourage class members to continue to use their agency wisely, as they did in the premortal life when they chose to follow Heavenly Father’s plan.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study 2 Nephi 2:27; Moses 4:1–4; 7:32; Abraham 3:24–28.
2. Materials needed:
 - a. The plan of salvation chart you created for lesson 1 (if you drew the chart on the chalkboard for lesson 1, draw it on a piece of large paper now, or show the copy of the chart in the picture section of the manual). Make sure all the labels and scripture references are now included on the chart. Save this chart for use in future lessons.
 - b. A pen or pencil and a piece of paper for each class member.
 - c. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher President Spencer W. Kimball, twelfth President of the Church, described agency as the “basic gospel law” (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 38). So important is this law that Heavenly Father has always protected it. Before we came to this earth he cast Satan out because Satan sought to destroy our agency. Heavenly Father allows us to use our agency in this life even though he knows many of us will use it unwisely. President David O. McKay, ninth President of the Church, said, “Next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct that life is God’s greatest gift to man” (Gospel Ideals [1953], 299). Help class members understand the importance of this great gift.

Note that although the term “free agency” is often used, the correct, scriptural term is simply “agency” (see D&C 29:36; see also page 11 of this lesson).

Suggested Lesson Development

Agency Is the Power to Choose Good or Evil

Activity Give class members pens or pencils and paper. Ask them to think of the choices they have made so far today and list as many as they can in one minute. At the end of a minute, invite them to share some of the choices on their lists. Then ask:

- Which of your choices today do you think was the most important?

Have class members circle this item on their list. Invite a few volunteers to tell which choice they circled and why they feel it was most important.

- Where did you get your ability to choose?

Have a class member read aloud Moses 7:32. Suggest that those who are using their own scriptures mark this verse (class members should not mark in library copies or borrowed copies of the scriptures).

Explain that Heavenly Father has given us agency—the power to choose between good and evil. But agency is more than just the ability to do what we want; agency is one of the most basic and important of all gospel laws.

Quotation

Have a class member read the following statement from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Your agency, the right to make choices, is not given so that you can get what you want. This divine gift is provided so that you will choose what your Father in Heaven wants for you. That way He can lead you to become all that He intends you to be. That path leads to glorious joy and happiness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 33; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 25).

Note to the teacher

Invite class members to become familiar with the teachings of the General Authorities by listening to them at general conference or by reading their messages in the Church magazines. These men are appointed by the Lord to teach us and help us along the path toward exaltation.

Story

Explain that for us to have and use agency, several conditions must exist. Write *Principles of Agency* on the chalkboard. Then tell the following story:

Teresa had been away for the summer. During her first day back at school she noticed something different about the way some of her friends treated her. They seemed distant, even a bit unfriendly. Teresa missed the easygoing relationship they used to have.

A few days later Teresa found her friends smoking behind the school. When she approached them, they invited her to join them.

Teresa was shaken. She didn't know what to do. She wanted to get along with her friends again, but she knew that what they were doing was wrong. What would her friends say if she refused to join them?

Chalkboard discussion

Write *1. Law* on the chalkboard below “Principles of Agency.”

- What commandment, or law, is involved in this story? (The Word of Wisdom.)

Write *2. Knowledge of the law* on the chalkboard.

- Does Teresa have knowledge of the law?
- Why is it essential to our agency that there be laws (or commandments) and that we know what these laws are?

Write *3. Opposition—good and evil* on the chalkboard.

- What choices does Teresa have? What will Teresa do if she chooses good? What will she do if she chooses evil?

Write *4. Freedom of choice* on the chalkboard.

- Is Teresa free to choose what she will do?

At this point, the chalkboard should look like this:

<p>PRINCIPLES OF AGENCY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Law2. Knowledge of the law3. Opposition—good and evil4. Freedom of choice

Explain that these four principles are the foundation on which agency is based. (Leave this list on the chalkboard for the remainder of the lesson.)

Our Premortal Choices Affected Mortality

Scripture and
chart discussion

Display the plan of salvation chart. Have class members read and mark Abraham 3:24–26 as you study it together and review the chart.

Help class members understand that in verse 24, the one “like unto God” was Jesus Christ and that he made the earth for us.

- According to verse 25, why were we sent to earth? Why is agency necessary for us to accomplish this purpose?
- What is the “first estate” mentioned in verse 26? (Point to “Pre-earth Life” on the plan of salvation chart.)
- What is the “second estate”? (Point to “Mortality” on the chart.)

Explain that we are here on earth because of choices we made during our first estate, or pre-earth life.

Scripture
discussion

Help class members read, mark, and understand Abraham 3:27–28 and Moses 4:1–4.

Explain that when Heavenly Father asked whom he should send, Jesus volunteered to be the Savior of the world and help fulfill Heavenly Father’s plan. Lucifer (Satan) also volunteered, but he demanded conditions that would have violated Heavenly Father’s plan. Heavenly Father chose Jesus.

- What was wrong with Satan’s proposal to save us? (See Moses 4:3; he wanted to take away our agency and force us to do right; also, he wanted Heavenly Father’s glory for himself.) What happened to Satan because of his rebellion against Heavenly Father’s plan? (See Abraham 3:28; Moses 4:3–4.)
- Point out that one of the reasons Satan was cast out was because he “sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3). Why is agency so important? Why would it be bad for us to be forced to keep the commandments, as Satan wanted?

- What important choice did we make in the pre-earth life? (We chose to follow Heavenly Father and Jesus instead of Satan.) How do we know we made this choice? (We have physical bodies; those who followed Satan will never have the opportunity to have bodies. They did not keep their first estate.)

Quotation

Have a class member read the following statement by Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“In the great council in heaven, God’s plan was presented: the plan of salvation, the plan of redemption, the great plan of happiness. . . . The adversary rebelled and adopted a plan of his own. Those who followed him were denied the right to a mortal body. Our presence here confirms that we sanctioned our Father’s plan” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21).

Refer to the principles of agency listed on the chalkboard, and emphasize that these principles applied also to our first estate. We made one of the wisest choices of our eternal existence when we chose to follow Heavenly Father instead of Satan. That decision set an example we can follow today.

We Are Responsible for Our Choices

Chalkboard discussion

Add to the list on the chalkboard 5. *Responsibility for choices*. Explain that the final principle necessary for agency is our responsibility for the results of our own choices.

- We sometimes hear a person say, “Someone (or something) *made* me do it.” Will God ever accept that as justification for our choices? Why or why not?

Quotation

Have a class member read the following statement by Elder Packer:

“We are free to obey or to ignore the spirit and the letter of the law. But the agency granted to man is a *moral* agency (see D&C 101:78). We are not free to break our covenants and escape the consequences” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 108; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 84).

Discussion

Emphasize to class members that when we make choices, we must accept the consequences. We are free to choose our actions, but we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions. The consequences of unwise choices can put us in a position where our choices, and thus our freedom, are greatly limited.

- Some people think that when we obey the commandments we give up our freedom. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- How do we lose freedom by making bad choices? How do we gain freedom by making good choices?
- How have you seen this happen in your own life?

Invite class members to talk about situations they have seen or experienced where a bad choice led to loss of freedom or a good choice led to more freedom. (One example is the choice whether or not to obey your parents. Choosing to disobey could lead to greater restrictions, while choosing to obey could lead to greater trust and privileges.)

Emphasize that wise use of agency keeps all our choices open and improves our ability to choose. You may want to share a personal experience in which your righteous use of agency led to more freedom and a greater ability to choose.

Our Choices Are of Eternal Significance

Discussion

Refer back to the story about Teresa and ask:

- How could Teresa's choice affect her daily life? How will it affect her eternal life? Which is more important for Teresa to consider as she decides what to do?
- How might Teresa's friends react if she decides not to smoke with them? How can we gain strength to choose what is right even if it makes us unpopular?

Scripture discussion

Have class members read and mark 2 Nephi 2:27.

- According to this verse, what is our main choice in this life? (To choose liberty and eternal life or captivity and death.)
- How do we choose liberty and eternal life? What choices have you made this week that lead you toward liberty and eternal life?
- How does breaking the commandments of God lead to captivity and death?
- What are some seemingly small choices we face each week that, if made improperly, could gradually lead to captivity and spiritual death? (Answers may include whether or not to pray daily, attend church meetings each week, obey your parents, be completely honest in your schoolwork.)

Testimony

On the chalkboard opposite the five points you have listed, write *Do I righteously use my power to choose?*

Testify that each of us possesses the gift of agency, the freedom to choose between good and evil. We exercised our agency wisely to earn the right to come to earth. Now, in this life, we are responsible for each choice we make. Making righteous decisions puts us on the path toward eternal exaltation.

Encourage class members to consider their choices carefully and ask often, "Do I righteously use my power to choose?"

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. If *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276) is available, show "True to the Faith," a nine-minute segment.
2. Write the following statement (from Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 108; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 84) on the chalkboard:

"The laws of God are ordained to make us happy." —Elder Boyd K. Packer

- How can obedience to laws make us happy?

Discuss with class members how they have seen this to be true in their own lives or the lives of their family members or friends.

You may want to give class members pens or pencils and cards on which they can copy Elder Packer's statement to take home.