

The Role of Life-Changing Choices in Human Life | A Path to Perfection or Downfall?

Resisting Temptation: How Life-Changing Choices Transform Our Lives

Imagine yourself standing at a crossroads. To the right lies a bright and tranquil path, lined with green trees and bathed in pleasant sunlight. To the left, there is a dark, winding road, filled with alluring and deceptive sounds. Our lives are filled with such choices: life-changing choices between following the truth or succumbing to temptation.

However, these choices are anything but simple. Behind every decision lies more than a mere yes or no. In Islamic thought, the human being is a creature endowed with free will—meaning that he possesses the power to choose. This gift of free will is a tremendous blessing, granting the ability to discern between good and evil. However, this very blessing also places a great responsibility upon the human being. With this free will, we must choose whom to obey and what to resist. It is precisely here that the differences begin to emerge.

Are life-changing choices limited to those moments when we face major crossroads in life? Or can even a seemingly minor decision be part of these pivotal choices?

Is obeying God merely a collection of rigid commandments, or is it in fact a path that leads to peace and spiritual growth?

Does resisting Satan imply a constant inner battle, or is it a form of training that strengthens the innermost dimension of our being?

In this article, we will delve into both the outward and inward consequences of our choices-decisions that may appear simple at first glance, but in reality, take root in the very depths of our souls.

The Effects of Life-Changing Choices: Obedience to God

God has created the human being with the freedom to choose between the path of truth and the path of falsehood. However, based on the mathematical structure of the creation and the divine principle of decree and destiny, every choice carries inevitable consequences that one cannot escape. God has clearly distinguished the two paths-truth and falsehood-and has granted human beings the means to make life-changing choices between them, through revelation, intellect , and innate nature. Choosing the path of obedience to God and resisting Satan not only distances us from sin, but also brings about self-mastery, piety, inner peace, bliss in both this world and the Hereafter, and ultimately, spiritual growth and perfection.

These life-changing choices often manifest even in the smallest dimensions of our daily lives. A seemingly minor decision-such as whether to smile at a stranger's child in the park or to pass by indifferently-can itself be one of these life-changing choices. For with every decision, we are shaping the very essence of our being.

The ability to choose the path of obedience to God and to resist Satan requires firm resolve and strong willpower. If the destiny we choose is obedience to God and opposition to Satan, then it will bring about a series of divinely ordained decrees and effects. Below are some of the key consequences:

- **Nearness to God and His Pleasure:** Obedience to God is a means of drawing closer to Him. The more a person adheres to divine commands, the nearer they become to God, thereby attracting His satisfaction and love [1].
- **Inner Peace and Assurance:** Surrendering to God's will brings with it a profound sense of inner calm and assurance, delivering the individual from confusion and anxiety. This tranquility stems from the certainty that one is on the right path and that God is pleased with them. A person who remains steadfast in obeying divine commands is less likely to be overcome by anxiety in the face of life's trials, for they are confident that God is always by their side, guiding them. One of the clearest examples of this trust in God amidst hardship is found in the story of Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him) during the height of his escape from Pharaoh's forces, when he turned to his companions and said: "Indeed, God is with me; He will surely guide me [2]."
- **Bliss in This World and the Hereafter:** Obedience to God is the most significant expression of our life-changing choices. It entails following the commands and laws that have been prescribed for our true bliss. Such obedience not only brings about bliss in this world but also paves the way for bliss in the hereafter [3]. One who upholds divine instructions-such as honesty, justice, and serving others-will find greater success and admiration in social life, while simultaneously cultivating virtuous traits and attuning themselves to the living conditions of the Hereafter.
- **Spiritual Growth and Perfection:** Obedience to God aids us in distancing ourselves from base instincts and low desires, guiding us on the path toward spiritual perfection. This process resembles watering a tree that slowly grows

and eventually bears fruit. For instance, a person who remains committed to acts of worship such as prayer and fasting will, over time, strengthen qualities like patience, piety, and self-discipline-thereby drawing nearer to spiritual perfection.

- **Mastery Over the Self:** Opposing Satan entails resisting the temptations that draw one toward sin and distance one from God. As it is said, "Satan, relying on our evil-commanding soul, low desires, selfishnesses, egotism, and vain passions, diverts us from God's straight path [4]." This resistance requires mastery over the self-that is, the ability to restrain one's low desires and, instead of yielding to fleeting whims, strive toward Absolute Perfection. Human beings inherently seek infinity, which can only be found in the Almighty God; thus, mastery over the self and opposition to Satan guide a person towards this Infinity.
- **Piety:** The mission of Satan and the essence of piety stand in stark contrast to one another. In truth, opposing Satan is itself an act of piety. Whoever rises to confront Satan has, in effect, stepped onto the path of piety.

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Many people, due to a lack of knowledge of their true self, view divine commandments as obstacles to their true selves. They consider God's instructions a hindrance to their individuality and, under this pretext, choose to oppose Him. Yet, self-knowledge gives us the understanding that divine commands are not

chains that restrict our true self, but rather restraints upon the lower dimensions of our existence -so that our true self may be liberated.

Anyone who willingly chooses the path of disobedience to God and obedience to Satan must expect the consequences. Such a path signifies a departure from the road of bliss and perfection, and it inevitably brings about harmful outcomes. For when a person disobeys God's commands and follows Satan, they are, in essence, betraying their Beloved-God. This disobedience stems from a flawed understanding of the human essence and an attachment to something other than God. By ignoring divine instructions and surrendering to Satan, individuals prevent themselves from becoming the best version of themselves—essentially, from achieving their infinite potential. Moreover, disobedience to God and submission to Satan's commands bring about trials and difficulties in this world as well, obstructing the path to heaven and true perfection. Below are some of the consequences that arise from opposing God and obeying Satan:

- **Distance from Divine Mercy:** In Islamic teachings, divine mercy is the wellspring of all goodness and blessings in human life. While God's mercy encompasses all of creation, it exists in varying degrees-and receiving its fullest portion depends on faith and righteous deeds. Disobedience to God, which entails turning away from His commands and laws, deprives one of these special blessings. This is because such disobedience severs the compatibility and harmony between our existence and our True Beloved.
- **Confusion and Anxiety:** The human beings are inherently seeking peace and bliss; however, opposing God-essentially a rejection of the divine nature within-leads to inner conflict and a deep sense of confusion and misery. For

example, a person who pursues wealth through forbidden means may outwardly attain financial success, but inwardly, they are deprived of peace, living instead in constant anxiety and fear. The Holy Quran describes those who neglect the remembrance of God as living a hard and anxious life [5]. Disobeying God is, in essence, a form of this neglect, and as a result, it casts the human being into restlessness and despair.

- **Falling into the Abyss of Destruction:** Disobedience to God causes a person to deviate from the right path, ultimately leading to entrapment in sin and corruption. Such deviation ends in the downfall and destruction of both the individual and society. The stories of past nations who were afflicted with divine punishment and annihilation due to their defiance and disobedience are clear examples of this inevitable downfall [6].
- **Moral and Social Decline:** Moral and social values find their roots in divine teachings. When a society turns away from God, these foundational values are weakened, leading to widespread moral and social degradation. In a society where divine values are diminished and individuals are driven solely by personal interests, corruption and injustice, social disorder will inevitably rise. The prevalence of lies, betrayal, and moral decay in society is a direct consequence of neglecting divine guidance.
- **Misguidance and Deviation:** Obedience to Satan means surrendering to his temptations and seductive calls—none of which serve our true well-being. The Qur'an repeatedly identifies Satan as a sworn enemy of human beings [7], relentlessly engaged in misleading them. Submitting to Satan's temptations gradually traps a person in wrongful thoughts and actions. For instance, one

may begin to lie, believing-under Satan's influence-that falsehood can offer escape from difficulty. Yet these lies slowly pull the individual into a state of misguidance and isolation, severing their bond with truth and morality.

- **Loss of Inner Peace:** Those who follow Satan often lose their inner peace. This unrest stems from the burden of sins and guilt. Imagine someone who lies or betrays; initially, they may feel they have achieved their desires, but over time, guilt and spiritual turmoil will rob them of their peace.
- **Divine Punishment:** Following Satan does not only result in misguidance and loss of inner peace-it also leads to divine punishment [8]. This punishment refers to the bitter and painful consequences a person inevitably faces due to their wrong choices in life. These consequences may manifest both in this world and the Hereafter. For example, someone who amasses illicit wealth through sinful means may suffer legal repercussions in this world, but such a person will also be held accountable in the Hereafter and face the punishments ordained by God.

Ultimately, each of us walks the path of life accompanied by two voices: the voice of guidance and the voice of temptation. We are not meant to merely hear them-we are meant to choose. And it is these pivotal choices that determine our ultimate bliss or misery. With each repeated decision, our character takes shape; for human beings are not merely defined by what happens to them, but by what they choose to become in the face of life-changing choices.

References

[1]. Quran, 3:31

[2]. Quran, 26:62

[3]. Quran, 4:13

[4]. Suprme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei, Eid al-Fitr Sermon, April 27, 1990

[5]. Quran, 20:124

[6]. Quran, 10:13

[7]. Quran, 36:60

[8]. Quran, 16:63