

# Bite Size Bible Study

Free Will #188

By Pastor Lee

Did God give us “free will” to keep us from becoming robots?

Dictionary: The ability to make choices that are not determined by natural causes or predestined by fate or divine will.

Wikipedia: “free will” is the ability to choose between different possible courses of action.

Philosophers: “Most of us are certain that we have “free will”, though what exactly this amounts to is much less certain. According to David Hume, the question of the nature of “free will” is “the most contentious question of metaphysics.” If this is correct, then figuring out *what “free will” is* will be no small task indeed. Minimally, to say that an agent has “free will” is to say that the agent has the capacity to choose his or her course of action.

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/freewill/>

First of all let's agree that God has “free will”. He can do anything He wants to do, there is no one to stop Him and He answers to no one. However, I would like to put a caveat on that, in as much as even if He can do something it doesn't mean that He will. God is a loving person and will not use His “free will” on unloving actions. Does that limit His “free will”? NO! He is still free to do anything – He just uses His “free will” to say “no” to certain actions.

In Genesis 1:27 (CJB) “*So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.*” If we agree that God has “free will” then if we are in His likeness (image) then we likely have some level of “free will” also. It seems that we do have “free will”; as we as a species do pretty much as we please without being restricted but are still subject to the consequences of that action. We can love another person unconditionally or we can make war on a whole culture.

## **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.**

*And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”* Gen 2:16-17

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.* Gen 3:6-7

Truly they received knowledge that they had not possessed before. They learned that the actions they

chose using their “free will” could be in line with what God had told them but other actions were not. Those that were not – had unpleasant circumstances.

Using their “free will” they decided to do things their way, the way that seemed good to them. Thereby rejecting God's instructions. The tree was part of what God had created and it was good; it was not a bad tree or a magical tree, it was just a tree and God had put a limit on their use of that tree. The tree was only there as a test of whether they would trust God or use their “free will” to do things that seem best to them. This, as it turns out, was the first test for mankind and they blew it. Was God surprised? I don't think so I think he expected it. Did He cause it? No, they chose not to trust Him, because free will only exists if one is free to make choices.

So did God make that tree off limits so that Adam and Eve would make the wrong choice? No. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13. *No temptation (testing) has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.* They had the ability to resist by trusting what God had told them but they lacked the maturity to resist the temptation to use their “free will”.

To know how to use “free will” maturely one must know how to consider a particular action and take it mentally to its conclusion. How does one learn this and become mature? It can be through several methods; 1) it could be by watching others and learning from their mistakes, 2) it could be by making the mistakes themselves, or 3) it can be by trusting in what God tells them. Unfortunately, the one that we learn from the best is number 2. When we suffer from a bad decision it seems to stick with us better and longer than any of the other methods.

A few people in history have learned the lesson, but in general mankind is still struggling with the concept. God's instructions seem to these people to be the exact opposite of what their “free will” dictates. But the truth of it is that it sets them free and doesn't restrict anything that is good for the individual or mankind in general. It frees them from the consequences of acting outside of the way God has designed them.

When an individual becomes mature in the use of “free will”, they will have learned to trust God's instructions and no longer be tempted by the evil in the world. They will understand that they have the ability to do anything in their power, but they will chose, by using that same “free will”, not to do things that are harmful and/or against what God has taught us.