

between two options? If the Lord is God, follow Him. But if Baal is god, follow him”. But the people said nothing. They seem unable or unwilling to make a choice. They want to hedge their bets, sit on the fence, and keep their options open.

How different are we in the 21st century? Would you prefer to make a no-turning back choice, or one you could back out of if need be? Do you ever find that you are afraid to commit? If so, you may be worshipping the god of open options.

Over the years, the Israelites had seen themselves delivered from slavery repeatedly, spectacularly, and miraculously by the living God. The Egyptian gods were powerless against Him, as were the gods of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Yet, here they are in 1Kings 18, their faces licking the dust before Baal, worshipping another soon to be defeated god.

It should be annoying, but as God's people today, how different are we? We have been delivered from slavery to sin by Christ's death and resurrection spectacularly. Yet, here we are, many of us worshipping other gods.

CONCLUSION

You need to make a choice. Every person that ever lived has to make the same choice. It's either the world and it's pleasures and it's gods or it's Christ. And it's an urgent decision because to delay makes the right decision harder. Indecision in itself is a choice. Not to decide is to decide not to. If you have a ticket to South Africa this evening and can't decide whether to go or not, if you wait pass the departure time, the choice will have been made for you. The plane will take off without you. Decisions are made whether we make them or not. Time decides if you will not and time always decide against you. There is a lonely arena in the depths of your heart where the greatest battle of life must be fought alone; that's your decision about Christ. Your parents can't make it for you, the church can't make it for you, your friends can't make it for you. You have to make it yourself.

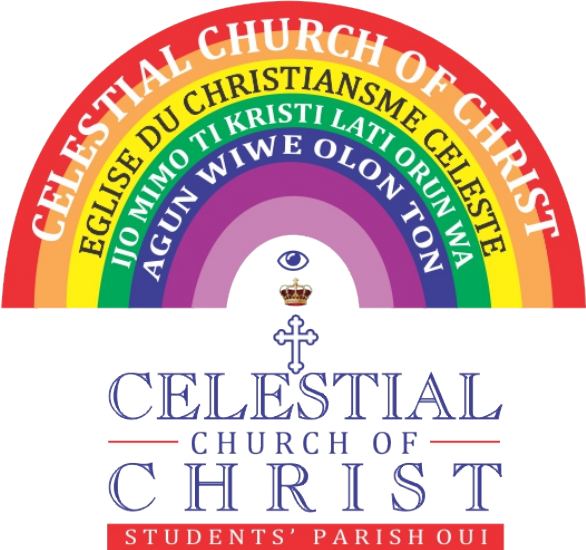
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CCCSPUI FBS DEPARTMENT

Commandant to the FBS Committee:

Bro. Agbaje Oluwasegun Matthew.



**FOUNDATION BIBLE SCHOOL
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TOPIC: CHOICE “בְּחִירָה” (JOSHUS 24:15)

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CHOICES (JOSHUA 24:15)



Choice involves decision making. It can include judging the merits of multiple options and selecting one or more of them. One can make a choice between imagined options or between real options followed by the corresponding action. For example, a traveler might choose a route for a journey based on the preference of arriving at a given destination as soon as possible. The preferred/chosen route can then follow

from information such as the length of each of the possible routes, traffic conditions, etc. The arrival at a choice can include more complex motivators such as cognition, instinct, and feeling. Simple choices might include what to eat for dinner or what to wear on a Saturday morning -choices that have relatively low impact on the chooser's life. More complex choices might include; what candidate to vote for in an election, what profession to pursue, a life partner, etc-choices based on multiple influences and having larger ramifications.

Freedom of choice is generally cherished, whereas a severely limited restricted choice can lead to discomfort with choosing, and possibly an unsatisfactory outcome. In contrast, a choice with excessively numerous options may lead to confusion, reduced satisfaction, and regret of the alternatives not taken.

It is quite unfortunate that most people believe that we have many choices in life, but from God's perspective, we only have two. These personal choices include **servicing God or servicing sin**. One path is obedience unto righteousness to eternal life. The other path is sin unto death. Romans 6:16 says, *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

Joshua was a great military leader who took the place of Moses when Moses went to be with the Lord. In Joshua 24:15, Joshua gathered all the leaders of Israel together at a place called Shechem. He was getting ready to die and it was his farewell address. During this address, he warned the people about their idolatry and the consequence that will befall them. He admonished them to make a choice and choose who they will serve. He said in a loud voice, as for me and my house we are going to serve the Lord. This is a decision every single person has to make. You either decide you are going to serve the gods of materialism all around us or the true and the living God. Moses had warned the Israelites earlier when he was dying (Deuteronomy 30:19). Moses said the same thing Joshua was saying many years ago. And every generation has to hear it over and over again, that's why the gospel never grows old. It applies to every generation alike, we have to make a choice. James 1:8 says, *a double minded man is unstable in all his ways*. Are you unstable and double minded about your relationship with Christ or are you totally committed? What do you waver

Bible who were wealthy, including Abraham and David. True greed is an issue of the heart that is evidenced in the flesh. So we cannot just look at how much a person owns and decide the person is greedy. Idolatry is always an issue of the heart.

One thing about greed is undeniable: people who accumulate more and more stuff have to spend more and more of their time and energy managing it, and when they do, the word of Jesus, that no person can serve two masters, are proven true. Most people who have accumulated large amounts of stuffs/possessions end up fulfilling the word of Jesus even though they may not intend to: they end up showing more love to their wealth than they do to God, and they spend their time with their stuff, "being devoted to" it and "ignoring" God.

How can we tell if greed has crept into our hearts and is diluting our devotion to God? One way is to get honest about how attached to our material possessions we really are. If it comes down to it, could we let go of them in service to the Lord? Many early Christians lost everything in times of persecution.

Hebrews 10:32-34 *"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance"*.

If like the early Christians, we can "joyfully accept" losing our property for the sake of the Lord, we know we do not have greed as an idol in our heart.

Another way we can see if we might be dealing with the idol of greed is to pay attention to how much time we spend doing the Lord's work and how much joy we get from following the Lord, versus how much time we spend managing the things that we really do not need. Does all our time seem to be soaked up by our stuff, leaving no time to pray, read the Bible, share our faith, or fellowship with other Christians? If so, we might have a greed problem.

To root out an idol from our hearts, we can follow in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, who wrote about the dedication we must have to get rid of idols and truly follow the Lord.

1Corinthians 9:24-27 *"know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And everyman that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"*.

The god of Open Options

1 kings 18:21 describes a crucial moment of decision. It's the final showdown between the God of Israel and a false god called Baal. Elijah calls God's people to choose once and for all between the living God who delivered them, and this false god who has captured their affections. He said to them, "how long will you waver

to pay attention to. Too often we let the possessions in our lives get in the way of our dedication to God.

Colossians 3:5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry".

When this verse is translated into English, it is unclear if the word "idolatry" refers to the whole list, or just the last item, "greed". Thankfully however, the Greek text is clearer, and from it we can see that the word "idolatry" refers only to the last thing on the list, "greed".

Before we begin to discuss greed and idolatry, we should discuss whether or not "greed" is the proper translation. Many versions have "covetousness", while many others have "greed". In translating the Bible, our intent must be to try to duplicate the meaning of the original language into the receptor language, i.e from Greek to English. While this sounds easy, it is often exceedingly difficult. This is due to many factors, one being that most Greek words do not have a singular meaning, but rather a range of meanings, which is referred to as the "semantic range" of the word. This means that the task of the translator becomes one of finding which English word has a semantic range that most closely matches the semantic range of the Greek word.

Another problem in translating is that English words have different meanings in different regions of the world, or to different age or groups, or to people with different levels of education.

In this case, the Greek word that is translated "greed" or "covetousness" is pleonexia (πλεονεξία), and it refers to a person desiring to have more than he needs, or more than his share. The English word "greed" is a selfish and excessive desire to have more than one needs. The English word "covetousness" has two primary definitions. The first is simply to have a strong desire for something, apart from any reference to need, or to the abundance one already has, for example, "I greatly covet winning the blue ribbon". This definition of covet can be good or evil, depending on the context on which it is used. The second definition of covet is always evil and refers to wanting something that belongs to someone else, for example, "you shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17). Having studied both "greed" and "covetousness", we can see that the English word "greed" is a much better match to pleonexia than "covetousness".

Now we know that the word of God teaches that greed is idolatry. The reason for that is simple: in selfishly taking or acquiring more than we need, we are elevating ourselves in an unhealthy way. Greed makes us the center of our attention: we spend our money, time, and energy on ourselves, when the word of God says to seek God and His Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). There are different reasons for greed, one of them is certainly not trusting God to take care of us in life. Furthermore, a hurtful aspect of greed is that the greedy person is not sensitive to the needs of those who are less fortunate, and who could use what he is needlessly accumulating.

Another aspect of greed is that it is a "heart" issue, not a "things" issue. Having great wealth is not necessarily "greed", and there are certainly wonderful people in the

about? Joshua the great military hero who led them from victory to victory reminded them of all the victories God had given and he said serve God and live, serve these other gods and you will die and come under the judgement of God. The wars were over, but Joshua found that the people were going towards idolatry. That's why, most times the **problems of peace** are greater than the **problems of war**.

So he called all the leaders to Shechem and stood before them and spoke out in a loud voice, he reviewed the history of Israel and how God had blessed them and how they had won their victories by the power of God. And the people should have been grateful to God but instead they were now going to other gods. The same applies to humans today, we should be grateful for the blessings He has given us but we find that we are worshipping other gods. The gods of pleasure, the gods of lust, the gods of greed, the gods of hatred, the gods of materialism, even the gods of war. And Joshua said such condition cannot continue, they must decide whether they want to serve the idols or they want to serve the living God and there will be no room for neutrality, neither does Jesus Christ. There is no room on the throne of your heart for two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon, you must make a choice. Adam and Eve had to make a choice in the garden of Eden. God made us in His own image and gave us the right to choose, so when Adam and Eve faced that choice, they chose wrongly, they broke the law of God. And God said in the day you do you will suffer and die. And man has been suffering ever since and it's all because of that first sin in the garden of Eden and man has been inheriting the tendency to sin ever since. The seed of sin is in us when we are born. David said in sin did my mother conceive me. At conception, sin was already planted. And then comes the age of moral accountability when you are held accountable by God for your actions and then you choose to sin and then the rest of your life you practice sin. Although, you are born in sin, you choose to sin at a certain point in life, and then you practice sin. Adam had to make a choice, and he made the wrong choice. You have to make a choice.



There are many choices, like the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and was filled with questions. He wanted eternal life and asked, Good master, what must I do to find eternal life, and Jesus said go and

sell all that you have, give it to the poor, take up the cross and follow me. The young man was grieved, he wept (mark 10:17-22). He wanted Christ, but he wanted his money more. Now, if he has said alright, I will do it Lord, Jesus would have probably said no, it is not your money I want, it is your heart. The issue is our attitude towards these idols. The

television itself can become an idol. Jesus said no man can serve two masters. You have to make a choice. You have to choose between two spiritual fathers. *John 8:44* says, *ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* For many, the devil is their spiritual father. You may not be aware of it, you may not admit it but that is the way God looks at it. There is either the true and living God as your Father or there is the devil.

Moses said, I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live (*Deuteronomy 30:19*). Note that he mentioned seeds, this has something to do with your children and your grandchildren and your children's children.

WE CAN NOT FOLLOW TWO MASTERS

It is a common complaint that people just “can not find the time” to do the things with God that they want to do. Many people want to know the Bible better, or have more time to serve God's people, and just never seem to have the time to do it. Jesus taught that no one can serve two masters

Matthew 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon”.

This verse has three difficult phrases and to properly understand the verse, we must understand it's vocabulary

and customs. Jesus told us plainly what would happen if a person tried to serve two masters. One was that the person would love one master, and thus serve that one well, and “hate” the other, and thus not serve that one. It helps us to make sense of the verse when we realize that in the Eastern mind set vocabulary, “hate” does not always mean “hate” as we generally use it today in the sense of extreme hostility and intense dislike. Especially when used in contrast to “love” in the biblical culture (both Hebrew and Greco-Roman), the word “**hate**” means **love less**.

A good example of “hate” meaning “love less” is when God said about Jacob and Esau, “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated” (*Roman's 9:13*). First of all, in *Malachi 1:2-3*, which is where *Romans 9:13* was quoted from, God is not speaking of the actual people, “Jacob and “Esau”. He is speaking of the countries of Israel and Edom, which were founded by Jacob and Esau respectively. God did not “hate” Edom, but he showed less grace and special love to the country of Edom than He did to Israel. Using “hate” as “love less”, Jesus was speaking in real and practical terms when He said that if a person tried to serve two masters, he would love one more than the other. Each of us only has so much time and energy, and it is nearly impossible to equally divide them between two masters that are making demands on us.

The second difficult phrase in the verse, in the typical Eastern fashion of teaching, is an amplification and clarification of the first phrase. Jesus made sure we understood what He meant by saying that a person trying to serve two masters would “hold to the one,

and despise the other”. As in the first phrase about love and hate, we must understand the biblical vocabulary to understand this phrase. The first phrase, translated “hold to” in the *kjv*, is cleared up for us in both modern versions, which read “be devoted to” (*HCSB, ESV, NET, NIV*). However, the use “despise” in both the *KJV* and many modern versions is less clear and needs to be properly understood.

It is surprising that even the modern versions usually continue to use the word “despise”, even though it gives most readers the wrong impressions. The Greek word translated “despise” is *kataphroneō* (*καταφρονέω*), and it has a range of meaning that encompasses looking down on someone or something with contempt or aversion; considering something not important and thus disregarding it; and not caring about, or ignoring someone or something. In defense of the modern versions use of “despise”, it is true that one of the primary meanings of the English word “despise” is to look down on with contempt or to regard as worthless (this is even the first definition in *Merriam-Webster dictionary*). However, the much more well-known use of “despise” is one of the other definitions: an intense dislike or even loathing.

As students of the Foundation Bible School, we should be aware that Jesus was not saying a person would be devoted to one master while intensely disliking or loathing the other master. Why would anyone have to hate or despise someone just because he loved or was devoted to someone else? That does not make sense. Jesus was making the simple statement that if a person had two masters, he would often be devoted to one and end up ignoring the other. We all know what it is like to get busy with certain things that we end up ignoring other things, even if the things we end up ignoring are important or things we enjoy doing.

There are other uses of the Greek *kataphroneō* (*καταφρονέω*) that are translated “despise” in many versions, which can give us the wrong impression of what the verse is saying. One is when Paul writes to Timothy and says, “let no one despise you for your youth” (*1tim 4:12*). No one would hate someone who was young. The better way to understand the verse is just like *Matthew 6:24* about the Two masters; Paul told Timothy not to let anyone ignore him just because he was young. Similarly in many versions, *Hebrews 12:2* says that Jesus endured being crucified “despising the shame”. It is indeed a shameful thing to be crucified, but Jesus did not hate it, He ignored it. In doing that, He set a wonderful example for us to follow. Many times we will find that if we are to be true followers of Jesus, we will have to ignore the shame and mistreatment we endure.

The third difficult phrase we need to understand in *Matthew 6:24* is the concluding sentence. Jesus powerfully concluded the point He was making by saying, “ye cannot serve God and mammon”. “Mammon” is an Aramic term for wealth, property, or anything of value. “Wealth” is a better translation than “money”. There are Greek words that specifically mean money, and that would have appeared in the verse if Jesus had meant only “money”. In contrast, “mammon” refers to total wealth including money, property, and possessions, any or all of which some people serve instead of God.

The teachings of Jesus about serving god of “possessions” is a lesson we need

