

Why Your Choices Make You Powerful

In episode 11 of my new series, *Questions With God*, I ask the question, “What role does choice play in our salvation?” Maybe it’s the college professor in me, but I have always had a deep curiosity of how things work, why they work that way, and what that ultimately means. I remember the first time I started thinking about things like this. I was in college, probably in my first theology class, and the professor was raising questions that were bending my mind and challenging beliefs I had always taken for granted.

At the time, it felt like an academic exercise, and the answers to these questions didn’t seem to matter much in the grand scheme of things. But then I started making movies about God, and suddenly, things became much more complicated, because now I was face to face with questions that carried eternal significance. I watched as God relentlessly pursued people who could have cared less about Him, and I watched as He met people who were desperate for Him. I remember one moment in particular ...

I was filming *Furious Love* and was in Madrid, Spain, finding out about a ministry there called Betel whose mission was to get heroin addicts off the streets (and off heroin) and give them a job—basically, give them their life back. On one of the days, we traveled to the city dump, which was a hotbed of heroin junkies (the local police basically turned a blind eye to this place, so it was seething with drug addicts). While filming there, we were approached by a group of men carrying their friend who was overdosing—right then and there. I’d never seen anything like this. The guy was white as a sheet, shaking uncontrollably and nearly incoherent. Luckily, a hospital truck had come that day, and they were able to save this guy’s life. Thirty minutes later, I watched as this same

man was stumbling around the dump, looking for used needles on the ground that may have had a little heroin left in them that he could shoot up with. It was a heartbreaking picture of addiction, but also a telling reminder of how sin often affects our own lives. Forgive me, God, I have sinned. I'll never act like that again. Then we're right back at it in no time...

We struck up a conversation with this man, and his self-loathing and shame were palpable. He told us he deserved this fate, that he was a lost soul. The Betel guys tried to explain to him that there was still hope, that Jesus was offering him freedom. In the end, he rejected their offer.

It wasn't until I got back home and started putting the movie together that I realized what we had filmed. Due to the danger of filming in a place like that, we had to use undercover cameras, which meant we couldn't monitor what we were filming, so we just pointed them in the general direction of the action and hoped we were capturing it. But when I started looking at the footage, I couldn't believe it. As this conversation was happening with a man who thought he was worthless, we had captured a cross from a church in the distance just behind him. It was as if Jesus were standing right behind this man, and all he had to do was turn around to find grace and freedom.

I think it's easy to get caught up in the academic nature of questions like the one raised in this episode, but the truth is, our choices do make a difference. 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that God desires all to be saved, but unfortunately we know that not everyone will be saved in the end, because wide is the path to destruction (Matt. 7:13). But choice is a funny thing, because to give someone choice is to give them power, in this case, power over themselves. I often hear people complaining that God has done such and such to them, or that He is a cruel God to allow so much suffering. But we forget that it is not God who is cruel, it's us. Our choices, taken

collectively across the globe, have added up to the world as it is today. But thankfully, God is always offering us a way of escape, a way of redemption and forgiveness.

All we have to do is choose it.