

How would you define free will? Is it the ability to make any and every choice? Is it entirely separate from any other factors? Is free will truly free?

I've been wrestling with the idea of free will over the past few days in an attempt to understand better God's sovereignty (or his supreme authority), especially in terms of humanity. And I've been looking at various camps that have strong views on God's sovereignty and each one has to wrestle with free will to balance out their belief.

And so, how free is our will? If we were to say that we are absolutely free to do anything we want, well we know that's not true. If you think you can, go ahead and try to fly without an airplane or play a game of cards under water without an oxygen tank. Obviously there are limits to our free will in that regard.

Maybe we'd say that we, then, are free to choose whatever we desire within those physical limits. And I would agree with that, we have choices in those limits, but are those choices completely free, either? I mean, wouldn't we always make the right and best choice if we were completely free? We all make choices that are impacted by a multitude of factors and emotions are a big part of that. All of us know of a time when we've responded to others out of hurt or fear or anger or self-preservation, right? And often when we do, we don't like the choice we've made. We yell at our kids. We isolate ourselves from our spouse. We purposefully avoid an individual who wronged us. It's true when they say, "hurt people hurt people."

So if we're impacted by our emotions in this

way, is our will really free? Are we truly agents in charge of our own choices?

But when it comes right down to it, we have choices to make. And even when we're hurt or angry or lonely or depressed, our choices are *our* choices. We are active agents in those choices. And because of that, we have responsibility for those choices and need to face the consequences of them. And as much "fun" as it is to blame everyone else for the problems we find ourselves in, we ultimately have a choice in the matter.

I think the best example for this comes from Joseph (I encourage you to read Genesis 37-50). When Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt by those who should have loved and protected him (his brothers) he had his own choices to make. And though his circumstances were out of his control to a large extent, his good choices within those circumstances led him to power and prominence multiple times. And every time he was pushed down or forgotten by those around him, God lifted him up because Joseph continued to be faithful to God's leading.

And that's where we are at too. We may be in difficult, even awful circumstances, but we have choices to make. And those choices may be influenced by our emotions and outside forces to some extent, but we are ultimately responsible for what we choose. And as hard as those choices can be to make, my prayer is that you and I seek to follow God's leading in providing life and love to those around us.

Serving Him and you,
Matthew

Movie Night

On Sunday, August 26th we will be hosting the movie 'Tortured for Christ' at 6:30pm. This is the powerful and moving story of Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand (founder of the 'Voice of the Martyrs') as he faces great persecution in 1945 Romania. Please visit our website for more details and to purchase tickets (<http://astoriachristian.com/upcoming-events/tortured-christ-movie>) or contact the church office (office@astorichristian.com). The cost for each ticket is \$9.

Area VBS

We encourage the participation and support of other area churches. Here are two opportunities in the next month:

Grace Bible VBS is August 6th – 10th from 6-8pm. This is for age 3 through 5th grade.

Bader VBS is August 11th at 9am to 3pm. This is out at Camp Emmanuel for all ages.

July Financial Report

	Weekly Actual	Yearly Actual	Yearly Budget
July 1	\$1,203.00	\$37,005.89	\$41,541.76
July 8	\$831.00	\$37,836.89	\$43,129.52
July 15	\$1,582.00	\$39,418.89	\$44,737.28
July 22	\$1,383.00	\$40,801.89	\$46,335.04
July 29	\$1,820.05	\$42,621.94	\$47,932.80
Totals	\$6,819.05		

Youth Offering

Thank you for your generous giving to support the youth this past Sunday. The offering was \$1,208.

August Prayer List

Tina Althiser (Judy B's friend) – cancer treatments (7-15)
 Beckie Beaird (Laurie M's friend) – chemo treatments (6-10)
 Sheila Belville – diabetes (5-27)
 Shelly Claxton – cancer (Pam K's friend) (12-24)
 Cory Chockley – continued needs (7-29)
 Tim Gunter – hospital, health issues (7-29)
 Todd Hamm - cancer treatments (7-30)
 Doris Harper (Cindy M's mom) – hospice (7-22)
 Renee Kagel – tests (5-27)
 Leonard Kaufman - cancer (10-16)
 Gloria Lapping (Pam Carlock's mother) – serious health issues (4-29)
 Jake McCombs – memory health issues (7-29)
 Brandi Rudd – cancer treatments (7-29)
 Marissa – cancer (Letha Stambaugh's friend) (11-5)
 Karen (Jones' friend) – cancer treatments (4-22)
 The lady who Pam K takes care has severe back pain issues (7-29)

Condolences

Beverly Burgard family
 Karen Sager family
 Linda Perry family (Denny Belville's niece)
 Jean Martin family
 Nadine Waters family

Praises

Bob Mummert successful surgery and recovery

**You Are Welcome
At Our Services!**

Sunday

Morning Worship.....9 a.m.

Sunday School.....10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Family Night.....6:00 p.m.

August Events:

- Sat, Aug 4th 5:00 a.m. (approx time) St. Jude's Runners in Astoria
- Mon, Aug 6th - 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. VBS @ Grace Bible
- Friday, Aug 10th
- Fri, Aug 10th 7:00 p.m. Grace Harmony @ Bader
- Sat, Aug 11th 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. VBS @ Bader
- Sun, Aug 12th 6:00 p.m. Board Meeting
- Tues, Aug 14th 6:30 p.m. Man Up
- Mon, Aug 21st 6:00 p.m. Camp Fellowship – LaGrange
- Sun, Aug 26th 4:30 p.m. Youth Committee
- Sun, Aug 26th 6:30 p.m. Tortured for Christ Movie



TEACHER'S Prayer

*Lord, please bless my students
 And help them as they grow:
 May I teach them faithfully
 The things they need to know.
 So they may face the future
 Knowing they're prepared,
 And when they think of school days,
 May they know their teacher cared.*