

can and does make it work so that one of these does not negate the other. Although we may not always understand how these things work in conjunction with each other, we should recognize that just because someone knows what I will do and what the result of my life will be does not mean that I do not make my own choices. In fact, God's foreknowledge should encourage me in that God tells me what the outcome of choices will be (Deuteronomy 28; Galatians 6:7-8). Now, it is up to me to decide whether to obey God or not!

No one should use the foreknowledge of God as an excuse to pass the blame for the choices they make onto God. God does not force anyone to make a right or wrong choice. Even though He knows the future, we must still recognize He has given us the choice as to whether we will choose Him so as to have eternal life in Heaven or choose to disobey Him and experience eternal punishment in Hell! Both God's foreknowledge and free will are Biblically true!

**Bible Question & Answer Series**

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**Bible Question & Answer**

# Does God's Foreknowledge Negate Free Will



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## Does God's Foreknowledge Negate Our Free Will?

A careful and thorough study of the Bible reveals two central truths – one about God and one about people. For God, the Bible clearly teaches that He knows all things. For people, the Bible clearly teaches that we have free will to make choices for ourselves. The difficulty is in understanding how God knowing everything leaves us with room to decide anything for ourselves. Although we must all admit limitations in understanding the depth of God's knowledge, we do need to avoid reaching inappropriate conclusions.

**1) God is all-knowing.** God possessing limitless knowledge is one of the characteristics unique to God. Certainly, His knowledge and wisdom far surpass that which people possess (Romans 11:33-36). This includes the ability to know what will happen in the future (Isaiah 46:9-10). We can see this characteristic of God at work, for example, in the many prophecies made throughout Scripture (i.e. bringing Jesus into the world; Ephesians 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:18-21). Then, we can also see evidence of God's foreknowledge concerning what people do. For example, John 6:64 indicates that Jesus

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knew from the beginning those who did not believe and the one who would betray Him. Particularly, Jesus knew and foretold that Judas would betray Him (Matthew 26:20-25; John 13:11). Then, Jesus knew and foretold that Peter would deny Him three times (Matthew 26:31-35). Many other examples could also be given. Interestingly, God uses this foreknowledge regarding what people will do to accomplish His greater plans and bring glory to Himself. Think about how God used the wicked actions of Joseph's brothers to bring about the salvation of Jacob's family (Genesis 50:19-20). Or, think about how God used many situations throughout history, including the envy of the Jewish leaders, to bring about the crucifixion of His Son on the cross (Acts 2:22-24).

**2) God gave people free will.** Just as certain as the Bible teaches God possessing foreknowledge, it teaches that people possess the free will to make choices for themselves. This concept is woven throughout every page of Scripture. For example, God gave Adam and Eve the choice to either follow His law or not (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6). God warned Cain of sin crouching at the door but told him that he must rule over it (make the right choice, Genesis 4:6-7). Joseph's brothers made a choice to harm

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Joseph and intended for their actions to hurt him (Genesis 50:15, 17, 20). Not only do examples bear out the fact that God gives people the freedom to choose for themselves, but specific instructions also indicate the ability and responsibility for people to make their own choices. The Israelites were often presented with the choice between obeying God and disobeying God (Deuteronomy 30:11-20; Joshua 24:14-15). Then, we are also presented with the choice between obedience to God and disobedience to God (Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 9:23; Galatians 6:7-8; Revelation 22:17). Many other examples and Scriptures could be provided.

**3) Harmonizing the two.** Accepting both teachings of Scripture as being true is essential to reaching a proper conclusion. Unfortunately, some will only accept one of these teachings above the other and then use that teaching to negate the other. For example, some will accept the foreknowledge of God and conclude that God knowing everything cannot leave any room for free will. Or, others may accept free will and conclude that God cannot know all things. However, we must be humble enough to simply accept both as being clearly taught in the Bible and trust that God