

You Have a Choice

“But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things: there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’” From Luke 10: 38-42, Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

When I was growing up, my parents always made sure that I had a choice. Take it or leave it. Eat what was on my plate or go hungry. Drink what was in my glass or go thirsty. Wear what my mom bought at the store, or wear what she bought at the store. This is how I grew up, and so I am ill-prepared for the world in which we now live. Anymore we have way too many choices.

There are more than a thousand kinds of drinks you can get at Starbucks, which is amazing since they have nothing smaller than Tall. I understand that in the average supermarket there are 85 varieties of crackers, 285 kinds of cookies, 230 sorts of soups, but only two people working the checkout stands. Still, supermarket choices pale compared to the 14.5 jillion cell phone plans.

Once there was a woman in a TV ad. She said, “This morning I got up and went to put my English muffin in the toaster and there were nine settings! I can’t deal with that!” Nor can I. I feel about so many of the choices we have as does Jimmy Buffet in his song *Fruitcakes*. When I go to the movies I don’t want eight more ounces of watered-down Cherry Coke for an additional quarter. I don’t want a twelve-pound Nestle Crunch for \$25. I don’t even want stadium seating.

There are different ways of going about making choices, but no matter what our style, beyond a certain point the more choices we have the unhappier we are. The more choices we ponder or the more time we invest in making a choice, the worse we tend to feel. Remember how God rained down manna for the Israelites in the Wilderness? Moses told them to take only enough for the day. Some disobeyed and took more than enough. What happened to it? It became wormy.

Having too many choices can also make life wormy. We need to be saved from the “Attack of a Jillion Choices”, and perhaps we might think of God’s help in terms of choice management. With choice management we look to God for guidance. Should we fully engage the choices before us, or add to them, or reduce them, or totally ignore them? We manage our choices before they manage us.

In the scripture (above), Mary adds a choice, which for us today sounds like going in the wrong direction. But it was unheard of for a woman to join the men at a rabbi’s feet in those days. Still, she chooses to listen to Jesus’ teachings along with the men, whereas Martha, her sister, chooses to act as though her last name is Stewart. She serves this group of men in her house, which was expected by her society. But expectations be hanged, Martha! Sit down by Mary and take notes.

Choice management. What choices are fun for you to make or are necessary in order that you live fully? Make them. But then ignore the choices about which you couldn’t care less if you weren’t trying to keep up with the Joneses. Let these choices manage the Jones’s life, not yours. And then thank God for all you have. Aaron Freeman says, “Gratitude ameliorates the worst aspect of American life, which is that the consumer culture makes us constantly aware of what we do not have, and it does so without counterbalancing rituals of gratitude for the mind-boggling bounty we do have...As you are grateful, to that precise extent you are happy.” –DJ

