

Choices and Changes

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This holiday season looks much different from anything we could have imagined—with masks, hand sanitizer, and social distancing—but we can still make it the best Christmas ever! Although none of us chose 2020’s trauma, we can make **choices** to transform what’s next. Here are some ideas.

Being brave is a choice.

You can bravely choose to be thankful instead of fretful. When the shepherds were terrified by what was happening around them, an angel reassured them: *Don’t be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people* (Luke 2:10). Choosing to appreciate God’s gift of His Son can help us live confidently, looking forward to a future of hope (see Romans 5:3-5).

Being kind is a choice.

We can reach out with kindness, to people nearby and to others throughout the world. Many organizations are providing food, clothing, and housing in local communities and in war-torn areas such as the Middle East. This is a perfect time to look for someone to tangibly help. You could start with this, “God, thank you that I’m breathing today. That must mean there’s something I can do, some purpose I can fulfill. Please show me what that is.” You are God’s masterpiece, created to do good things (see Ephesians 2:10).

Noticing is a choice.

The year our youngest daughter married and moved to the west coast, I was stunned by the heartache of an “empty nest,” but God provided an object lesson to help me move beyond the pain. As a pair of cardinals steadily built a nest on a bush just outside our kitchen window, I wondered if their construction site could keep them safe from roaming neighborhood cats. But the cardinals knew what they were doing! When their solitary egg hatched, I was in awe each time the tiny cardinal popped its head out of its secure nest. One day I arrived home to see all three cardinals—Mom, Dad, and Junior—completing a flying lesson in our driveway. And that was the last time I saw Junior. Through three cardinals, God reminded me an empty nest is not a tragedy. Noticing His lesson in nature reminded me of a lesson I knew and allowed my emotions to derail: parents raise children, equipping them to face life’s challenges, so they (like the cardinal!) can fly off on their own.

Relying on God’s promises is a choice.

Dear friend and Russian pastor Andre Furmanov wrote, “In this life, Christians live on promises, not explanations. The explanations will come when this life ends and we enter eternity.” Waiting to go forward until we understand, we miss life’s adventures! Rather than relying on our limited finite minds, we can choose to explore God’s Word and begin to discover who He really is—our loving, kind, faithful Good Shepherd. He promises to lead us safely where we need to go.

Choosing to entrust our lives to God is a transaction we make, believing what He says. Our emotions (from hope and joy to peace, forgiveness, and love) follow our choices rather than deciding them. Instead of focusing on the distance separating us, *let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...[and] hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful* (Hebrews 10:22, 23).

Receiving God’s great gift of eternal life is a choice.

For God so loved the world that He gave is only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).