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# Words of Truth

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## **You Cannot Prevent Someone Else's Falling Away**

*By: Brian A. Yeager*

Each of us that care about anyone in this lifetime have struggled with the question of how much we can do to help people stay faithful to God. Parents are taught that they can train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6). Brethren are taught to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). We are all bound not to cause someone else to stumble (Romans 14:21). All of those Scriptures, and many more, do teach that we have some level of responsibility in helping people do the right things. However, does that mean that you have the power to make someone obey God initially and continue to serve Him faithfully from that point forward?

I know the question I just asked is easily answered. We will see that. Yet, it is a question we each ask ourselves. We just word that question differently. For example, when someone we know and love makes terrible, sinful choices; we start down the road of questions. We ask ourselves: "What more could I have done? Did I say or do something that caused \_\_\_\_\_ to sin? Could I have prevented this? Should I have seen the signs and done something to stop them?" I may not have listed every question, but I think you get the point. We often think we can do something to help others, but we have to realize we can't.

The Scriptures teach that each person's salvation is ultimately his or her own responsibility. That even means for us parents, who bring up our children in the nurture and abomination of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), our children must of their own choice serve God. After Peter and the eleven, preached of how to be saved, this statement was made: "*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation*" (Acts 2:40).

While we may each have an impact on someone else's choices, the choices they make belong to them. Even Christians, whom were being taught by men of God in the first century, had to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). No matter how good a teacher someone is, that teacher cannot save the student without the student's choosing for such to occur. Consider how we see this proven through Christ.

### **Even Jesus Couldn't Prevent Someone From Falling Away**

Do you think you know more than Jesus? Do you think you're a better teacher than He? I hope you answered both of those questions with a "no". He is the Master (Matthew

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23:8). He knows much more than anyone of us will ever know in our physical lifetimes (Matthew 11:27, and John 2:23-25). Jesus is literally, “the way” (John 14:6). Yet, He could not prevent His disciples from falling away even when He knew it was going to occur. Notice: *“These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve”* (John 6:59-71).

Jesus lost MANY disciples. He could not stop it from occurring. He not only “saw the signs” (as we might be looking for in others), He KNEW who would walk away and who would betray Him. He could not stop it. Why? Jesus could not stop people from falling away for the same reasons you and I cannot. God has granted all people the ability to choose right or wrong (Genesis 2:15-3:19, Deuteronomy 5:29, Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Joshua 24:14-16, Ecclesiastes 7:29, Acts 2:37-41, etc.) and the freedom to reap the consequences (John 5:28-29 and Galatians 6:7-9).

God wants all men to be saved (I Timothy 2:3-4). He is not willing that any should perish (II Peter 3:9). However, most will be lost (Matthew 7:13-14 and Luke 13:23-24). Salvation is hard to obtain and hold on to (I Peter 4:17-19). God limited Himself in giving mankind freewill. He is greater than we are (Job 33:12). We have to accept that our ability to prevent someone from making bad choices is limited.

### **Conclusion**

There is not one among us that can make someone do the right things. Faithful brethren throughout all ages have had to observe people they/we care about choosing to be lost. Paul saw this in the once faithful Demas (Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 1:24) who chose the world over the Lord (II Timothy 4:10). Our Almighty Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and all other faithful saints have struggled in watching people fall away. Still, many have and will continue to do so (I Timothy 4:1). Just accept the fact that your role in the choices of others is limited! So is the responsibility for their choices (Ezekiel 18:19-32, Romans 2:1-6, Romans 14:11-12, I Corinthians 3:8, II Corinthians 5:10, and Galatians 6:4-5)!