



# IRRECONCILABLE!

Lesson 5

Free Will

**“For out of the heart come evil thoughts—  
murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.  
These are what defile a person;  
but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.” (Matthew 15:19,20).**

## Setting the Stage

### 🌀 The Free Will Dilemma – Choose Your Ending

Setup: Read each of the three short fictional “moral choice” scenarios below **on your own**, choosing from the options provided—“Good choice,” “Bad choice,” or “No choice at all.” Then briefly explain why they made each choice with a partner.

- **Scenario 1: A man sees a wallet fall to the ground. No one notices. He...**
  - A. Keeps it.
  - B. Returns it.
  - C. Stares blankly and walks away.

► *Is this truly free will? What’s influencing the choice?*

- **Scenario 2: A teenager is tempted to cheat on a test. She...**
  - A. Decides to cheat and justifies it.
  - B. Refuses because it’s wrong.
  - C. Doesn’t even think about it—she already studied.

► *What’s the real power behind each response?*

- **Scenario 3: A man hears the gospel for the first time. He...**
  - A. Chooses Christ immediately.
  - B. Says he’ll think about it.
  - C. Dismisses it entirely.

► *Does anyone “decide” for Christ unaided?*

### Debrief:

- *Which of these reflected real spiritual freedom?*
- *Who or what was really in control?*

# Core Exploration: What Does Scripture Say About Free Will?

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## 🔍 IN-CLASS EXPLORATION (35–40 min)

Split into four groups. Each group explores a cluster of questions and prepares reports back to the larger class (choose a “secretary” and a “spokes-person”).

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### ◇ Group 1: *Dead Means Dead*

Read Ephesians 2:1 – What can a spiritually dead person do on their own?

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Read Romans 3:10–12 – How many people are naturally righteous or seek God?

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Read Ephesians 2:8–9 – Where does saving faith come from?

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◇ Group 2: ***The Pharisee Problem***

Read John 9:39–41 and Luke 18:9–14 – Why didn't the Pharisees believe they needed Jesus?

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Read Psalm 51:5 and Romans 7:18 – What truth about human nature did the Pharisees ignore?

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Read Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20 – What happens when people think they can choose good?

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◇ Group 3: ***Dangerous Teachings***

Read Matthew 12:34 and 16:12 – How did Jesus describe the Pharisees and their teaching?

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Read John 14:6 – Why is Jesus so direct about the only way to the Father?

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◇ Group 4: ***Two Natures vs. Two Angels***

Read Matthew 15:19–20 – What naturally lives in the human heart, or ask it this way, What’s wrong with the cartoon idea of a good and bad angel on our shoulders?

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Read Romans 7:18 – What does Romans 7:18 and the concept of “Old Adam vs. New Man” show instead?

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Think about Judgment Day – What two wrong thoughts might people have about judgment day if free will were true?

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**Group Share**

Each group shares a key takeaway with the whole class. Ask:

*What surprised you?* \_\_\_\_\_  
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*How does this understanding change your view of salvation?* \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Wrap-Up

### ☑ **Wrap-Up: From Bondage to Freedom**

This lesson has uncovered a hard truth—by nature, we are **not free**. We are not neutral. We are not spiritually wounded. We are **spiritually dead** (Ephesians 2:1), slaves to sin (John 8:34), unable to seek God or choose him (Romans 3:10–12).

But it also revealed the best truth: **God doesn't wait for us to choose him. He comes to us. He makes the first move.**

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### ⊕ **Gospel Takeaway:**

- You did not choose Jesus. **He chose you** (John 15:16).
  - You did not rise from spiritual death. **God made you alive with Christ** (Colossians 2:13).
  - You don't cling to him by your strength. **He holds you** (John 10:28–29).
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🗨 **Key Thought to Leave With:**  
**We are not saved because of our decision. We are saved because of Christ's death and resurrection—applied to us by grace through faith, a gift of God.**

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## Theology Note: Free Will vs. Freed Will

What's the difference between “free will” and a “freed will”? Martin Luther famously argued that the idea of natural free will in spiritual matters is a dangerous illusion. Our will is not free until God sets it free. Before that, it is in bondage to sin.

“Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin.”

—Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, LW 33:268

### Coram Mundo vs. Coram Deo

Luther also made a key distinction between what we can choose in the world (*coram mundo*) and what we cannot choose before God (*coram Deo*).

- *Coram Mundo* (Before the World):  
We have free will in earthly matters—jobs, families, daily decisions. “In external matters man has a free will...” —Luther, LW 33:112
- *Coram Deo* (Before God):  
We have no power to choose spiritual good. The will is enslaved to sin.
  - ✓ Romans 8:7–8 – “The sinful mind is hostile to God... it cannot submit to God's law.”
  - ✓ 1 Corinthians 2:14 – “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God...”

### Bottom Line:

We are not free to come to God—we are freed by God to live in Him.

John 8:36 – “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

# At-Home Activities

## 1. Illustrate It: “My Free Will Without Christ”

Draw a cartoon version of what free will really looks like—before and after conversion. Include labels like “Old Adam,” “Holy Spirit,” “Faith,” and “Christ Alone.”

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## 2. Gospel-Centered Rewrite

Rewrite a common Christian phrase to reflect truth:

- Original: “*Accept Christ today!*”
- Rewrite: “*Today, hear Christ calling you!*” or “*The Spirit brings you to Jesus!*”

Explain your rewrite in 2–3 sentences.

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## 3. Personal Reflection: “Where’s My Comfort?”

Journal or share in small groups:

- Have you ever been told your faith was your choice?
  - Why is it more comforting to know that God gave you faith?
  - How does this truth affect your assurance of salvation?
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