

Answering TikTok Questions Part 2: Do I Have Free Will?

Message Notes

This week we answer the question: If God knows everything and has a plan, do I really have free will?

We often hear the phrase, 'God is in control', but what does this really mean? Does God really control *everything*, and if he does what does that mean for human free will?

Key Definitions

- Free Will – The ability to make real choices voluntarily, that are not coerced.
- Sovereignty – God's absolute authority, rule, and power over all things
- Providence – God's ongoing care, guidance, and governance of creation.
- Predestination – The act of God determining or appointing something to happen in advance.
- Foreknowledge – God's knowledge of all things before they happen.
- Omniscience – God's perfect and complete knowledge of everything (past, present, future).
- God's Will – What God desires, intends, or purposes to happen.

Different Views on the Debate

1. Calvinism/Reformed View: God ordains everything; our choices are real but pre-determined.
2. Arminianism/Free Will: God foreknows our choices but doesn't cause them; His grace enables real choice.
3. Molinism (Middle Knowledge) – God knows every possible choice and arranges the world accordingly.
4. Open Theism – God foreknowledge is limited, and the future is open and contingent.

To try to unravel this 'mystery' of this topic, we're going to look at the life of Joseph

1. Joseph's Story Begins with God's Foreknowledge (Genesis 37:5-11)

- God's foreknowledge is shown in the Prophetic Dreams that God gives to Joseph. God knew and showed Joseph what his future was.

2. Joseph's Story is Played Out Through Human Decisions (Genesis 37:18-41:44)

- Scene 1: Brothers' jealousy and betrayal (Gen. 37:18–28).
- Scene 2: Potiphar's wife's false accusation (Gen. 39:7–20).
- Scene 3: Cupbearer's forgetfulness (Gen. 40:23).
- Scene 4: Pharaoh's decision to exalt Joseph (Gen. 41:37–44).

3. Joseph's Story Ends With God's Plan Having the Final Say (Genesis 50:15–21)

- Scene 5: Joseph forgives and reframes his brothers' actions.
- What his brothers meant for evil and harm, God used it for good (50:20). Even though the brothers had free will, God worked within it all to bring about a greater purpose and plan

Joseph's story shows how God's foreknowledge, human decisions, and God's plan work together.

- God gave Joseph dreams (foreknowledge).
- People made sinful and selfish decisions that had consequences (free will).
- God redeemed it all for good (his plan has the final say).

Conclusion

- Joseph's famous words: *"You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."*
- God allows evil but does not cause it.
- Nothing surprises God. Not tragedy, not betrayal, not suffering or anything else.
- He redeems and uses all things for His purposes and our good.

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Group Discussion Guide

Question: If God knows everything and has a plan, do I really have free will?

PART 1: SCRIPTURE DISCOVERY

1. Read Genesis 37:5–11

- What did Joseph's dreams reveal about God's foreknowledge of his future?
- How did Joseph's family respond to these dreams?

2. Read Genesis 39:19–23

- What human choices led to Joseph being imprisoned?
- What does verse 21 say about God's presence even in Joseph's suffering?

3. Read Genesis 50:15–21

- What were Joseph's brothers afraid of after their father died?
- How did Joseph reframe their evil actions in light of God's greater plan?
- What phrase in verse 20 sums up the tension between human choice and God's plan?

PART 2: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The sermon began with the tension: some people say *"God is in control of everything"* while others say *"People make their own choices."*

- Discuss how you have interpreted the statement: 'God is in control'
- Which side do you lean toward when you face hardship?
- Why do you think this question is so important for people today?

2. We defined several key words (free will, sovereignty, providence, foreknowledge, predestination, God's will, omniscience), and several beliefs (Calvinism, Free Will, etc.)

- Discuss some of the different terms and views of God's sovereignty and Free will that you have heard/experienced.
- Are there any of terms/beliefs that are confusing or difficult for you? Discuss.
- How does having clear definitions help when wrestling with tough questions?

3. Joseph's life shows both human free will (his brothers' betrayal, Potiphar's wife's lie, the cupbearer's forgetfulness) and God's plan (dreams, providence, exaltation).

- Which "scene" of Joseph's story stands out most to you? Why?
- Share how you have seen both human choices and God's purposes working together in your own life story?

4. Joseph declares, *"You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."*

- Discuss the power of this statement.
- Why is it important that Joseph doesn't excuse the evil but also doesn't get stuck in bitterness?
- How does this verse give you hope for situations where you've been hurt or wronged?

Closing Prayer: Take time to pray for one another, asking God to help you trust His foreknowledge and sovereignty while walking faithfully in your daily choices. Pray for healing where there's been pain from others' decisions, and for hope that God's final word will always be good.