

Live Beyond Default

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How many people own a computer? If you do, you've probably experienced a "crash." Earlier this summer, I not only had my home computer crash, but also my Air Force computer! I began to feel like an electronic Typhoid Mary! Maybe I was infected by a "bug byte." (bad pun, groan...)

I got a new computer at work and replaced the hard drive at home. To get both computers back to where they were efficient for what I needed to do, it took about a month to override all the default settings. As I labored to work out all the kinks, I began to meditate on the role of "defaults" in my own life – especially in my spiritual life.

If I, as a person, began life as a computer, I came out of the box with default settings. I came into this world programmed naturally, or carnally, because we are born into sin in a fallen world. As we grow up, our operating system by default – is natural. Our output is often programmed by the parameters of the world.

As we go through life, this natural system becomes defiled through power outages, corrupt files and viruses as sin brings death to our imperfect operating system. We experience frequent crashes – and can even get to a place where we can't even boot up!

When I was in my early 20's, I came to a place where I knew I needed a whole new operating system. I acknowledged my broken state – my sin – and accepted Christ's offer of forgiveness through His blood on the cross. At that point of salvation, I received a whole new 'operating system' – a supernatural program!

This new operating system is loaded to our main frame – our heart – and it's awesome! (I call it 'Windows to Heaven!') It never needs patches or updates, has no bugs, it runs on every "new" model for all ages. It only has one error message: **"user malfunction."**

There's only one problem. The old operating system is still on the computer. The supernatural software runs perfectly – but it involves user responsibility – I have to *choose* it. Each day I "boot" myself up, I have to select the supernatural operating system. If I don't, I default automatically to the old, sin-weakened, corrupt system. The interface looks similar, but the wrong programs may be running in the background – in my heart and mind.

So, the most important thing is having a new operating system through faith in Jesus Christ, and the second thing is to purpose to choose it each day – to override the default of the world.

I thought of the many times my kids would do something wrong – the same thing over and over. Their response was: "I didn't do it on purpose." I would tell them that they'd continue to do it unless they "purposed *not* to do it." It sounds like we're playing with words, but the impact is enormous. "I didn't do it on purpose" is letting the default rule. "Purposing *not* to do it" is making an active choice.

Considering the defaults I live in when I don't purposely choose something better is sobering. When I put the actual choices side-by-side, it's like a slap in the face.

The first "slap" is the contrast between truth and lies. We are exhorted in Scripture to actively pursue truth – which can set us free. (John 8:32) Often we think if we don't actively pursue truth we then default into some neutral zone in between truth and lies. Truth, in our postmodern culture, is not the default – deception is. If I am not actively overriding the default, I live in the default of deception. There are no "half-truths" because that negates the very definition of truth in

that truth cannot contradict itself. The only other choice, other than truth is a lie, or deception... or ignorance. **I can rationalize the deception and ignorance with, "I didn't do it on purpose" but, the real question is, "What am I doing on purpose?"**

It helps so much to look at the consequence of default in areas of my life. It should make me more circumspect. Romans 1:18 says, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"*

Let's take an even more basic choice. In the last chapter of Joshua, in 24:15, Joshua speaks to the tribes of Israel. He tells them "choose you this day whom you will serve..." and he names the other gods they can default to. Joshua makes a clear choice: *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

If we do not purpose to serve the one True and Living God, what is the default? We will serve false gods we will serve man or self, or fall into idolatry of all types. Verse 20 explains the consequences: *"If you forsake Jehovah and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and destroy you after he has done you good."*

It's a helpful exercise to actually list different life choices – what is the default, what is the better choice – and what are the consequences of both? (Kids do not naturally see the consequences of choices, so this is a good way to walk them through choices and their consequences ahead of time.) The words "if" and "then" appear in the same verse 299 times in the Bible.

The Bible is filled with contrasts and choices. Deut. 30:19 says, *"I call heaven and earth to record today against you. I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, so that both you and your seed may live."* A clear example of choice, default and consequences!

Consider the 10 commandments. Would God have to command us to do something if it was the automatic thing we default to? He says:

- 1. You shall have no other gods before me.**
- 2. You shall not make any idols, nor bow down to them, or serve them.**
- 3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.**
- 4. Keep the Sabbath day.**
- 5. Honor thy father and mother.**
- 6. You shall not murder.**
- 7. You shall not commit adultery.**
- 8. You shall not steal.**
- 9. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**
- 10. You shall not covet thy neighbor's goods or his wife.**

We have a sin nature and our default is to do the things listed in the 10 commandments. It's critical that we choose, but we have supernatural resources to help us make the right choices. In Isaiah 56:4 the prophet speaks for God: *"Choose the things that please me"*.

Let me emphasize that we are constantly faced with choices and cannot choose two opposing things at the same time. We also can't live between choice – it doesn't work and makes us miserable. Matthew 6:24 says, *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

What do you think the default is? Serving money, the material world. If we don't actively choose to serve God, we default to serving ourselves. It's the natural against the supernatural – every time. In the supernatural, we are called to sacrifice – in the natural we are selfish. Selfish is the default, sacrifice is the purposeful choice.

James 1:17 says a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways and James 4:8 exhorts us very clearly: *“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hand, sinners; and purify your hearts, double-minded ones.”*

Take time to look at **biblical contrasts**. Compare the default *“works of the flesh”* (19-21) in *Galatians 5* with the *fruit of the Spirit* in verses 22-23. Compare the wisdom of this world (earthly, sensual, devilish, envying, strife and confusion), in James 3:15-18 with the wisdom from above which is *“truly pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”*

The defaults in our culture are powerful and, if we're not careful, we're more controlled by the world than the Word. These are the natural defaults in II Timothy 3. verses 2-5, as Scripture speaks of the last days: ***Lovers of self, money lovers, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, unyielding, false accusers, without self control, savage, des-pisers of good, traitors, reckless, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it – EVEN TURN AWAY FROM THESE. WE HAVE TO CHOOSE!***

The contrast to 'Last Days' defaults is found in verses 10: ***“But, you have known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience.”***

And doctrine does...what? It makes our choices clear. Verses 16-17 say: *“all Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfected, thorough-ly furnished to every good work.”*

On my computers, it took time to figure out what the default setting were, and even longer to figure out how to change them – but now I'm more efficient.

The stakes are much higher in life! Take time to look at the defaults, what are the better choices and the consequences of both... **And remember to boot up with the right operating system each day!**