

The Seed of Consequences

A clear example of the consequences God allows for ignoring His clear truth is Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Look at the table below for statements about what God did and did not do with Adam and Eve.

DID	DIDN'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow Eve to talk with Satan • Allow Eve to be deceived • Allow Eve & Adam to choose to disobey • Seek them after they sinned • Maintain a relationship with them • Show mercy/love by providing a solution to their sin • Show justice by initiating consequences • Shut the gate to the Garden of Eden and opened the door to Heaven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop the temptation • Stop the sin • Tell them they could have a second chance • Ignore the consequences He stated • “Disown” them or say He was going to create some better people

Free to Choose

If you take everything in the table above and summarize it, you could say,

“God allowed them to freely walk away from what was best for them and experience the costly consequences of their decision.”

That statement is not easy to accept or understand. And it probably sends shivers down the spine of parents and anyone in a position of authority. Of course, you might ask, “Why would God let them experience the enormous consequences without stopping them?”

Since God is PERFECT, it was obviously the right thing to do. So, instead of questioning it, accept it, at least for now, and see how to use God’s approach in your leadership and relationships.

Right now, someone you know is doing the wrong thing, and there will be consequences. If you were God, what would you do when you learn about what they are doing? Would you try to change their mind to do what is right? Would you put an obstacle in their way to prevent them from doing what is wrong? Or would you accept their freedom to choose to do something wrong, even if it has dire consequences?

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Maybe the consequences become the seed that is planted to grow new behavior.

God Rescues Souls AND Allows Sin

So, God does not stand in the way of your sinful desires and actions – or mine! But the story gets much better. He redeems and rescues souls from Hell. ***That is a critical thought that could radically change all your relationships.***

God has a plan, and the sin in the Garden was allowed and part of His plan. How can you know that – because it happened! Anything that has occurred was permitted by God and is part of His plan. He is in control as He orchestrates the plan to its ultimate glorious and perfect end.

He is totally in control, AND you are free to make choices. No one knows how both of those are true, but they are. Praise God that He knows how all this works and is doing it PERFECTLY!

Is He PERFECT when He doesn’t prevent you from sinning and lets you experience the consequences of it? Of course! That may be the most important thing for you to realize right now. When you stop

someone from experiencing consequences, you MAY be hindering their growth and learning. Maybe the consequence will become the seed planted to grow new behavior!

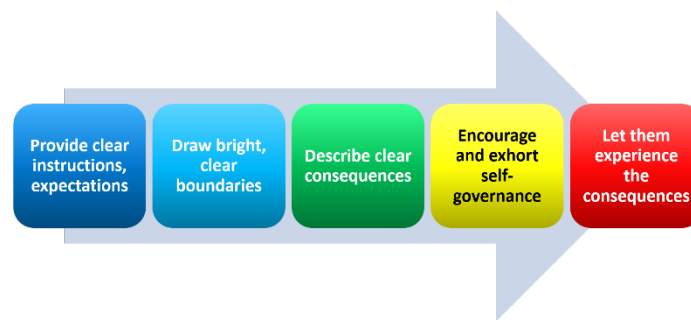
But Freedom Will Cost Too Much!

What if the cost of the consequences is too high? Shouldn't you step in and prevent it? That makes sense and appears to be good and reasonable thinking. The difficulty is that, in the Garden of Eden and throughout the Bible, God provides clear examples of how He provided explicit instruction, sent prophets to remind and warn of the consequences, and **STILL** let the people experience very BAD consequences.

The most costly, WORST consequence that can happen to any person is separation from God, AND God allows that to happen!

Since God is our model, He created freedom of choice and allows the consequences of bad choices. He also provides everything needed for "life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3) for His children and ***lets us walk away from Him in sin.***

Is it correct to use the following sequence with that as the background?



It is easy to argue against that when using our knowledge, experience, and thinking. But it is hard to argue with that logic when you read God's Word. God provides that sequence numerous times in His Word, which you have seen in your life. It is elementary to say that following the above sequence is acting like God. But my behavior, and probably yours, most often violates one or more of those items. That leaves you trying to prevent people from crossing the boundary, trying to control them. Unfortunately, control drives them to rebel and use counter strategies to get across the boundary anyway.

All five steps are essential. If you don't provide the clarity in steps 1-3, you do not help people know what behavior is right and wrong. Without step 4, you are apathetic without mercy, and without step 5, there is no freedom AND justice. It is wise to identify which steps you are prone to ignore.

God Allows the Worst Choices

Going back to the relationship mistakes, if you tend to be a "Dictator," trying to control everything and everybody, much of your worry and anxiety is associated with step 5. Based on personal experience, when I made sure that steps 1-4 were done, that provided the strength and courage to trust God and use step 5.

So, what is the learning from this? The only way to model God's behavior is to do ALL 5 items listed above. The LAST item is the one that screams at me that it can't be true. It is like fingernails on a chalkboard. ***BUT that is what GOD DID, and He is PERFECT.***

Reflecting on my life, the seed of consequences has often grown and developed into new and better behavior. The WORSE the consequence, the greater the blossom of changed behavior. There are also situations where my lousy behavior did not change, and the consequences were rationalized or became a "pity party." Once recognized, those situations blossomed into better behavior, but there was a long time when the seed lay dormant due to trust in my own thinking.

Most likely, your intervention to rescue someone helps the seed lay dormant and prevents it from blossoming into a change of behavior!

What would God do? It is evident from God's Word that He lets mankind experience the consequence of sin, even when it results in a person's choice for Hell.

BUT WAIT, THAT ISN'T THE END!

If you stop at step 5, you miss some of the most marvelous actions of our PERFECT God and Father. You miss the salvation message that God provides over and over and over again in His Word. It is the cycles you see in Judges, the cycles you see throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament.

If you follow the cycles in Judges, you see this pattern

- ✓ **Sin** – You cross the boundary into the realm of pain and consequences
- ✓ **Enemy** – God allows the pain and consequences about which He warned
- ✓ **Cry** – You don't like the pain and consequences and cry for deliverance
- ✓ **Deliverer** – God redeems and delivers you...

...and the cycle starts over unless you trust God and do not cross the boundary!!

What Are You Missing by Stopping at Step 5?

FORGIVENESS, REDEMPTION, and RESTORATION!

So, YES, the cycle is accurate! God allows you to experience the consequences (step 5), AND since He has already forgiven you, He waits patiently for your return and confession (repentance is part of confession, or it is not confession). He constantly looks for your return like the prodigal son's father, rejoices in your changed heart, and throws a party to welcome you back.

The consequences experienced are not removed but are redeemed and made part of the process that helps motivate your changed thinking. Even though it sounds strange to say, as stated earlier, the consequences may be the seed planted to grow new behavior.

Finally, the five steps are incomplete and not linear – it is a cycle or, better yet, an upward spiral. ***When you apply the teaching of Jesus about forgiveness in Luke 17:3-10 into the process, there is almost a sigh that comes from your soul – thank you, Lord, that the "game" is not over when experiencing the step 5 consequences.***

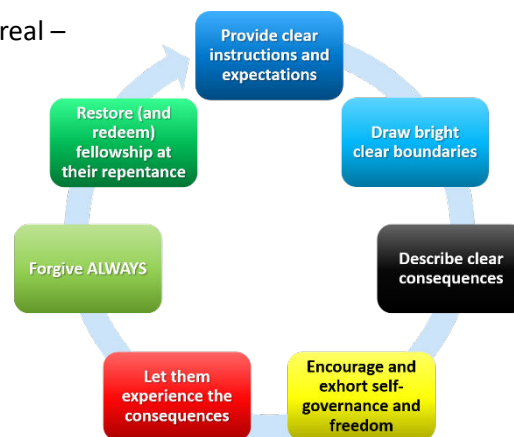
So, while the first five steps are real, the FINAL 2 are also real –

6. Forgive ALWAYS
7. Restore (and redeem) fellowship at repentance

The last step is not tied to forgiveness but is to their repentance. That is the idea of 1 John 1:9.

Adding these last two steps appropriately follows the model God provides. The process demonstrates His Image –

- ✓ Powerful = boundaries, consequences, justice
- ✓ Belonging = freedom, forgiveness, restoration



Without constantly accepting their freedom and a willingness to forgive and restore the relationship, you miss two critical elements in the process.

Please pray about this and consider applying it to your relationships TODAY!