

Our New Default...

(March 10, 2023)

The word "default" has numerous meanings, like many words in the English language, but this particular meaning is what we are dealing with for this article. In that case, "default" means, "...*a selection made usually automatically or without active consideration due to lack of a viable alternative.*"^[1] We all have our default ways of responding to certain things. We've done them for so long that we become oblivious at times that we are actually doing it because it is simply second nature.

Most of us have been doing things the same way for so long that we often rarely think about how we should react to something. We simply react to it. This of course can be either good or bad depending upon our reaction and the situation that will illicit our reaction.

For instance, anyone who has been driving for any length of time knows that driving in the early morning or early evening on country roads means the likelihood of seeing wild animals greatly increases during those times. Because of this an alert driver will drive more slowly always ready to apply the brakes when seeing a wild animal. Just this morning as I left the house about 6:00am and as I turned onto our dirt road from our driveway, up ahead I noticed three deer standing in the road, a mom (with only three legs), and her two offspring. I immediately slowed down and gave them a wide berth as they ran ahead of me going the same direction that I was driving. I knew if I sped up to pass them, invariably one or all three would cross in front of my car and I'd probably hit one.

Eventually, they did exactly what I thought they would do and crossed over from the left side of the road to the right side and into the woods. Why didn't they just stay on the left side where there were other woods and fields? Because those three deer live on the right side of the road and have been there ever since we moved into the home we now live in.

There are plenty of examples of how we use our "default" whether the situation is good and pleasant or bad and not so pleasant. Our defaults are simply part of our nature, for good or for bad.

Before we became Christians, we had specific "defaults" in how we reacted to situations. Those reactions often stemmed from the way we were brought up, at least in part, as well as the personality we had and how that personality developed in us over the years. The way things impacted us as a child and how we saw our parents reacted to life, to one another and to God (if God was in that equation), created a pattern for the way we ourselves learned to deal with similar situations our parents encountered. Interestingly enough though, our default to the many situations we faced in life was a learned process. We may have seen how our parents handled stress for instance, and we began imitating that reaction so that it stayed with us and carried us over into adulthood. Now, that pattern may be firmly established within us so that we find ourselves reacting to stressful situations for instance nearly the same way our parents did.

Eventually, we became a Christian, sought to begin to follow our Lord and longed to see changes in us that the Bible teaches will come to those who are dedicated to walking in His footsteps. But we still had

our old default to deal with and that often creates a large gap in the way God sees us (as righteous), and the way we see ourselves (sinners and not so righteous).

Prior to becoming a Christian, our God-ward default had us in the position of being enemies of God (**Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:21**), literally *estranged from God*, because we were not regenerated by Jesus through the salvation only he offers. The big problem is that when we *did* come to Jesus for salvation, we bring that same default outlook with us and it takes a while to begin to understand that God has a *new* default He has given us and wants us to live by that one. This means that He wants to consistently *remove* the vestiges of the sin nature that are bound up in our previous default and instill within us the new default, which is the *character* of Jesus. Our reactions to life will then begin to mirror the way Jesus responded to life's situations when He walked this earth.

Unfortunately for us, changing our defaults takes a lifetime and won't culminate until we leave this life and see Him in eternity. Understanding this can relieve some of the pressure felt while living in this world as we continue carrying (and dealing with), our sin nature within us. This does not mean we should ever excuse ourselves (nor should we beat ourselves up when we fail). It simply means that we need to realistically adopt a new default, a new understanding of ourselves; the way we think, act and speak and we need to do this by learning to depend on God's strength in and through us on a daily basis to see and expect the needed change in us. I'm not saying that we need to go through life focused on ourselves, but we should make it a point to endeavor to submit more and more of ourselves to God so that He will be able to make the needed changes more easily in us. We see this time and time again in many books of the Bible, but focusing for a few minutes on **Deuteronomy** brings things clearly into view. We introduced this topic in our previous article, "*Forgetting to Remember.*" [2]

The first few chapters of **Deuteronomy** is really a recollection of Israel's history. Here, Moses is reiterated to the Israelites what God had done for them and how the Israelites had reacted to God and His intervention in their lives as a nation. In **Deuteronomy 3**, Moses recounts how Israel overcame Og of Bashan, a king who is believed to have been giant. We are told that Og's bed was 13 1/2 feet long (**Deuteronomy 3:11**), which may mean that Og was about 10 to 11 feet tall. The same verse tells us that Og was a remnant of the "giants." This means Og was "...one of the last of the Rephaites...which means he was strong and tall (see **Deuteronomy 2:20–21**)."[3]

Throughout chapters in **Deuteronomy**, Moses reminds the Israelites of God's faithfulness and moving them from Egypt into a Land flowing with milk and honey. He also notes the times Israel failed to keep their covenant with God and how God reacted to those failures. In **Deuteronomy 3:23** ff, Moses again relates to them the reason he was not allowed by God to enter the Promised Land. Unfortunately, because of the continued defiance of the people, Moses reacted out of an old default of his rather than the new default that he should have reacted from when dealing with the Israelites. It cost Moses the opportunity to walk into the Promised Land on foot. He will need to wait until the Millennial Kingdom to walk there.

In **Deuteronomy 4**, Moses reminds the Israelites that the constant need before them is to live in *obedience* to God's Law. Failure to do so would result in being on the receiving end of God's anger and

judgment. Moses tells the Israelites that they are the only nation that has ever existed where God had a personal relationship with and endeavored to use them as His own instrument of righteousness to the world. This had not happened before and would not happen again (in spite of the fact that many it seems believe God literally founded this nation much the way He founded Israel).

Starting in **Deuteronomy 4:15**, Moses takes pains to warn them away from idolatry and what would happen to them if they succumbed to the temptation to worship other gods, which are not gods at all, but literally demons. In other words, Moses was point blank demanding of the Israelites that they turn their backs on their former default and adopt and embrace the new default. Whereas the old default was given to superstitions and worship of false gods, the new default was to turn to God who was and is the only true God deserving our worship.

Deuteronomy 5 is a record of Moses reviewing the 10 Commandments Moses gave the people from his time with God on Mt. Sinai. He goes onto note that because of God's Presence, the people were afraid and didn't want to hear God but preferred that God speak directly to Moses and Moses would relay the message to them. It was at Mt. Sinai when the people of Israel entered into a covenant promise with God that they would do all He required of them.

In **Deuteronomy 6**, Moses stresses the greatest commandment, which is to *"...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."* (v5). A few verses later, Moses is once again stressing to the Israelites their need for continued obedience to God and His commands. Moses also emphasizes their need to teach their children all the things Moses was reminding them of so that it would go from one generation to the next smoothly.

What is very interesting here is that we can see not only from **Deuteronomy** but from the books of **Joshua** and **Judges** especially, that not only did the Israelites fail to continue worshiping the one true God consistently, but they were always falling away from Him. Moreover, God's Laws were not only not written on their hearts, but they failed to pass these truths onto their children. Inevitably, this meant that one generation would follow God closely, then the next would fall away. Eventually, a remnant within that generation who seemed to know or at least yearn for God would cry out to Him and He would answer by raising up a judge who would lead Israelites to victory. When that judge died, the people began to whore after idols and devolve into continued sin. Then a remnant of Israelites would begin calling out to God and He would raise another judge who would lead the people into many victories. When that judge died, again the people fell away from God.

It is clear from Scripture that the Israelites had a default or particular mindset, one that was set *against* God and His commands and routinely led them to falling away from God. They never seemed as a nation to understand their new default that God wanted them to live by. It became too easy for them to intermarry with pagan nations and adopt the worship of idols that those nations served. The Israelites as a whole never understood that problem.

How is it with you, Christian? Do you understand that we are at war with the world and its attitudes and outlook? The world wants us to adopt its attitude (at enmity with God), so they can feel good about

themselves and see us as one of them. God wants us to understand He has given us a new default, one that is actually at enmity with the *world*. This enables us to live the way God wants us to live.

We as Christians, have to make that choice every day, often multiple times throughout each day; embracing the new default and rejecting the old default. This is the constant battle we face as Christians. Which default will we follow?

[1] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/default>

[2] <https://studygrowknowblog.com/2023/02/28/forgetting-to-remember/>

[3] <https://www.gotquestions.org/Og-king-of-Bashan.html>