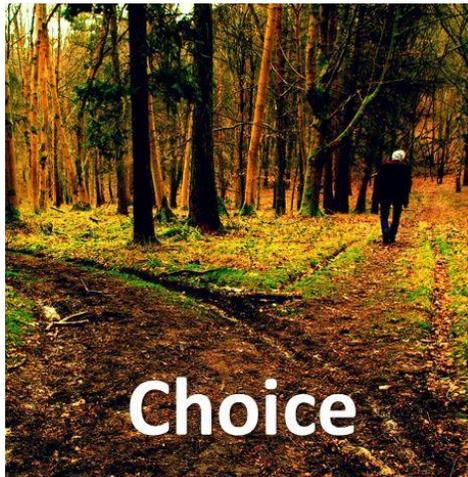


The Traveler Within



Living From The Heart of Choice

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I — I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

– Robert Frost

Taking “the road less traveled” isn’t just about doing our own thing or digressing from the status quo. Its deeper meaning points to an extraordinary distinction many life travelers never fully explore which I call the “Heart of Choice.” Upon reflecting on Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken” it’s clear he was musing over the forks in the road of life. It also alludes to the process we go through as we face diverging roads, as well as the regrets we harbor after making certain life decisions. This week’s post is about how to deal with these challenges and it introduces some very useful distinctions about making life choices and living with them wholeheartedly and with confidence.

The first distinction I’d like to offer is between a “choice” and a “decision.” While many would say the difference between them is just semantics, I beg to differ. The word “decide” comes from the Old French, “decider,” or “to cut off and kill the alternative.” (The guillotines of France were often called “swift deciders.”) Whereas the word “choice,” from the Middle English, “chois” means “to select freely and after consideration.”

If I must “kill the alternative” in order to walk a new road, I’m moving forward with the energy of negation, exclusion and invalidation. Whereas if I “select freely and after consideration” I’m accepting all options as valid and selecting a specific road from a positive liberating place. I suggest to you that the kind of energy we engage in during our first steps onto a new road go with us all along the way to that road’s end.

Let me give you an example. My Grandmother on my father's side was 94 years old when she died. Grace Oldham didn't die of natural causes however, she and my Grandfather were run over by a car while out for their daily walk. Grandpa died instantly but Grandma lived for three days in intensive care. I was the last member of the family to see her alive.

The first thing I remember when I entered her hospital room was her slamming her fists against the chrome bedrails. I rushed over to comfort her and surprisingly she pushed me away yelling, "God took Grandpa and hasn't come for me yet and I'm angry as hell about it!" In tears I reached in again to hold her and replied, "He will come for you soon Grandma, he loves you and so do I." "He's punishing me for being a bad mother. I don't deserve to be with him. My children, oh dear Lord . . . your father is violent and confused because I didn't love him as I should have when he was a child. Furthermore, your Aunt Lota is a hopeless alcoholic because I didn't care for her properly. And your Uncle Elmo died of cancer because I didn't make him stop smoking and living a life of the devil!"

Never had she expressed these regrets to me, and while I knew my family had their problems, I never blamed my Grandmother for them. I was at a fork in the road of my life. What could I offer that would help her, short of pulling her tubes and quickening her demise? I so wanted her to stay alive for my sake, but knew she wanted to die for her own peace. I made a choice to say this to her so as to ease her passing, "Grandma you believe you're a bad mother is that right?" "Yes, I was a terrible mother." Grandma do you know that only good mothers think they're bad? Bad mothers don't care how bad they've been."

All of a sudden her body relaxed as tears began flowing down her weathered face. After a few moments she opened her eyes and reached for me. "Oh my word Val, I never realized that! Yes I made many mistakes . . . but I WAS a good mother." Then she whispered, "God forgive me and come for me if it is your will."

Those were the last words (of heart choice) I ever heard from my Grandmother. She died that evening, and as she did I vowed never to harbor regrets and negative self-judgments. From a place of choice I also vowed that when it is my time to meet my maker, I'll carry my Grandmother's heart with me, right here in my Heart of Choice.



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