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A few years ago I heard a speaker talking about determinism. In modern philosophy determinism is one of the most debated concepts. Determinists believe events in the world and in our lives are predetermined.

The speaker had a great question that challenged the deterministic beliefs. He asked, "Do you look both ways when you cross the street?"

The audience buzzed, some laughed, and others looked puzzled.

The presenter had a point. Many people say everything is planned out. Some people like the idea that everything is determined in advance, but this philosopher said people just don't live that way. This presenter used the everyday example of looking both ways before crossing the street to get people thinking not just about what we say we believe but also about how we live.

He was pointing out the limits of determinism as a philosophy. If a person believes every moment is planned out there's no need to worry about being cautious crossing the street or even signaling a turn—but he argued no one actually lives like our lives are all planned out.

Over the years questions about the future and the power of people's decisions has gotten philosophers and theologians talking. As a pastor I have been asked questions like, *Can people change?* And *Does God plan out every moment in advance?*

The more time I spend reading scripture the more I'm convinced God is an active part of every person's story. I'm also convinced that God has given us power to make choices in our lives. From the beginning stories of the Bible, the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob there's an ongoing interplay between the God of the universe and the people who were made in God's image and likeness.

We are making choices every day.
And God is making choices too.

One of my favorite stories to help understand the relationship between us and God is the story of Jacob wrestling with God. The story is found in Genesis chapter 32. Jacob had made some bad decisions. Truth is Jacob had blown up his relationship with his twin brother. The night before he was going to meet his brother after years in conflict he met a stranger. And Jacob wrestled against that stranger next to a stream for the whole night.

Jacob realized only as the dawn was coming that he had been struggling against God. There's so much more to Jacob's story. He ended up as the father of conflicted sons. It is really something to read the story of Jacob—to see how he had and hadn't changed and to start to recognize the way God moved in his life.

May we be blessed to recognize the work of God's hands in our lives.

Peace and thanks for reading,
Pastor John Heille