

Values Drive Behaviors; Principles Drive Outcomes

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Healthy values are valuable! Your values influence every choice you make, right?

Yet sometimes what you intend doesn't exactly turn out the way you had expected. Why is that?

Values are not the same as principles or natural laws, such as gravity or inertia. Stumble on the stairs, and you are likely to fall--whether you know about, understand, or even agree with the concept of "gravity." Further, an object at rest will remain at rest until acted on by an outside force--and this truth doesn't require your approval.

Outcomes are always a result of principles or natural laws and will never be swayed just because you prefer things to be different. Instead, we should observe natural laws, seek to understand and apply them, and live in harmony with them.

Although we have total control over our choices, once we take some action, we have no control over the outcome. Stated another way, once you set behaviors in motion, the effect of the actions you've taken may have a very different impact than what you intended.

You choose your behaviors at least partially based on the outcome you want to create. But sometimes your predictions are not accurate, because you cannot precisely determine in advance which principles will dominate.

I'm sure you've had an experience where your motive in executing a given behavior was purely honorable. But somehow, the action inadvertently hurt someone. Maybe it was a physical action, such as driving a car--none of us intends to cause an automobile accident.

Maybe you decided to publicly thank the seven people who contributed to the success of a major project--only to have someone point out afterward that you overlooked (and hurt the feelings of) a very critical yet lower-profile eighth contributor.

Natural laws control the outcomes of your behaviors. You don't create the natural laws, and you don't have the privilege of selecting which ones apply to you and which ones you can exempt.

Physical principles such as gravity and inertia are easy to see. But there are also interpersonal and spiritual principles. You can't violate any principles without suffering the consequences.

"Keeping promises" is an example of an interpersonal principle. People tend to trust those who have a history of following through on the commitments they make. Fail to execute the behaviors you've promised a couple of times, however, and people will doubt your integrity.

"Service" is an example of a spiritual principle. People who understand this natural law are willing to serve not based on what it will bring to them, but because they are blessed with the ability and opportunity to contribute. They find the effects of honorable service are beneficial both for the individuals served and for themselves.

Will you agree that your values drive the choices you make--from among a variety of optional behaviors? Will you concede that principles drive the outcomes of your behaviors?

If both are true, it follows that your success in life will be a function of how closely your values align with natural laws. Through whatever means available to us, you should learn what those principles are--and adopt values that align with them! The result will be a greater influence on others and greater peace for you and for those you affect.

I believe God describes them to us in our owner's manual, the Bible. God created everything (John 1:3), including the principles that drive the outcomes set in motion by our choices.