

If God Knows Everything I'm Going to Ever Do am I Really Free?

Question 1: “If God already knows everything I'm going to do before I do it, how can I be blamed for it? Wasn't it already going to happen anyway?”

Knowing something will happen does not necessarily mean you cause it to happen.

There are 2 things that seem to be in conflict but are not:

1) God knows everything, including the future

“Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, **declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done**, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’” - **Isaiah 46:9–10, ESV**

“Known to God from eternity are all his works.” = **Acts 15:18, NKJV**

2) We are responsible for our actions

“For we are each responsible for our own conduct.” – **Galatians 6:5 (NLT)**

“Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” - **James 1:14 (ESV)**

“So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.” - **Romans 14:12 (ESV)**

God exists outside of space and time, as well as within it. Everything – our past, present, and future are all known by God. Augustine argued that our past, present and future – are all God’s present experience.

God's knowledge of your future choices does not mean that He forces you to make those choices. For example, imagine that you somehow knew with complete certainty that your friend would choose chocolate ice cream tomorrow. Your knowledge would not **cause** your friend to choose chocolate. You simply knew what your friend would freely choose.

God is different because His knowledge is perfect-He cannot be mistaken. But the fact that God knows what you will freely choose does not mean He makes the choice for you.

God's knowledge does not cause your decision; His knowledge perfectly reflects the decision you will make.

An important distinction is that **certainty is not the same thing as necessity**.

If God knows that tomorrow you will choose A, then it is certain that you will choose A. But that doesn't mean you are being forced to choose A. You choose A because you want to, even though God already knows that you will.

A simple analogy is watching a movie you've already seen. You know exactly what the character will do next, but your knowledge isn't what causes the character's actions. God's knowledge is infinitely greater than this analogy, but it illustrates the basic distinction between **knowing** and **causing**.

In short:

God's foreknowledge means your choice is certain, not that your choice is forced.

Question 2: “If God already knows someone is going to end up in hell, why would He create that person in the first place? Isn't that unfair to them?”

This question becomes easier to understand when we remember that **God's purpose in creating someone is not to send them to hell**.

God desires people to turn to Him.

“Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked**, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” – **Ezekiel 33:11 (ESV)**

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish**, but that all should reach repentance. “ - **2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)**

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” - **John 3:16 (ESV)**

God's knowledge of someone's future does not mean He wants that future for them

God's foreknowledge of someone's final choice does not mean that He causes that choice.

Imagine a parent who knows their adult child extremely well and knows that the child will make a terrible decision. The parent's knowledge does not make the decision happen, nor does it mean the parent wanted the child to make it.

If People will make bad decisions why make them at all?

1) God has done a good thing in making people

God created a world capable of experiencing and knowing love. Being able to know and experience love is a good thing.

God creates people because **existence is a genuine good**, and because human beings are capable of knowing God, loving Him, loving others, doing good, and experiencing the blessings of life. God also gives people genuine opportunities to respond to Him.

The Christian understanding of judgment is therefore not:

“God created you knowing He would send you to Hell, so He wanted you there.”

Rather:

“God created you for relationship with Him, gives you genuine opportunities to respond to Him, and knows beforehand how you will ultimately respond.”

There is another important point: **not creating someone doesn't necessarily make their situation better**. If God creates someone who has the opportunity to know Him, love Him, experience life, and freely choose Him, that person's existence has enormous potential for good -even though God knows the possibility of their eventual rejection of Him.

2) Love requires the real possibility of "no."

For true love to exist, free choice must exist. Love that is not freely chosen, but compelled is not real love. If free will exists, the possibility of sin and evil exist.

But why doesn't God only create people who will ultimately accept Him?

If God selectively removed from existence those who would reject Him, then the meaning of free choice, and by extension of true love would be diminished. While every being would then love God, there would not be any real chance that they could do otherwise.

If some will reject God why create anyone then?

God gives us value when He creates us.

Would it be fair to those who choose to love God to deprive them of creation, and knowing God, and living with Him for an eternity because others would reject God? No. It would not be fair to them.

Is a world with love in it greater than a world without? Yes. If so, then it makes sense that God would want to create a world where beings capable of love are in it.

Is it fair for God to punish people with hell for their sins?

Christianity teaches that God judges people **justly**, not arbitrarily.

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” - **Genesis 18:25 (ESV)**

God knows every person's circumstances, knowledge, opportunities, motives, and choices far better than we do. Therefore, we can trust that His judgment will be perfectly informed and righteous, even when we don't understand every detail of how He judges.

God's justice demands that every wrong be punished. If God just said, “you know what, it doesn't matter that someone was raped, or murdered, or abused”, then He would not be just. Every sin is punished.

The good news for us is that God knows that we all deserve to be punished but He loves us. He is willing to accept a ransom for the payment of our sins. As the one offended it is his right to be able to accept another payment.

Jesus, who is perfect and without sin, freely chose to be our ransom (payment for sins). He died on the cross to pay for our sins.

For this substitution for sins to be applied, we must recognize that we have sinned, repent, and accept God's offer for Jesus' sacrifice to be applied to our “account”. We can accept this offer or reject it. But whichever option you choose, know that God went to extraordinary measures to provide you a way to escape hell and to be with Him in heaven.