

Once upon a time in a world far, far away, there were three choice spirits waiting to be born and sent to earth.

God said, "You three are numbered among the noble and great of my spirit children. Therefore, I will let you view earth for awhile before I send you down."

A Fictional Story With Some Great Truths By Dr Greg Shepard

## Three Life Choices

James, Joe and Jason marvelled at the earth below. It was beautiful beyond comprehension. Then as they got closer, they saw many ugly things: wars, killings and many deceitful actions by their brothers-to-be. But, they also witnessed much good, giving and sharing by their future brothers. Then, quickly, it was time to return.

God said, "Well now, it will soon be time to send you down. After your brief glimpse of life on earth, do you prefer to be born in a certain country?"

"Yes, we do! We would all like to be born in America where great freedoms and opportunities are given?"

God smiled and said, "Yes, America is a great land. However, with those freedoms and opportunities come responsibilities, if you are going to progress and be happy. Are you sure?"

All three nodded affirmatively. "Very well," God said, "It is done. Now what talent shall I give unto you? Every being is entitled to at least one talent."

James, Joe and Jason sparkled with enthusiasm as they all unitedly said, "Basketball!"

God almost laughed but then with a sage tone said, "Very well, I will give unto you three choices and you cannot choose the same one."

"One of you can choose to be 6'9" with grace and great coordination. If you practice hard, you'll be the NBA's number one draft choice."

"Another one of you can choose to be 6'6" with the ability to score points. You will not even have to practice to be great. Everything will come naturally. I'll even allow you to score 50 points a game in high school before you become an NBA All-Star."

"Finally, one of you can choose to be 5'10" and blessed with average high school ability. Since I gave so much to the other two, I'm afraid this player will have to work hard, long hours for even the slightest advantage."

After conferring and pondering on these three choices, James was the first to speak. "I would like to be 6'9" and given great coordination." Joe interjected, "Let me be the one who can score points." Jason looked up with determination, "Dear God, I may be a fool, but my view of earth made a deep impression. I am satisfied on being the 5'10" player."

With great tenderness, God gathered his three spirit children for one last embrace. "It shall be done. You will not remember this conversation until you return to me after your life on earth."

As Joe grew to be 6'6" he did indeed star in high school basketball while averaging 50 points a game. Joe was so good, he decided to turn Pro after only two years of college. Joe even amazed himself. Everything came easily. He practiced very little and conditioning his body was completely unnecessary. Since people enjoyed doing things for Joe, it was easy for Joe to say, "Why not?" If Joe had needed help on a test, a paper, a grade or some spending money, most of the time he didn't have to ask. Yes, this earth life certainly was wonderful. Joe even made the NBA All-Pro team after three years in the league. Joe loved to hang out at the night spots; after all his body seemed to be different. He could handle business on the court. Then one night a friend said, "Joe, my man, I've got some great stuff that will make your day. I'll show you how to snort it. It's expensive but we're tight man, so I'll give it to you free." Soon Joe learned to love this stuff more than life itself and would spend thousands for a great day on cocaine.

Joe's body fought hard but finally he could fool people no longer. He tried to break free from the death grip of the evil drug. For awhile many people thought Joe was cured, but it was always there. Finally, Joe used up his chances with the NBA and penniless, without a college degree, Joe was banned from the NBA and was unable to demonstrate his remarkable natural ability. Tragically, Joe thought, "Who is going to take care of me now?"

Meanwhile, Jason was struggling, trying to make the Junior Varsity team. He practiced long and hard to develop his skills. He lifted weights, ran

and attended every basketball camp available. As a senior, his hard work paid off, for Jason became a starter. He averaged 8 points per game and dished off an average of 3 assists per game. However, nobody wanted a 5'10" average guard in college. Jason's playing career came to an end. Oh, how glad he was that he'd worked hard to get a B average because now he could enroll at the state's university.

As Jason stood in line to get his college degree, his mind flashed back to the difficult times he'd had with papers, tests and degree requirements. He was thankful for the self-reliance he'd developed and thankful for the spirit of determination of overcoming obstacles he'd cultivated in his earlier years. Jason proudly clutched his college degree.

Jason soon married and fathered three children. He took great joy in teaching and playing with his family. Sometimes his marriage was a little rocky, but somehow Jason figured out how to endure and work things out with a wife he truly loved. Then, one day his boss told Jason that he no longer had a job due to cutbacks. The story of Jason ends here as he unblinkingly stated, "Boss, I understand. This is not a problem, but only one more challenge to be met. I have been blessed greatly; more than I deserve. A coach once told me, 'Turn adversity into prosperity' and that is exactly what I will do."

James did indeed grow to be 6'9" and as he worked, he was noticed by many college coaches. After a sensational college career, James fulfilled his destiny and became a number one draft pick. James had a good heart, but was swayed by those who said, "Man, you are great! You're going to be rolling in dough. You'll make more in one year than those college pros earn in a lifetime. Why go to class? I mean why?"

Then, a friend told the great, great lie, "James, my man, I've got some great stuff that will make your day. I'll even show you how to snort it. I can even put some extra stuff on it to really make you happy. It's expensive, but we're tight man, so I'll give it to you free."

James signed a huge contract and a fantastic career was about to begin. Because James had the whole world in the palm of his hand, it was a time to celebrate with the great lie. James snorted, then reeled and then died.

James returned to his God. They both had tears and embraced. James looked back at earth and quickly viewed both Joe and Jason. Finally, he looked up into God's piercing eyes and whispered, "Dear God, now I understand....."



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