



# The LUCIFER EFFECT

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By Philip Zimbardo

*Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*

## *Who was Lucifer and how did he become the Devil?*

The "Lucifer Effect" describes the point in time when an ordinary, normal person first crosses the boundary between good and evil to engage in an evil action. It represents a transformation of human character that is significant in its consequences. Such transformations are more likely to occur in novel settings, in "total situations," where social situational forces are sufficiently powerful to overwhelm, or set aside temporarily, personal attributes of morality, compassion, or sense of justice and fair play.



*Evil is the exercise of power to intentionally harm (psychologically), hurt (physically), or destroy (mortally or spiritually) others.*

According to various scenarios of early Christian Church Fathers (from Cyprus, Armenia, Greece, and France), Lucifer was god's favorite angel, referred to as the "Morning Star," as "Light," as the "Prince of the Power of Air," or of the Atmosphere. His sin, and the origin of his transformation into the Devil, stems from his envy of man and disobedience to God. Lucifer resented God's command that all of the angels should worship the image of God in the newly created Adam. When Archangel Michael ordered all angels to worship this image of God, Jehovah, Lucifer refused. Allegedly, he said, " I will not worship one inferior and subsequent to me. I am prior to him in creation. Before he was made, I was already made. He ought to worship me." Other angels subordinate to Lucifer similarly refused to obey this command despite Michael's warning that God will be wrathful with them. Apparently a cosmic battle ensued in which Michael's legions ousted Lucifer's and the fallen angels were cast out of heaven into Hell (paradoxically to a place created by God.) Lucifer is transformed into Satan, the Devil, following his fall from grace. The Devil then plans revenge against Adam to expose his weakness of spirit. He blames Adam for being sent out from the glory of heaven, expelled into the world, "...we were pained to see you in such bliss of delights [in Paradise]. So with deceit I assailed your wife [Eve] and made you to be expelled through her from the joys of your bliss, as I have been expelled from my glory."

Thus, "The Lucifer Effect" represents this most extreme transformation imaginable from God's favorite Angel into the Devil. My work has focused on lesser transformations of human character not as dramatic as this one, in which ordinary, even good people begin to engage in bad deeds, for a short time or longer, that qualify as "evil."

The best source for these materials about Lucifer and Satan is in the 2006 in-depth analyses by Henry Ansgar Kelly, [Satan: A Biography](#) (New York: Cambridge University Press). [Click here](#) to read more about fallen angels.

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Jesus and Lucifer on Social Justice

By Rev. Jennifer Brooks

I was intrigued by television personality Glenn Beck's advice that Christians "run as fast as you can" from a church that has "social justice" on its website. Beck apparently sees "social justice" as something new, springing from Marxism and not only irrelevant but harmful to Christianity. Thinking about Beck's advice, I asked myself, WWJD, "What Would..."

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