

# Leroy' Big Decision

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier ([www.thefaithkit.org](http://www.thefaithkit.org))  
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# Leroy's Big Decision

Leroy was going to be a great one. No one had ever seen such natural talent, and such great instincts for the game.

He had been a star at every level, had enough press clippings to paper a house, and was a sure shot to be rich and famous.

Besides all this, he actually enjoyed the game—loved it, really—and knew its history, and knew he had a chance to become part of that history. The game was his life from as long as he could remember; and, not surprisingly, he cared about little less.

He gave a sample because everyone else on the team did it. The coach thought it would be good for building good will in the community. (Maybe there would be fewer complaints about the traffic on game day!)

It was quick and painless as promised. You write your name on a card; give your address and phone number; it takes two seconds to give a sample; you go home feeling you had done something good.

In fact, your sample would now be analyzed and categorized, and your information would be entered into some big data base. Maybe, though the odds were small, someone could use your “globular” if globular disease destroyed their two, and you would still be OK with one.

The odds were small. Of the very few people who got globular disease and needed a match, most did not find one—not *one* anywhere in the country—and of these most, soon thereafter, died.

None of this was in Leroy's mind when he gave his sample. Nor did he quickly remember when someone called him to say that he was the sole match for a young man named Jesús, of almost the same age, who lived on the other side of the country.

“What do you want me to do?” was his hesitant question.

The answer: “Let us test to confirm that you are a match.”

It was hard to say no to that.

Things got harder when he was told that he *was* a match; and they got much harder when he was told that his globulars were not in the right spot. Somehow they had developed in the wrong spot, where they formed some sort of support for something involving his nerves.

He was too shook up to ask a question and so they just told him: “If we take it you’ll be OK, and you’ll save a life, but you’ll never be able to play the game again.”

Leroy was stunned but he knew enough NOT to say what he was feeling. “This is not fair,” he wanted to say, “I don’t even know this person—and I don’t want to know him—and you are asking me to give up everything.

You are asking me to give up *everything*—everything I’ve ever worked for, everything I’ve ever hoped for.

You are asking me to give up *everything* so somebody else can have everything *he* wants.”

(And Leroy did not know this at first, but soon he found out that Jesús and his family were not going to be able to do little more than thank him for all he was being asked to give up.)

“Oh God,” was all that Leroy said at first; “I’m going to have to think about this.” He was told that he wouldn’t have much time to think before events made the decision for him.

Of course, he talked to people, and the people around him didn’t know what to say. No one felt comfortable saying yes or no.

Leroy felt kicked in the head by life again when the press got a hold of it. Of the few people who allowed themselves to be quoted, most made it sound like an easy decision. “Of course, he has to do it”; this is what they said.

“It’s easy for them to say,” thought Leroy; “I wonder how easy it would be for THEM to do it? I wonder how many would actually do it? I wonder how many of them do anything, voluntarily, because of the great big needs of people they don’t even know?”

Within Leroy the battle raged. Of course he could understand the plight of someone desperate not to die. But why should he have to give up his life for this “someone.” He himself was not facing death, but what was he going to do with the rest of life? Not only would he not be rich (or famous), he would probably end up poor, a prisoner of work at best, a guy life mocked for who he was not.

“A lot of people are in bad situations,” thought Leroy, “and by making big sacrifices other people could save them, but where are these other people?”

And what does somebody else’s problem really have to do with me?

Everyone would feel the same way I do,” thought Leroy, “and no one will admit that they would have chosen to save *themselves*.”

No one will admit they would have chosen to save themselves. Everyone will condemn me. If I say no, and this guy dies... *when* this guy dies, people will see me as some kind of monster. (Who will want me to play for their team?) Life has cheated me; I have no choice.”

Leroy went ahead with the operation. It was successful.

Jesús was grateful, and his family, too; and the press was impressed; and that helped a lot.

Yes, the praise and attention helped a lot.

But then it faded. The world moved on to the next real or manufactured big thing. Not two months later it was all over.

No longer did Leroy see his name in the paper or get messages from strangers. Now that he has recovered and could walk normally, he was treated normally, in other words, like nobody special.

And now Leroy had time to think about his life and what he had lost.

It wasn't that hard to pick something to study, but he found himself haunted by "what might have been" and he began to detest what he could expect from the rest of his life.

It was this that ultimately saved him.

It was NOT something he got from someone's else misfortune. The team bus *didn't* crash killing everybody aboard.

It was NOT some earthly reward that people should not be taught to expect. Jesús never won the lottery and gave him all the money. No team declared it was going to pick him and decided to pay him anyway. He did not become a hero/celebrity and an admired member of the jet set.

What happened was that Leroy was faced with another decision. He could live in misery, or he could decide that he had done the right thing—even if his heart was not at first in it.

If giving up your life for someone else is really the greatest thing that one can do... well, Leroy had done the greatest thing that one can do.

He discovered that this gave him an incentive to see things this way. The idea itself was clear enough. Even without a pietistic faith, human instinct tells us that somehow, for some reason, the greatest thing that one can do is to give up one's life.

Faith explains this as the creature's version of what God did in the act of creation. It further explains that this is the supreme act of faith (which means love), and that it makes us like God, and is our passage to the richest life with God that we might have. Faith says that there is nothing else that really matters because it is really true that there is nothing else that lasts. Faith also says that to be like God is to feel like God (to feel like God feels) and to know the greatest peace and joy possible here on earth.

What holds us back is doubt—not being sure. It's hard to give up a lot when we are not sure that this is right and smart.

But if things just happen and we don't really have a choice; and the deed is done; and there's no going back.... Now, instead of a reason NOT to see things as faith says, now we have a reason TO see things as faith says. We are not blocked by doubt; now we have incentive to see what was always there, a truth that is deeper and more beautiful.

Armed with this incentive, Leroy began to look at life differently. He began to value things in terms of something that could actually be said to involve "values"—something that made people better (deeper) and promised fruits that would last. The more he looked, the better he saw.

He began to see life as the transitory thing it is. He learned not to seek from things what they could not give, or to believe in himself on the basis of the attention of others or anything else that was liable to change.

Not seeking from things what they could not give, he learned how to appreciate things for what they are, and to see them as pointers to the life that he and we were made for.

Since this was precisely the right way to live in this world, Leroy's life became as good as it could be.

And Leroy became Le-roy.

Dear reader,

If perhaps you might like to use this story in order to present people (students, etc.) with a moral exercise, try this: Before letting them finish the story, ask them to speculate on what **THEY** would have done in Leroy's shoes, *and how they would have found peace with the decision.*

You might also notice that this short story is just loaded with topics for discussion!