

## Making Life's Decisions

Proverbs 2:1-12

We began the New Year by doing a series of messages that I have entitled “Living the Christian Life Today and Tomorrow.” It is my desire that we will learn to live the Christian life in such a way that it will impact every area of our everyday living. Living the Christ-life is not something that we do on Sunday; it is a way of life that we live everyday for the rest of our lives.

So, as we continue to lay the foundation for living the Christian life today and tomorrow, I want to talk to you today about **“Making Life's Decisions.”**

There is no doubt about it today we are faced with more decisions than ever before. We are living in a multiple-choice culture. The problem is that sometimes a seemingly insignificant or trivial decision has a major life changing impact.

Let me give you some real life examples of what I am trying to say:

Sam Phillips sold a small recording company to RCA records in 1955 for \$35,000. It included an exclusive contract with a young man named Elvis Presley, so he unknowingly forfeited royalties on more than one billion records. Bad decision.

Tom Sellick turned down the role for Indiana Jones. Bad decision.

In 1936 Joe Schuester and Jerry Segal sold the rights to Superman for \$65 each. Bad decision.

What is the key to making wise decisions? Proverbs 2:5 & 9 says it is listening to God, “If you want better insight and discernment, learn

the importance for reverence for the Lord and of trusting Him. He shows how to distinguish right from wrong and how to find the right decision every time.” If you want to make good decisions, listen to God.

**Today we are going to look at five principles for making life’s decisions.** There are more than these in the Bible but these five are at the top.

1. **First, there is the ideal test.** Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.” The ideal test is, *is it in harmony with God’s word.* **This is always the very first test you want to look at.** In life you have to decide what is going to be your *ultimate authority.* It really boils down to two choices – *God’s Word* or the *world* is going to be your authority for life. What *God* says or what *other people* say.

**If you base your life on popular opinion you are always going to be out of date because it keeps changing every day.** What used to be in yesterday will not be in today and what is in today will not be in tomorrow. *So the opinions of the world change quite frequently.* **If you base your life simply on popular culture, political correctness, or opinion polls you will have a very shifting foundation.**

**On the other hand, if you base your life on God’s Word, the truth never changes.** Truth is always true. So if God says something was wrong 10,000 years ago, it was also wrong 5000 years ago, it was wrong 500 years ago, it is wrong today and it will be wrong 1000 years from today. **I don’t care what the opinion polls say.** I don’t care what *political correctness* says. *I don’t care what Hollywood says.* **If God says it’s wrong, it’s wrong.** So you can either build your life on a *shaky foundation* that is constantly changing (the opinions of the world) or you can build your life on what God says which never changes which gives you a solid foundation while everything else is up in the air.

**2. Next, there is the *integrity test*.** For the second test you want to ask yourself the question, “Would I want everyone to know about this decision that I'm making?” **If you are making a decision and you worry that other people are going to find out about the decision that you are making, then it is most likely a very good indication that it's a bad decision.** Why? Because *bad decisions* always lead to *secrets* and *those kinds of secrets always lead to pain in our lives*.

Proverbs 10:9 reads like this, “The man of integrity walks securely but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.” So when making decisions you have to have the integrity test. **The truth is, when it comes to integrity, even if you can fool everyone else, you cannot fool yourself.** And if you violate your own conscious you have to pay for that.

**3. Next, there is the *improvement test*.** Will it make me a better person? The Bible talks about this in 1 Corinthians 10:23, “Everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial and not everything is constructive.” Notice the freedom we have here as Christians, “Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial and not everything builds you up – is constructive.” **The Bible is saying some things are not necessarily wrong, they are just not necessary.** It is not a matter between good and bad. It is a matter between what is good and what is the best. **Most of the choices you make in life are not really between really good and really evil.** You don't get up in the morning and say, “Shall I read my Bible or shall I become an international terrorist?” “Should I pray or become a drug addict?” Those kinds of things do not even cross your mind. Those are not issues with you.

**The issue is what is really best in your life.** A lot of things are *not necessarily wrong*, they are *morally neutral*. You need to go to a higher standard and ask, “Will what I'm about to do make me a better person?” That is the improvement test.

**4. Next, there is the *influence test*. Will it harm other people?** One of the biggest mistakes we make in life is *we forget how much our actions influence and affect others around us.* **Everyday you are tempted to make decisions that may be the best thing for you, but could have a devastating effect on the people around you.** You need to ask yourself, “Will it harm other people?”

**That is the opposite of our culture.** Our culture teaches us, think of *self* first - think of what you need, what your desires are. The truth is, God expects you to think more than just of yourself, as seen in Romans 14:12-13 says, “Each of us will give an account of himself to God. Try to live in such a way that you will never make your brother stumble by letting him see you doing something that he thinks is wrong.”

**You may not like hearing this, but everything you do has an affect on somebody else either *directly* or *indirectly*.** We are all in this *boat* called *humanity*. And if we are in this boat together and I decide to drill a hole in the bottom of the boat, everybody else is going to be effected by the hole I drilled.

Therefore, the influence question says, “How is what I'm doing going to hurt somebody else?”

**5. Next, there is the *investment test*.** Not only should I ask myself, “Is it the best use of my life?” but also, “Is it the best use of my time?” Ephesians 5:15-17 gives us this advice, “Be very wise how you live. Don't live like those who are not wise. Live wisely. I mean that you should use every chance you have for doing good because these are evil times. So don't be foolish with your lives. Learn what the Lord wants you to do.”

**If you want to make the best use of your life, if you want your life to count, if you want to make an impact with your life, you have**

**got to do one thing.** You've got to get control of your time. **Your time is your life.** If you do not learn to manage your time, you are not going very far in life.

**We all have the same amount of time every week – 168 hours a week.** The greatest successes and the worst failures in life had the same amount of time as you do. **It is what you do with it. Time is more important in your life than money.** Far more important. **You can always get more money. But you can't get any more time.** You only have a certain number of days you have been allotted in this world and if you blow them, you have blown it! **If you waste time, you are wasting your life. If you are killing time, you are committing suicide.** Your time is your life. **You have to stop and say, "Is this the best use of my time? Is this the best use of my life?"**

**There are many things that I just don't do.** Its not because they are bad, or that they are not fun. **But I have chosen not to do them, because I want to maximize my time on those things that I have place my highest priority on: my *family* and my *ministry*.** **But in addition to these, I need to also set aside some time for pleasure (for myself and with my family).**

**Now listen carefully, you don't have time for everything.** The good news is this: **God does not expect you to do *everything*.** **So don't feel guilty if you can't get everything done that you want to do.** **On top of that, there are only a few things worth doing in the first place.**

**Effective people figure out what is *essential* in life and what is *trivial* in life and they spend more of their time doing the *essential* things and less time doing the *trivial* things.** You can't eliminate all the *trivia* in your life but you can reduce it. **But that is not an easy task. It is often difficult to choose between what is best for my life and what is easiest for my life.** Especially when you are tired. **When you are tired you don't want to do the best thing, you want to do what is easy. You don't want to do the right thing; you want to do what is**

**comfortable**. That is why it is absolutely necessary for you to learn to get some rest.

**What am I saying?** I am begging you as your pastor do not waste your life. **Do not settle for second best. Do not go through life just existing, just copying, just getting by, and just skimming through life.** You were not put here in life just to coast. You were not put on this planet just to drift. **God made you for a reason. He made you for a purpose.** That starts by asking the question, is this the best use of my life?

**Let me close by making this statement: We have all made stupid decisions in our life, really dumb decisions that have been devastating to ourselves as well as other people.** Jesus would say this to you today, “I love you. I want to forgive you. I can restore you. And I can even reverse some of the damage you have brought on your life and the lives of other people from your stupid decisions. I died for those dumb decisions that you made. They have already been paid for on the cross. If you will come to Me and give me all the pieces of your life, the good, the shameful, the ugly, the parts you’re embarrassed about, just hand Me all your pieces, I will take your pieces and I will give you My peace. Not only that, I will give you the power and the wisdom to start making smart decisions the rest of your life. Not stupid decisions that cause scars and shame but smart decisions that cause satisfaction and significance.”

**What a deal! Who could turn that down? The most important decision you will ever make in your life is this, who is going to call the shots in your life? You or God? Give it to God.**

If you have never been saved, why not give your life to Christ today?

**Everyone please stand for prayer.**

Father,

Give me the courage to allow You to be the power behind my life's decisions. Help me to take the time to see the impact that my decisions will not only make on my life but on the lives of others. In Jesus' name. Amen.