

QUALITY
OF
LIFE
BIBLE
STUDY



Decisions®

COMPILED BY
S.MCRAE

DECISIONS

“Quality of Life Series”

LEADER: The Roads We Take

From: Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

“The roads we take are more important than the goals we announce. Decisions determine destiny.” - Frederick Speakman – Author

LEADER: How are your decision making skills? Have you ever heard the saying... “Not to make a decision, is to make one.”?

READER: QUOTE #1

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

Be willing to make decisions. That’s the most important quality in a good leader. Don’t fall victim to what I call the Ready- Aim-Aim-Aim Syndrome. You must be willing to fire. - T. Boone Pickens - American Businessman, Chairman of Mesa Petroleum

READER: QUOTE #2

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

“Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide.” - Napoleon Bonaparte 1769-1821, French General, Emperor

READER: QUOTE #3

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

“Indecision is the seedling of fear.” - Napoleon Hill 1883-1970, American Speaker, Motivational Writer, “Think and Grow Rich”

READER: QUOTE #4

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

“Indecision and delays are the parents of failure.” - George Canning 1770-1827, British Statesman

READER: QUOTE #5

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

“In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.” - Theodore Roosevelt 1858-1919, Twenty-sixth US President

READER: QUOTE #6

Source ~ <http://www.worldofquotes.com/topic/Decision/1/index.html>

“There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision.” - William James 1842-1910 Harvard Professor/Author

READER: QUOTE #7

Source ~ http://www.quoteland.com/topic.asp?CATEGORY_ID=43

“If anyone does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable.” - Seneca the Elder 60 BC-AD 37, Roman rhetorician and writer

READER: QUOTE #8

Source ~ <http://www.worldofquotes.com/topic/Decision/1/index.html>

“When I have fully decided that a result is worth getting I go ahead of it and make trial after trial until it comes.” - Thomas Alva Edison 1847-1931 Inventor

READER: “Good Decisions, Bad Decisions”

Source ~ http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/choices,_decisions_frameset.htm

A young woman was on the fast track the managerial elite ranks of her firm. Being wise she sought out the advice of the CEO, a businesswomen she greatly admired.

“Boss, what do I need most of all to become a good manager?”

“You need to learn how to make good decisions.”

“And how do I learn that?” asks the young woman.

“Experience” her boss replies.

“And how do I get that sort of experience?” the young woman asks.

“Bad decisions”.

READER: “Can’t Make Decisions”

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

A farmer hired a man to work for him. He told him his first task would be to paint the barn and said it should take him about three days to complete. But the hired man was finished in one day. The farmer set him to cutting wood, telling him it would require about 4 days. The hired man finished in a day and a half, to the farmer’s amazement. The next task was to sort out a large pile of potatoes. He was to arrange them into three piles: seed potatoes, food for the hogs, and potatoes that were good enough to sell. The farmer said it was a small job and shouldn’t take long at all. At the end of the day the farmer came back and found the hired man had barely started. “What’s the matter here” the farmer asked. “I can work hard, but I can’t make decisions!”

READER: “When In Charge”

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

When in charge, ponder
When in trouble, delegate
When in doubt, mumble

READER: “Someone Else Will” Today in the Word, MBI

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

Former president Ronald Reagan once had an aunt who took him to a cobbler for a pair of new shoes. The cobbler asked young Reagan, “Do you want square toes or round toes?” Unable to decide, Reagan didn’t answer, so the cobbler gave him a few days. Several days later the cobbler saw Reagan on the street and asked him again what kind of toes he wanted on his shoes. Reagan still couldn’t decide, so the shoemaker replied, “Well, come by in a couple of days. Your shoes will be ready.”

When the future president did so, he found one square-toed and one round-toed shoe! “This will teach you to never let people make decisions for you,” the cobbler said to his indecisive customer. “I learned right then and there,” Reagan said later, “if you don’t make your own decisions, someone else will.”

READER: “Dead Tree” By Thomas Nelson From: Robert H. Schuller, Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do!

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

I remember one winter my dad needed firewood, and he found a dead tree and sawed it down. In the spring, to his dismay, new shoots sprouted around the trunk. He said, “I thought sure it was dead. The leaves had all dropped in the wintertime. It was so cold that twigs snapped as if there were no life left in the old tree. But now I see that there was still life at the taproot.” He looked at me and said, “Bob, don’t forget this important lesson. Never cut a tree down in the wintertime. Never make a negative decision in the low time. Never make your most important decisions when you are in your worst mood. Wait. Be patient. The storm will pass. The spring will come.”

READER: “Final Decisions” by H.W. Andrews

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

While an open mind is priceless, it is priceless only when its owner has the courage to make a final decision which closes the mind for action after the process of viewing all sides of the question has been completed. Failure to make a decision after due consideration of all the facts will quickly brand a man as unfit for a position of responsibility. Not all of your decisions will be correct. None of us is perfect. But if you get into the habit of making decisions, experience will develop your judgment to a point where it is better to be right

fifty percent of the time and get something done, than it is to get nothing done because you fear to reach a decision.

READER: “Heads or Tails” From: Donna Paciullo, in Reader’s Digest

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

In my search for an assistant, I had narrowed the applicants to two women. One had more experience; the other was more personable. I headed for my boss’s office, still undecided. Realizing I needed help, he produced a quarter, saying, “Heads, It’s experience. Tails, it’s personality.” He flipped the quarter into the air and then asked, “Quick! What are you thinking?” “Tails,” I blurted. It was true. I had been wishing it would come up tails. The quarter landed in his palm and without looking at it, he said, “Call Personnel with your executive decision.”

READER: “Good Decision Making” From: Charles W.L. Foreman, “Managing a Decision Into Being,” from the Management Course for Presidents

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

What kind of person is best able to involve others and himself in good decision making? J. Keith Loudon lists seven qualities:

1. The ability to look ahead and see what’s coming—foresight.
2. Steadiness, with patience and persistence and courage.
3. A buoyant spirit that in spite of cares generates confidence.
4. Ingeniousness, the ability to solve problems soundly yet creatively.
5. The ability to help others.
6. Righteousness, the willingness to do the right thing and speak the truth.
7. Personal morality of a quality that commands the respect of others

READER: “Good Manager”

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

Actually, a manager needs the ability not only to make good decisions himself, but also to lead others to make good decisions. Charles Moore, after four years of research at the United Parcel Service reached the following conclusions:

1. Good decisions take a lot of time.
2. Good decisions combine the efforts of a number of people.
3. Good decisions give individuals the freedom to dissent.
4. Good decisions are reached without any pressure from the top to reach an artificial consensus.
5. Good decisions are based on the participation of those responsible for implementing them.

READER: “Stanford Professor” Bits and Pieces

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

Years ago a professor at Stanford devised a check list of nine questions that can be applied to any problem. Used as a self-quiz, the questions spur imagination. They are:

1. Is there a new way to do it?
2. Can you borrow or adapt?
3. Can you give it a new twist?
4. Do you merely need more of the same?
5. Less of the same?
6. Is there a substitute?
7. Can the parts be rearranged?
8. What if we do just the opposite?
9. Can ideas be combined?

READER: “Decision Making” #1 By Kenneth Boa

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=3358

There is a thought-provoking scene in Lewis Carroll’s classic children’s tale, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. Young Alice comes to a fork in the road and asks the Cheshire Cat which direction she should take. “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where –’ said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you walk,’ said the Cat.”¹

Life is filled with decisions, many of which never even reach our conscious level. Which socks to wear? Should the shirt button from the top down or from the bottom up? Which lane to drive in? Most of these decisions are made out of habit.

On the other hand, there are some decisions that you spend time thinking about. What sounds good for lunch? Which voicemail needs to be answered first? Can the haircut wait until next week? These decisions may seem small and insignificant, but woven together, they form the tapestry of our daily lives.

Then there are life-altering decisions that cause you to struggle. Which career path is most in line with your unique skill-set and calling? Should you marry or remain single? Which church will allow you the best opportunity to grow and minister to others? These are often hard choices that deserve a great amount of thought.

Often the same decision-making process we use for minor issues is used for major decisions as well. So the question is: How do we choose wisely? What criteria do we use to evaluate, to discern the best course of action? Clearly, gathering information and carefully analyzing our options is essential. Beyond that, we need wisdom and clarity of thought in order to make prudent decisions based upon the facts at hand and our understanding of God’s will.

READER: “Decision Making” #2 By Kenneth Boa

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=3358

Many bad choices are made simply because we move through the decision-making process too hastily, basing our conclusions on emotions, bad information or impulses. There is something to be said about “gut reactions,” but basing our every purchase on our feelings leads to a lot of buyer’s remorse. The opposite extreme would be to automatically rule out any emotional factors in our decision-making method. We should allow an inner sense of conviction to serve as a “red flag,” without allowing ourselves to fall into the “paralysis of analysis” when it comes to determining our next move.

The complexity of this issue shows how important it is to not make decisions in a vacuum. Particularly on very important matters, it is wise to seek counsel and advice from others who are experienced and godly. The only basis for really good decisions is correct thinking. This kind of wisdom comes from above and is given to us through four primary avenues – God’s Word, God’s Spirit, God’s Providence and God’s people. In other words, to ensure good decision-making habits, we must be people whose minds are consistently being renewed by God’s Word. We must also be people who walk in step with the Spirit of God, paying attention to his promptings and leadings. We must watch carefully and understand how God works providentially in our circumstances.

READER: “The Autopilot” by Rick Warren *The Purpose Driven Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon9/autopilot.htm>

Imagine riding in a speedboat on a lake with an automatic pilot set to go east. If you decide to reverse and head west, you have two possible ways to change the boat’s direction. One way is to grab the steering wheel and physically force it to head in the opposite direction from where the autopilot is programmed to go. By sheer willpower you could overcome the autopilot, but you would feel constant resistance. Your arms would eventually tire of the stress, you’d let go of the steering wheel, and the boat would instantly head back east, the way it was internally programmed.

This is what happens when you try to change your life with willpower: You say, “I’ll force myself to eat less . . . exercise more . . . quit being disorganized and late.” Yes, willpower can produce short-term change, but it creates constant internal stress because you haven’t dealt with the root cause. The change doesn’t feel natural, so eventually YOU give up, go off your diet, and quit exercising. You quickly revert to your old patterns.

There is a better and easier way: Change your autopilot-the way you think. The Bible says, “*Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.*” Romans 12:2 Your first step in spiritual growth is to start changing the way you think. Change always starts first in your mind. The way you think determines the way you feel, and the way you feel influences the way you act. Paul said, “*There must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.*” Ephesians 4:23

READER: “Deciding Wisely” From: Decision Making By Kenneth Boa (Excerpt)
Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=3358

Good decisions require accurately processed information. Technology has made it relatively easy to gather information. Computers crunch data and give it to us in digestible bits, but the human mind must still analyze that data and make the decisions. Because Solomon knew that leaders must make good decisions, he urged them to attain wisdom and mental discipline and to understand words of insight:

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young – let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance – for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

We should search ourselves regularly to make sure our thinking is in line with his will. We should strive to develop the character and conviction to make decisions that are products of our relationship with God.

LEADER: “Questions To Ask” Charles Stanley, In Touch Ministry.
Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

Questions that Charles Stanley and In Touch Ministry ask when making decisions:

1. Is this biblical?
2. Will it help accomplish our goals?
3. Is it wise stewardship of our resources?
4. Will it glorify Christ?

READER: Ephesians 5:17-18

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

READER: Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

READER: “Ask God” #1 By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)
Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2888

The battleground for every decision we face is the mind. That is where we wrestle with the pros and cons, weigh the potential consequences of each alternative, and ultimately make our choices. The impressions which weigh the heaviest and linger the longest in the mind will usually determine the course of action we take. What goes on in the mind is crucial!

That is why we must be sure our minds are controlled by God’s Spirit. Remember Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians? *“Don’t be unwise,” or “Don’t be without your minds.”* And in the very next verse he charges, *“But be filled with the Spirit.”* We cannot trust our impressions if our wills are not so yielded to the Holy Spirit that he dominates our minds. But when he is in control, we can expect our thoughts to be his thoughts.

Since the mind is the high command headquarters where all decisions will be made, it must be not only controlled by the Spirit, but also programmed with the Word. We have dealt with that principle extensively. As Paul put it, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and counsel one another with all wisdom.”*

But there is a third matter which vitally affects the mind as it grapples with the decisions of life. It must be in tune with the Lord. If we want him to lay his convictions on our minds, then we must be on his wavelength, and the line of communication between us must be kept open. If we want to be certain that the impressions on our minds are from him rather than from some other source, then we will need to talk to him about them. The subject before us is prayer.

READER: James 1:5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

READER: Luke 6:12

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

READER: “Ask God” #2 By Richard L. Strauss

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2888

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Whether it is one of the major decisions of life like the choice of a vocation or a mate, or one of those less consequential issues like where to go for lunch or what to cook for dinner, we are invited to ask God for wisdom.

Jesus did. Follow him as he faces one of the most serious decisions of his life. There were multitudes who numbered themselves among his disciples, but he needed only twelve of them to be with him continuously and to receive the intensive training necessary to carry on in his absence. Whom would he choose? *“And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.”* If Jesus needed that much time in his Father’s presence when he faced a major decision, how much more do we.

LEADER: “Ask God” #3 By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2888

Maybe you are facing a significant decision in your life right now. You’ve been frantically seeking direction from one source after another. You feel yourself getting anxious and apprehensive about it. Your worrisome attitude is not only hindering your communion with God, but it is also short-circuiting your ability to think clearly about your options. Why not heed the advice of the Apostle Paul? Philippians 4:6-7 says: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* Talk to God about the decision. Share your thoughts and feelings with him. Thank him for his promise to guide you, and enjoy the peace of mind which he alone can give.

READER: Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

LEADER: “Use Your Head” By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2890

The Word of God is primary in divine guidance. And the witness of the Spirit, clarified through prayer and confirmed through circumstances, will invariably contribute to our understanding of God’s plan. But some other factors also affect the decisions we weigh. Some of these fit in the category of “the obvious.” What is it you think God wants you to do? Ask yourself some self-evident questions about it.

READER: “Does This Make Sense?” From: “Use Your Head” By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2890

I know that the most famous passage in all the Bible on God’s direction forbids us from leaning on our own understanding. But Solomon did not mean that we should shift our brain cells into neutral before we make a decision. That would be contrary to a great body of biblical truth. On a number of occasions, New Testament writers used the verb *sophroneo*, which means *“to be of sound mind, to be reasonable, sensible.”* Peter used it when he said, *“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be of sound judgment.”* In other words, use good common sense.

READER: Proverbs 3:6

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

READER: 1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer

READER: “Is This What I Ought To Do?” From: “Use Your Head” By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2890

The Scripture teaches that basic moral values are inscribed on the soul of every human being. Those values may differ from person to person or from culture to culture, but there is in every person a sense of “ought,” called conscience, which evaluates his behavior and either accuses or defends him. God can use that conscience to lead us.

Closely linked to conscience is the plain sense of duty. Certain things are obviously God’s will simply because they are rightfully expected of us. As the Apostle James said, *“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”* James 4:17

Doing our duty has another application as well. When you face a difficult choice and honestly cannot decide what to do, just faithfully perform the next thing that is expected of you as part of your daily responsibilities. Guidance may come and greater opportunities may open to you while you are carrying out those obligations.

READER: Romans 2:14-15

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

READER: “Am I Qualified For This?” From: “Use Your Head” By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)
Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2890

God never calls on us to do a job which he does not equip us to do.

In the final analysis, it really doesn’t matter a great deal what we can or cannot do. What matters most is what God wants us to do with our lives and how he wants us to minister to others. He can provide additional training if we need it, and he can impart new gifts and abilities if he thinks we need them. He can take what we are and transform us into whatever he wants us to be, if we are willing. We are not capable of accomplishing anything eternally profitable through our own gifts and abilities anyway. They must be energized and operated by his power. *“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”* 2 Corinthians 3:5

READER: “What Do Others Think?” From: “Use Your Head” By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)
Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2890

Someone has suggested that if you are the only one who thinks a particular course of action is right, you’d better stop and pray about it some more. That isn’t to say that one person is always wrong when the majority disagrees with him. But it does reinforce the great truth of Christian community, that God has brought us together into one body so that we can minister to one another.

LEADER: The book of Proverbs makes a strong case for seeking the counsel of others.

READER: Proverbs 11:14

Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

READER: Proverbs 12:15

A fool thinks he needs no advice, but a wise man listens to others.

READER: Proverbs 15:22

Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed

READER: Proverbs 19:20

Get all the advice you can and be wise the rest of your life.

READER: Hebrews 10:25

not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

LEADER: “Ask God” #3 By Richard L. Strauss (Excerpt)
Source ~ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2888

Solomon made it clear when he established his basic prerequisites for divine guidance: *“And do not lean on your own understanding,”* he warned. On the other hand, when we ask God to lead us, we are acknowledging that we are incapable of successfully directing our own future and that we need his help. That is exactly where he wants us to be—fully aware that apart from him we can do nothing.

READER: John 15:5

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

LEADER: What is the first thing we should do when facing a large decision? We all at one time or another will face decisions about our career; relationships; finances...What did Jesus do when before he made a big decision?

READER: Luke 6:12-16

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

LEADER: “How to approach Decision Making” By David Elvery (Excerpt)

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=87131&ContributorID=11657>

In this passage, Jesus was faced with a decision that would shape the rest of history.

Do you ever feel the weight of decisions on you. Feel that the whole world - or maybe your whole future rests on this one decision? I think that Jesus felt that pressure ... So what did He do? (Let them answer...He prayed)

God wants us to include him in our decision making - and just like a perfect FATHER, God has all the time in the world to sit and listen to us and direct us in our decision making - whether it be a big or small issue. He wants to help us.

READER: “Eleanor Roosevelt” From Little House on the Freeway, Tim Kimmel

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

The words of Eleanor Roosevelt ring true:

One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words. It is expressed in the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.

READER: QUOTE #9

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

“We are given one life, and the decision is our whether to wait for circumstances to make up our mind, or whether to act, and in acting, to live.” - Omar Nelson Bradley 1893-1981, American General

READER: QUOTE #10

Source ~ <http://www.quotationspage.com/subjects/decisions/>

“Somewhere along the line of development we discover what we really are, and then we make our real decision for which we are responsible. Make that decision primarily for yourself because you can never really live anyone else’s life, not even your own child’s.” - Eleanor Roosevelt 1884-1962, American First Lady, Columnist, Lecturer, Humanitarian

READER: QUOTE #11

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Decisions>

“Our lives are a sum total of the choices we have made.” - Wayne Dyer 1940-, American Psychotherapist, Author, Lecturer

READER: “The Road Not Taken” By Robert Frost

Source ~ http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/choices,_decisions_frameset.htm

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

READER: “Once To Every Man” by James Russell Lowell

Source ~ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=374

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide
In the strife of truth or falsehood
For the good or evil side.

But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low
And every man decideth
Which way his soul shall go.

READER: “How Do I Make The Right Decision” By Mark Perryman (Excerpt)

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=91161&ContributorID=14484>

Making the proper decisions is very important because one day we will all have to give an account. Remember to focus on three things.

1. Doing the right thing.
2. Doing the right thing at the right time.
3. Doing the right thing at the right time with the right motives

LEADER: “How to approach Decision Making” #2 By David Elvery (Excerpt)

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=87131&ContributorID=11657>

Have you ever wondered why a bird sleeping on its perch never falls off? How do they manage to do this? The secret is the tendons of the bird’s legs. They are so constructed that when the leg is bent at the knee, the claws contract and grip like a steel trap. The claws refuse to let go until the knees are unbent again. The bended knee gives the bird the ability to hold on to his perch it gives it stability in its life.

Just like a bent knee in a bird helps that bird stay balanced and safe through the long hours of darkness, a knee bent in prayer enables us to get a firmer grip on life and the wisdom needed for decision making.

LEADER: And remember...“The roads we take are more important than the goals we announce. Decisions determine destiny.”

COMMENTS IF TIME:

**ALLOW 10 MINUTES PRIOR TO ENDING FOR
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:**

COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR YOUR READERS

READERS

QUOTE #1

Be willing to make decisions. That's the most important quality in a good leader. Don't fall victim to what I call the Ready- Aim-Aim-Aim Syndrome. You must be willing to fire. - T. Boone Pickens - American Businessman, Chairman of Mesa Petroleum

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QUOTE #2

"Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide." - Napoleon Bonaparte 1769-1821, French General, Emperor

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QUOTE #3

"Indecision is the seedling of fear." - Napoleon Hill 1883-1970, American Speaker, Motivational Writer, "Think and Grow Rich"

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QUOTE #4

"Indecision and delays are the parents of failure." - George Canning 1770-1827, British Statesman

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QUOTE #5

"In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing." - Theodore Roosevelt 1858-1919, Twenty-sixth US President

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QUOTE #6

"There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision." - William James 1842-1910 Harvard Professor/Author

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QUOTE #7

"If anyone does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable." - Seneca the Elder 60 BC-AD 37, Roman rhetorician and writer

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QUOTE #8

"When I have fully decided that a result is worth getting I go ahead of it and make trial after trial until it comes." - Thomas Alva Edison 1847-1931 Inventor

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"Good Decisions, Bad Decisions"

A young woman was on the fast track the managerial elite ranks of her firm. Being wise she sought out the advice of the CEO, a businesswoman she greatly admired.

"Boss, what do I need most of all to become a good manager?"

"You need to learn how to make good decisions."

"And how do I learn that?" asks the young woman.

"Experience" her boss replies.

"And how do I get that sort of experience?" the young woman asks.

"Bad decisions"

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“Can’t Make Decisions”

A farmer hired a man to work for him. He told him his first task would be to paint the barn and said it should take him about three days to complete. But the hired man was finished in one day. The farmer set him to cutting wood, telling him it would require about 4 days. The hired man finished in a day and a half, to the farmer’s amazement. The next task was to sort out a large pile of potatoes. He was to arrange them into three piles: seed potatoes, food for the hogs, and potatoes that were good enough to sell. The farmer said it was a small job and shouldn’t take long at all. At the end of the day the farmer came back and found the hired man had barely started. “What’s the matter here” the farmer asked. “I can work hard, but I can’t make decisions!”

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“When In Charge”

When in charge, ponder
When in trouble, delegate
When in doubt, mumble

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“Someone Else Will”

Former president Ronald Reagan once had an aunt who took him to a cobbler for a pair of new shoes. The cobbler asked young Reagan, “Do you want square toes or round toes?” Unable to decide, Reagan didn’t answer, so the cobbler gave him a few days. Several days later the cobbler saw Reagan on the street and asked him again what kind of toes he wanted on his shoes. Reagan still couldn’t decide, so the shoemaker replied, “Well, come by in a couple of days. Your shoes will be ready.”

When the future president did so, he found one square-toed and one round-toed shoe! “This will teach you to never let people make decisions for you,” the cobbler said to his indecisive customer. “I learned right then and there,” Reagan said later, “if you don’t make your own decisions, someone else will.”

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“Dead Tree” By Thomas Nelson

I remember one winter my dad needed firewood, and he found a dead tree and sawed it down. In the spring, to his dismay, new shoots sprouted around the trunk. He said, “I thought sure it was dead. The leaves had all dropped in the wintertime. It was so cold that twigs snapped as if there were no life left in the old tree. But now I see that there was still life at the taproot.” He looked at me and said, “Bob, don’t forget this important lesson. Never cut a tree down in the wintertime. Never make a negative decision in the low time. Never make your most important decisions when you are in your worst mood. Wait. Be patient. The storm will pass. The spring will come.”

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“Final Decisions” by H.W. Andrews

While an open mind is priceless, it is priceless only when its owner has the courage to make a final decision which closes the mind for action after the process of viewing all sides of the question has been completed. Failure to make a decision after due consideration of all the facts will quickly brand a man as unfit for a position of responsibility. Not all of your decisions will be correct. None of us is perfect. But if you get into the habit of making decisions, experience will develop your judgment to a point where it is better to be right fifty percent of the time and get something done, than it is to get nothing done because you fear to reach a decision.

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“Heads or Tails”

In my search for an assistant, I had narrowed the applicants to two women. One had more experience; the other was more personable. I headed for my boss’s office, still undecided. Realizing I needed help, he produced a quarter, saying, “Heads, It’s experience. Tails, it’s personality.” He flipped the quarter into the air and then asked, “Quick! What are you thinking?” “Tails,” I blurted. It was true. I had been wishing it would come up tails. The quarter landed in his palm and without looking at it, he said, “Call Personnel with your executive decision.”

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“Good Decision Making”

What kind of person is best able to involve others and himself in good decision making? J. Keith Loudon lists seven qualities:

1. The ability to look ahead and see what’s coming—foresight.
2. Steadiness, with patience and persistence and courage.
3. A buoyant spirit that in spite of cares generates confidence.
4. Ingeniousness, the ability to solve problems soundly yet creatively.
5. The ability to help others.
6. Righteousness, the willingness to do the right thing and speak the truth.
7. Personal morality of a quality that commands the respect of others

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“Good Manager”

Actually, a manager needs the ability not only to make good decisions himself, but also to lead others to make good decisions. Charles Moore, after four years of research at the United Parcel Service reached the following conclusions:

1. Good decisions take a lot of time.
2. Good decisions combine the efforts of a number of people.
3. Good decisions give individuals the freedom to dissent.
4. Good decisions are reached without any pressure from the top to reach an artificial consensus.
5. Good decisions are based on the participation of those responsible for implementing them.

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“Stanford Professor”

Years ago a professor at Stanford devised a check list of nine questions that can be applied to any problem. Used as a self-quiz, the questions spur imagination. They are:

1. Is there a new way to do it?
2. Can you borrow or adapt?
3. Can you give it a new twist?
4. Do you merely need more of the same?
5. Less of the same?
6. Is there a substitute?
7. Can the parts be rearranged?
8. What if we do just the opposite?
9. Can ideas be combined?

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“Decision Making” #1 By Kenneth Boa

There is a thought-provoking scene in Lewis Carroll’s classic children’s tale, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Young Alice comes to a fork in the road and asks the Cheshire Cat which direction she should take. “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where –’ said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you walk,’ said the Cat.”¹

Life is filled with decisions, many of which never even reach our conscious level. Which socks to wear? Should the shirt button from the top down or from the bottom up? Which lane to drive in? Most of these decisions are made out of habit.

On the other hand, there are some decisions that you spend time thinking about. What sounds good for lunch? Which voicemail needs to be answered first? Can the haircut wait until next week? These decisions may seem small and insignificant, but woven together, they form the tapestry of our daily lives.

Then there are life-altering decisions that cause you to struggle. Which career path is most in line with your unique skill-set and calling? Should you marry or remain single? Which church will allow you the best opportunity to grow and minister to others? These are often hard choices that deserve a great amount of thought.

Often the same decision-making process we use for minor issues is used for major decisions as well. So the question is: How do we choose wisely? What criteria do we use to evaluate, to discern the best course of action? Clearly, gathering information and carefully analyzing our options is essential. Beyond that, we need wisdom and clarity of thought in order to make prudent decisions based upon the facts at hand and our understanding of God’s will.



“Decision Making” #2 By Kenneth Boa

Many bad choices are made simply because we move through the decision-making process too hastily, basing our conclusions on emotions, bad information or impulses. There is something to be said about “gut reactions,” but basing our every purchase on our feelings leads to a lot of buyer’s remorse. The opposite extreme would be to automatically rule out any emotional factors in our decision-making method. We should allow an inner sense of conviction to serve as a “red flag,” without allowing ourselves to fall into the “paralysis of analysis” when it comes to determining our next move.

The complexity of this issue shows how important it is to not make decisions in a vacuum. Particularly on very important matters, it is wise to seek counsel and advice from others who are experienced and godly. The only basis for really good decisions is correct thinking. This kind of wisdom comes from above and is given to us through four primary avenues – God’s Word, God’s Spirit, God’s Providence and God’s people. In other words, to ensure good decision-making habits, we must be people whose minds are consistently being renewed by God’s Word. We must also be people who walk in step with the Spirit of God, paying attention to his promptings and leadings. We must watch carefully and understand how God works providentially in our circumstances.



“The Autopilot” by Rick Warren

Imagine riding in a speedboat on a lake with an automatic pilot set to go east. If you decide to reverse and head west, you have two possible ways to change the boat’s direction. One way is to grab the steering wheel and physically force it to head in the opposite direction from where the autopilot is programmed to go. By sheer willpower you could overcome the autopilot, but you would feel constant resistance. Your arms would eventually tire of the stress, you’d let go of the steering wheel, and the boat would instantly head back east, the way it was internally programmed.

This is what happens when you try to change your life with willpower: You say, “I’ll force myself to eat less ... exercise more . . . quit being disorganized and late.” Yes, willpower can produce short-term change, but it creates constant internal stress because you haven’t dealt with the root cause. The change doesn’t feel natural, so eventually YOU give up, go off your diet, and quit exercising. You quickly revert to your old patterns.

There is a better and easier way: Change your autopilot-the way you think. The Bible says, *“Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”* Romans 12:2 Your first step in spiritual growth is to start changing the way you think. Change always starts first in your mind. The way you think determines the way you feel, and the way you feel influences the way you act. Paul said, *“There must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.”* Ephesians 4:23



“Deciding Wisely”

Good decisions require accurately processed information. Technology has made it relatively easy to gather information. Computers crunch data and give it to us in digestible bits, but the human mind must still analyze that data and make the decisions. Because Solomon knew that leaders must make good decisions, he urged them to attain wisdom and mental discipline and to understand words of insight:

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young – let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance – for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

We should search ourselves regularly to make sure our thinking is in line with his will. We should strive to develop the character and conviction to make decisions that are products of our relationship with God.



Ephesians 5:17-18



Colossians 3:16



“Ask God” #1 By Richard L. Strauss

The battleground for every decision we face is the mind. That is where we wrestle with the pros and cons, weigh the potential consequences of each alternative, and ultimately make our choices. The impressions which weigh the heaviest and linger the longest in the mind will usually determine the course of action we take. What goes on in the mind is crucial!

That is why we must be sure our minds are controlled by God’s Spirit. Remember Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians? *“Don’t be unwise,”* or *“Don’t be without your minds.”* And in the very next verse he charges, *“But be filled with the Spirit.”* We cannot trust our impressions if our wills are not so yielded to the Holy Spirit that he dominates our minds. But when he is in control, we can expect our thoughts to be his thoughts.

Since the mind is the high command headquarters where all decisions will be made, it must be not only controlled by the Spirit, but also programmed with the Word. We have dealt with that principle extensively. As Paul put it, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and counsel one another with all wisdom.”*

But there is a third matter which vitally affects the mind as it grapples with the decisions of life. It must be in tune with the Lord. If we want him to lay his convictions on our minds, then we must be on his wavelength, and the line of communication between us must be kept open. If we want to be certain that the impressions on our minds are from him rather than from some other source, then we will need to talk to him about them. The subject before us is prayer.



James 1:5

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Luke 6:12

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“Ask God” #2 By Richard L. Strauss

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Whether it is one of the major decisions of life like the choice of a vocation or a mate, or one of those less consequential issues like where to go for lunch or what to cook for dinner, we are invited to ask God for wisdom.

Jesus did. Follow him as he faces one of the most serious decisions of his life. There were multitudes who numbered themselves among his disciples, but he needed only twelve of them to be with him continuously and to receive the intensive training necessary to carry on in his absence. Whom would he choose? *“And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.”* If Jesus needed that much time in his Father’s presence when he faced a major decision, how much more do we.

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Proverbs 3:5

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“Does This Make Sense?”

I know that the most famous passage in all the Bible on God’s direction forbids us from leaning on our own understanding. But Solomon did not mean that we should shift our brain cells into neutral before we make a decision. That would be contrary to a great body of biblical truth. On a number of occasions, New Testament writers used the verb *sophroneo*, which means *“to be of sound mind, to be reasonable, sensible.”* Peter used it when he said, *“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be of sound judgment.”* In other words, use good common sense.

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Proverbs 3:6

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1 Peter 4:7

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“Is This What I Ought To Do?”

The Scripture teaches that basic moral values are inscribed on the soul of every human being. Those values may differ from person to person or from culture to culture, but there is in every person a sense of “ought,” called conscience, which evaluates his behavior and either accuses or defends him. God can use that conscience to lead us.

Closely linked to conscience is the plain sense of duty. Certain things are obviously God’s will simply because they are rightfully expected of us. As the Apostle James said, *“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”* James 4:17

Doing our duty has another application as well. When you face a difficult choice and honestly cannot decide what to do, just faithfully perform the next thing that is expected of you as part of your daily responsibilities. Guidance may come and greater opportunities may open to you while you are carrying out those obligations.

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Romans 2:14-15

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“Am I Qualified For This?”

God never calls on us to do a job which he does not equip us to do.

In the final analysis, it really doesn't matter a great deal what we can or cannot do. What matters most is what God wants us to do with our lives and how he wants us to minister to others. He can provide additional training if we need it, and he can impart new gifts and abilities if he thinks we need them. He can take what we are and transform us into whatever he wants us to be, if we are willing. We are not capable of accomplishing anything eternally profitable through our own gifts and abilities anyway. They must be energized and operated by his power. *“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”* 2 Corinthians 3:5

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“What Do Others Think?”

Someone has suggested that if you are the only one who thinks a particular course of action is right, you'd better stop and pray about it some more. That isn't to say that one person is always wrong when the majority disagrees with him. But it does reinforce the great truth of Christian community, that God has brought us together into one body so that we can minister to one another.

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Proverbs 11:14

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Proverbs 12:15

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Proverbs 15:22

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Proverbs 19:20

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Hebrews 10:25

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John 15:5

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Luke 6:12-16

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“Eleanor Roosevelt”

The words of Eleanor Roosevelt ring true:

One's philosophy is not best expressed in words. It is expressed in the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.

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QUOTE #9

“We are given one life, and the decision is our whether to wait for circumstances to make up our mind, or whether to act, and in acting, to live.” - Omar Nelson Bradley 1893-1981, American General

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QUOTE #10

“Somewhere along the line of development we discover what we really are, and then we make our real decision for which we are responsible. Make that decision primarily for yourself because you can never really live anyone else's life, not even your own child's.” - Eleanor Roosevelt 1884-1962, American First Lady, Columnist, Lecturer, Humanitarian

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QUOTE #11

“Our lives are a sum total of the choices we have made.” - Wayne Dyer 1940-, American Psychotherapist, Author, Lecturer

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“The Road Not Taken” By Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

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“Once To Every Man” by James Russell Lowell

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide
In the strife of truth or falsehood
For the good or evil side.

But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low
And every man decideth
Which way his soul shall go.

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“How Do I Make The Right Decision” By Mark Perryman

Making the proper decisions is very important because one day we will all have to give an account. Remember to focus on three things.

1. Doing the right thing.
2. Doing the right thing at the right time.
3. Doing the right thing at the right time with the right motives

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