

**MAKING GOOD DECISIONS IN LIFE,
OR HOW TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOD-GIVEN VISIONS**

Making decisions, and making them correctly, is not a task for the weak or the unprepared.

“It is in the moments of your decisions that your destiny is shaped.” ~ Tony Robbins.

“It is not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.” ~ Roy Disney (brother of Walt Disney).

Who is more famous for life-planning and who is right?

Let’s look into decision-making from a Christian perspective and determine if the principles by which we make those decisions are biblical or worldly.

1. Introduction.

1.1. Rubbish wisdom.

“Your life changes the moment you make a new, congruent, and committed decision.” —*Tony Robbins*

“We are the creative force of our life, and through our own decisions rather than our conditions, if we carefully learn to do certain things, we can accomplish those goals.” —*Stephen Covey*

"There is a tide in the **affairs of men**,
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.
Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries." ~
Wm. Shakespeare (*Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Scene III.)

Many Christians buy into these errors, thinking that one decision (usually the first decision) inexorably sets the course for all future decisions.

1.2. The basis of sound decisions.

Good decisions come from our values, not simply our previous decisions that have produced in us habits of life.

1.2.1. The Traditional View (a defective view).

[Concept from Garry Friesen, et. al., *Decision Making and the Will of God.*]

This traditional view is the manner in which most Christians look at decision-making. Here is how it breaks down:

Premise: For each of our decisions God has a perfect plan or will.

Purpose: The goal of the believer is to discover God's individual will for a certain situation (find the "dot") and make decisions in accordance with it.

Process: The believer interprets the inner impressions and outward signs through which the Holy Spirit communicates His leading.

Proof: The confirmation that one has correctly discerned the individual will of God comes from an inner sense of peace and outward (successful) results of the decision.

When the Apostle Paul came to Macedonia (2nd Corinthians 7:6), he did not experience a sense of peace but had no rest and was “troubled on every side.” Sometimes, making the godly decision is fraught with discomfort or unpleasantness.

The key to decision making, according to this view is, therefore: find the dot.

But what if you misinterpret one of the signs along the way. The fear of missing or misinterpreting one of the sign posts along the way to a decision is why some Christians have great difficulty making important decisions and sticking to them without second-guessing their decisions.

2. Principles of Decision Making: The Way of Wisdom

2.1. In those areas specifically addressed by the Bible, we are to obey the revealed commands and principles of God (His moral will).

You have to know the Bible, both the statutes and the stories.

The many stories in the Bible about people making decisions and then seeing the fruits of those decisions, whether good or bad, is conducive to gaining wisdom. Read the stories.

2.2. In those areas where the Bible gives no command or principle (nonmoral decisions), the believer is free and responsible for choosing his own course of action.

Any decision made within the moral will of God is acceptable to God.

Knowing the Bible, and thinking through the implications of any teachings therein, means you will know the moral will of God.

2.3. In nonmoral decisions, the objective of the Christian is to make wise decisions through the application of spiritual expediency.

Spiritual expediency comes through a knowledge of the Bible and prayer.

3. The dangers of bad decisions.

3.1. You destroy yourself.

Let us look at one example of a man whose defective values caused him to make a decision that took him out of the will of God.

Colossians 4:14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

Philemon 23-24: Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,

24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

2 Timothy 4:9-10:

9 Be diligent to come to me quickly;

10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica.

3.2. You ruin your family.

Lot in Sodom.

3.2.1. The problem to be solved.

Genesis 13:2-9:

2 Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

5 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. 6 Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

3.2.2.Lot's defective values.

Genesis 13:10-12:

10 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.

He chose the valley of the plain. He made his decision on the basis of economics alone.

Genesis 14:8-12:

8 And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim

9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar — four kings against five.

10 Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains.

11 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way.

12 They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

Now he is living in the city of Sodom.

Genesis 19:1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

Finally, he is ruling in Sodom as an elder in the city.

Of Lot's family, his wife died because she wistfully looked back to Sodom, and his daughters committed incest with him, having picked up the morality of Sodom.

Lot was a righteous man (in 2 Peter 2:7 he is called "righteous Lot"), but a bad decision ruined him. The well-watered plains were a wonderful place to water his flocks and to grow wealthy, but it was a terrible place to raise his family. Lot should have done anything to stay with Abraham, God's man.

Are you planning to move? Is there a strong, Bible-teaching church there? If not, are you prepared to start one? Are there good schools for your children? Who made the decision? You? Your boss? Is God directing your move or are you making a unilateral decision and hoping that God will somehow bless it?

3.3. You disobey God.

This is the most destructive danger of all!

Saul and the Amalekites: 1 Samuel 15:1-3 (the direction), 7-9 (the disobedience), 10-16 (the deception), 20-26 (the decision).

1 Samuel 15:1-3:

1 Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD.

2 Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."

1 Samuel 15:7-9:

7 And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

8 He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

1 Samuel 15:10-16:

10 Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying,

11 "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night.

12 So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal."

13 Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

15 And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen,

to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night."
And he said to him, "Speak on."

1 Samuel 15:20-26:

20 And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

22 So Samuel said:
"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He also has rejected you from being king."

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."

26 But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.

4. The importance of having a strategy for life: Proverbs 4:26.

What do you want to look back and see when you are lying on your deathbed. On your deathbed, there are no do-overs, you cannot correct any mistakes, and you have no time left.

Proverbs 4:26 Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established.

Decisions are easier to make if you have a written structure for your life. You can take charge of the direction in your life if you can refer to your life-vision statements for guidance. For instance, if your vocational objectives include becoming a school teacher, you know to say no to a job opportunity that takes you away from an environment that allows you to go to school to get your teaching credential.

By writing down your life visions, you have already made many of the most important decisions that will confront you in life.

Set your vision, objectives, and goals to help you maximize your life as a stewardship from God.

There are seven basic areas of life in which vision, objectives, and goals are necessary:

- Personal walk with God.
- Education.
- Family (to include planning for marriage, marriage itself, and parenting).
- Personal ministry (a ministry in the lives of others into which you believe God has led you).
- Church (in which church will you worship and in what ministry will you be involved?)
- Vocation.
- Finances.

4.1. Vision: an ideal that you want to accomplish.

These are three possible visions in three different areas of life:

4.1.1. To be the best possible husband to my wife.

4.1.2. To make Christ an issue in my community.

4.1.3. To be a discipler.

4.2. Objective: a vision that explains the method for achieving it.

Here are three objectives:

4.2.1. To be the best possible husband to my wife by having date nights.

4.2.2. To make Christ an issue in my community by telling people that I am a Christian.

4.2.3. To disciple someone in a morning discipleship group.

4.3. Goal: an objective which is measurable and accomplishable.

Here are three goals:

4.3.1. To be the best possible husband to my wife by scheduling two date nights this month.

4.3.2. To make Christ an issue in my community by telling two people that I am a Christian before the end of the month.

4.3.3. To disciple two people on Thursday mornings starting in three weeks.

5. Steps to making good decisions.

5.1. Prayer (it must be a continual practice throughout the decision-making process): Proverbs 3:5-6.

Proverbs 3:5-6:

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;

6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

Start with prayer. Continue with prayer. End with prayer.

5.2. Questions to be asked.

5.2.1. Will my decisions glorify God?

1 Corinthians 10:31: Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

5.2.2. Will my decisions strengthen my walk with Christ, my ministry in the church, my family in my home?

5.2.3. Is it specifically forbidden by Scripture?

For instance, when it comes to disciplining your children, what will you decide to do when they rebel against your authority?

Proverbs 29:15: The rod and reproof give wisdom,
But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

5.2.4. Does the Bible discuss this decision?

5.2.4.1. Through specific teaching?

Psalms 119:24: Your testimonies also are my delight
And my counselors.

5.2.4.2. Through example?

Note the examples in the lives of Lot, David, etc.

5.3. Consult those whose wisdom has proven itself.

Proverbs 11:14: Where there is no counsel, the people fall.
But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

5.4. Act.

Proverbs 3:5-6:

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;

6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 16:9: A man's heart plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps.

6. Cautions on decision making.

6.1. Do not remake a decision you have already made.

Unless considerable new information that was not available earlier becomes available, do not revisit your made decisions.

If you have made a careful evaluation of the circumstances and have made your decision on the basis of your life visions, biblical principles, and godly counsel, then you have done all you can to make a proper decision. Don't go through the process

6.2. Do not wait for your ducks to get in a row before you act on your decision.

A person who is a workaholic or a perfectionist suffers under a need to root out any variables in a course of action before he proceeds. Such perfectionism ultimately leads to decision paralysis.

If you think you can get your ducks in a row, then you don't know ducks!

6.3. Do not be afraid of failure.

Just because a course of action did not succeed (or at least did not succeed as you anticipated it) does not necessarily mean that the decision was a bad one.

Nehemiah fell in the soup when he decided to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem. It was the right decision, but there were many setbacks and much opposition.

6.4. Do not second-guess God.

Do not take the chances that Lot took.

Your Christianity (i.e., your relationship with Christ) must not be merely a facet of your life and therefore another consideration when making a decision. Christ must be all of your life, and your decisions must reflect that.

6.5. Do not cripple your decision by playing on your doubts.

If you make a proper and godly decision, you will probably run into roadblocks from Satan. Do not assume you made a bad decision just because you run into problems.

Second guessing your decisions will give you chronic decision paralysis.

Move smartly and confidently to implement your decision.

6.6. Do not make decisions based solely on economics.

This was Lot's problem in Genesis and it destroyed him, his testimony, and his family.

When you have completed all other evaluations (morals, biblical commands, ethics, and so forth), then consider economics; but not until then.

6.7. Do not let others make decisions that belong to you to make.

We are talking about life decisions. Your boss, your government, the police, all make some of your decisions for you.

6.8. Don't let your boss's desire to transfer you determine the environment in which your life (or raise your family).

6.9. Not deciding is a decision.

Someone who hesitates to make a decision makes a decision by default: the decision of inaction.

1 Kings 18:21: And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

Our lives are filled with decisions, from the sublime ("Shall I give my life to Jesus Christ?") to the ridiculous ("Shall I order a burrito or a taco?")

It is important that we learn how to make good decisions in all the areas of our lives.