

#### So, How Do You Make a Decision?

<u>James 1:19</u>: (NASB) This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;



We make decisions all the time. Some are big and significant life altering choices and most others are small, often unnoticed and even insignificant. What most influences our decisions - reason, emotion or expediency? What about laziness versus discipline? Can we make better decisions? If so, how?

Whatever question we have, there are scriptural principles that can help us to answer that question. We have to apply them to our situation.

- (Quoting from Viktor Emil Frankl, MD, PhD and Auschwitz Survivor March 26, 1905 September 2, 1997)
  - But there is another branch of this attitude and it comes from something called "Logo Therapy" in a book written by Viktor Frankl called, "Man's Search for Meaning," and I'll read his quote because I want to get it just right. "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

So, there is a process: It starts with some kind of stimulus, some kind of input that evokes a response with multiple possibilities. In between these two events - stimulus and response - there is space, perhaps a small space, but space nevertheless. In this space lies our destiny...

#### The theme text and context teach us about this space!

James 1:16-22: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup>Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. <sup>18</sup>In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. <sup>19</sup>This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; <sup>20</sup>for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. <sup>22</sup>But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

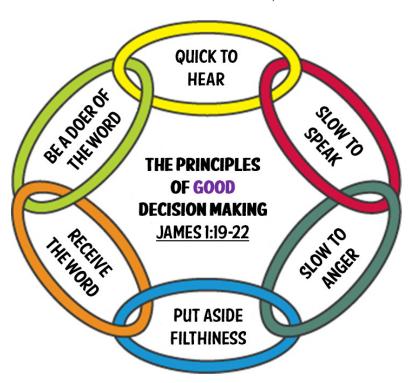
### Power of Decision, Finding Meaning in Difficult Times, Viktor Frankl

- (Interviewer) Dr. Frankl, what is the difference between people who are able to pick themselves up and get over life's problems and those who are not?
- (Dr. Frankl) The decisive factor is decision. The freedom of choice. The freedom to come up with a decision. It should be: I would like to become this way or another in spite of conditions that should only seem to predetermine my behavior. I wish to act freely as a responsible being, which is a human being. I wish to act in accord with heredity and environment owing what I become to them. But also, if need be, in spite of the worst conditions.

We want to make good decisions regardless of our conditions.

<u>James 1:19</u>: (NASB) This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;







BE ALERT AND FOCUSED TO TRULY UNDERSTAND THE STIMULUS

The noise of life can get in the way of our decision making.

#### What information did Eve listen to?

Genesis 3:1-6: (NASB) ¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden? Satan began his communication with a (true) piece of God's command. This was easy for Eve to hear. ²The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden,

God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die. Eve picks up on God's command - so far it is easy for her to stay in line because nothing is contrary. <sup>4</sup>The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die! NOT TRUE! <sup>5</sup>For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Satan gives Eve new information to hear. Is this new information valuable or noise? <sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Eve pauses and considers the new information in line with her own desires and makes a decision! She looks at this tree a little differently - there is no penalty? This looks pretty good!

She was quick to hear, but what was it she was actually listening to?

So far the idea of quick to hear seems to be a BAD idea - is there more to it?



• We all make decisions. Like say, gas station sushi. Cheap is good and sushi is good. But cheap sushi? Not so good.





What about someone who was quick to hear the right thing?

King David committed some pretty awful sins, the worst being arranging for the death of his soldier, Uriah, because the King had gotten Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, pregnant. David's decisions were all about serving himself and preserving his ego. Finally, Nathan, a prophet of God, comes to David and tells him a story as though it was an actual event in David's kingdom needing judgment.

- <u>2 Samuel 12:1-4</u>: (NIV) <sup>1</sup>The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup>Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.
- 2 Samuel 12:5-9,13: (NASB) <sup>5</sup>Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. <sup>6</sup>He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion. <sup>7</sup>Nathan then said to David, You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup>I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! <sup>9</sup>Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife. <sup>13</sup>Then David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said to David, The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.

David had been quick to hear his own desire, but was now quick to hear the judgment of God. David's response was immediate. He "got" it. He embraced the judgment even though it went against his ego.

## **DECISION MAKING LESSON**

THE PRINCIPLES
OF GOOD
DECISION MAKING
JAMES 1:19-22



WHILE VALUABLE AND NECESSARY, TO BE QUICK TO HEAR

CAN BE A DANGEROUS STEP
IF NO OTHERS ARE TAKEN.
FOR IT IS EASY - ALMOST EFFORTLESS TO PLACE THE WRONG INPUT
INTO A POSITION OF INFLUENCE!

NEVER BE QUICK TO HEAR WITHOUT THE OTHER STEPS!



## Obsessed with perfection, The Best Way to Make Decisions, Erin Stutland

• I want to share a little story, because not long ago I would have considered myself someone who was awful, and I mean AWFUL, at making decisions. Any kinds of decisions. Things like, should I go out to dinner with friends or should I stay in? Should I invest this amount of money into my business or should I not? A lot of decisions that I made would cause me such inner turmoil, and I think it was because I was so obsessed and addicted to trying to make perfect decisions. Right or wrong. Good or bad. Black or white. So I just want to share this story that happened quite a long time ago to sort of demonstrate my madness that I'm guessing that you are going to be able to relate to it.

More to come, but it is important to not be obsessed with making a perfect decision: I must decide THE right thing and everything else must be wrong or bad. Decision making becomes too narrow in the possibility of success if there is only one possible good decision. As Christians trying to decide the will of God in our lives, we may feel there is absolutely one narrow path we can walk down when in fact there may be several on which God can work with us. Maybe we are not making the very best decision, but God can still bless a good decision. We are not perfect! In many cases we put ourselves in unnecessary turmoil.



STRETCH OUT THE SPACE BETWEEN THE STIMULUS AND RESPONSE FAR ENOUGH TO ADEQUATELY AND APPROPRIATELY DECIDE ON A COURSE OF ACTION

Typically a reaction is emotional and not thought out. Making a good decision gets past the noise and sees the real issue. The word "SELAH" is used often in the Psalms, meaning "pause and consider."

Sometimes an event of great impact loses its full meaning over time and as a result is viewed as a "new" stimulus.

#### Sometimes this brings us to a bad decision:

Genesis 11:4-9: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>They said, Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

They had remembered the flood but ignored the meaning of the promise of the rainbow and decided to take matters into their own hands.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. <sup>6</sup>The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech. <sup>8</sup>So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.



When we react/decide out of fear or emotion or pride, confusion often results!



During the process of making a decision, do we get to a point where my decisions are all about "ME?" If we are looking to do God's will, it should be about Him and not us. The human ego creates a lot of noise in the process of making decisions and sometimes it is so loud we cannot hear anything else.

# Should we be "slow to speak" even when what we hear makes little sense in our minds?

A funny example of bad decision making...

))Advertisement, GEICO Insurance, Horror movie commercial



- (Man) Let's hide in the attic.
- (Woman) No, in the basement!
- (Second Woman) Why can't we just get in the running car?
- (Man) Are you crazy? Let's hide behind the chain saws.
- (First Woman) Fine.
- (Second Woman) Yeah, okay.
- (Narrator) If you are in a horror movie you make poor decisions.
   It's what you do.
- (Man) Shhh!
- (First Woman) I'm being quiet!
- (Second Woman) You're breathing on me!



A caller from Connecticut suggests <u>Matthew 24:22</u>: Except those days be shortened, there be no flesh saved. His remedy is <u>Jeremiah 29:13</u>: Ye shall seek Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.

The basis of making a good decision is finding the strongest foundation you can make it upon. That Jeremiah text shows us what the most important thing is.

The following example is one of a great faith displayed by being quiet and following God, even though it looks like complete folly and death! Gideon and his army were about to do battle with the Amalekites.

# While Gideon had a strong and numerous army, the Amalekites were also vast:

<u>Judges 7:12</u>: (NASB) Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

But Gideon was in tune with God's will. He was living that way before this event.

#### Watch how quick he is to hear and how slow he is to speak:

<u>Judges 7:1-3</u>: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, My own power has delivered me. <sup>3</sup>Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead. So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.

Who would say they have too many men for this battle? Gideon lost 68% of his fighting force! Notice Gideon does not complain or challenge, for he had



already decided to follow God and trusted Him for the victory no matter what. He was in line with the will of God.

Completely overanalyzed, The Best Way to Make Decisions, Erin Stutland

This was my senior year of high school, and I was deciding which college to go to. Maybe you had a similar experience. And I knew that I was going to go dance in college and it was between the University of Iowa and the University of Illinois. Both wonderful schools, but for the life of me I could not decide where I wanted to be. And I truly, truly believed in my heart that one place would make me happier than the other place. That going to one school it would mean I would be more successful than if I went to the other school. And it just felt like there was no good choice to make. And I had gotten to the point where I had overanalyzed all the thinking. And I had weighed the pros and the cons and the cons and the pros, and sometimes when you get into this place where you analyze it to death, you know, it's funny when you find it hard to make a decision, people will often say to you, "What does your gut say? What does your gut really tell you?" And if you've gotten to that place where you've completely analyzed it, you are totally disconnected from your gut and your intuition in every and any sense. And so much so that it's like almost impossible to find your way back into that place. So, that's where I was with this decision.

Judges 7:4-8: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Gideon, The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there... <sup>5</sup>So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink. <sup>6</sup>Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water.

300 men against a vast army!?! 99% of his fighting force was removed! Still no voice from Gideon, for he had ALREADY decided to follow God! He was not going to hear the noise - he was quick to hear the right things and slow to speak.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD said to Gideon, I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home. <sup>8</sup>So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.



Just because you have decided does not mean you have no fear!

<u>Judges 7:10-11</u>: (NASB) <sup>10</sup>But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, <sup>11</sup>and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp.

The end of the story is that God wins the battle with just 300 men because the Amalekites turn against each other. Gideon made the right decision even though it looked stupid!



Would some sort of point system for weighing the reasons to move forward with a decision help?



We want to win the game of decision making. Evaluating in light of scripturally and morally sound principles and looking at examples of those who lived godly lives will help us. Listen to what is important and try to ignore the noise.

A wise man makes his own decisions, an ignorant man follows the public opinion.

~ Chinese Proverb



### Quick Tips with Poor Decision Making, Rob Lowe

- Looking for the right present for your nephew? Consider a crossbow.
- Always buy your mattresses used.
- If the weather isn't cooperating with your barbeque plans bring the barbeque inside.
- Yard sales? Great place to find affordable swim wear.



USE THE SPACE TO "PIN DOWN" ANGER
- TO CONTROL IT - AND NOT ALLOW IT TO BE
YOUR RESPONSE, BUT BE A TOOL OF
RESPONSE ONLY IF NECESSARY

Why is anger mentioned in our theme text? The next verse tells us:

<u>James 1:20</u>: (NASB) for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Therefore, good decision making is all about being in line with godly principles and not ourselves or our egos!



A caller from Connecticut shares that she is a widow. Her son, daughter-in-law and young granddaughter live in England. She has never met her granddaughter but money is an issue and she has never flown before. She prayed for an opportunity to go and recently was notified of a miscalculation of her husband's social security benefits that will allow her to go. That is how she made this very big decision to get the courage to fly alone.

Find the godly principles to making decisions, the sure foundation. We may not always be right. We might interpret things wrong because we are not perfect, but it is okay! God wants us to move forward.

<u>Proverbs 14:29-30</u>: (NASB) <sup>29</sup>He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. <sup>30</sup>A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones.

Anger gets us in trouble because it can distort reality.

<u>2 Corinthians 10:5</u>: (NASB) We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

This is where the good decision making process is: taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

<u>Proverbs 15:18</u>: (NASB) A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute.

People have a hard time arguing with people who do not argue back.



### Decided then panicked, The Best Way to Make Decisions, Erin Stutland

• It was the day I had to hand in my acceptance letter. This was before you did it via email. And I was headed off to school and my mom said, "Alright, what's it going to be?" And I said, "All right, I'm going to the University of Iowa. And I said it with such clarity and such grace and such power and she was like, "Are you sure?" Because at this point I had been back and forth for a solid six months. And I said, "Yes, I'm sure. University of Iowa." And I went off to school and I was feeling pretty good. I had gotten to school and I was sitting in my first period class and all of a sudden I was struck with panic. It was as though I was having an anxiety attack. I stood up from class and ran to the pay phone (because this was while we still had pay phones) and I called my mom and I said, "Did you send in the thing yet?" And she said, "No, why, what's going on?" And I said, "I can't go to University of Iowa, that's a terrible decision. I want to go to University of Illinois."

Do we finally make a decision and then continually second guess ourselves?



ESTABLISH YOURSELF AS HAVING <u>REJECTED</u> THE HUMAN DEFAULT OF A SINFUL AND BROKEN BASIS FOR DECISION MAKING - REPLACE! <u>James 1:21</u>: (NASB) Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

Replace the ego and emotional responses - the reactive process. Put those things away. Reject what seems to be the natural reaction.

The once wise King Solomon gives into his lusts and marries those who worship idols. He becomes an idol worshiper himself:

<u>1 Kings 11:1-3</u>: (NASB) ¹Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh..., ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods. Solomon held fast to these in love. ³He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

He allowed his desires to override his God-based wisdom. All of that brilliance became skewed and it all fell apart.

Our decision making can get settled into patterns of good or evil - each pattern instinctively throws away what would drive the other.

Despair defined, Viktor Frankl, Finding the Meaning in Difficult Times

• Despair can be explained in terms of a mathematical equation: **D** = **S** - **M**. What does it mean? Despair is suffering without meaning. As long as an individual cannot find, cannot see any meaning in the suffering, he or she will certainly be prone to despair, and under certain conditions to suicide.



#### D = S-M: Despair equals Suffering minus Meaning

If there is meaning attached to our suffering, there is hope. With no meaning, there is despair.

This happened to King Solomon because he lost the meaning of his life.

1 Kings 11:4,9-10: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been... <sup>9</sup>Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, <sup>10</sup> and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.

When we don't decide by putting unrighteousness away, we will only find trouble and despair!

#### How do we make good decisions a habit?

Nissan commercial (there is a young man with wood all over his driveway, setting up to chop wood.)



• Hey, throw me the axe.

We all do things out of reaction without thinking, which sometimes can get us into serious trouble!

This next example is a classic regarding what we hear, what we process and what we decide:

Numbers 13:25-32: (NASB) <sup>25</sup>When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, <sup>26</sup>they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel...and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup>Thus they told him, and said, We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup>Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup>Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.

What did they know? What did they see? What weighed most in their thinking? The inhabitants were large!

<sup>30</sup>Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, we should **by all means** go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.

What did Caleb know? God promised them the land. What did he see? He saw the big people. What weighed most in his thinking? What God promised him. By all means - what are we waiting for?

<sup>31</sup>But the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us. <sup>32</sup>So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.

The default human reaction was fear and faithlessness. Most were overcome by this and they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. What can we learn from their wrong decision?



# Decision made but not embraced, The Best Way to Make Decisions, Erin Stutland

• "Are you sure?" she said. "Yes," I said, "I'm sure. This feels like such a better choice. This is a much better choice," I thought. And so she said, "Okay, University of Illinois." Hung up the phone. Wouldn't you know it that within a few hours of feeling so good about this decision, I was right back to where I started? Flipping and flopping. Having a high, feeling so tortured, so much so that I did end up going to the University of Illinois. But my whole first year of college was so challenging because even though I had made the decision to go there, I actually hadn't fully embraced it or accepted it or owned it that this was really a good choice for me today, because I was so still caught in the idea that one was good, one was bad. One would make me happy, one would not. I was so used to beating myself up in the process of making the decision and then after making the decision, I was still in the process of beating myself up. There was no way I could choose right.

She ruined a great opportunity because she was so stuck in not letting go and embracing her decision.



EMBRACE THE NEW HIGHER SPIRITUAL DEFAULT FOR DECISION MAKING OF ENLIGHTENED THINKING

After putting aside all filthiness, we replace it with something to embrace. It is easy to *begin to* embrace something when it doesn't require much of you personally. But when the personal cost is high, the decision to embrace it is of far greater difficulty.

#### Another example:

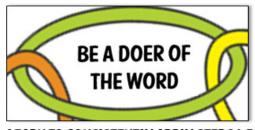
1 Kings 17:8-16: (NASB) 8Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 9Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you. <sup>10</sup>So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink. <sup>11</sup>As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand. <sup>12</sup>But she said, As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. <sup>13</sup>Then Elijah said to her, Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, (What a tremendous step of faith this would have been!) and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. <sup>14</sup>For thus says the LORD God of Israel, The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth. <sup>15</sup>So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days. 16The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

The widow heard the word of God spoken through Elijah in spite of her awful prospects. Her faith was evident in her decision to hear, consider and respond based on God's word and not starvation.



## (1) Quick Tips With Poor Decision Making, Rob Lowe

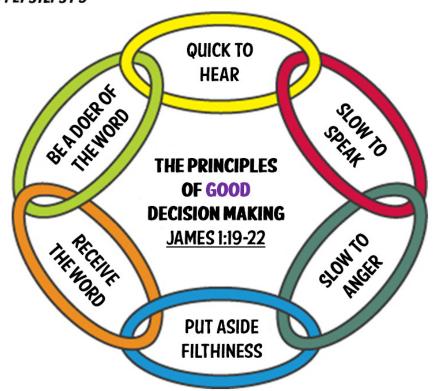
- Stray pit bulls make great house warming gifts.
- CPR training is almost always a huge waste of time.
- Why waste your money on the dentist when they teach you how to do all that stuff on the internet?
- If a Nigerian prince emails you to borrow money, lend it to him because then you are friends with a prince!



LEARN TO CONSISTENTLY APPLY STEPS 1-5

<u>James 1:22</u>: (NASB) But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

If we make decisions in good faith and we are wrong, God will show us and we can make corrections.



### Perfect, The Best Way to Make Decisions, Erin Stutland

• This is for all my perfectionists out there. Because I think part of what makes it so challenging for us to make a decision is that we really feel like we need to do it perfectly. That everything needs to be perfect. But I'm going to invite you to redefine today what perfect actually means. Because it actually doesn't mean what we think it means. The Latin root of perfect is "perfectus" and the meaning of perfectus is to finish or to complete something. So if you have finished or you have completed something, then there in itself means that it is perfect. And so I want you to practice today



with everything that you finish, everything that you complete, every decision that you make from whether it's what you are going to wear, to what you are going to eat or who you are going to call, to who you are going to email - every time you make a decision you finish something, I want you to say to yourself, it's perfect, it's perfect. And I don't mean perfect in that pristine sense, I mean perfect in it is done.

Making a decision completes a process, so embrace that completed process.

## Our final example is one where we can easily trace all of the steps of a good decision:



Acts 16:16-34: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slavegirl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling. <sup>17</sup>Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, These men are bondservants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.

# Paul heard "truth" being spoken by a dark source and therefore it lost its credibility.



<sup>18</sup>She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it came out at that very moment. <sup>19</sup>But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, <sup>20</sup>and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, <sup>21</sup>and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.

# ...continued doing this for many days - Paul was slow to speak. He gave the experience time and then acted.



<sup>22</sup>The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup>When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; <sup>24</sup>and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup>But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

#### Paul (and Silas) did not fall into anger or fault finding - instead they praised!



<sup>26</sup>and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. <sup>27</sup>When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!

# Paul and Silas "put away filthiness" - they did not use the opportunity for personal gain.



<sup>29</sup>And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, <sup>30</sup>and after he brought them out, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? <sup>31</sup>They said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. <sup>32</sup>And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. <sup>34</sup>And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.





Paul and Silas had the word and implanted it in others. They proved to be doers of the word! Their decision making was solid and strong with the right foundation.

As Christians, we ought to be among the most decisive people ever because we have a sure foundation of the Scriptures, and the words and actions of Jesus and the Apostles. Clear out the clutter and the noise, listen to the right things, pause and consider, then speak, then act putting aside anger and the filthiness of the flesh, embracing the word of God and proving by our decision, follow through with truly being followers of Christ.

So, how do you make a decision?

For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...

Think about it...!

And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!

Let's realize that *making* a good decision is only a beginning. What really counts is the *managing* of that decision. What about the actual process of making decisions?

(Source: www.virtualsalt.com)

- 1. Identify the decision to be made together with the goals it should achieve.
- 2. Get the facts.
- 3. Develop alternatives.
- 4. Rate each alternative.
- 5. Rate the risk of each alternative.
- 6. Make the decision.

# Israel wanting a king, creating a decision to stay with God's appointed way OR to be like other nations:

<u>1 Samuel 8:1-22</u>: (NKJV) <sup>1</sup>Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. <sup>2</sup>The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. <sup>3</sup>But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. <sup>4</sup>Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, <sup>5</sup>and said to him, Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Israel wanted a new course of action, based upon certain facts. While these facts were a good start, they did NOT reflect the entire context that they should have considered...

<sup>6</sup>But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. So Samuel prayed to the Lord. <sup>7</sup>And the Lord said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. <sup>8</sup>According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. <sup>9</sup>Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.

God gives Samuel permission to heed their decision, but He also discloses the rest of the context of their choice...



<sup>10</sup>So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. <sup>11</sup>And he said, This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. <sup>12</sup>He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. <sup>13</sup>He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. <sup>14</sup>And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. <sup>15</sup>He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. <sup>16</sup>And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. <sup>17</sup>He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.

All of the downside of a king is now revealed. Israel is now in a MUCH better position to be able to make their decision, as the facts were now on the table...

<sup>19</sup>Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, No, but we will have a king over us, <sup>20</sup>that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles. <sup>21</sup>And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>So the LORD said to Samuel, Heed their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said to the men of Israel, Every man go to his city.

So, the decision is made and Israel is given their king, but now they were left to manage that decision. Remember - we are always left to manage the decisions that we make!

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The Express Will of God vs. the Permissive Will of God (Source: Joe Megacz, Elder, Chicago Bible Students)

The express will of God is like a line down the center of a roadway, and it applies to all of us. We are all to stay on that line and not deviate off of that line to the right or the left. God's will as represented by that line is expressly stated in the Scriptures, hence the name, "express will of God."



Among the many examples of the express will of God:

Romans 12:14,17: Bless them which persecute you. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

1 Peter 4:15: Let none of you suffer as a busybody in other men's matters.

1 John 5:21: Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

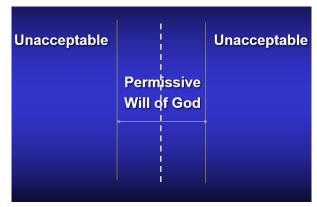
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day.



The other part of this illustration is called the "permissive will of God." The permissive will of God is not expressly stated in the Scriptures. With the permissive will of God, we have some leeway to choose our actions and make decisions within boundaries that are broader than the express will of God.

And so, in our illustration, the permissive will of God is drawn as the shoulder markings on each side of a roadway. We can move to the left or to the right as long as we stay within these outer lines so that we don't go off the roadway.

Everything within these two lines is in accordance with God's permissive will. Anything beyond these lines, on either side, is not in accordance with God's permissive will, and therefore unacceptable. Now, while the express will of God clearly stated in the Scriptures applies to all of us uniformly, the permissive will of God is more individual. It is a part of God's training and shaping and molding each of us, individually, into copies of His dear son.



Examples of important actions, decisions and choices each of us is given to make within the boundaries of God's permissive will, are:

- -Should I go to college or not?
- -Should I live in this city or another one?
- -Should I attend this congregation or that congregation?
- -Should I marry or remain single?
- -If married, should we have children or not, and if so, how many?
- -Should I take this job or that job?

Now, there are no Scriptures that expressly give each of us, individually, the answers to those questions in our own particular circumstances. However, there are many scriptural principles and precepts which guide our words and actions and help us determine where those outer lines are for each of us. And when we seek to discern God's permissive will for us through prayer and the study of His Word, perhaps we do well to draw the lines close together, narrowly, because we are in the "narrow way." The important understanding we should gain from this illustration is that God can shape us and train us and mold us into copies of Jesus as long as we <u>seek to discern</u>, and <u>stay</u> in between the two lines that mark God's permissive will.