

How to make the Right Decisions

Imagine if every decision you made was right! Wouldn't your life be filled with happiness, contentment and fulfillment? The truth of the matter is, not every decision you make will be right. However, you can make every decision 'right'. This involves a series of choices (and actions), a process which involves listening to God and applying His universal laws and principles. Remember, for you to make the right decision, you must first **decide** what it is what you would like to achieve. Many people like to live in a random environment where nothing is definite or predetermined. But that is not how God intends us to live. He has designed the universe in such a way that there is order (conformity). He has predestined that we live according to a specific plan and purpose - His blueprint for our lives.

Ephesians 1:5 says, *"Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."* Another translation says, *"God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure."*

In God, nothing is ever random! Everything is consistent and operates according to His predetermined plan and purpose. Notice how God decides in advance what He'd like to achieve. The question is this, *"Do you decide in advance what you would like to achieve? And are your decisions right?"* That is what we'll be examining in detail today. We are going to look at a process which will help us to make the right decision. I sincerely believe that if we apply the right principles, we can make the right choices. Right choices (resulting from right decisions) are important.

Have you ever thought you were making the right choices, and then later on... Oh, what a disaster! So How do you avoid such disasters?

To do the "right thing" you must first know the **truth**. And there is only One who knows all the truth – and that is God. He is the author and perfecter of truth. In **Exodus 33:15** the Lord tells the people of Israel to go to the Promised Land, and that he will send an angel to go before them. However, He will not go with them. Moses' response was, *"Lord if your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."* Moses teaches us the fundamental principle about making right decisions: without God everything else is irrelevant. Moses was willing to give up the Promised Land for the "presence of God." The fact is, without God we are unable come to know the truth of any matter. So without God's presence, our decisions are based on what we "assume" to be the truth, rather than the truth itself! Consequently, our decisions are based on oscillating realities and random facts.

Quite simply, for you to make the **right decision** God has to be a part of it. His presence must go with you. Wherever you are and whatever you do, the Truth Himself should accompany you. This will also make sure that the 'timing' is right for every decision that you make. Timing is everything! You can make the right decision at the wrong time and the result is a setback! In the Parable of Ten Virgins. The bridegroom was coming, so the virgins awoke and they trimmed their lanterns, but five didn't have oil. They had to go and buy some. They returned to go to the wedding banquet but the door was shut - it was too late! They genuinely wanted to be with the bridegroom (right decision), but they missed the window of opportunity (wrong timing). They needed to be better prepared, and this had to do with correct supervision. In our case, it is "being led by the Holy Spirit."

Therefore, the fundamental principle in making the **right decision** is to have God's presence with you so that He

can guide you.

Our journey through life is a busy process of decision making. And with every decision, there's an element of risk involved. Some decisions are monumental and life changing, others are trivial. "What career shall I pursue?" Verses... "A crème filled donut or a chocolate croissant?" Some choices you make, may even take you (and your family) away from God... Some will draw you closer to Him. Some of the decisions you make you'll eventually regret and wish you'd never made. Other decisions, you'll thank God that you followed His leading. But regardless of whether they are big decisions or small ones, the truth is, *we make our decisions and then our decisions make us!*

Turn with me to the Book of Esther.... Esther is at a crossroads in her life. She has to make a decision that would change her life and possibly the lives of millions of others. Let me explain... When we first meet King Xerxes, he's the great and powerful King of Persia who reigned over 125 provinces, but by the end of chapter 1 he ends up drunk, threatened by his wife's resistance, and scrambling to stay in power. Having just got rid of his wife (Queen Vashti), his spirit is low, so he sinks into depression. He is looking for a loving companion.

Observing all this, his close advisors think to themselves, *"If we don't do something quick, he's going to go back to Vashti, and if he does, heads are going to roll! And since we're the ones who suggested he get rid of her in the first place, we better keep that from happening!"* So they suggest a remedy for the sulking sultan, *"Hey, king! Why don't you hold a beauty contest? Yes, we'll search the entire kingdom for beautiful young virgins and then you can have your pick!"* (**Esther 2:2-4**)

Exit Vashti... Enter Esther. A vacancy opened up at the top of the King's household so God has just the person waiting in the wings. Coincidence? I don't think so. Now keep in mind that at this point Esther doesn't have any idea of what's been happening in the royal palace. She doesn't know a thing about the drunken party, or this royal decree that's going to totally change her life. Esther has been living in complete obscurity, minding her own business, when all of a sudden there's a knock at the door and she's taken by force to join a beauty pageant. Her only crime was that she was drop-dead gorgeous. Can you imagine her fear as she was forced to leave the only family she knew and join the king's harem. (Verses 8 and 9)

The only bright side to this whole thing is found in verse 12. Have you read this ladies? Twelve months of beauty treatments! Six months of being massaged myrrh oil, six months of perfumes and cosmetics! A full year of nothing by lounging around, getting pampered and being fussed over. No dirty dishes, no screaming kids...complete relaxation, no cares, no worries! Anyway, at the end of the year Esther got her chance with the King. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us there were over 400 women. But in the end, King Xerxes choose Esther above all of them! (verse 17) Esther had a beauty that was more than skin deep. Because she was herself, she won the King's heart and he fell deeply in love with her. Even though Esther was beautiful on the outside, she was even more beautiful on the inside.

It wasn't long after Esther became Queen that trouble rears it's ugly head. The King promoted Haman (above all the other princes) to a position of prominence and power. Being very insecure, Haman loved it when people bowed

down to him. In fact, He expected it! So when he found out that Esther's uncle Mordecai wouldn't bow He was enraged. He went to King Xerxes and got him to sign a law that said all Jews would be exterminated on a certain day.

Xerxes didn't realise that his new wife was Jewish, and so in effect he was signing his own wife's death certificate in the process.

When Mordacai finds out what Haman has done, He's overtaken with grief and immediately contacts Esther. Let's pick up the story in Esther 4:4-8... In response, Esther sends an urgent message back to Mordacai, that basically says, "*Uncle, there's only one problem with pleading our case before the king. If you go into the Kings presence uninvited you'll be killed - unless by some miracle he holds up his golden sceptre. I haven't been called in 30 days. So if I go into his courtyard I could also be risking death, and there goes our chance of saving our people. I don't know what to do!*"

Can you see the "Catch 22" Esther's in? Do you sense the anxiety and anxiousness of the moment? It's decision time. What's she going to do? Maybe it's decision time in your life right now. Maybe, you too need to make a critical decision. Whatever that decision, you find yourself in the hot seat and you can't get out of it. So what are you going to do? To help, I'd like to provide you with four **Decision Principles**, taken from the experiences of Esther. And, they all come from Mordacai as He sends a message to her (Chapter 4 verses 12 to 14). Here they are:

(a) **Use the authority and privilege you have in Christ Jesus**. Esther was put in the position of great responsibility and Mordacai knew it. She had both the authority and the privilege to make a momentous decision. The fact of the matter is, where you are today is a result of the decisions you made yesterday; and where you'll be tomorrow will be a result of the decisions you make today. That's a scary statement, but it's true! The Lord could have programmed us like computers, or given us a set of instincts like animals, but instead He gave us a free will.

It was risky business on His part, because the capacity to choose also gives us the ability to choose wrongly! Esther had the power and the privilege of choice but what would she choose? What decision would she make?

When Mordacai heard of Esther's dilemma He sent a message to her. In it He said (verse 13), "*Just because you live in the King's palace, don't think that out of all the Jewish people you alone will escape.*" In other words, "*Esther you've got a decision to make, and whether you realise it or not, you won't escape the consequences of your decision. You'll be responsible for the outcome either way!*" Even though she was the Queen, Mordacai was reminding her of her responsibilities.

(b) **Make your decision sooner rather than later**. The first repose most people have when faced with a crucial decision is to procrastinate! They want to back-off, bail out or beat around the bush! Anything but face the problem! Ask yourself, "Why do I delay at the point of making a decision?" I think I know why - fear! It's like someone said, "Indecision is the mark of a fearful mind."

You may say, "Fear of what?" Well, the fear of rejection for starters. We think to ourselves, "*What if I fail? What if I embarrass myself?*" If you have fear in your life about a decision you need to make, it's normal. If you're never afraid you're foolish, because there are some things you need to be afraid of. The important thing is how you deal with your fear. Do you let it paralyse you or do you face it? You see, courage isn't the absence of fear, it's pressing on

in spite of your fears! I guarantee you, Esther was afraid but she didn't let her fear freeze her. She faced it head on! Note, before you make any important decision, you need to go through four "F" stages:

1. The FACT stage. This is where you gather all the information available to you. Find out what you need to know, what you already know, and then what you don't know. Proverbs 18:13 says, "*What a shame, how stupid to decide before knowing the facts.*"
2. The FEED-BACK stage. This is where you ask God and you ask people around you what they think. Remember, they should be people that you trust and have some knowledge and wisdom in the area you need it.
3. The FOCUS stage. This is where you focus in on the negatives, and also the positives. Mordacai did that for her, "*Esther, there's a risk of dying either way, if the King would allow millions to die, don't think He'd spare you!*"
4. The FORWARD stage. This is where you've asked all the questions and evaluated all the evidence, weighed the pros and cons, and now it's time to take the plunge! If at this point, you refuse to make a decision, your delay could be very costly!

Which leads to the next Principle about making a decision...

(c) **Exploit the window of opportunity.** Indecision will cause you to lose your God given opportunity. You need to realise that the window of opportunity won't remain open indefinitely. Listen to what Mordacai says next to Esther (chapter 4:14), "*If you keep quiet at this time, someone else will help and save the Jewish people, but you and your father's family will all die.*" Do you know what that verse says to me? None of us are indispensable to God's plans. He gives you the power and the privilege to serve Him, but if you choose to ignore that privilege, or if you choose not to serve Him wholeheartedly, He can (and will) find somebody else. In other words, He wants to use you, but you are not 'absolutely necessary'. God won't stop His plans because of your disobedience! Mordacai said, "*Esther, God wants to use you, but if you decide to keep quiet, He'll find somebody else who will speak up!*"

Which leads to the forth Principle concerning decisions...

(d) **Know that your time is now!** The chosen few are the few who have chosen! Someone once said, "*Great people are ordinary people who make extra-ordinary decisions.*" By that standard, Esther was a great person! Listen to the last sentence of Mordacai's message to Esther (verse 14), "*And who knows, you may have been chosen queen for just such a time as this.*" Mordacai was beginning to see all the pieces of God's providential puzzle come together. The reason she was orphaned at a young age, and how it was that her beauty and character gained her a place in the Kings heart. "*Esther, God has chosen you for just such a time as this. Make the right decision and fulfil God's plan for your life!*"

Do you believe God has a plan for your life? I do. I believe He has a plan for my life! I can see clearly how and why

God allowed me to go through my life's experiences in order to be here (on this day), pastoring His church. I believe that God is also working in your life, putting the pieces together in just the right way, to bring you to His plan and purpose for your life. I don't believe He has wasted even one trial or heartache to bring you to the "point of decision" you find yourself at today. So what are you waiting for? You were chosen for such a time as this!

Remember... Choice, not chance, determines your destiny! So many people are living in "Lotto Land" waiting for that magic ticket to bring them to riches and happiness. Don't be foolish! Your decisions determine your destiny! Esther made her decision, and I want you to hear how she responded to her uncle, "*Go and get all the Jewish people in Susa together. For my sake, give up eating; do not eat or drink for three days, night and day. I and my servant girls will also give up eating. Then I will go to the king, even though it is against the law, and if I die, I die.*" – **Esther 4:15,16**. She made her choice and she was willing to die for it!

Are you willing to face the ramifications for any decisions you make today? If you're not, you're probably going to make the wrong decision!

To recap... How do you make the right decision?

First and foremost, make sure God's presence goes with you, so that He can guide you by His Spirit.

Then.....

- + **Use the authority and privilege you have in Christ Jesus.**
- + **Make your decision sooner rather than later.**
- + **Exploit the window of opportunity.**
- + **Know that your time is now.**

Martin Luther King said, "*Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative selflessness or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.*" It's so much easier to make decisions that are going to benefit others!