

CHOOSING WISELY

Joshua 24:15 is a familiar passage to us as it relates to making choices. Joshua, toward the end of his life to challenge Israel, *And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* This was the ultimate call to make a wise choice. What prompted this challenge toward the end of his life was how he had observed the people of Israel to be less than devoted in their service to God. Sure, they were following Him for the time being (somewhat), but he knew the direction they were headed. After the people declared that they would not forsake the LORD to serve other gods, Joshua declared to them, *But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."* (vs. 19-20). The people again declare, "No, but we will serve the LORD!" (21). Thus, Joshua declared that they were witnesses against themselves should they choose to serve idols (22).

The Bible is FULL of examples of people and the choices they made, some foolish and sinful, while others chose wisely. From the decision of Eve and Adam to partake of the forbidden fruit, choices were being made. In life, we are going to be faced with choices on a daily basis. These choice will have a bearing on the direction we will focus our lives and ultimately our eternity. So, for a few moments, let us discussing the importance of choosing wisely and note a few examples who chose wisely and some that did not.

I. Making wise choices

- a. A gospel preacher who developed a sermon about this noted that making right decisions is not always easy. In fact it involves 3 things:
 - i. You have to KNOW what is right. Wisdom, by its very definition, implies right knowledge. Psalm 119:104, "Through Your precepts I get understanding..." Proverbs 4:5-8, *Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her.* Proverbs 18:15, *The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.*
 - ii. You must desire to do what is right – Ezra 7:10, *For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.* Colossians 3:2, "set your mind on things above..." 1 Peter 2:2 speaks of our need to desire (as newborn babes) the pure milk of the word that we may grow thereby.
 - iii. Your desire needs to be strong enough that you WILL do what is right. Romans 8:35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ...?" Cf. Acts 21:13 – Paul, headed toward Jerusalem stated, *I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*
- b. There are many factors to consider in the choices we make.
 - i. A list of principles should ALWAYS govern our decisions. While much of scripture is straightforward with direction, it does not specifically outline every possible scenario. But it gives us principles that govern our choices. For example, before we act we should ask:

1. Will my choice draw me closer to God or further away from Him?
2. Will this build me up spiritually? Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:23 – not all things edify.
3. Do I have doubts about this? Romans 14:23 – will it violate my conscience?
4. How will my choice affect others? Romans 13:10 – Love does no harm to his neighbor, 1 Corinthians 8:9 – will it become a stumbling block to my brother?
5. Will it bring glory to God? 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“Therefore, whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*
6. Would I be ashamed to chose this if Jesus OR godly brethren, whom I respect were with me?

ii. There is a realization that the decisions we make could have eternal consequences.

II. Decisions wise and foolish

a. Some who made foolish decisions

i. Rehoboam - 1 Kings 12.

1. He was Solomon’s son and successor to the throne. After Solomon died (having CHOSEN to reject God later in life), Rehoboam becomes king.
2. Jeroboam, along with other leaders came to Rehoboam and asked for him to lighten the load his father had placed on them. Rehoboam asks them to wait 3 days while he decided.
3. The older, wise men advised him to listen to the people and be a servant. But then his younger friends whom he grew up with advised him to make their burdens even stronger. Rehoboam chose the “in-crowd” over wisdom.
4. We know this was from the LORD (1 Kings 12:24), but that does not change the fact that Rehoboam chose based on friendship, rather than wisdom & experience.
5. ***How many today, will chose popularity or what others want over what is wise and right?*** Heed James 4:4 – Friendship with the world...; consider what Paul said in Galatians 1:10, *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*

ii. Lot chose the “greener pastures” as he left from Abraham (Genesis 13).

1. Genesis 12 records how YHWH promised Abraham future blessings, including He would bless him and any who also blessed him (12:3). Both he and his nephew Lot prospered greatly so that there was not enough room for their flocks. When strife arose between their herdsmen, Abram came to Lot and let him choose which direction to go.
2. Lot, lifted his eyes and saws the well watered plains of Jordan and went south toward Sodom (10-12). He chose based on material appearance. But, we know the problem – Sodom was a wicked city that was doomed to God’s destruction.
3. Lot lived there but his choice came at a high cost 2 Peter 2:7-9, while giving us comfort, notes that “righteous Lot” was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. His soul was tormented as he tried to do what was right. BUT his choice cost him dearly – he lost some of children, and his wife, who looked back turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:16).
4. ***How many today make decisions based on external appeal and fail to consider how it will affect them spiritually?*** For example, accepting a more lucrative job, but in a city without a faithful congregation of the Lord’s people, or away from godly peers to encourage them. 2 Peter 3:17, *You therefore, beloved, since you know this*

beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

iii. The rich, young ruler – Mark 10:17-22

1. We read here of a wealthy, young ruler who came to Jesus asking, “*What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” Jesus knows his heart and questions him concerning areas where he WAS following God’s law. But THEN, he addressed the one thing that was a clear danger to him – he loved his wealth and possessions. Jesus said he needed to sell everything and come follow Him. He went away sorrowful, unwilling to give up his things.
2. Jesus then taught about how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter heaven (10:23-27). NOT impossible with God’s help, but VERY difficult.
3. YET, how many to choose wealth over following the Lord? Be reminded of 1 Timothy 6:17 – command the rich to not be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches. Matthew 6:19-21 – where is your treasure? In our prosperous society and times, we MUST continually remind ourselves of this warning!

iv. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*

b. Some who made wise decisions

i. Ruth, chose to remain with Naomi – Ruth 1-4

1. The story of Ruth is about her relationship with her mother-in-law, Naomi. In the land of Moab, where Naomi & her sons lived because of famine (during the days of the judges), her sons both married women of Moab, Orpah & Ruth. When all 3 husbands died. After some time, Naomi decides to return to Israel and offers to release both of her daughter-in-laws to return to their land so that they could marry and have children. Both loved her, but Orpah returned to her family. Ruth **CHOSE** to remain with Naomi. Note Ruth 1:16-17 which shows her loyalty to Naomi.
2. The rest of Ruth records how Ruth was faithful, but through various events met Boaz, a relative and eventually married him and had children. The LORD blessed her for her faithfulness. We read of Ruth **ONCE** in the New Testament, Matthew 1:5 where she was an ancestor to David, who was the ancestor of Jesus. Ruth was part of the lineage of Jesus!!!
3. ***There are many today who will CHOOSE to remain loyal to the Lord, when hardships OR other opportunities arise.*** They have made a commitment and will keep it. Keeping one’s word is a CHOICE!
4. ***Another example similar to this is Moses*** – Hebrews 11:24-26. He walked away from Pharaoh’s household to faithfully serve God.
5. ***Another example similar to this is Paul*** – Philippians 3:7, “*What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.*”
6. This IS what putting Christ first is about. It IS a choice!

ii. Mary, chose to sit at the feet of Jesus. Luke 10:38-42

1. Jesus had been invited to their home for a meal. While Martha was frantically preparing the meal, Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus learning from Him. Martha, distracted with preparations, asked Jesus to tell Mary to help.

2. The reply of Jesus is powerful, And Jesus answered and said to her, *“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”*
 3. NOTE: Both Martha and Mary were devoted disciples of Jesus. ***But Mary, at that moment, made the wiser choice to listen to Jesus.*** This is an example of one CHOOSING the best option, when 2 choices are given and neither one is wrong.
 4. Furthermore, what will we choose to distract us from spending adequate time doing the Lord’s work – studying, praying, worshipping, serving, teaching, etc.?
- c. Solomon – a case study in choices.
- i. After Solomon is anointed king over Israel, 1 Kings 3 records the LORD coming to him. Vs. 3 notes that Solomon loved the LORD and walked in his statutes. When the LORD offered him anything he wanted, Solomon asked for wisdom to lead the people. It was granted to him.
 - ii. For much of his life, he acted wisely. But (1 Kings 11) he loved women, and sadly, toward the end of his life, his many idolatrous wives turned his heart away from YHWH. As a result, the LORD’s kingdom would be divided after his death.
 - iii. The lesson about choices we learn from Solomon is how we are continually making choices. ***We can choose wisely today, and then tomorrow choose to act foolishly or wickedly.*** We can choose to reject God and return to the world. This is tragic but it is a reality – 2 Peter 2:20-22 gives us a warning.
 - iv. We must continue to make wise choices throughout our life. It is only after this life is over, that we will receive our reward based upon how we finish the race (Revelation 2:10, 13:14, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, etc.).

As you study through your Bible you will find multitudes of choices being made, both examples and commands. Jesus taught in Matthew 12:30, *He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.* There is no middle ground. Are you a child of God? If what, what will you choose to do about it? As a child of God, what choices are you making? Think about it!