

Thoughts on Making Decisions

- I. We know we are to walk by faith, not sight. **2CO 5:7.**
 - A. We are to trust God rather than our own understanding. **PRO 3:5-6.**
 - B. We read in Scripture of God's providential direction of men's lives and may even have experienced the same in our own lives.
 - C. We may be persuaded that because God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives, we are relieved of the responsibility of personal decisions, and, after all, *God makes all things work together for our good.*
 - D. This study is a reminder that Jesus Christ died to take away our sins, not our minds or personal responsibility to make decisions.
 - 1. Common sense need not be contrary to faith.
 - 2. Faith obliges us to have common sense, regulate it by God's word, and put it to work.
- II. Decisions are basically choices: choices between permissible options or choices concerning impermissible options (things contrary to God's law, **1JO 3:4**).
 - A. Believers have only one acceptable choice concerning an impermissible thing: NO.
 - 1. Black and white decisions about known wrong require little critical thought: they are easy decisions.
 - 2. We simply choose to do or not do what we know is wrong.
 - B. But we are faced with myriad decisions where our critical faculties are tested.
 - 1. We may need to first decide whether a thing is permissible or not. For this we are constrained to know God's laws from His word. **PSA 119:104, 128; 2TI 3:16-17.**
 - 2. There are many revealed "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" laws in Scripture where God's will is crystal clear but what about those "gray" areas?
 - 3. There are many areas of liberty in which there are multiple choices, none of which are necessarily wrong but they can have undesirable consequences: food, hobbies, companions, living accommodations, careers, marriage, single life, pleasures, etc.
 - a. It is these decisions that are the most problematic to us.
 - b. If we want to please God, we don't want to make decisions that displease Him.
 - c. Neither do we want to make decisions which trouble us or those we love.
 - d. But the fact is, we have to make such decisions, and this involves effort in thought and the unpleasantness of risk.
 - C. It is our nature to avoid pain and decision-making in the absence of a clear-cut commandment can be painful. This can become a snare.
 - 1. One may make no decision out of concern of what others think.
 - 2. One may make no decision out of concern of it not working out for the best.
 - 3. One may resort to "rolling dice," letting random chance make the decision.
 - 4. One may resort to looking for mystical signs to guide him, "putting out the fleece" as Gideon did. **JDG 6:36-40.**
 - 5. One may resort to feelings to direct him.
 - a. We know that feelings are not a basis for interpreting Scripture where God's will for us is revealed.
 - b. If feelings have no authority in interpreting the will of God revealed in Scripture, why should they have authority in deciding the will of God not revealed in Scripture?

6. One may let another make the decisions in order to avoid personal responsibility.
 - a. For this reason, many desire a higher power to direct their lives.
 - b. That higher power may take the form of voices in the head which are assumed to be revelation from God. Once one is convinced that the Almighty has thus spoken, how can it be questioned?
 - c. The appeal of the occult is that it offers us a way to escape the responsibility of personal decisions.
 - (1) Man wants his own personal spirit guide, fortune-teller, or guru to decide everything for him.
 - (2) Cult researchers have observed how readily people submit to bondage which relieves them of the heavy freedom they have to carry with all the decisions and efforts that freedom implies.
 - d. For some, religion is a way of coping with difficulty. For others, religion is a way of escaping difficulty.
7. Many of the above are some form of fear: fear of man, failure, loss, unpopularity, embarrassment, the unknown, etc.
 - a. These are not the means of overcoming this world (**1JO 5:4**); they are the means of torment. **1JO 4:18**.
 - b. The fear of God is healthy but these other fears are not.

III. We are taught by example and precept to seek divine direction for our lives and we are promised it shall be given. **PSA 25:4-5, 8-9; 31:3; 32:8-9; PRO 3:5-7; EPH 5:15-17.**

- A. Note how that divine direction did not exclude understanding. **PSA 32:8-9; EPH 5:17.**
 1. To have understanding implies knowledge and the wisdom to apply it.
 2. It is when we lean on our own understanding *in opposition* to the understanding we obtain from God that we are not walking by faith.
 3. Remember the source of our understanding. **PSA 119:99-100, 104.**
- B. God's direction of our lives does not exempt us from having to make our own decisions.
 1. The same Solomon who wrote **PRO 3:5-7** wrote at length also about wisdom and discretion.
 2. God made us with the ability to think, to reflect, to analyze, to plan, to choose and to decide. He obviously gave us these abilities to use just as He gave us physical abilities to use.
- C. We are oft called upon to use our critical faculties. **DEU 30:19-20; JOS 24:14-15, 22; ISA 1:18-20; HAG 1:5-10; LUK 14:28-33; JOH 7:24; ACT 6:3-5; 1CO 6:3-4; 10:15; 11:13; TIT 1:5-9.**
- D. Discretion is commanded. **PSA 112:5; PRO 3:21-22.**
 1. discretion: The action of separating or distinguishing; The action of discerning or judging; judgement; decision, discrimination.
 2. We have to sort things out and decide upon a course of action.
- E. We are to *prove all things*. **1TH 5:21.**
 1. prove: To make trial of, try, test.
 2. The Bereans were commended for proving the apostles. **ACT 17:11.**
 3. Ephesus was likewise commended. **REV 2:2.**
 4. We are to try the spirits to distinguish between truth and error. **1JO 4:1-3.**
 5. Biblical faith obviously requires the use of reason and critical faculties to discern the truth one is to believe.
 6. Paul reasoned out of the Scriptures to persuade men of Christ. **ACT 17:2-4; 18:4.**