

DECISIVENESS VS. PROCRASTINATION

CHOOSING TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT BASED ON ACCURATE FACTS, WISE COUNSEL, AND CLEAR DIRECTION FROM GOD'S WORD.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, which giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." (James 1:5).

DEFINITION OF DECISIVENESS

Decisiveness is choosing to do what is right based on accurate facts, wise counsel, and clear direction from God's Word. It is the ability to recognize key factors and finalize difficult decisions, having the confidence that our choice is wise and correct.

THE FOUNDATION OF WISE DECISIONS

When Daniel faced a decision in Babylon about whether to obey the king's command or God's commandment, it was not a difficult choice because he had predetermined that he would only obey God whatever the cost. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank" (Daniel 1:8). The word purposed means "to consider and determine." Although it required creativity on Daniel's part to meet the objectives of his authority and still be loyal to what he had purposed, God provided a way to accomplish it because Daniel's purpose pleased Him. God wants each one of us to determine early in life that we will choose to do what is right: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

In addition to choosing life we must also choose whom we are going to serve in order to achieve and experience life. Our natural inclination is to dedicate ourselves to get money so that with it we can enjoy all the things that money can buy. We may choose to serve money and God at the same time, yet Jesus explained that this is not possible. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [money]" (Matthew 6:24).

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served. . . And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14-15).

THE CAUSE OF FOOLISH DECISIONS

The greatest hindrance to decisiveness is double mindedness. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). He is like a wave of the sea that is driven by the wind and tossed to and fro.

The Greek word for double minded is dipsuchos which means "two souled or vacillating." Psuchos is the root for the English word psychology. It involves our mind, will, and emotions. A double minded person has divided desires. On the one hand he wants to do what is right and on the other hand he wants to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which last only for a short season. (See Hebrews 11:25.)

Moses conquered double mindedness by making a lifetime decision to identify with God and His people. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:24-25).

Decisiveness is based on wise and careful consideration of available options. Moses considered and determined that the "reproach of Christ [was] greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:26).

THE BENEFIT OF SEEKING OUT WISE COUNSEL

Decisiveness is having the confidence that the decisions we make are wise and correct. For this we need to seek out wise counsel. We should get counsel as inexpensively as we can; others have paid a high price for it through disastrous wrong decisions. They will usually give us the benefit of their experience just for the asking. They then gain some redemptive value for the pain and loss of past mistakes.

≪≪ "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15).

≪≪ "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22).

≪≪ "Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end" (Proverbs 19:20).

≪≪ "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14).

HOW TO BASE DECISIVENESS ON GOD'S WORD

Wise decision-making must be based on God's will, not on our own natural inclinations, because "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Therefore, God warns: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). God also warns us to reject the counsel of the ungodly: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly..." (Psalm 1:1) and "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth thee to err from the words of knowledge." (Proverbs 19:27).

Every decision that Jesus made was based on His Heavenly Father's will. He stated, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). God's will on a specific matter will be based on the universal, non-optional principles of life that He established throughout all His creation and which He explains and illustrates in the Bible. They can be summarized by asking the following questions when making a specific decision:

1. Is my use of things consistent with the purposes for which God created them? (Money, food, clothes, marriage, family, time, friends, etc.)
2. Whose jurisdiction am I under for this decision? (Parents, employer, government, or church) Decisiveness must never violate the overall jurisdiction of God and the moral principles of His Word.
3. Can I make this decision with a clear conscience? Any caution from our conscience or the counsel of our authorities must not be overridden.
4. Am I in harmony with all those involved in this decision? Decisions based on bitterness or anger are sure to be wrong and costly.
5. Have I yielded my rights on this matter? George Mueller was a great man of faith and learned to understand the will of God in specific decisions. He explained that the secret was getting his own heart in a state in which he had no will of his own. A practical way to accomplish this is to list all of the benefits of each choice and purpose thank God for whatever choice He indicates is His will.
6. Will it weaken or damage anyone else? We are not to do anything that will cause a "weaker" brother to "stumble, or [be] offended, or made weak" (Romans 14:21). Because of this, we are even to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22).
7. Is this fulfilling God's calling on my life? God calls each believer to fulfill an important role in the advancement of His kingdom and the damage of Satan's kingdom. Every decision we make must be in harmony with these objectives. Our calling will involve praying for and serving all authorities with good works, assisting the fatherless and widows, as well as the poor and those from other nations.

Our primary calling is given in the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

HOW FASTING ENHANCES DECISIVENESS

For important decisions and to increase spiritual alertness for all decision-making, it is valuable to set aside a day, or several days, for prayer and fasting. Jesus promises that if we fast secretly, He will reward us openly. (See Matthew 6:18.)

One of the many rewards of fasting is a greater increase in discernment and wise judgment for decision-making. (See Isaiah 58.)

HOW DECISIVE ARE YOU?

- ≠≠ Have you made a foundational commitment to do what is right whatever the cost?
- ≠≠ Have you decided to serve God rather than money, fame, or pleasures?
- ≠≠ Do you seek out wise counsel before making a decision?
- ≠≠ Have you purposed to discern God's will in every decision and to do it?
- ≠≠ Do you fast and cry out to God for wisdom in important decisions?
- ≠≠ Do you make decisions based on impulse or on commands and principles in God's Word?
- ≠≠ Do you accept advice that is contrary to Scripture?