

THE TALE OF THREE DECISIONS

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Joshua 7:16-21

1. Decisions are a part of life and the decision making process is an important one.
2. People differ when it comes to decisions.
 - a. Some are decisive while others are indecisive.
 - b. Some make wise decisions while others make unwise decisions.
 - c. Some make intellectual decisions while others make decisions that are emotionally driven.
 - d. Some make decisions that are unselfish while others tend to make decisions based on what's best for them.
 - e. Some want to make decisions that are pleasing to God while others could care less.
3. Many factors impact how and why we make decisions, but every decision has three important components.
 - a. An intellectual component.
 - b. An emotional component.
 - c. A volitional component.
4. This morning we are going to look at three decisions made by three different men and see what we can learn about how to be a good decision maker.

I. A private decision. Joshua 7:16-21

A. Joshua had given specific and clear instructions to the soldiers of Israel related to the conquest of Jericho. Joshua 6:15-19

NOTE: Joshua made clear the consequences of disobedience.

B. Later Israel's army suffered its first defeat at a small city called Ai.

C. God told Joshua that the defeat happened because Israel had sinned. 7:10-12

D. Through a process of elimination the guilty party turned out to be a man from the tribe of Judah named Achan.

E. When confronted by Joshua Achan confessed what he had done.

1. "Truly, I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel."

2. "When I saw." Intellect

3. "I coveted." Emotion

4. "I took and I hid (concealed)." Will

F. Achan's private decision had a wide-ranging impact.

1. It impacted Israel's ability to accomplish God's work.

2. It led to the destruction of Achan's entire family.

NOTE: God made an example of Achan just as He did Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 5:1-11

G. Sadly many professing Christians reap a bitter harvest because they decide to sin against the clear teaching of God's word.

H. Not only do they reap a bitter harvest but the ripple effect of their decisions harms the church and impacts the lives of others; particularly the lives of their families.
EXAMPLE: Many years ago a deacon in a church I pastored was involved with the wife of one of his best friends. His “best friend” shot and killed the deacon, his wife, and himself. Like Achan the deacon sinned against the clear commands of God. “You shall not commit adultery... You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.” Ex. 20: 14, 17 He paid a terrible price, but so didn’t his family, the family of the other victims, his church, his business partner, and the community because he was a respected county commissioner.

II. A relational decision. Matthew 1:18-25

A. Many decisions in life have to do with relationships.

B. Joseph had a decision to make.

1. Mary, the woman to whom Joseph was engaged, had recently returned from a three month visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

2. She was found to be with child, and Joseph knew that he was not the father.

NOTE: Joseph made the only intellectual assumption that he could make under the circumstances; Mary had committed adultery prior to or while visiting Elizabeth.

3. The information Joseph had, though incorrect, had to impact him emotionally.

4. However, because he was a righteous man who did not want to disgrace Mary publically he chose to make a reasoned rather than an emotional decision.

5. Joseph responded instead of reacting and as he considered his course of action God revealed to him the truth about Mary and her condition.

C. The Bible warns us about the danger of making purely emotional decisions.

1. Ps 37:8

Cease from anger and forsake wrath; do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.

2. Eph 4:29-32

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

3. James 1:19-21

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

NOTE: All of these commands can be obeyed as we appropriate the grace of God.

D. Purely emotional decisions are rarely correct decisions because the will is being controlled by emotions rather than the intellect.

NOTE: Many religious leaders seek to produce an emotionally charged environment before presenting their message because they know that their hearers can be manipulated more easily when their emotions are aroused.

E. Correct decisions cannot be made based on wrong information.

- F. We also need to evaluate our experiences based on Biblical truth.
“Spiritual experience that does not arise from God’s word is not Christian experience...Not all that passes for Christian experience is genuine. An authentic experience of the Spirit is an experience in response to the gospel. Through the Spirit the truth touches our hearts, and that truth moves our emotions and effects our wills.” (Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church*, pg. 31)

III. A ministry decision. Matthew 9:35-38

- A. Note three things here.
1. Jesus saw the people. **Intellect**
 2. He was moved with (felt) compassion for them because of what He saw. **Emotion**
 3. He told His disciples to pray (beseech) that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers into His harvest. **Will**
- B. If we are going to be used by God we must respond positively (will) to what we see (intellect) and feel (emotion).
- C. The faith that saves is the faith that serves. James 2:14-17
What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.
- D. I believe that God reveals His will for us in the area of ministry by what we see, by what we feel, and by what He calls upon us to do.
NOTE: Individually we can't do everything but we can do something.
- E. Sometimes God lays a need on our hearts and we slam the door emotionally by intellectually rationalizing away our responsibility to respond. 1 John 3:16-18
16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.
EXAMPLE: After hearing his father piously pray for some of the needs in their English village a twelve year old boy responded, “Father, as you were praying it occurred to me that I could answer all of those prayers if I had your checkbook.”

APPLICATION

1. The Bible makes it clear that the totality of who we are is to be surrendered totally to God.
2. Jesus stated that the foremost commandment of all is that we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength.
3. God designed us with the ability to think, feel and act.
4. **He did not intend for us to be dominated by any single component.**
5. Are you a balanced personality or are you willful (under the control of the will), emotional (controlled by your emotions), or rational (careful and calculating)?