

Making Wise Decisions Together

CASE STUDY #1: Mike and Julie have been married for 3 years. They do not have any children. They are having a tough time deciding on when to have children. Matter of fact, they struggle making any decision. They haven't decided yet who is going to handle the finances, so they each manage their own account and split the bills like roommates. They both own homes and they haven't decided which house to live in, so they split their time between both. They have visited 10 churches in the last four months and haven't decided which one they will attend. They are deathly afraid of making wrong decisions. This has led to them both doubting whether it was a good decision for them to get married.

CASE STUDY #2: Jim and Nancy have been married for 12 years. They have 3 children ages 4, 8 and 11. Jim has changed jobs five times since they have been married and is thinking about another change. Of the five jobs, three of them have required moves. The job he is currently looking at will require them to move again.

Nancy is at her wits end. She does not want to move. She loves their church; the kids are doing well in school and have established great friendships. Jim completely understands. He too loves the church and is excited about how well the kids are doing. But, job opportunities like this do not come around all the time. He believes that this job would be it. This job would be the job he could see himself keeping for the rest of his working career.

Nancy says, "He doesn't listen to me. He just does what he wants to do."

Jim says, "I do listen, but when God opens doors you need to walk through them."

Nancy says, "I have gone along with his decisions, but not this time. This time I am putting my foot down."

Jim says, "She has never gone along with my decisions. Whenever I decide anything, she criticizes my decision and goes along complaining all the way. She makes it very clear that she does not like my decision and how stupid my decision is."

Nancy says, "Well, if he decides to take this job the kids and I are staying right here."

Prerequisites for Biblical Decision-Making

1. Be rightly related to Christ (2 Cor 5:14-21)
2. Pursue a life of worshiping God (John 4:23-24; 2 Cor 5:9; Phil 1:21; 3:10-14; Col 1:9-12)
3. Recognize God's sovereignty over all (Ps 115:3,8; Eph 1:11; Eph 5:17; James 4:13-16; Prov 16:9; Rom 8:28-29). God's sovereignty works in sync with (never apart from) all His other attributes (e.g. Goodness, Wisdom, etc.)

Principles

1. Apply God's sovereignty in planning and seeking his will! (Proverbs 16)
 - a. God _____ you to plan. (16:1)
 - b. God expects you to _____ Him as you plan. (16:3)
 - c. God expects you to give him _____ power in your planning. (16:9)
 - d. God expects you to plan _____ to His Word. (16:20)
 - e. God is in _____ of every decision. (16:33)

2. Scripture has bearing on all decisions, one way or another
 - a. By _____ – positive and negative
Ex. "be kind to one another" (Eph 4:32)
 - b. By _____
Ex. "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away" (Matt 5:29) – deal with sin forthrightly
 - c. Wisdom is at its purest in Scripture and then starts to rely more on human reasoning, advice and experience after that (obviously less reliable).

3. Purposeful _____ (an overarching principle concerning loving others)
 - a. Matt 22:37-40
 - b. Phil 2:1-5
 - c. 1 Cor 6:12; 10:23-24
 - d. Gal 5:13

4. Desire (Ps 37:4; "Wishes"- 1 Cor 7:36, 39)

Practices to be cautious of or avoid altogether

Misusing the Bible	Ideas, inner feelings, desires, and impressions
Personal advice	An audible voice
Circumstances / results	Inner peace
Setting up conditions	Devices
Opened and closed doors	Signs

Dreams

“Waiting” on the Lord wrongly

Conscience

Reason

Faith

The “Call”

Small group (“...where two or three are gathered...”)

Process

These all interrelate. The first three are practiced at the same time.

1. Continually have a _____, yielded, and dependent will before God (Rom 12:1-2).
2. Continually _____ for wisdom – for the Spirit to assist you in bringing Scripture to bear on the situation (James 1:5).
3. Gather all the _____ data needed to make a wise decision (Prov 18:13).
4. Study any _____ commands in Scripture concerning this particular issue (2 Tim 2:15).
5. Is there anything _____ with this activity? (1 Cor 10:23)
6. Study the _____ principles in Scripture concerning this issue (2 Tim 2:15).
 - a. Is this something I can thank God for? (Rom 14:6; 1 Cor 10:30; Col 3:17)
 - b. Is this something that will glorify God? (1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 5:9)
 - c. Is this worth imitating (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 4:9)
 - d. Is this following the example of Christ? (Rom 15:7-8; 1 Cor 11:1; 1 John 2:6)
 - e. Is it beneficial? Does it promote my spiritual life?
 - f. Is it a practice that over time will tend to master me? Will it stimulate a desire that will be difficult to control?
7. Weigh the purposeful use of freedom (Gal 5:13; 1 Cor 8).
 - a. Is it self-serving at the expense of someone else’s benefit? (Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:33; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:1-4)
 - b. Will my choice affect others around me? If so, in what way?
 - c. Is this an occasion where my “flesh” (sinfulness) is seeking to indulge itself? (Gal. 5:13)
 - d. Is it constructive? Will it promote the spiritual well-being of other believers if they engage in this practice that is permissible for me?

8. Affirm that your desires are God-honoring (Ps 37:4).
 - a. What do I want (“wish”) to do?
 - b. Will it bring glory to God? (1 Cor 7:36, 39, 10:31)
9. If you still can’t decide:
 - a. Rom 14:23; Heb 11:25 (“holding principle” = if it involves the troubled conscience that you might possibly sin in moving ahead)
 - b. Possibly gather more data – both in the initial data gathering or in the commands and principles of Scripture.

A good decision is based on the **process** of making the decision **NOT** necessarily on the **outcome** of the decision.

Further consideration

Is the opportunity before me (us) one that will enable me (us) to:

1. _____ as a living sacrifice in giving glory to God? (Rom 12:1-2)
2. _____ my (our) God-given gifts to the greatest extent? (1 Pet 4:10-11; Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31)
3. Be _____ to become more like Christ – a greater servant of others? (Rom 8:29)

Practical Suggestions

1. Make time to sit down and talk about the decisions that need to be made – you always have time to make a biblical decision.
2. Understand your roles when making decisions.
 - a. Husbands, lead in this process, but don’t make decisions to simply tout your headship.
 - b. Wives, support your husband and when the decision is made then go along without complaint or arrogance.
3. Take time to evaluate your decision process and make necessary adjustments.
4. Setup freedom decisions. Ex. If husband is managing the finances then he frees his wife to make certain purchases without having to bring it to him all the time.
5. Do what works for you within the limits of Scripture.
6. Communicate, communicate, communicate.