

Making a Decision

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[0 : 00] Welcome everyone and thanks for listening to this podcast today. We're entering the fourth part of our sermon series on the Four Point Gospel, which is the question mark, we need to make a decision.

And if you don't hear the normal spontaneous laughter, clapping, cheering, people shouting Amen in the background, you'll probably realise that there's been a slight technical glitch on Sunday morning in the recording.

So I'm making this recording after the service. And so sit back, focus, enjoy as we discuss and maybe peruse and think more and more what it is to make decisions as a Christian.

I bumped into a lady and her husband in the park on Saturday and she works with Steve Chalk, who's head of the Oasis Trust. Now, the link is that Steve was a significant part of the Christian journey in the 80s and 90s at Spring Harvest.

And at that time, there was a significant move of God through a very, very simple wristband that everyone was given.

[1 : 14] And on this wristband was WWJD. What would Jesus do? And doing some research, I realised that this goes back to 1896.

And there was a guy in America, Charles Sheldon, who published a novel called In His Steps, What Would Jesus Do? And he published this book and asked the question, what would Jesus do in any given situation?

Thanks to a mistake by the publisher, there was no copyright. And as a result, over 30 million copies were made, making it one of the top 50 bestselling books ever.

Fast forward then to 1989. And there was a lady called Janie Tinklenberg, a youth leader in Michigan. And after reading this book, she thought again about her youth group and thought, what a great idea.

And thought up this idea of wristbands with WWJD. What would Jesus do? To make us think in the everyday. Of course, it caught on and it went worldwide.

[2 : 26] And it was quite a significant thing for me. You know, I wore that wristband in my previous job as a police officer. And it really helped. You know, to make thinking about decisions in an everyday decision making process and in my own life and in my personal life.

What would Jesus do? So today is about decisions. Is Jesus at the heart of your decision making? Truly, I think we need to ask ourselves, is Jesus at the heart of our decision making?

In our Lent series, we come to this symbol where we need to decide. We've looked at the heart.

God loves me. The cross. We have sinned. The X. And then the cross itself.

The amazing, powerful symbol that Christ died for us. And now, now we need to decide and make that decision today of whether we are living for him totally wholeheartedly with every fibre of our being.

That we are living for him. It says, if you declare with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. And, you know, and I sense that many people give their life to Jesus.

[3 : 44] Amazing. But, but do we live our lives for him? You know, living our lives day by day requires us to make decisions that reflect Jesus and his kingdom. Life in our character.

You know, the way we talk, the way we forgive, the way we care, the way we share. We tell people about Jesus, not just by what we say, but by how we live our lives and draw people to him.

You know, I'm not laying guilt on anyone, but a very wise and well-known leader once told me, you know, when will you ever rebuke people with their resistance and failure to share their faith, to profess that openly?

You know, and maybe today it's a decision for us all to make that more and more we will share our faith with other people, not just by what we say, but by what we do as well.

So often we choose to make the decision to become chameleon Christians, you know, to blend into the surroundings of our culture and become invisible for Jesus and his kingdom amongst the people that we live and serve and work with.

[4 : 53] And as we move rapidly towards that week in our Christian history where Jesus and his disciples enter Jerusalem, we notice that there's decision after decision that hits us.

You know, we're faced with characters in Holy Week who made decisions that disappoint us, that shock us, that upset us, that frustrate us, anger us at its injustice, and decisions that humble me to the core and make me weep.

But the thing is, we are a post-resurrection people. We know that Jesus died and rose again for us, which I would suggest makes our decision-making so much easier because the people that we read about in Holy Week didn't know that.

They didn't know what was coming. We know that Jesus did not know that.

You know, many Christians would do well to revisit those words when preference takes precedence over his will and his purposes.

[6 : 18] And as we rapidly move towards Palm Sunday, we get this, the story unfolds where Jesus enters Jerusalem knowing that he is facing the cross.

You know, the people welcome him as saviour. They decide that this is the Messiah, yet decide to change their minds very quickly when he is not their preferred saviour.

They didn't want a Messiah coming in peace. They rather preferred a violent revolutionary, maybe. Which, to be honest, Jesus was a revolutionary in the way he faced the cross in love.

I mean, that decision that made, that came from Jesus on the cross, Father, forgive them. You know, who makes that decision in the depths of unfathomable suffering, pain, rejection and deceit? Jesus, who could have condemned us, decides to forgive us. And then, of course, there was the religious leaders, you know, who decided from that entry into Jerusalem, this man, this Jesus would be killed by fair means or foul.

[7 : 35] But it's often the personal decisions, isn't it, that are made in relationships that cut us deep. Judas. You know, we hang our heads in disbelief in the decision he made.

And with a kiss. You know, that's the cut, isn't it? When those who we know and care for betray us, it happens so often in life. There's hurtful words.

There's actions. There's comments. And all of those things mar God's image in us and in his church. When we decide, and it is a decision, you know, let's not let ourselves off the hook here. In doing those things, we deny Jesus in the way we behave, the way we think. And those words that cut deep.

As Paul says, anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame. And I read that in that we are indeed sometimes put to shame when I deny Jesus and his way.

[8 : 47] You know, what would Jesus do in this situation? And in this, as we approach Holy Week, we get Peter, don't we? Peter, that real rock that was always close to Jesus.

Yet on that fateful morning, what was the decision in Peter's decision-making process? When Jesus is arrested, Peter makes a decision to try and stay close to Jesus.

All the rest have fled. All the rest of the disciples have hidden away. But Peter decides to stay as close to Jesus as he can. What was his decision-making process in that time of fear?

Maybe that time of anxiety? You know, what do I do? Was in his mind a rescue attempt? Maybe they will release Jesus and I'll be here.

I'll be close by. And after all, he said to Jesus, didn't he? I will never leave you. You know, maybe he's trying to stand by that decision. Yet very soon he makes a decision that is totally opposite to all of that.

[10 : 02] After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, surely you are one of them. Your accent gives you away. Then he began to call down curses and he swore to them.

I don't know the man. Immediately a rooster crowed. And then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken. Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

And Peter went outside and wept bitterly. You know, when did we last weep bitterly when we have let Jesus down and deny him?

You know, my heart aches for Peter here. I can imagine him feeling sick to his stomach the moment that rooster crows and he realises what he has just done, the decision he has made.

I too have felt that same sick feeling in the pit of my stomach when there have been times that I too have denied being openly professing the name of Jesus through the words, actions and choices I've made in life at times.

[11:08] Peter's tears are a beautiful reflection of his deep love of Jesus. Even in Peter's weakness and fear, it's a devastating moment of coming face to face with himself and the decision he has made, which was, I guess, self-preservation.

When did we last shrink back seeking maybe to preserve our credibility or image rather than stepping up and stepping in for Jesus?

Someone criticised me a few weeks back for using the term both feet in when it comes to being a follower of Jesus. You know, and that's a decision that we all have to make.

You know, moment by moment, am I all in or am I half in with you, Jesus? You know, yet Peter must have allowed this experience to shape and transform him because the only way that we know about this experience is because Peter recorded it for us to know, to learn from.

You know, we learn from his poor decision. Yet in the future, it is Peter's courage and boldness that grows the church and people recognise him as a man who has been with Jesus.

[12:26] Wouldn't that be great as people look at us? There is a person who walks closely with Jesus. Is there an area in our life where we are making decisions to deny Jesus? Maybe it's not as obvious as Peter, but am I being tempted to compromise my integrity, to be unkind or to act unjustly out of fear or self-preservation?

You know, am I afraid to invite people to church, into a relationship with him and his community? You know, is my decision based more on my need than that of the gospel and mission of his church?

Are my decisions maybe shaped by people around me who don't declare with their mouth openly and without hesitation in every setting that Jesus is Lord? What would Jesus do?

Today, maybe of all days, is a day to recommit. Maybe this is a moment where we ask him to come into the centre of your decision-making in all things.

What would Jesus do? WWJD. It changed my life. In this setting that we face day in and day out, what would Jesus do?

[13:40] Maybe this morning, maybe this day, wherever you're listening, morning, afternoon, this evening, maybe you are crying out, Jesus, I have a decision to make here. Show me, show me what to do.

How would you have me react? How would you have me respond? Help me, Lord, in the power of your spirit to do that, in love, grace, strength, forgiveness and compassion. Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.

Never be put to shame. Maybe a decision today is to go deeper into his presence now. Maybe a decision to accept Jesus afresh today as your Lord and Saviour, even for the first time to say, come Holy Spirit, come give me courage to live that life for you more and more, deeper than before.

Lord, would you come and do that? Perhaps more importantly, if you have said that and committed your life already to him, to look more and more at our character, our life, our commitment to this fellowship of brothers and sisters and ask, do my decisions match up to my involvement in the mission of this church?

Am I giving my best or am I bringing him my leftovers? Love and commitment. Where do I need to be, Lord, in my decision making?

[15:08] Do I radically need to change my life? Where do I need to live and speak out for you more and more to bring people into your presence? As I said on Sunday, I'm hopeful that every person in Christchurch will invite one person to Alpha.

it's one evening for 10 weeks. There's an option to come to bring a friend, family member, somebody who you know, neighbor perhaps, to Alpha, to maybe make a decision for you to make a decision to sacrifice maybe whatever it is that gets in the way of you inviting somebody to come along and explore what it means to be a follower of Jesus and ask all the questions you may ever want to ask.

There's invitation cards that are available at Christchurch that you can actually give to people because it says if you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God

raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

It is a decision that we make to share Jesus with other people. What would Jesus do? maybe listen to those words that he says, come and follow me.

Sin no more. Through the power of the cross you are healed and trust in God and trust in me. And now, that decision, do we give him all of our life?

[16 : 49] I hope that in listening to this this morning that maybe that will help in your decision making process to maybe pause now to just take a moment maybe wherever you might be to just pause probably not if you're driving but at the next opportunity pull over where it's safe.

and maybe just say Lord Jesus would you would you come now? Lord in the power of your Holy Spirit would you come close to me now?

And come into my decision making Lord and to ask myself again and again what your will is for me.

and to ask myself in everyday decisions Lord what would you do?

What would Jesus do? Lord we just ask this in Jesus name. Amen.