

# Biblical Decision Making

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good evening. Did we lose anybody at the Chief? Everybody's back? That's good. You know, I neglected to say earlier, and I need to say this, I bring greetings from my pastor, John MacArthur, and several elders at Grace Church. What is happening here in Squamish is exciting.

There's great love for your leadership and for you, and great hope for what the Lord's going to do in British Columbia. And so thank you again for the opportunity to be here. It is an honor, and we're going to talk tonight about biblical decision-making. And the question is, really, that I want you to wrestle with is how do we discern the will of God? When you're making decisions, that is really probably what it boils down to, the questions we have is what is the will of God?

And is there a danger in making decisions that I could miss the will of God and potentially choose something that God would not want me to choose? And I think this is relevant in a family conference because I think this is good for all of us to review and to think about, but particularly as we shape the next generation, as we train children, you train your children, part of what you want them to think about before they leave your home is how to make decisions. Because the day is coming when you will not be making their decisions. And the sooner you get there, probably the better.

And one of the goals in our home was to have our children make their own decisions as much as possible in an environment where we were there to watch that process and to help them in that process process and to help clean up the mess that sometimes that process created. And that's part of discipleship and training. And so I want to walk through this entire issue. Your kids someday will be making a decision.

What college should I go to? What career should I choose? Who should I marry? Where should I live? Should I move somewhere away from home? Or should I stay here? And then eventually, should we have children? Should we have another child? Should we have yet another child? Those decisions. And I guess the question to wrestle with and to think about is, is there any such thing as a bad decision? A right decision?

[ 2 : 3 9 ] A wrong decision. And the answer to that is, of course, yes and no. So let me start with some really obvious bad decisions. Out of history, one is in 1999 in our country, NASA, which is the National Aeronautic and Space Administration, lost a \$125 million satellite because of a really bad decision.

Engineers at Lockheed Martin used the Imperial System of measurement, inches, feet, miles, etc., when calculating coordinates and programming a communication station, while NASA used the metric system, centimeters, meters, kilometers. This caused the Mars orbiter to miss its mark, burn up its engine in the atmosphere, and disappear forever. That was a bad decision.

The captain of the Titanic, if you're familiar with the Titanic, largest passenger ship in history, when it was floated in 1912. And despite being warned of impending danger, the crew decided to embark on the cruise anyway. And on April 15, 1912, the ship scraped the right side of the ship along a submerged piece of ice, a part of a glacier, causing the vessel to sink in the water. And in today's dollars, that cost them \$175 million, and over 1,500 people died. Clearly a bad decision. They missed the warning. They ignored the warning and went ahead. The Bible records some bad decisions.

If you think of Jonah, in Jonah chapter 1, God says, arise, go to Nineveh. Two verses later, Jonah rose up to flee where? To Tarshish. Just to give you a visual, Nineveh's that way, Tarshish is that way. Bad decision, if you know the story, and we'll come back to that later.

You think of the thieves on the cross next to Jesus. Those men were on the cross after a lifelong pattern in history of bad decisions. Committing crimes, thieves, they were robbers, they were criminals, the Bible says. And even while they're on the cross, they both mocked Jesus. Bad decision after bad decision after bad decision. Then there's Noah's neighbors. If you know the story of Noah, he was in Genesis 7. He's building an ark. He's getting ready for something nobody had ever seen before or heard of before. And crazy Noah was building a boat. Matthew 24, 37 describes what it was like for Noah.

[ 5 : 25 ] Verse 37 says, for the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. Noah. For in those days before the flood, his neighbors were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark. And they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away. They all died. Bad decisions. They ignored Noah. They made fun of Noah. And in fact, instead of following Noah's lead, they did exactly the opposite. And they died. And then there's King David.

You know the story of King David. He had an illicit extramarital affair with his neighbor, resulting in a pregnancy and the murder of her husband to cover it up. It's all recorded in 2 Samuel 11. That is a cascading series of bad decisions. And it started with a seeming innocuous decision. And it was compounded by bad decision after bad decision after bad decision. First of all, it says in 2 Samuel, he stayed at Jerusalem. His army was going out to fight the Amalekites. And he made a decision he was going to stay back home. Bad decision. And then he got up in the night and walked around the roof of the king's house.

Another bad decision. And he saw a woman bathing. And David sent and inquired about the woman. Bad decision. And then he impregnates her. Bad decision. And then he sends her husband.

And he sends for her husband from the battlefield to come home to spend time with his wife to cover his sin. Bad decision. Uriah refuses to do that. So David sends him to the battle with a letter, a sealed letter carried by Uriah to Joab. And this is what the note said. Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him so that he may be struck down and die. That's what you call incriminating evidence of a murder. Bad decision. Bad decision after bad decision after bad decision. So can you make bad decisions? You can make bad decisions. Think of Pharaoh.

The story of Pharaoh repeatedly choosing to face off with God, to challenge God, and losing every single time. We're going to look at this tomorrow in a little more detail. But 10 times in the Exodus account, it says that Pharaoh hardened his heart. Every single time he made a decision to harden his heart. So all of this, can you make a bad decision? Yes. Okay. Can you make good decisions? Well, yeah.

[ 8 : 19 ] At any time, David could have stopped that series of bad decisions and made a good decision. Jonah could have made the decision to stop going to Tarshish and go to Nineveh. So yes, there are good decisions. But I want to give you the thesis for tonight, this session, just to get your wheels turning. There's two things I want to show you. The first one is your decisions don't matter.

Your decisions don't matter. The second is you must make good decisions. I'm going to make both of these cases from the word of God. And there's a reason we're doing that. And I think this is important, particularly in the context of parenting, that we understand this as parents so that we can train both of these truths. And they are affirmatively true. Because this perspective will help train the next generation to have the right perspective on how they fit in this world run by an all-powerful God. Again, the outline is this. Your decisions don't matter. Make good decisions.

Okay? So let's start with your decisions don't matter. Why do I say that? Well, there's a bit of a dilemma in thinking about making decisions. We must make decisions. I bet you've made 20 decisions today, at least. On the other hand, our decisions have no impact on the will or the providence of God.

None. The sovereignty and providence of God is a great difficulty for finite human beings, with pride particularly, who want more control and credit. It is hard truth only because of the frailty of man. So tonight, I'm praying it's a great comfort to you as you contemplate the large decisions in your life. That your decisions never thwart the providence and the sovereignty of God.

When you make decisions, you must lean into and yield to the knowledge that God is provident. His will dictates everything. And this is particularly the case when you look back at decisions that you've made in your life and you think what might have been. I went to accounting school. I can think all day long that I made a big mistake and I should have gone to medical school and contemplate what might have been. That is a waste of time. I didn't. And yet, everything that happened there and since then has been consistent with the provident will of a sovereign God. Let's see why that is. Let me read you a couple verses from my favorite, one of my favorite chapters in the Old Testament, Isaiah 40. I'm going to start reading in verse 13. This is a passage you've heard before. There are hymns that have been written quoting this passage. Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord or as his counselor has informed him? That is a rhetorical question. The answer is what? Nobody. So I'm going to read it the way it's meant. Nobody has directed the Spirit of the

[ 11 : 48 ] Lord and nobody has informed him as his counselor. Verse 14. Nobody. He's consulted with nobody and nobody has given him understanding. Nobody has taught him in the path of justice and nobody has taught him knowledge and nobody has informed him of the way of understanding. You know why? Because he doesn't need us.

He's got all of that. Verse 22 of Isaiah 40. It is he, God, who sits above the circle of the earth.

And I love this little parentheses. And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. How's that for some positive thinking tonight on a Saturday night? You are like grasshoppers. God sits above the circle of the earth.

He stretches out the heavens like a curtain and he spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.

Scarcely have they been planted. Scarcely have they been sown. Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth. But he merely blows on them and they wither and the storm carries them away like stubble.

[ 12 : 56 ] That is an all-powerful, all-controlling, all-knowing, all-doing God. God. So, you know, I teach our new members class at our church and when I read Isaiah 40 passages to them, I ask them, so why do you pray? You're not informing God of anything. You're not changing God's mind.

You're not changing God's perfect will, so why do you pray? And I leave it right there and I'm going to leave that right there for you tonight too. Because that's another one of those dilemmas. By the way, the answer to that is because we're commanded to. Remember, Jesus Christ even prayed.

You can reconcile the rest of that later. But you're not going to change God's mind. God created us in all the worlds. He makes the rules. We respond to Him. He does not respond to us when it comes to changing the course of events or changing circumstances.

If you would, I want to show this to you. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 2. 1 Samuel chapter 2. This is Hannah's song of thanksgiving.

And I'm not going to give a bunch of background on this. I think it will be evident, the value of this. I think it's interesting. This is a prayer written by a woman who is exalting in the sovereign providence of a holy, loving God. Again, this is all under the banner of my first point, your decisions don't matter.

[ 14 : 34 ] Okay? So all of life is described in 1 Samuel chapter 2. It's a deeply personal expression of who God is and what He does.

And it's the most profound exploration of the omniscience of God at a personal level. That God has control over every aspect and over every circumstance of a human life.

Verse 1, Hannah prayed and said, My heart exalts in the Lord. My horn, that means strength. My strength is exalted in the Lord. My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies because I rejoice in your salvation.

There is no one holy like the Lord. Indeed, there is no one besides you, nor is there any rock like our God. Boast no more so very proudly. Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth.

For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed. He's our strength and our salvation.

[ 15 : 37 ] He is holy. There is none like Him. He is omniscient. That means infinite, perfect, holy knowledge, understanding, and a complete foresight. He makes all the decisions, is what she's saying.

We don't weigh His decisions. He weighs ours. That's what she's saying.

And His standard is infinite, perfect, complete, omniscient holiness. When we're teaching our children how to make decisions, the starting point is understanding God is God and we are not.

And then starting in verse 4, she begins to answer a series of questions that you might not be asking, but you will be in a minute.

Why are you here? Was it the result of somebody's decision? Why are you sick tonight? Is it because you made bad health decisions?

[ 16 : 36 ] You ate the wrong thing. You saw the wrong doctor. You didn't get enough exercise. The flip side is why are you healthy? Are you healthy because you run every day?

Because you eat well? Are you healthy because you make the right decisions in life regarding your health? Why are you hungry or well fed?

Is it because you've made the right decisions on when to eat and how to eat and where to eat? Why do you have money? Why don't you have money? Are you poor because you're a bad manager of money?

Or because you made bad decisions about what kind of a degree to get? Are you wealthy because you made the right decisions? Are you wealthy because you made good business decisions?

Hannah is about to answer all these questions. Why do you have the number of children you have? Did I have three daughters, three kids because Anna and I decided we were going to have three kids?

[ 17 : 35 ] Did we not have more kids because we decided not to have more kids? Why are you alive?

Is it because you've made decisions to be safe? To live a careful life? To not take risks? If you know somebody who's died, maybe in an accident, did they die because they made a bad decision?

Did they make a bad driving decision and that's why they're no longer with us? Did they die of an illness because they made bad decisions early in the illness?

They decided not to go see a doctor and had they seen a doctor sooner, they would have maybe survived. You ever heard that? It's common for us to talk like that and to think like that. Some of you are influential in your careers or in your circles.

Is it because you've made good decisions? Some of you think, I can't get a promotion. Is it because you made the wrong decisions? You get the point.

[ 18 : 42 ] All of these questions are about to be answered by Hannah. Starting in verse 4. Let me back up to verse 3. Boast no more so very proudly. That is a very important phrase.

When we make decisions, when you have made decisions, if you credit the condition of your life on your decision making, you are stealing glory from God.

Boast no more. Your decisions don't matter. Ah, we're getting there, but make good decisions. So boast no more so very proudly and do not let arrogance come out of your mouth.

For the Lord is a God of knowledge and with him actions are weighed. Verse 4. The bows of the mighty are shattered, but the feeble gird on strength.

Do you see the juxtaposition there? The strong fail and the weak win. Why? Because God said so. Verse 5.

[ 19 : 46 ] Those who were full hire themselves out for bread. In other words, they're starving now. But those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, but she who has many children languishes.

Verse 6. The Lord kills and makes alive. Let me say that again. The Lord kills and makes alive. We were talking this afternoon about a conversation I had with one of my granddaughters, nine years old, and laying out for her the truth that God kills.

That's a shocking truth, isn't it? But like I told her, if God gives life, why wouldn't it be God who takes life? It's not our decisions.

It's God's. He's provident. He's sovereign. He's omniscient. So the Lord kills and makes alive. He brings down to Sheol and he raises up.

The Lord makes poor and rich. The Lord does that. It says it right there. It's not your investment strategy.

[ 20 : 51 ] It's not your career. It's not your good decisions. It's not your bad decisions. The Lord makes rich and the Lord makes poor. He brings low.

He exalts. He raises the poor from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's.

And he set the world on them. He keeps the feet of his godly ones. But the wicked ones are silence and darkness. For not by might shall a man prevail.

Do you see that? It's right there. She is rehearsing that the people who win don't win because they're strong. And the people who lose don't lose because they're weak.

The people who win win because God says they win. And the people who lose lose because God says you lose. That's the providence of God.

[ 21 : 47 ] Your decisions don't matter. God's going to do what God's going to do. Verse 10. If you don't like this, this is for you. Okay?

Those who contend with the Lord will be shattered. Against them he will thunder in the heavens. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. And he will give strength to his king.

And will exalt the horn or the strength of his anointed. And that is a prophetic statement of what's going to happen at the end of all of this. This is an incredible passage of scripture.

That helps us understand in day-to-day real life terms what it means when we walk around and we say God is provident. God is sovereign.

That has real life implications. And this whole passage is bookended by the God of knowledge in verse 3. And the earth is the Lord's in verse 8. That is the context of all these decisions that just got answered.

[ 22 : 55 ] That just got evaluated. That just got weighed. You see, he weighs our decisions. We don't weigh his. We don't inform God of anything.

We don't change him. We don't change his will. He is who he is as he always has been and always will be. And he does what he wills. So those who contend with the Lord will be shattered.

Don't steal God's glory. Your well-being is entirely due to the providence of God. And taking credit for his providence is contending with the Lord.

So what does all this have to say about decision-making? Well, remember, we're under the first point. Your decisions don't matter. God makes decisions.

Our decisions fit within the grid of his decisions. We bend to his will. He does not bend to ours. We have to understand we should believe.

[ 23 : 57 ] We must trust the providence of God. God's will is never thwarted. You cannot ever miss the will of God. Our decisions do not change or impede his purposes and his will.

And Romans 8, 28 says, With no qualification except for one. It says God causes all things to work together for good. The only qualification there is it's for those who love God to those who are called according to his purpose.

Our decisions do not cause things to work together for good. God does. In spite of our decisions, sometimes.

This applies to everything. You know, an example of that is Proverbs 16, 33, a verse that's debated much among mostly seminarians probably, but it's the lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord.

You can cast dice if you want, and you can think you came up with the number, but the Lord's even in charge of that. So we've come to a very uncomfortable point, I would imagine.

[ 25 : 10 ] You came tonight to find out how to make decisions. And all you've heard is, it doesn't matter. We can go home now, right? You can if you want, by the way.

If I've really offended you or made you really uncomfortable, you certainly can. If I stopped here, you could conclude that there's no reason to be concerned with making decisions. But guess what?

The Bible has a lot to say about making decisions. The Bible makes clear that our decisions don't matter, and now we're to the second point, but you need to make good decisions.

There's a paradox in the Bible, and there's these two imperatives, that you must endeavor to make the right decision, because our decisions matter, and the process of making decisions matters.

And we're going to look at both of those. So we're on the second big point. We're off the uncomfortable point. Now we're on the point that everybody likes to talk about. That how you make a decision matters, and the process of making that decision matters.

[ 26 : 24 ] In other words, we need to avoid bad decisions. Let's see what the Bible has to say about that. Let me give you some clear examples in the Bible where you can make a good decision, and where a decision is demanded of you.

How about your salvation? You are clearly responsible for decisions and should expect consequences from your decisions as it relates to salvation.

You need to repent. Romans 10.9 says, Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord. That's a decision. Acts 26.20 says, They should repent and turn to God, performing the deeds appropriate to repentance.

And the alternative there is a Pharaoh decision, harden the heart. That's a decision point. The Bible makes clear. You've got to make the right decision there. Confess Jesus Christ as Lord and repent.

There's the example of a ruler of a nation in the Bible who makes a good or a bad decision. In Proverbs 16.9 and 10, it says, The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.

[ 27 : 43 ] A divine decision is in the lips of the king. His mouth should not err in judgment. Make a good decision. Be careful in your daily life.

Ephesians 5.15 makes clear that we are to make good decisions. It says this, Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil.

That series of commands, which is be careful, be wise, make the most of your time. All of that involves decisions.

Make good decisions. And then there's the contrast of good and evil. 1 Thessalonians 5.21 says, Examine everything carefully.

Why do you examine everything carefully? Because you need to make a good decision. Examine everything carefully. Hold fast to that which is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

[ 28 : 51 ] If you've ever been confronted with evil, you know you have a choice, don't you? You participate in that evil or you avoid that evil. That's a decision point. Make the right decision.

And it goes on. Well, in Hebrews 5.14, it says, Solid food is for the mature who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

In other words, as our children grow, they should be practicing, choosing between that which is good and that which is evil because once they've developed that skill, you can say they are mature.

Decisions. They need to make good decisions. So there's two things I'm confident of based on a quick run-through of these passages. You must endeavor to make the right decision.

You have to avoid bad decisions. And the second thing is it follows then that the process of making decisions matters. And yes, the Bible has a lot to say about the process of making decisions.

[ 30 : 02 ] There's some questions to consider when you're making decisions. It's a process you should train your children in because they will eventually leave your home and make lots of decisions without you.

The first question they should ask in a difficult decision is does it violate God's revealed will? Ephesians 5.17 says, do not be foolish but understand what the will of God is.

That takes us right back to where I started. In decision making, one of the difficult questions we always have is what is the will of God? And the first question, does it violate God's revealed will?

That isn't necessarily what mom and dad think. That's not God's revealed will. God's revealed will is what does the Bible say? Mom, dad, should I go rob a bank today?

Is that a pretty easy question to answer from the Bible? Yeah, the Bible says you shouldn't steal. Okay? Pretty easy. That would violate God's revealed will.

[ 31 : 12 ] Bad decision. We're required to make decisions and to process the decision making process or to process that decision within the grid of does it violate God's revealed will.

The second is, is it sin? Is it sin? If it's sin, the easy answer is don't do it. It sounds really basic, doesn't it?

What a world this would be if people would make decisions after hitting that decision point and making a decision not to sin. Think of Jonah.

Was it a good decision for him to go to Tarshish? The answer is no. Bad decision. Disobedient. Sin. Simple. This is not an exercise in seeing how close to sin you can get without falling in.

It's an affirmative decision to be obedient. I don't want to make any decisions that are going to result in me being in sin. Third, motives.

[ 32 : 17 ] Are my motives pure? Proverbs 16.2 says, all the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives. That's why I said, we don't weigh the Lord's decisions.

He weighs ours. And you can do, you can be wrong by being right. In other words, you can make a decision that's right, but if your motives are impure, the Bible says that's a bad decision.

You need to make good decisions. 1 Corinthians 4.5 says, the Lord will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts.

And one of the ways that God discloses the motives of men's heart is through a bad decision. The consequences of a bad decision. Another question to ask is, is it wise?

We already looked at that in Ephesians 5.15. Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise. You need to make wise decisions.

[ 33 : 20 ] This is why parents are charged over and over and over in the Bible to teach your children wisdom. We talked about Proverbs, I think it was last night.

They're all running together now. But wisdom, wisdom, wisdom. Make wise decisions. Why? There is great blessings in making wise decisions.

And the flip side of that is, there are great and negative and terrible consequences for making foolish decisions. Another question in the decision-making process to process through is am I prepared for the consequences?

Am I prepared for the consequences? Am I prepared to absorb and endure the results of a bad decision? I think of Psalm 15.

Great Psalm. It's the definition and description of integrity. And one of the most defining parts of Psalm 15 is at the tail end of verse 4.

[ 34 : 25 ] It says that the person of integrity swears to their own hurt. That phrase, let me finish it.

He swears to his own hurt and does not change. Let me make this very practical. I tell my daughter, I will be home from work today and we will go out to dinner tonight, just you and me.

Man of integrity makes a statement like that and will keep that commitment regardless of what happens, not because of any other reason than in the integrity of his heart he made that decision.



Even if someone calls me at 3 o'clock and says I have two tickets to the Dodger game front row behind home plate, I made a commitment.

I made a decision. That decision to not take those tickets is easy because I'm a man of integrity. Make good decisions.

[ 35 : 29 ] Ecclesiastes 5, 1 through 7, I read part of that in another session that it talks about not making, or making vows and not keeping it. It says, do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought.

Can't tell you how many times in marriage counseling at my church I've heard somebody say to me, I made a mistake and married the wrong person. That's just not true.

I know that's not true. You know why? You're married. You made a commitment. You made a vow in the house of God before God and all those witnesses.

that is your wife. That is your husband. So there's a whole series of questions. Let me run through those really quickly.

Does this potential decision violate God's revealed will? Is it sin? Are my motives pure? Is it a wise move?

[ 36 : 33 ] Am I prepared for the consequences? When I make a vow, when I make a decision to vow that I'm going to be somewhere, do something, marry somebody, am I prepared for the consequences for whatever those may be?

Am I swearing to my own hurt and not changing? So, we all like to and need to get help with big decisions.

So let me give you some guidelines on getting help in the decision-making process. Remember, your decisions don't matter, but make good decisions. And in the process of making good decisions, I gave you a grid to consider and I also made clear to you that a man's ways are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives.

And sometimes your heart is deceitful and sometimes you need help assessing some of these things on is it wise and what are the potential consequences of my decision and is it sin?

And sometimes you need help from somebody outside of all of that to walk you through it. And by the way, that's you if you have children. Someday, they're going to be in a place where you've said you need to make this decision and they may actually come back to you and ask you for your counsel.

[ 38 : 00 ] How should that look? And by the way, they might ask you for your counsel and you will give very good counsel. And what might they do? Do exactly the opposite.

So, let me give you some counsel on giving that kind of direction in the decision making process or getting counsel in a big decision.

The first thing I would say is that the word of God is primary. If the Bible says it, that's it. I think we also have to be very aware that if the Bible doesn't say it, that might be persuasive.

we deal a lot with young people at our church and it's very often that I am talking to a young man who wants to marry a young woman and the young woman's parents have said this ain't happening.

And the gist of the objection is some argument from Scripture that talks about something and they have interpreted that to mean that their daughter should not marry this young man.

[ 39 : 13 ] And so often I have to walk through with somebody and say, yeah, but that's not in the Bible. What's in the Bible matters. What's not in the Bible matters. And by the way, that goes both ways in the dating scene.

God has not defined in the Bible who you should marry. It's not there. God does not talk about what college you should go to. God does not make reference in the Bible whether you should buy a Toyota or a Tesla.

Some of the decisions we make just simply are not in the Bible and that matters. It matters in the decision process to free the conscience when you consider am I revealing or am I violating God's revealed will?

Am I about to commit a sin by making this decision? There is a freedom of conscience that if it's not in the Bible you have the freedom. And that may not make your decision any easier.

I guess my advocacy here is don't oversimplify decisions by pretending something is in the Bible when it's not. when there's no obvious biblical principles now you can get wisdom.

[ 40 : 34 ] Now you can get wisdom. Proverbs 4.7 says the beginning of wisdom is to get wisdom acquire wisdom and with all your acquiring get understanding. How do you do that?

First way is pray. You're all familiar with James 1.5 if any of you lacks wisdom that's all of us let him ask of God who gives to all generously and without reproach and it will be given to him.

That is a promise. That is the first step. Prayer. Matthew 6.9 known as the Lord's Prayer says this pray then in this way our Father who is in heaven hallowed be your name.

I love the next verse. We go over this really fast. Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Does that ring consistent with my first point?

Your decisions don't matter. I think when you're praying about decisions that's a good place to start. That's where Christ started. Is rehearsing Lord I want to fit in your kingdom I'm not trying to get you to fit into mine.

[ 41 : 46 ] Your decisions don't matter and that is an appropriate place to start in your prayers about difficult decisions. But when asking for wisdom the Lord says it will be given to you.

And how do you pray? You pray that God would be glorified and pray for clarity but ultimately pray whatever happens here may the Lord's will be done because guess what the Lord's will will be done.

And when you're getting wisdom from others then when the counsel is received adopt it incorporate it or reject it but in the final decision is yours.

And that is a discipline to teach children. The Lord has given every single one of us decisions to make and yeah they don't matter but we need to make the right we need to make a decision we need to make the right decision we need to do go through the right process of the decision and it's my decision it's not your decision.

I may sit down with you and ask for counsel but at the end of the day is it your decision? No. It's my decision. I need to own that. Saying someone else told you well let me say it this way when the decision goes really bad this happens to me quite a bit where someone will make a decision after they've talked to me and it goes really bad and it's really a wreck and they'll say yeah but Chris Hamilton told me to do it this way.

[ 43 : 28 ] Have you ever experienced that? Sure you have. Yeah I may have said that but I may not have had all the information and at the end of the day it wasn't my decision.

That is the vehicle for avoiding responsibility for a decision. That decision was always your decision. So you want to always remember that.

Joe told me to do this. Bob told me to do that. You're trying to borrow somebody else's credibility and distance yourself from a potentially bad decision. It's a form of pride and dishonesty.

It's also by the way incredibly unfair to the person who gave you counsel and if you do that people will tend to stop giving you counsel. And the Bible says to get counsel.

So how do you avoid what I call analysis paralysis? There are some people who cannot make a decision.

[ 44 : 28 ] I knew a man in the business world. I am in an accounting firm. I do forensic accounting. I work with a lot of lawyers. I always slip up there. Lawyers.

And there's one lawyer in particular I got to know pretty well. and I am not kidding you. It took him two and a half years to decide which car to buy. He was only deciding between two.

Over two years. It became, at first it was funny and then it was a joke and then it was like really stop talking to me about this. So how do you avoid that kind of paralysis?

And some people really struggle with decisions. decisions. I think one thing to remember is your decisions don't matter. Isn't that freeing? Make a decision.

I'm not saying be careless. I'm not saying to not be concerned with making a good decision or following the process. Being concerned about is it sin? Is it consistent with God's will?

[ 45 : 27 ] Are my motives pure? You need to go through that grid and if everything checks out you just need to make that decision and understand it didn't matter.

Why? God's going to do what God's going to do. You haven't altered anything. Go back to what you know.

This is why teaching and training our children who God is in every area of life benefits them. They go back to what they know and they let what they know dictate how they feel and what they do.

Not let their feelings dictate what they think. Go back to the providence of God. And after the decision is made now we're going to move past the decision.

This is all moving has been moving towards the decision. You have this looming decision to make. Two points. I think you've got them. They don't matter but you need to make good ones.

[ 46 : 32 ] Right? Okay, the decision is made. And after the decision is made you look in the rear view mirror. There's a couple of telltale signs of a bad decision.

You know what they are. It resulted in foolishness, sin. It was obviously contrary to God's revealed will. It's a bad example. Terrible consequences.

Criticism. All of that will tell you that that was a bad decision. So how do you think about past decisions?

Good or bad? Well first of all there's maturity. You own it all. I already talked about this. It was your decision. You know I'll give you an example.

Somebody decides at a young age to live a carefree and an undisciplined life. What are the results of that? There's consequences to that. That means that down the line when you have no career, no family, no stability, no wealth, whatever it is you're all of a sudden wanting in your 50s or 60s, you're not a victim.

[ 47 : 47 ] You made decisions. You made definitive decisions that you wanted to live a certain life. Can the Lord override that? Of course he can.

And he does. But not always. But if he wills, he can override that decision. Another way to think about your past decisions is integrity where you swear to your own hurt.

You keep promises and commitments reflected in your decisions. I made a decision in my example to be home at 530 to take my little girl out on a date to dinner.

Then I swear to my own hurt and I don't change. I turn down the Dodger tickets and I go home and go out to dinner with my daughter. And I don't sit there and stare at my phone watching the Dodger game the whole time thinking about what might have been.

we make good decisions. We follow through on our decisions. We tell young people all the time in premarital that in the process of getting married you're making a decision of who it is you're going to love and then you love the one you chose the rest of your life.

[ 49 : 02 ] When you look back at your decisions, the decision to get married, that's how you respond to that decision no matter how you made that decision, how you got to that decision, that decision has consequences and one of the consequences is it makes demands on you.

When you decide to have children, you cannot ever look back and say, well, that was a mistake, can you? They're hungry. They need protection. You love them, you lead them, you teach them.

Ecclesiastes 5, I know I've referenced this already, let me read verse 6, do not let your speech cause you to sin, in other words, make commitments, make decisions, do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake.

Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness, rather fear God. There is a juxtaposition here or a distinction of those who look back on commitments that they made, decisions that they made, and say it was a mistake, those are people who don't fear God.

Why? Because you're questioning the providence of God. Humility. Wisdom is gained by learning from mistakes.

[ 50 : 29 ] You look in the rear view mirror and you see clearly some bad mistakes and a bad process in making mistakes. mistakes. If your name is Jonah and you went to Tarshish instead of Nineveh, it's legitimate to look back at that decision and in humility say, that was a bad decision.

I was wrong. And wisdom is gained by that. I wonder if Jonah ever did that again. If you don't ever recognize or acknowledge mistakes, you won't learn from them.

And that's true of you and I and it's true of our kids. Our children need to learn that. They will make mistakes and they are for their benefit to learn from them.

Proverbs 1.7 says, fools despise wisdom and instruction. That instruction comes sometimes from making bad decisions. Proverbs 12.15 says, the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

And that counsel, as it goes on in that passage, is the word of God, accountability, and experience. So, in conclusion, can you make bad decisions?

[ 51 : 47 ] Yes. We established that at the beginning. Do those decisions, or any decisions, surprise or alter God's plan? Praise the Lord, the answer is no.

Jonah. Think about Jonah. Did Jonah make a bad decision? We already established he did. What do we know about the rest of Jonah? Well, we know about Jonah's bad decision, don't we?

So, God used Jonah's bad decision as an education point for all of us who have come for hundreds and thousands of years after Jonah to learn about Jonah's foolishness so that we might learn.

By the way, God intervened, didn't he? He changed Jonah's decision in the form of a whale. Jonah spent a few days in the belly of a whale.

And what did God do with Jonah? He sent him to where he wanted him to go in the first place, didn't he? God's will, his process, is never thwarted. It just took a detour.

[ 52 : 58 ] Jonah was allowed to repent and obey and that big fish was the grace of God. And you and I probably aren't going to end up in the belly of a whale, but we often make a bad decision and God does what he needs to do to reverse that bad decision and to accomplish his purposes and his will.

Why? Because that is always what happens. Which is why the first point is your decision doesn't matter. And the second point is make good decisions.

I mentioned the thief on the cross as an example of a bad decision. We all know about the thieves, don't we? We know about them. We know about their bad decision.

Why? Because that was preserved by the Holy Spirit in Scripture for our benefit and for the glory of God. And by the way, we're going to meet one of those thieves in heaven.

He made a series of bad decisions that put him on a cross and put him next to the Savior of the world who he mocked.

[ 54 : 04 ] And even after that last bad decision, Jesus Christ reached down, touched his soul, and turned his heart from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

And he died on the cross with Jesus. And we'll meet him in heaven. Did he make bad decisions? Really? To get put on a cross next to Jesus Christ.

I don't think there was a bad decision. Would you want that for your son? You don't want your son going to the death chamber because of his life of crime.

Can God redeem a lifetime of bad decision after bad decision after bad decision after bad decision? There's a thief in heaven who will testify to us when we get there.

Yeah, God can redeem bad decisions. God's will is never thwarted. It's never diverted. We know about Noah's neighbors. We know about their bad decisions.

[ 55 : 07 ] Did it turn out okay for them? It didn't. But we all know about them, don't we? And their history of bad decisions and the consequences of their bad decision put on display the holy judgment of God for our benefit so that we would not be like Noah's neighbors.

How do I know that? Because I read you in Matthew where Jesus Christ said don't be like Noah's neighbors. Bad decision after bad decision after bad decision were those bad decisions redeemed by a holy God?

God, they were for his purposes and for his glory, his will. King David, what a series of bad decisions.

I walked through those with you. Why did he do that? Because he's a sinner. And did he make bad decisions?

He made bad decisions. Did they matter? No. You know why? Because God reached down and redeemed David.

[ 56 : 22 ] And David is recorded in the rest of the Old Testament. He is the example of what confession and repentance looks like. You can read it in Psalm 32, Psalm 51.

You can read the consequences and the judgment of God in the life of David in 2 Samuel chapter 12. It's stunning. How David expresses in Psalm 32 the love and the forgiveness and the grace of God in his life.

God redeemed all those bad decisions. And in 2 Samuel 12 is the context of Psalm 32 of God spanking David hard for the rest of his life.

Did he thwart God's purposes? Not at all. Not in the least. God accomplished in the life of David what he wanted and he preserved for all of us the example of what really bad decisions look like and how God can redeem even those.

I mentioned Pharaoh. We're going to talk about Pharaoh tomorrow night in some detail. But Romans 9.17 quoting Exodus 9.16 says this, for the scripture says to Pharaoh, Pharaoh made a lot of bad decisions.

[ 57:50 ] Ten of them recorded right in a row. He hardened his heart. He hardened his heart. He hardened his heart. He hardened his heart. And God says in all of that, even in those decisions you accomplished my purpose, my sovereign will because you're demonstrating my power in you.

That's an amazing statement. By Pharaoh hardening his heart and rejecting God, he was demonstrating God's power in Pharaoh and that God's name would be proclaimed through the whole earth because of Pharaoh and all of his bad decisions.

We all know about him. So all of this brings us back to the two polar truths of decision making. I won't say him because I've already said him enough.

You got it. You need to remember both of those points. Both of those points are true. Both of those are in the Bible and families need to live in the reality of both of those.

That God does not answer to us. We answer to him. And he tells us that we cannot thwart his will and we should thank God for that.

[ 59 : 09 ] But he also tells us we need to make decisions in a way that honors him and that result in glory to him. So how do you reconcile this?

There is a decision point. And as you roll into a decision, I think you need to focus on the second point. Make good decisions.

After the decision is made, I think we should focus on the first point. your decisions don't matter. And all of the regrets and the guilt and the I wonder what might have been gets washed away as you look in the rear of your mirror at decisions that you've made.

Whether it's who to marry, what college to go to, or what to wear this morning. And you realize there are no regrets. There might be some things to learn, but that decision didn't matter.

where I am today is not because I made a good decision and it's not because I made a bad decision. Where I am today is because this is exactly where God put me.

[ 60 : 17 ] And the circumstances of where I am are because this is what God has for me, whether it's good or it's, in my perspective, difficult, or bad.

1 Corinthians 15.10, and I'll end with this, says, by the grace of God I am what I am. And his grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

There is two truths in there. I labor, and by the grace of God I am what I am. We need to work hard. to make good decisions.

And when we look back at decisions, we need to realize I am what I am. I am where I am. By the grace and the design of a holy, provident, sovereign God.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for your providence. Thank you for your sovereignty. Thank you for the knowledge of you, which helps us to look back at decisions and understand that your will is done, that you are doing exactly in our life what you want to do, what you have designed to do.

[ 61 : 38 ] And we may not understand it, but we embrace it, and we know that it is for your purposes, for our good, and for your glory. Lord, help us to live in the reality that our decisions don't matter, and help us to live in the obedience of, but we do need to make good decisions, that we need to honor you in the process of making decisions, that we need to be an example to our children, and to those who would watch us, if someone who carefully, thoughtfully, biblically considers the decisions in front of us, to your praise and glory, and we pray this in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.