

How Do I Make Decisions?

(#2 in the series, "Faith and Life Questions")

Proverbs 3: 5-8

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Familiar Words: The scripture I have chosen today is very familiar. You may even be able to recite it by heart. However, sometimes that familiarity can have us not take these words seriously. Certainly, we know we are loved by God as revealed through the life, death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ. That gives us great hope and comfort! But in the midst of all the daily distractions, how does one put that knowledge into practice? How do we allow God into our lives to advise us on our daily journey?

Today as part of our sermon series, 'Faith and Life Questions', we are addressing the question: "How do I make decisions?" Life is full of decisions. What are the principles you use to decide? First of all, I believe most of us want our decisions to be wise decisions. The bible gives us words of wisdom to guide us in our decision making. Proverbs 3: 5-6 helps us learn to make sound decisions. ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your path."***

There is a story about a woman driving through the mountains west of Denver when she encountered a snowstorm. She was completely lost and looked ahead and saw a snowplow. She decided to follow it and keep as close behind it as possible while it removed snow from the road. At times, the blowing snow almost cut off her view, but her faithful guide kept leading the way. After some time the snow plow stopped and the driver of the plow got out and asked the lady where she was going. The lady answered that she was on her way to Denver. The driver told her that she will never get there following him because he was plowing a parking lot! It is important that we are on the right road in order to get to our destination. It is also important that we follow the one who desires to give direction to our lives.

We may wish to follow God's direction, but he usually does not give us more than a few steps ahead. God lights our path: In Psalm 119: 105 we read, ***"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."*** I believe that one reason God does not light our entire future, is that he wants us to trust him every step along the way. We do not need to be 100% sure before we make a decision. If we want everything perfectly in place before we make decisions, we will miss out on life's joys and opportunities. Certainly, it is important that we do our research and plan our steps. However, our trust in God helps us in the planning of those steps, and allows us to put the uncertainty in God's hands.

The word 'trust' in the Hebrew language means 'to lean one's whole body' or 'to rest one's full weight'. We are to trust in God who never changes and can be counted on. Proverbs 29; 25 says it well, ***"the fear of others lays a snare, but the one who trusts in the Lord is secure."*** Our Lord wants us to trust him with all our heart, not just a part of it. Too often we feel unable to make decisions, because we are fearful of the outcome. I believe there is healthy fear which drives us to do due diligence in preparation before we make decisions.

God gives us the gift to discern with our minds. God also provides us with others of whom we can ask for advice. The fact of the matter is that we are not complete on our own and need God and others to guide our steps.

Every one of us did not choose when we would be born or what country we would be born in. We did not choose our parents, how we were raised, our siblings, etc. It is a miracle actually that we exist! It is a miracle that we have the gift of life. We did not make any of this happen by our own decision or our own power. The one who made us knows us completely (Psalm 139: 1-3) ***'O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path, and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.'*** Since God knows us more than we know ourselves, it follows that we seek him for direction. We can trust him because his love is steadfast – it never fails from generation to generation (Psalm 100:5).

Difficult decisions: Today we have the baptism of little Esther Park. Esther is a name in the Bible. We read of Esther in the book of Esther, where she had to make a big decision to help save her people, the Israelites, from being murdered. What she was deciding to do would amount to Esther asking the king to change his plans. There was a real chance that she would be killed if she went through with her decision. She decided with faith in God's direction that it was the right thing to do even if it meant her life. Sometimes, for the advancement of God's Kingdom, we need to make difficult decisions which may cost us our lives. In discerning direction for our lives, it is very important to remember that we actually do not belong to ourselves, we belong to God. In belonging to God it means that we are not our own, and we do not walk alone in daily life. We are known by God and belong to God, and thus his steadfast love will never let us go – not even in death! We have the freedom to choose to walk away and make decisions and live life on our own, but God will always remain faithful and steadfast in his love towards you. Esther's parents the Rev. John and Grace Park desire to nurture Esther to trust in God and to have the knowledge that she belongs to God.

Christian author Max Lucado in his book, "Just Like Jesus" writes about a man by the name of Frank Lauback who made a decision to live with a distinct awareness of God every day. In his daily journal, Lauback asked whether one could live in contact with God all the time. Can we do his will and think his thoughts all the time? Frank said this, "I choose to make the rest of my life an experiment in answering that question".

Are you willing to take on that same experiment? Are there areas of your life where you have not allowed God to access? I wonder what would happen to our church if each one of us would plunge ourselves into this. It would not result in all of us arriving at that destination in one week. But, just the fact that each of us would desire to pray and allow God in would already bring noticeable transformation to the life and ministry of our congregation. We would be caught up in God's beauty and we would be more ourselves as God created us to be.

Encourage one another to ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your path."*** Lean on him! Make these familiar words of scripture your guiding words! Amen.