

Choices, choices, choices which one will I choose

Just one trip to the grocery store for example and you find that all of a sudden you are confronted with a multitude of choices. Take soups, cereals, or salad dressings for instance. Just how many of them can one person choose at any given time? We couldn't afford to buy them all.

Well the idea of choices is one that fills our life, and success is largely a matter of making wise decisions. Frank Borham said, "We make our decisions and then our decisions make us." The problem is with every decision there is an element of risk -- "Did I do the right thing? ... Did I make the right choice? ... Was it the wise thing to do?"

Maybe you have a dream to begin a business, to start a new career, to go back to school and get a degree, to raise your kids, to begin a ministry but you're afraid to start on it. Is there any way to make successful decisions and reduce the level of risk involved? The answer is yes and so today lets look at eight general principles, or steps from the book of Proverbs on how to make successful decisions and choices.

I. STEP ONE: PRAY FOR GUIDANCE

Proverbs 28:26 (Living Bible) *"A man is foolish to trust himself. But those who use God's wisdom are safe."* Don't just depend on your own opinion. Proverbs 2:6 reminds us that *"It is the Lord who gives wisdom."*

In any successful decision making we start by getting God's perspective. How does He see it? The Bible says, *There's a way that seems right to us but it messes us up; it ends in death.* How many of you have ever had an intuition about something or someone and it was wrong?

We don't need to rely on our intuition but we can ask God for His insight and also his oversight. **Ask:** What is Your will in this thing I am thinking about doing? James says in 1:5 that, *"If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask God"* and he also says later on in 4:2 that, *"You have not because you ask not."* **A key thought** for this section is, It is better to ask the Lord to direct your paths than to correct your mistakes.

II. STEP TWO: GET THE FACTS

Proverbs 13:16 *Wise people think before they act; fools don't and even brag about it!* Don't make a decision out of ignorance. Find out all you can to help you decide. **A key here is:** Don't assume that what people say is always true. Do your own homework.

Proverbs 18:13 *"What a shame -- how stupid -- to decide before knowing the facts!"* Think before you act.

One of the major causes of small business failure is uneducated enthusiasm. **Example:** I know of a couple who got a settlement from the RR for an injury and decided they wanted to start a craft shop in the village close to where we lived. They picked a bad location, did not think of the financial ramifications, did not think about help and before you know it they were closed.

What's the solution so as to avoid a similar situation in our lives? Proverbs 23:23 *"Get the facts at any price"* **Here is the key phrase** for this section - When in doubt, check it out.

III. STEP THREE: ASK FOR ADVICE

Talk to somebody who's already taken the risk. Proverbs 24:6 says, *don't go to war without wise guidance; victory depends on having many counselors.* In other words. *"The more advice you get, the more likely you are to win."*

Thought: Someone has observed that it's wise to learn from experience. But it is wiser to learn from the experience of others because life is too short to learn everything by trial and error. So get all the advice you can and you will succeed.

Here is a tip for your success in this area: Learn to ask questions. We can learn from anybody if we just know the right questions to ask. Proverbs 20:5 *Though good advice lies deep within a person's heart, the wise will draw it out.*

We can learn from anybody if we learn to draw their wisdom out of them and we do that by learning to ask questions. Proverbs 18:15 *"The intelligent man is always open to new ideas. In fact, he looks for them!"* Our hang up is pride and we don't want to ask questions because we don't want to appear ignorant.

But it's better to appear dumb than to make dumb mistakes so that everybody really does know we weren't the sharpest pencil in the box. It's much better to ask and find out than to make mistakes on our own and wish you'd never done it.

A key thought for this section might be this: To err is human, but when the eraser wears out before the pencil, you're overdoing it and we can save a lot of eraser use by asking for some advice before using the pencil.

IV. STEP FOUR: SET YOUR GOAL

Proverbs 17:24 (Good News) *"An intelligent man aims at wise actions, but a fool starts off in many directions."* **Thought:** You cannot chase two rabbits at the same time. You've got to select one or the other.

In life, if we want to be a success we have to make definite choices because we don't have time for everything. Make sure we have a clear cut purpose. Ask ourselves: What is my target? If we're going to make a decision, we've got to know what we're reaching, grasping, or aiming for. *Remember "An intelligent person aims at wise actions but a fool starts off in many directions."*

So thus far we have seen these steps in helping us make successful decisions or choices. We need to pray for guidance, get the facts, ask for advice, set your goals now

V. STEP FIVE IS : COUNT THE COST

If we're making a decision or choice this week we need to ask our self these three questions to help us make a successful choice:

- 1 . Is it necessary? Is there any other way I can reach my goal without having to make this decision? Is this risk necessary?
- 2 . What will it cost? Everything worthwhile in life costs. It costs money, it costs time, it costs energy, it costs our reputation.
- 3 . Is it worth it? Is the risk worth it? Is the cause worth the cost? Will the potential profit be greater than the risk involved?

Proverbs 20:25 *"It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows."*

Thought: It has been said this way: It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly, to decide without deliberating, to promise without pondering. **The key point is:** It is always easier to get into something than it is to get out so be sure to count the cost! In other words, is this risk necessary for be to be successful.

The second area to consider in making a wise decision is **Time**. Isn't it true that it's always easier to fill your schedule than it is to fulfill your schedule.

Jesus told a couple of parables in Luke. *He said no wise builder goes out and starts to build a building, a tower, without first budgeting and seeing how much it's going to cost. Can I complete this thing? Can I pay for it? Secondly he said No king goes to war without counting his soldiers.*

Jesus is simply saying, consider your commitment carefully as you make your choice. A **key thought here** is if you want to make successful decisions, never make a major decision when you're tired or depressed.

We ought to make our important and hopefully successful decisions in life when we feel our best. Vince Lombardi once said, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us." When we are tired we seldom make successful decisions.

VI . STEP SIX: PLAN FOR PROBLEMS

Proverbs 20:18 (GN) *"Don't go charging into a battle without a plan."* Murphy's Law says: If anything can go wrong, it will, count on it!

Proverbs 22:3 *"A sensible man watches for problems ahead and prepares to meet them. The simpleton never looks and suffers the consequences."*

Ask yourself as you prepare to make what you hope to be a wise choice or decision: What can go wrong? What will happen if it does? That's not being negative, it's being sensible. What can go wrong and what will happen if it does? So be sensible and plan for problems ahead of time in your decision making.

VII . STEP SEVEN: FACE YOUR FEARS

One of the purposes of fear is a warning light to keep us from doing something stupid or making decisions or choices that are not in our best interest. **Thought:** The only person who is never afraid is a fool. He's lost touch with reality.

The (Living Bible) *"A fool plunges in with great confidence."* And when he does he does not make wise or successful decisions. Mark Twain once said, "Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is moving ahead in spite of your fear." Captain Eddie Rickenbacker said, "Courage is when you do what you're afraid to do."

If you allow fear to keep you from making a decision you will have allowed it to defeat you and you might not get another chance to make a wise decision. If you use fear wisely you will make better choices on your way to victory

So thus far we have seen that to make successful decisions we need to Pray about it. Get the facts. Ask for advice. Set your goals. Count the cost. Plan for problems. Face our fears. Finally,

VIII. STEP EIGHT IS: GO FOR IT!

There comes a point of decision in this choosing process when you must stop talking, praying, and thinking and start acting. It's a point of commitment.

It's the time when you finally put one box of cereal, or a jar of dressing in the grocery cart and then go off to the next need. Proverbs 16:3 *"Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed."* Once you've decided it's worth the risk and a wise choice then, go for it!

Think of Peter walking on the water. Jesus says to Peter, "Come to me!" He hops out of the boat and starts walking across the water. He's doing fine till all of a sudden he looks at his circumstances and starts sinking.

What we have our eyes on determines whether we make it or not! **The point of the story is this:** If you want to walk on the water you've got to get out of the boat. You must make a conscious choice!!

Question: How many here remember the names of the 12 spies that went to look over the promised land? Most of us will remember just 2 Joshua and Caleb.

The point is nobody remembers the people who didn't want to risk. We only remember the people in life who go for it. Those who make a choice based on the foregoing steps and then they go for it. Faith is the bottom line in the Christian life and the making of decisions and choices. If we're not taking any risks then my faith is useless.

But there is a difference between faith and foolishness when it comes to choices. Foolishness just jumps in while faith does its homework by following these first seven steps, and then getting out of the boat.

What choices or decisions do you have facing you? Is it a decision or choice about some job or other dream that seems to just hang around in your thoughts?

Well God may be moving you to something greater in your life and you will need to make a choice and to make wise choices or decisions. So just

Set your goal, Count the cost, plan for problems, get some counsel, face your fears and then go for it.

Notice: Life's most important decision however is, What am I going to do with Jesus Christ? Many people delay this decision but remember, Not to decide for is to decide against!

So let's run through the steps as it applies to the lost

- **First**, pray for guidance.

God do you want me to get saved today? His answer is in II Peter 3:9 which says *The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for*

your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent. The answer is yes he wants you to be changed today.

- **Second**, get the facts. The facts are this

*You can be changed from death to life free of charge Ephesians. 2:8,9 says *God saved you (or changed you) by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.* The other fact is this found in I John 5:12 *So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life.**

So if you are here and are confused about your status in life you just need to realize that if you have never received God's son Jesus you still abide in death

- **Thirdly** Ask for advice

What would you advise anyone here who has not received Christ? I would imagine your advice would be do it today?

- **Fourthly** Set your goal

To help you let me give you a passage to remember II Corinthians 6:2 says *For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, God is ready to help you right now. Today is the day of salvation.*

- **Fifthly** Count the cost

The simplest way to count the cost, is to count the cost if you don't make this decision.

Thought: Someone has noted: How tragic that people pay a high price for being lost when salvation is free. The cost dear one is heaven and life or hell and eternal punishment, the choice is yours.

- **Sixthly** Plan for problems

If you accept Christ today you will immediately have an active and avowed enemy Satan who will do all within his power to trip you up, and discourage you,

Thought: You have had this enemy but he has mainly been inactive because he doesn't bother the dead. However with movement on your part towards Christ and life, you will jerk his chain and wake him up so be ready

- **Seventh** Face your fears

True, you might lose friends or have some major changes take place in your life but listen to this verse as it speaks to your fears. Matthew 10:29 says *"Don't be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

- **Finally** Go for it.

Pray something like this: "Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

And if you are here and you already know Christ but you still have some choices to make about what you are going to do with your life, you can follow the same steps we just looked at for a person who is lost. Don't put off making exciting choices because of fear but by following some simple guidelines you can step from defeat into the light of victory, hope, joy and success.