

Forward: Claiming the Life God Gave You
A Story of Decisions
Joshua 9:1-27

Introduction: In trying to figure out a way to get this sermon started, I had a little fun researching the worst decisions made in history. Here's three examples of bad decisions you would be hard pressed to not find on a list:

- (1) After surviving almost ten years of being under siege from the Greek Army, Troy had almost defeated them. However, seeing what they believed to be the Greek army in retreat, they gladly accepted the gift of a massive model horse. They energetically rolled the horse into their city not realizing a bunch of Greek soldiers were hiding inside of it. That night, presumably while the city celebrated its perceived victory, the soldiers snuck out and opened the gates for the Greek army who had secretly returned to walk right in and conquer the city!
- (2) The French felt completely confident that their massively expensive modern trench warfare system known as the Maginot Line, which included airconditioned underground barracks, would deter the Germans from using the historical path of invading France. They wanted to force Germany to have to invade them through Belgium, which Germany confidently did on 10 May 1940. By 14 June 1940, Germany marched into Paris with no opposition. The decision to invest their nations resources and military strategy into the Maginot Line was a total failure of epic proportion.
- (3) Finally, in the 1950's, Chairman Moa of China proclaimed the "Great Leap Forward," that doubled down on communistic principles, was going to turn China into a modern economic powerhouse. Moa's Leap Forward ended up being a leap the wrong direction that not only caused a massive economic recession, but also led to as many as 55 million Chinese citizens starving to death!

However, if I wanted to research bad decisions, all I really needed to do was look at my own history. Beginning with Adam and Eve, one of the common denominators of humanity is our ability to make bad decisions. We all have a testimony of them, and generally it's for the same reasons. Sometimes our bad decisions are rooted in fear and insecurity which typically results in "paralysis by analysis." The bad decision in this scenario ends up being the unwillingness to make a decision which is of itself a decision.

At the other end of the spectrum of bad decisions are those that result in being "extinct by instinct." I suspect more of us have a much longer list of bad decisions that resulted from this process than we do the other! Instead of taking the time to wisely analyze a decision or even seek the Lord, we jump into something with complete trust in our instinct. Our decisions feel right until we find ourselves running into a brick wall or falling off a cliff!

In the Bible we see both of these decisions demonstrating themselves in the life of Israel. When the people of Israel first arrived at the edge of The Promised Land their spies refused

to trust God and invade the land He had given them. They over analyzed what they had seen in Canaan to the point they justified their fear instead of their faith.

However, more than forty years later, we find a story in the Bible that highlights the other extreme of bad decision making. Because of God's commitment to raise them up as a nation, their "extinct by instinct" decision making process in Joshua 9 didn't result in them being destroyed, but, as we will talk about in greater depth later in our study of Joshua, it did set up a pattern of decision making that had significant long-term consequences. As one commentary noted on this chapter,

"In the time of the Judges, Israel so entangled itself with covenants of peace with the condemned nations, violating the *hērem*, that the Lord no longer drove out the Canaanites (Jdg. 2:1-5)."¹

So, let's first walk through Joshua 9 and look at the three different kinds of decisions that were made in it. After that, I want to take a few minutes to give you a Biblical framework for making Godly and wise decisions that are not entrapped by a "paralysis of analysis" nor end up with us getting labeled "extinct by instinct."

Proposition: There are 3 different kinds of decisions in Joshua 9.

The first kind of decision in Joshua 9 was made by the Gibeonites.

(1) The Gibeonites made a desperate decision out of self-preservation. (9:1-13)

- A. To set the stage, word has traveled that Israel completely destroyed Jericho and all its inhabitants (Joshua 6), and then, after suffering a defeat at Ai (Joshua 7), they came back and killed all its inhabitants and completely destroyed it as well (Joshua 8). At Ai they even hung the King from a tree, then later that afternoon took his body off the tree, threw it where the gates of Ai used to be, and then piled a heap of stones on top of him as a statement for what they planned on doing to every other King in Canaan! The point is, so far, Israel has fought two cities on the west side of Jordan and the results were that everybody in the city died (minus Rahab and her family.). Here's what happened next,
- B. **1 As soon as all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, heard of this, 2 they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel. 3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4 they on their part acted with cunning and went and made ready provisions and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, 5 with worn-out,**

¹ Waltke, B. K. (1994). [Joshua](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 246). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes. And all their provisions were dry and crumbly. 6 And they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us." 7 But the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you live among us; then how can we make a covenant with you?" 8 They said to Joshua, "We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who are you? And where do you come from?" 9 They said to him, "From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God. For we have heard a report of him, and all that he did in Egypt, 10 and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon the king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth. 11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants. Come now, make a covenant with us.'" 12 Here is our bread. It was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for the journey on the day we set out to come to you, but now, behold, it is dry and crumbly. 13 These wineskins were new when we filled them, and behold, they have burst. And these garments and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey."

1. Gibeon was "Located about five miles away from Ai (presuming Ai is et-Tell; see 7:2 and note). Gibeon would eventually be folded into Benjamin (18:25–28) and be named a Levitical city (21:17; compare Lev 25:32–33)."²
2. "Gibeon, known to archaeologists as *Al Jib*, is 8 miles north of Jerusalem and very close to Ai and Bethel. It was a very old city, having been occupied almost continuously from 3100 B.C. to A.D. 325."³
3. "They have heard a report of the Lord's actions in Egypt and in dealing with the Amorite kings, and now they declare that they have travelled to Gilgal '**because of the name of the Lord your God**' (9:9). Here they employ the name 'Yahweh', which is the personal, covenantal name that the Lord had revealed to his own people. The inhabitants of Jericho had heard the same reports as the Gibeonites, but they had reacted differently."⁴
4. "Interestingly, however, they made no mention of Israel's recent victories over Jericho and Ai because if they had come from a far country they would not have heard of these recent battles."⁵

² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Jos 9:3). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

³ Barber, C. J. (2006). *Joshua: A Devotional Exposition* (pp. 103–104). Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

⁴ Currid, J. D. (2011). *Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained* (pp. 119–121). Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books.

⁵ Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Joshua*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 348–349). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- C. So, all the major Kingdoms in the southern part of Canaan decided their best chance of survival was to come together as one army against Israel. They were normally rivals with one another, but nothing brings people together faster than a common enemy, especially when that enemy has not only demonstrated the intention to kill you, but also the ability!
- D. Now, the Gibeonites, who were interestingly not led by a King as the other people of Canaan were, but rather by elders⁶, believed the strategy of the Kings was going to fail. Therefore, the leaders of the Gibeonites apparently led all the other Kings to believe they were playing along with the alliance, while they secretly sent an envoy to the Israelites to trick them into making a covenant of peace with them on behalf of their people. That of itself was a brilliant move to survive! Gibeon clearly operated under two ancient values, “all’s fair in love and war” and “live to fight another day,” but the real wisdom of their decision comes out much more in the details of their plan.
- E. The Gibeonites rightly concluded that they needed to trick Israel into making this covenant. We can’t be sure how they made this decision, however, after Jericho and Ai, they may have simply deduced that the Israelites planned on killing every person in Canaan and therefore if they wanted to survive, they needed to convince them they weren’t from Canaan. As sensible as that sounds, it would have to be more than that. They would have had to have known something else about the Israelites that would have led them to believe the Israelites wouldn’t go back on their word once they realized where they actually lived. It’s not as if the Gibeonites are a tiny and unnoticeable people group. As you will see in a minute, they populated and controlled more than one city in Canaan.
- F. Therefore, I believe the Gibeonites would have likely sent spies into Israel just as Israel had done with Jericho. If they did this after Israel destroyed Ai, they would have likely been there when Joshua gathered all the people together and taught them the Law. In Joshua 8 we read,
 - 1. **34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them. (Joshua 8:34-35)**
 - 2. In that reading the spies would have heard how the Israelites were required by God to keep an oath. From the book of Numbers, they would have heard,

⁶ Barber, C. J. (2006). *Joshua: A Devotional Exposition* (pp. 101–103). Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

3. **2 If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. (Numbers 30:2)**
4. In addition, the spies would have also heard about a very specific command to the Israelites relating to nations they waged war against outside of the Promised Land. From the Book of Deuteronomy, they would have heard,
5. **10 "When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. 11 And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. 12 But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. 13 And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword, 14 but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. 15 Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. 16 But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17 but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, 18 that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 20:10-18)**
6. In addition, it's not a farfetched idea at all to believe the Gibeonite spies would have also learned why the Israelites lost their first battle at Ai; that is, that because a man named Achan had disobeyed Yahweh's instructions, the entire nation suffered a loss. As such, they would have gone back with massive confidence in the idea that if they could convince the Israelites they were a foreign nation, they could likely get them to form a covenant of peace with them that they then couldn't go back on because their God requires them to keep their vows!
7. “Apparently the Gibeonites had become aware of the provisions in the Mosaic Law permitting Israel to make peace with cities that were at a considerable distance, but requiring them to wipe out completely the cities of the seven nearby Canaanite nations (Deut. 20:10-18; 7:1-2).”⁷

The second kind of decision in Joshua 9 was made by Joshua and the leaders of Israel.

⁷ Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Joshua*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 348). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**(2) Joshua and the leaders of Israel made a careless decision out of self-reliance.
(9:14-15)**

- A. **14 So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the LORD. 15 And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.**
- B. On the surface, nothing Joshua did was wrong, that is, if the Gibeonites were actually a foreign people looking to make an alliance with Israel. But the Gibeonite envoy lied about who they were, therefore, even though they didn't know it yet, Joshua and the tribal leaders of Israel have sworn to do something that God specifically told them not to do! They were commanded by God to kill everybody in Canaan!
- C. How did this happen? How could Joshua and the leaders of Israel fall for this trick? J. D. Currid noted,
- D. **"The Israelites are acting on the physical evidence before them rather than on the word of the Lord. Self-reliance is the reason that Israel is duped."⁸**
- E. The text implies, if they would have sought God, He would have gave them a word, but Joshua 9:14 tells us they never sought God's counsel! To make matters worse for Joshua, it's not as if God's counsel wasn't readily available in a personal way. God had been highly engaged with Joshua. Therefore, the text implies that if Joshua would have asked God for direction concerning the Gibeonite proposal, God would have revealed to Joshua that he was being tricked!
- F. So here stands Joshua, he's in the middle of a war that would lead people to do or say anything to survive, but he never stopped to analyze the story of these strangers. Before making a covenantal alliance with another nation, he never dug beyond what was right in front of them, and more importantly, he never sought God. He and the rest of the leaders of Israel jumped into a covenant with a people they knew nothing about, solely based on their outward appearance, some busted wineskins, and some old bread! If that's not the definition of a careless decision, then I don't know what is! They let convenience and flattery lead them into doing something God told them not to do. Remember, in Joshua 1 God told him to be careful to obey the law. Meaning he not only needed to make sure he learned it, but he also needed to pay careful attention to how he implemented it!
- G. This all led to a third kind of decision that was required by both Gibeon and Israel.

⁸ Currid, J. D. (2011). *Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained* (pp. 121–122). Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books.

The third kind of decision is an honorable one ...

(3) Both Israel and Gibeon made the honorable decision to keep their word. (9:16-27)

- A. As I already stated, the Gibeonites had to have known that Israel eventually would figure out they had been duped! It only took three days after the covenant was formalized. The book of Joshua records,
- B. **16 At the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, they heard that they were their neighbors and that they lived among them. 17 And the people of Israel set out and reached their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. 18 But the people of Israel did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders.**
 - 1. I'm not trying to diminish the fact that the Israelites were bound by the Law of God to keep whatever oath they made in His name, but it can't be missed that the leaders of Israel not only kept their word with Gibeon, but that they did it knowing the consequence to their reputation as leaders among the Jewish people. For the first time in Joshua's leadership of Israel, the people are questioning his leadership. After the loss in Ai nobody would have doubted Joshua because there's no way Joshua, nor any of the other leaders, could have possibly known what Achan did. Ai was squarely on Achan. However, what just happened with the Gibeonites was squarely on Joshua and the leaders. Although done in ignorance, the people still had to wonder if God's hand would turn against them for disobeying the instructions to kill all the Canaanites! The disaster of the first battle of Ai was because ONE PERSON didn't follow the instructions of *cherem*, but this time the entire leadership team of Israel committed the entire nation to not follow it!
 - 2. "9:18 The people were likely uneasy that this violation of the *cherem* command would result in retaliation from Yahweh, or perhaps withdrawal of His help."⁹
 - 3. However, even though it hurt their reputation, Joshua and his leadership team still did the right thing and kept their word. But it should also be noted that the Gibeonites kept their word as well, even though it cost them! Look at what Joshua records,

⁹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Jos 9:17–18). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

C. **19 But all the leaders said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them. 20 This we will do to them: let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them." 21And the leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became cutters of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation, just as the leaders had said of them. 22 Joshua summoned them, and he said to them, "Why did you deceive us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you dwell among us? 23 Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall never be anything but servants, cutters of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God." 24 They answered Joshua, "Because it was told to your servants for a certainty that the LORD your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you--so we feared greatly for our lives because of you and did this thing. 25 And now, behold, we are in your hand. Whatever seems good and right in your sight to do to us, do it." 26 So he did this to them and delivered them out of the hand of the people of Israel, and they did not kill them. 27 But Joshua made them that day cutters of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place that he should choose.**

D. There are four things I want to make sure you don't miss here.

1. First, Joshua believed it was more important to follow the law concerning an oath they made in the Lord's name, than it was to follow the law concerning God's instructions on what they were to do to the people of Canaan.
 - a. He would rather risk God's discipline over keeping the vow he made with the Gibeonites than he would to experience God's discipline for breaking a vow he made in God's name; meaning Joshua attached the integrity and trustworthiness of God to the vow! This is massively important for us to understand.
 - b. When we, as followers of Jesus, break our vows, we are testifying that God's children can't be trusted, and thus God can't be trusted either. Our mission as God's people is to proclaim His glory and we fundamentally can't do that if our word can't be trusted.
 - c. This is why your credit history matters. Your credit history is a testimony of your word. When you spent Visa or Master Card's money, you made a promise to pay it back. When you borrowed money from Bank of America or General Motors you promised to pay it back. When you signed that rental agreement, you promised to pay it. When we don't do what we say we were going to do, then we preach to the world God's children can't be trusted and thus God can't be trusted. Our word matters because it testifies of the trustworthiness of the one we say has fashioned and shaped us! Its why Solomon wrote,

- d. “**Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.**” (**Proverbs 12:22**)
 - e. Its why Paul said, “**21 for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.**” (**2 Corinthians 8:21**)
 - f. “The law of Moses clearly allows an oath to be recalled if it is taken rashly or impulsively (Lev. 5:4–6). However, oaths that are employed as part of a covenant appear to be of a different class or order, and they must be kept (see Gen. 26:26–31; 2 Sam. 21:7; Ezek. 16:59–60). And, so, Israel keeps the covenant—and that despite the grumblings of the people. Our wonder and puzzlement regarding Israel’s keeping the covenant with the Gibeonites are partially a reflection of ourselves and of our culture. The reality is that we often hold to a lax view of the given word and take a feeble stance on the truth. Israel is faithful to the covenant made with Gibeon even in its twisted and warped condition. Jesus tells the church that it is better not to make a vow than to fail to keep one that has been made (see Matt. 5:33–37). Even in the midst of our own foolishness, we are to live obediently and faithfully; we are to be true to our word.”¹⁰
2. Second, because Joshua knew he couldn’t go back on their vow of peace with the Gibeonites, they had to settle for less than what God had provided them. God had already given them victory, which included a land free of the Canaanite idolatrous worship that would constantly cause their downfall. The ripple effect of what Joshua and the leaders committed to do with the Gibeonites planted a seed of compromise that later in our study of Joshua surfaces in other places; a ripple effect that had generational consequences for the nation of Israel. Our sin and bad decisions not only communal in the present, but it also affects those who come after us!

Note: “So the very thing the Gibeonites hoped to attain they lost. They desperately wanted to remain free men; in the end they became slaves. But the curse became a blessing. It was on behalf of the Gibeonites that God worked a great miracle (cf. 10:10–14). Later the tabernacle was pitched at Gibeon (2 Chron. 1:3); still later some Gibeonites helped Nehemiah rebuild Jerusalem’s wall (Neh. 3:7). Such is the grace of God. He is still able to turn a curse into a blessing. Though it is usually true that the natural consequences of sin must run their course, the grace of God can not only forgive but also overrule mistakes and often bring blessings out of sins and failures.”¹¹

¹⁰ Currid, J. D. (2011). *Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained* (pp. 125–127). Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books.

¹¹ Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Joshua*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 349). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. Third, it needs to be noted that the Gibeonites never went back on their word! As far as we know, the only time anybody ever broke the covenant between Israel and the Gibeonites was 400 years later when ironically, the first King of Israel (Saul) did it. Later, David found out about this violation and reconciled it (2 Samuel 21). We will learn all about that when we do our study on 1st and 2nd Samuel. But the point I wanted to make here is that over that time span there were numerous opportunities for the Gibeonites to have sided with an enemy of Israel and attacked them, but they never did. The Gibeonites kept their word.

4. However, the fourth thing I want you to see is that although the text doesn't tell us it was a possibility for the Gibeonites, we do know Rahab was part of a city declared by God to be *cherem*, and as such, she and all her family would have been killed had she not repented of her faith in the gods of Jericho and swore her allegiance to Yahweh. The point I'm making is that the Gibeonites could have theoretically chosen this option as well, and in so doing been a part of the blessing of God to Israel instead of servants to Israel. They could have been welcomed into the nation of Israel just as Rahab was; instead of being condemned as slaves they could have been citizens. B.K. Waltke noted,

Note: "The exceptional diplomacy of Gibeon is presented against the background of the decision of other Canaanite confederacies to wage war against Israel (10:1–11:23). The Gibeonites risked peace, not war. Unfortunately, though they feared God, they did not opt for a third solution, full vassalage within God's covenant, as Rahab had done (see 2:8–14). Confronted with Christ and his gospel, people can likewise opt for one of these three postures: fight against him, peaceful co-existence without submission to him, or full membership in the new covenant through his blood and spiritual rebirth."¹²

So, with all that, what do we do when we face decisions in life? A few weeks ago, I joked about those who are trying to get God to tell them whether they should drink black coffee or coffee with cream. That's likely not the spiritual condition of most of those who associate with Venture church, or who listen to my sermons online. However, my guess is that our spiritual error in decision making tends to be more in line with what Joshua and the leaders of Israel did in Joshua 9. We aren't frozen in life by some sort of spiritual "analysis by paralysis," but we have all suffered from the consequences of walking in the process of becoming "extinct by instinct" because we never stopped to seek the Lord!

But how do we do that? What does it mean to seek the Lord about our decisions?

¹² Waltke, B. K. (1994). [Joshua](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 246). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

The following is a four-part Biblical framework for making wise and Godly decisions:

The first part of the framework is to ...

(1) Test the moral and ethical implications of your decision.

- A. **1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)**
- B. **13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)**
- C. **17 Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. (2 Peter 3:17)**
- D. On the surface this box was checked for Joshua and the leaders because they thought they were obeying The Law of Moses in making a covenant with the people who turned out to be the Gibeonites. Therefore, this is why this is only the first step of the framework and not the only step of the framework. If something doesn't line up with the moral and ethical principles of the Bible then we don't need to go further into the framework, however, if it does then we need to keep moving through it before we make a decision.

The second part of the Biblical framework to make wise and Godly decisions is to ...

(2) Identify your motives because that's where you're truly headed.

- A. No matter what you are telling yourself about the decision, your motives are the wind blowing the ship towards its destination.
- B. Listen to what God's Word says about our motives as it relates to making wise and Godly decisions,
 - 1. **3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)**
 - 2. **17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)**

3. **13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (James 3:13-17)**
- C. But here's the deal. The easiest person to lie to is ourselves. Therefore, we need God to open our eyes to the motive of our heart. Its why we read this in the Bible,
1. **2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. (Proverbs 21:2)**
 2. **12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)**
- D. We need the truth of His Word to be the measure of humility and love to truly see if that's what is actually leading us. We need to study God's Word and meditate on it, not to find an answer for whether or not we should take a new job, buy a new house, or go to a certain college; but rather so we can properly identify the motives that are driving us towards whatever decision we are thinking about making! Our motives are our destination!

The third part of the Biblical framework to make wise and Godly decisions is to ...

- (3) **Listen to the advice of others but evaluate it in the context of whose giving it.**
- A. There is a ton of this in the Proverbs but I'm just going to give you a quick sample of both principles. Solomon wanted his son to get as much counsel as possible, but he also wanted them to learn which counsel to consider and which counsel to avoid. He wrote,
 - B. **20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. (Proverbs 13:20)**

Note: Taking advice from wise people leads to wisdom but taking it from fools leads to a mess. Therefore, whoever surrounds himself with wise people will grow in wisdom but whoever surrounds himself with fools will find himself in the fruit of foolishness.

- C. **6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.**
(Proverbs 27:6)

Note: The advice of a true friend will help you, even if it hurts your feelings, but the advice of an enemy will destroy you even if it makes you feel better about yourself. The lesson then is to know where your advice is coming from!

- D. I'm not saying you can't get good advice from anybody, but the Bible makes it clear we better know who it is we are taking it from, that is, before we apply it, we better analyze it not only against the previous two principles, but also against who's giving it.

The fourth part of the Biblical framework to make wise and Godly decisions is to ...

(4) Ask God for direction but seek God to know Him.

- A. This postures us to be submitted to His will in the decision we need to make and more importantly in the posture of our life. The decisions of our life are contained in a life that's either submitted to God or to ourselves. Its why Solomon wrote,
- B. **5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)**
- C. Jesus said, "**31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**" (Matthew 6:31-34)
- D. Seek first the Kingdom of God means to seek to know Him first! We spend our lives seeking answers to the decisions we need to make instead of seeking Him as our answer. A life of faith starts with the belief that God is in control and loves us, therefore, our lives need to be consumed with knowing Him first then watching how He orders our steps and fills in the blanks!

Challenge: What kind of decisions are you making? Are the decisions of your life a testimony of a life lived in submission to Him that comes from a sincere belief in the Gospel that declares His love for you, or a life lived trusting your ability to understand and control your circumstances?

25 There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death. (Proverbs 16:25)