

Decision-Making Tied to God's Word and Good Conscience

Making decisions is often a challenge along life's twisting, curving path. In practical terms, the need to make decisions begins in early childhood and extends throughout one's lifetime. In virtually every waking situation and stage of life, the human mind is taxed with moment-by-moment challenges to make decisions. For example, even with a task as seemingly simple as operating an automobile, the driver is faced with numerous, constant critical decisions-sometimes with huge consequences. Reason, practice, and acquired skills are important in such decision-making. Even more importantly, when facing key decisions in life, the voice of a functioning conscience tempered with God's Word must be our guide to paths that are secure, wholesome, and upbuilding to self and society.

In other words, while some choices are largely subconscious, other decisions in life require consciously and methodically working toward a clear rational choice. On the same token, some decisions seem to render no significant influence on one's life or on the lives of others, while other choices result in profound personal, multi-personal, and even societal impact.

The human conscience, with which all normal humans are endowed, can and should play a guiding role when facing choices that touch on moral and ethical issues. Apostle Paul explained in clear terms the function of the human conscience in general: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom 2:14,15). Hence, when individuals and society in general make decisions without reverence for God and His Word, the choices rendered tend to serve and honor man himself and his own desires, with the danger of ultimately ending in detriment to the individual and/or to society.

In today's fast moving and quickly transitioning society, humans seem to be increasingly faced with the task of making rapid-fire choices-as individuals, but even collectively, especially when considering key State or Federal ballot issues. Therefore, many important individual choices, which especially in a free society one has the right to make, inescapably exert profound influence not only on one's own future, but also on society in general. For example, individuals in our society-and not only young people-are now commonly faced with the choice to use or not use such drugs as marijuana (now legal in some states). Although the hope of monetary gain, coupled with ideological motives, drives marijuana vendors to market their product and, at least in the short term, government tax revenue can be bolstered, disastrous results lie in wait. At personal peril, countless individuals make the unfortunate decision to use the drug. The use of alcohol has proven a bleak road that has trapped and destroyed the lives of millions, devastated families, shattered marriages, and sadly impacted the lives of children. It should have already demonstrated to society that legalizing additional mind-altering, recreational drugs represents the gaping jaws of a new avenue to human suffering. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

On the other hand, wholesome decisions in life that are joined with a reverence for God, and which often require personal "backbone," offer a bright and positive path for life. The general result of making sound, God-fearing choices affects not only the individual decision-maker's life, but frequently has profound influence on others-children, parents, loved ones, and even on society at large. For example, the individual's hope for peace and for a government graced with God-fearing leaders brings with it the responsibility to seize the time and opportunity to exercise one's right to vote. This individual

responsibility becomes even more important as an increasing number of laws and trends become more discordant with longstanding and sound scriptural values.

In making key choices on life's pathway, a reverence for one's Creator is especially important since man's own basic tendency is toward the evil. A wholesome, correct fear of God as described in the Bible, positively influences even the temporal aspects and outcomes of an individual's life choices. An even greater blessing occurs when one has been given the grace-gift to believe according to God's Word. Then the human conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit guides one on the narrow way to eternal life.

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