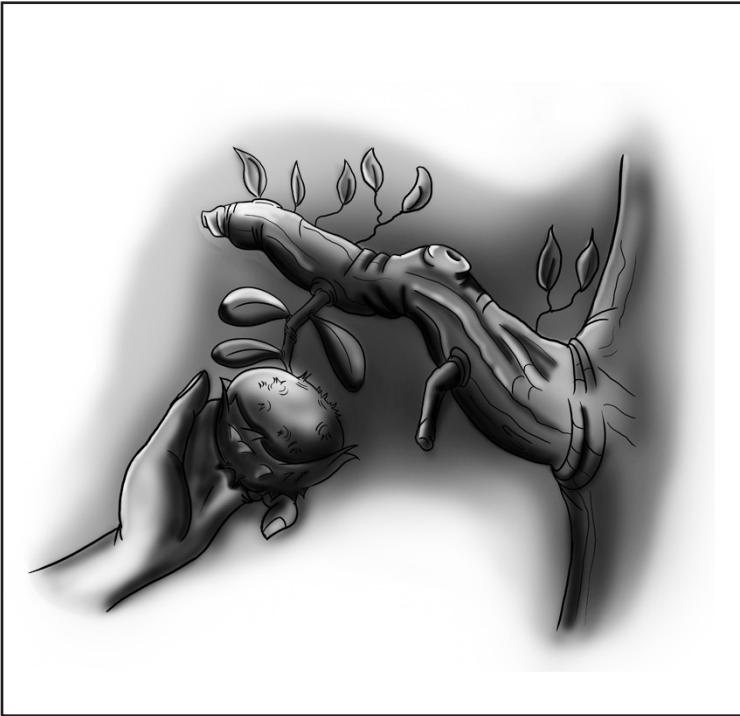


## The Choices We Make

*“And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15, NKJV).*



The hand of Eve takes fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is the most critical choice any human has ever made. We are living in its consequence today.

# Introduction

## *Decide to Choose*

2 Tim. 3:16

According to the butterfly effect, one small local decision has the potential to alter outcomes elsewhere. This emphasizes the influence of our choices and the impact that they carry. When we're younger, our decisions tend not to be well thought out because children do not often think long-term. However, as we grow older, we tend to fear spontaneity and opt to plan every step of our lives. Take the example of picking an outfit. As children, if we could help it, we'd wear our Superman costume or princess dress every day. But as adults, when picking an outfit we factor in the weather outside, anticipated activities, and whether we'll be mostly indoors or outside.

### **We cannot do as we please and then ask God to help us only when a great dilemma comes our way.**

Hitler's choice to invade Poland resulted in death and destruction and the start of a world war—one choice that had severe repercussions. Eve's decision to yield to Satan's temptation and persuade Adam to do likewise birthed the downfall of all humanity. The suffering of the entire world could have been averted if she had made the choice to obey God. Each of us is afraid of making the wrong decision. But how much easier would making the right choices be if we would just lay them at the feet of Jesus?

As Christians, we understand the Word of God as our guideline for life on Earth. We may know the difference between what He wants for us and what He warns us against, but still we find ourselves at a crossroads. We battle with following the path God set out for us because we consciously make decisions that separate us from Him. We cannot do as we please and then ask God to help us only when a great dilemma comes our way. If we do this, we'll never be able to discern the voice of God from that of the one trying to distract us. Every day, every choice should be made with the counsel of Jesus. We should be building a tolerance against the temptations of the enemy.

Regardless of any wrong decisions that we have made in our lives, Jesus made the choice to die on a cross for us. He ensures there is and will be forgiveness for all the mistakes we have made and are sure to make in the future. Each time we hurt Him and let Him down, He still does not eliminate the opportunities He gives us to repent. He has blessed us with Scriptures that will teach us to make the right choices that He wants for us (2 Tim. 3:16).

Prov. 13:20;  
Isa. 55:2**Evidence***One Does Not  
Simply Choose*

All around us, we see the product of choices. Choice of food, words, friends—the saying is true, “Show me your friends, and I will show you your future.” As the Bible puts it, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Prov. 13:20). That’s how great the impact our choice of friends has on our future. Moses understood this and chose to suffer with God’s people rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin. Thus, Moses was instrumental in God’s plan and is found in the hall of faith (Hebrews 11). When it comes to food, we can learn from Daniel, who chose not to defile himself with King Nebuchadnezzar’s food and wine. It’s worse in this era. Most of the diseases, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and osteoporosis are due to unhealthy food choices. If we choose to eat what is good as the Lord instructs us (cf. Isa. 55:2), we will indeed prosper in health.

---

**Good choices seem costly and difficult to make**

---

The prophet Jeremiah says, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight” (Jer. 15:16, NIV). The Hebrew term meaning “to eat” is *akhal*, which can also be translated as “to devour, consume, feast.” The prophet did not just nibble but indulged on the Word of God, and for him it was joy and his heart’s delight. Indulging in the Word of God is something that we can never overdo.

Good choices seem costly and difficult to make. And they are. Sometimes you think hard and long only to eventually make a bad choice. James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (NIV). King Solomon asked God for wisdom, and it was granted to him. He managed to accomplish much as king of Israel but also chose to indulge his lust, only to find that it was all meaningless (Eccles. 2:1–11).

When God gives us wisdom, we must be consistent with what He has plainly taught us in His Word and must continue in a pattern of making good choices. One bad choice can bring to ruin a long life of good choices. The opposite is also true; if you have been making one bad choice after another, with one choice to truly change today, you can live with purpose.

**REACT**

1. What do you do when you realize you have made a bad choice?
2. How can you make good choices consistently?

# Logos Love Motivates

Ps. 119:105;  
Prov. 3:5, 6; 8:11; 14:12;  
Matt. 7:24, 25; 22:35–37;  
1 Corinthians 13;  
Eph. 1:1–4;  
2 Tim. 1:8, 9;  
Titus 1:1, 2;  
Heb. 11:24–26

## **To Do or Not to Do?**

Arts or sciences? University or gap year? Every day we make decisions. Some are simple and quick, and others more significant and complex. A study by the University of Columbia found that on average we make more than 70 decisions a day.<sup>1</sup> That means in an average life-span of seventy years, we would have made at least 1,788,500 decisions! As we journey from our teenage years to adulthood, our daily choices can either bring us closer to God or take us further away from Him. One of the greatest mistakes we as young people make is thinking that God is not interested in our decisions. He is very much interested, and He wants us to know He cares.

---

**We should never shy away from making decisions,  
no matter how confused or scared we may feel.**

---

## **What's Love Got to Do With It? (1 Corinthians 13)**

True love is unchanging; no matter what you do, the love will remain. The greatest example of this kind of love was shown at Calvary, when Jesus laid down His life for us all because God so loved us. What impact, then, does this kind of love have on our daily choices? What's love got to do it? The answer is simple: love has everything to do with it.

We know that Jesus is our best choice for a role model. He came in person and showed us that it is possible to live a life that is pleasing to God despite this sin-soaked world. When we make someone our role model, we study their every move, every choice, and every motive. As we read every Gospel writer's account of any of the interactions of Jesus with people, we will see that His primary motive behind every decision was love. Perhaps that is why John penned these words in 1 John 4:16: "God is love."

Whether we realize it or not, our every decision is also driven by love, love for someone or something. A mother's love is what wakes her up at odd hours of the night to feed her nursing child. A love for graphic design keeps a student motivated even when others grow weak. At the core of any decision, big or small, lies the love for either self and our will or God and His will. In our finite knowledge, we act based on what we "hope" will come to pass because of our choice; yet if we entrust our choices into the hands of an all-knowing God, we have the assurance that He already knows.

## **(Un)Controlling Love (Matt. 22:35–37; Eph. 1:1–4; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; Titus 1:1, 2)**

One of the most fascinating processes to watch is software development:

looking at a line of code and seeing the finished product of an application such as Facebook or Instagram. You cannot help but stand in awe of the ability to make something do exactly what you want. Ever wonder why God didn't do the same? Why not just program us to love Him? Why take the risk of granting us free will? The answer is very simple: "For God so loved the world . . ."

God's love for us doesn't depend on our reciprocating it. He simply loves us. And that is why He wants the same kind of love in return. Forced love isn't love at all; it's a violation of your basic rights, and God is not forceful nor controlling. The gift of free will means that when we love God, we will love Him with everything we have, not love Him because we don't have a choice.

### ***Confusing Crossroads (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 8:11; 14:12; Matt. 7:24, 25)***

We have advanced in knowledge at a remarkable rate, yet we still find the process of making a decision very intimidating. If only they offered Decision Making 101 as an elective at universities! Often, we shy away from making major decisions because deep down we know that there is always an inescapable risk, so we assume it is better not to decide at all. We bury our head in the ground and hope the decision will make itself and we can just go with the flow.

As children of God, we should never shy away from making decisions, no matter how confused or scared we may feel. God, in His love and mercy, constantly urges us to seek wisdom from Him and counsel from the righteous. His gift of wisdom is freely available to us. He will guide as we decide.

### ***When the Going Gets Tough (Prov. 3:5, 6; 14:12; Heb. 11:24–26)***

Moses grew up as Pharaoh's grandchild with the glitz and glam of palace life, but he decided to leave that behind and follow God's calling. In life, we will be called to make tough choices that will ultimately change the course of our lives, but we should always remember the path that appears easy may not necessarily be the right path. It would have been much easier for Moses to remain in the palace and live a life most dream of. But the path he chose, the correct path, was a lot more difficult.

The strength to make these tough decisions is not delivered to our doors neatly wrapped in a box. It comes from time spent seeking God through His Word and prayer. As followers of Christ, we can expect times in our lives when, just like Moses, we will have to make some tough choices; we will be called to take the path that we know will be more difficult, but ultimately, we will be in the will of God—which is the safest place to be in this world!

## **REACT**

How do I know what God wants for me and for my life?

---

1. S. S. Iyengar and M. R. Lepper, "When Choice Is Demotivating: Can One Desire Too Much of a Good Thing?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 6 (Dec. 2000): 995–1106, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11138768>.

## Testimony

# *Build a Fortress, Not a Sandcastle*

Matt. 7:24, 25

Building on a solid foundation is not a foreign concept to Christians because we strive to build our spiritual lives on Christ, our solid Rock. This translates to ensuring that the basis on which we make our choices is strong because every other decision we take from that point onward stems from the previous decision.

Take the example of finding a career path. First, we determine which university to attend. That decision forms a foundation to stand on. Building on this foundation includes selecting a course of study and discovering the people we wish to associate with on campus. Our environment now depends on that initial decision—the foundation—because we cannot study what the university does not offer, nor can we be classmates with those who are not enrolled.

### **A weak link in a chain is the measure of the chain's strength.**

Every aspect of our lives is a plot where we are about to break ground. We experience different phases in these areas in which we are required to make initial decisions; it is here that we begin to lay a foundation. After this point, each choice we make is another brick we add to this foundation as we try to build a life for ourselves.

"A chain is no stronger than is its weakest link. We might pronounce such a chain good on the whole, but if one link is weak the chain cannot be depended on."<sup>1</sup> A weak link in a chain is the measure of the chain's strength. Similarly, a weak foundation cannot house a solid structure. How then can we, weak and lowly, expect to make decisions that will influence our lives without the input of Him who knows the end from the beginning?

The choices we make impact our lives in one way or another. By looking to Jesus for guidance, by realizing that He is very much concerned about each choice that we make, we have a greater possibility of making the correct decisions and developing a character like that of the Son of Man.

### **REACT**

1. Find an example of a biblical character who heeded God's counsel in his or her decisions and an example of someone who did not. What are the differences in their outcomes?
2. Jesus made the choice to die for us knowing that not all would accept Him. How should we handle decisions where we may not see a positive outcome for everyone, ourselves included?

1. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, p. 91.

Judg. 16;  
Prov. 12:26; 17:17;  
Eccles. 2:1–11;  
James 1:5–8

## How-to *The Greatest Choice*

The greatest choice we can ever make is the choice to follow Jesus to develop our relationship with Him. Through prayer and through studying His Word, we see that He has great plans for us (Jer. 29:11), plans to bless us to have life more abundantly (John 10:10). A part of His plan for us is to bless us with relationships with our fellow humans as well. Friendship and marriage are blessings from God because He created us to be social beings. It should be no surprise, then, that the people we choose as friends and the person we choose as a life partner are also things He cares about.

---

### **We don't have to feel scared or confused or burdened by impending choices.**

---

When we read about David and Jonathan, and Paul and Silas, we are reminded that friends can be a great source of strength and comfort (Prov. 17:17). However, the opposite is also true. We are warned by Solomon in Proverbs 12:26 that we are to choose our friends very carefully because their influence can lead us astray. It is true that birds of a feather flock together, and the company we keep becomes a reflection of who we are.

Have you ever noticed the ever-rocketing divorce rates in our world today? Perhaps people are not putting careful thought into this choice of whom to marry. As you read Genesis 24 and understand why Abraham went to such painstaking lengths to ensure the right person was selected as a wife for Isaac, you begin to understand why God is concerned about this choice in our lives as well. God knows the end from the beginning, and He knows that certain people can serve as catalysts to bring us closer to Him while others can pull us further away, so who better to ask when making these decisions than God?

We can find comfort in the fact that God wants to bless us with wisdom to make these decisions. James 1:5–8 reminds us that all we need do is ask. We don't have to feel scared or confused or burdened by impending choices. Wisdom is learning from the mistakes of others, so we should pay attention to the advice of older, seasoned Christians because often their advice comes from experience. Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 shows us, in no uncertain terms, how selfishly pleasing the desires of our flesh will leave us still feeling unfulfilled. We stand in front of two roads, and the choice we make today will determine who we are tomorrow.

#### **REACT:**

Evaluate the emotions you feel before making a decision. Do you feel confidence in God, or do you feel fear?

---

*Anastashia Piyarilal, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa*

## Opinion

# Choosing Right

Phil. 4:6;  
James 1:5

It is not easy being a young person in this mixed-up world. Temptations and challenges are tremendous. It sometimes seems as though our faith is not strong enough to handle daily stresses, and we despair for want of courage, guidance, and endurance.

We have been drilled on how extremely important our choices are. Our future is determined by the choices we make in our youth. We have a myriad of decisions to make, and each one leads to a different outcome. We feel pressured in our tasks, but then again, we have been pressured since we made the choice to allow Jesus to be King of our lives.

### **In this world of shifting sand, it is important to stick with people who will add value to our lives.**

We have seen many of our youth move away from God and eventually leave the church when the pressures of youth become overwhelming. Many slip away easily when faced with worldly options and embrace the value system of the world.

In this world of shifting sand, it is important to stick with people who will add value to our lives. Our greatest insecurity should be that of making big decisions which will lead us away from Christ and the mission He has entrusted to us.

Each decision we make can take us either closer or further away from our goal to grow in Christ. It all depends on whether we allow Him to be at the center of our lives. Some choices are no-brainers; however, that shouldn't stop us from asking for God's guidance.

God does not make impulsive decisions, and neither should we. Patience is key. Career and life partner choices are not the only ones that can be considered tough; real tough choices can include whether to remain friends with someone who goes against our morals and values.

The best part about being a child of God is that we are never alone. One of my favorite scriptures, Philippians 4:6, reads, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything" (NLT). This scripture gives hope and has seen me through character-breaking challenges in my life. Making the right choice isn't always easy, but take courage, my friend; we serve an all-knowing God who is willing to advise us whenever we are faced with a "toughie" (James 1:5). Faith is scary, but when the going gets tough, the tough hold on to Jesus.

### **REACT**

We serve a God who knows our future, yet we seek advice from earthly professionals before we seek His.

---

*Liscka Nirell Govender, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa*

Josh. 24:14, 15;  
1 Kings 18:21

## Exploration *Choose This Day*

### CONCLUDE

Job, Daniel, and Stephen all have one thing in common: they chose to follow God. Life wasn't always easy, though. They faced many trials along the way, but their faith never wavered. When trials come, we cannot falter between two opinions. There is no grey area. There are only two options for us to choose from: one is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, while the other is the path that leads to destruction. The question remains to us as it did to them. Do we choose to stay faithful with eternity in mind or to pursue the fleeting pleasures of this world?

### CONSIDER

- Writing down the points you consider before deciding anything. Do you seek God's opinion? Would He approve of your choice?
- Evaluating future decisions by asking whether the choice you're making is worth eternity.
- Reflecting on your past and the decisions you made. Think about WWJD (What would Jesus do?).
- Thinking about Ellen White's statement that "we should choose the right because it is right and leave the consequences with God."<sup>1</sup> While we know our decisions have consequences, how do we ensure that we look at this in a positive light?
- Writing out a prayer young people can use when faced with making tough decisions.
- Thinking about the hymn "All to Jesus I Surrender" and the hymn "Live Out Thy Life Within Me." How can we truly surrender to Jesus without holding back even an iota of ourselves?

### CONNECT

Genesis 13:5–18; Matthew 6:33; 7:13.

Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 13; *Steps to Christ*, chap. 5

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 460.