

Pre-Decide
Drawing Closer to God
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TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Acts 2:42-47 (NLT)

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

John 15:1-7 (NLT)

1 "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What's one of the best decisions you made in 2022? What's one of the worst?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Acts 2:42-47.** What was the pre-decision the believers made in v.42? What happened as a result of their devotion/ decision?
- Discuss the following statement: We make decisions and our decisions make us.
- Why is pre-deciding so important? Practically speaking, what could pre-deciding look like in your life?
- The 2nd thing the early church did was seek out Christian community. What made you join a small group? What difference has it made in your life? What happens when we fly solo?
- **Read John 15:1-7.** What does it look like to remain/abide in Jesus? What did Jesus mean by the phrase "apart from me you can do nothing?"
- Have you attended 21 Days of Prayer? What's your favorite thing about it?
- What's your goal for your prayer life this year?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Pre-decide to implement practices and spiritual disciplines of Acts 2:42 each day this week.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Ask God to help you draw closer to Him, and to make good decisions. Join with others in the 21 Days of Prayer at Generations Church on-site or online.

Question: "What are the biblical principles for solid decision-making?"

Answer: Solid decision-making begins by discerning the will of God. God delights in revealing His will to those who are eager to follow His precepts (Psalm 33:18; Psalm 35:27; Psalm 147:11). Our attitude towards decision-making should be that of Jesus Himself who affirmed, "Not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42; Matthew 6:10).

God reveals His will to us primarily in two ways. First, through His Spirit: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (John 16:13; see also 1 John 2:20, 27). And, second, God reveals His will through His Word: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105; see also Psalm 19:7-9; 2 Peter 1:19).

The process of decision-making includes making a judgment about an attitude or action. Decisions are an act of the will, and they are always influenced by the mind, the emotions, or both. The decisions we make actually reflect the desires of our heart (Psalm 119:30). Therefore, a key question before making a decision is "do I choose to please myself, or do I choose to please the Lord?" Joshua set the standard: "If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15; cf. Romans 12:2).

God sees the whole picture—the past, present, and future of our lives. He teaches and counsels us as He reveals Himself to us through His Word and Spirit. God has made this promise to us: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8; cf. Psalm 25:12). There will be times when God's will may seem undesirable or unpleasant, when our heart follows our own desires instead of trusting God. But we will eventually learn that God's will is always for our benefit (Psalm 119:67; Hebrews 12:10-11).

Again, the chief key to solid decision-making is knowing God's will and not following the desires of our own hearts: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12; cf. Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 21:2). As we put our trust in God, rather than ourselves, we soon discover what decisions are pleasing to Him.

First, God blesses those decisions that He initiates and that line up with His Word: "I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness" (Proverbs 4:11; see also Psalm 119:33). Second, God blesses decisions that accomplish His purpose and depend on His strength: "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13; see also Philippians 4:13).

Additionally, God blesses those decisions that result in His glory: "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). He blesses decisions that reflect His character, that promote justice, kindness and humility: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8; see also 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:12). And He blesses those decisions that come from faith: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

We must not forget God's promise to give His children wisdom when they ask: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17). And when we pray for wisdom, we must trust God to answer our prayer: "When he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord (James 1:6-7). Patience is important, too, as we wait for God's timing: "After waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised" (Hebrews 6:15).

Decision-making is more difficult when it involves a painful choice. Sometimes, the right course of action will also hurt us in some way. This is where we need grace the most. Are we really willing to suffer for the glory of Christ? "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1-2).

Making a decision today? Look to God's Word for direction. Take comfort in the peace which only He can provide (Philippians 4:7). Ask for wisdom, trust His promises, and He will guide your path: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6; see also Isaiah 58:11; John 8:12).