

## Lifecraft from God – Decisions, decisions, decisions

This is the last in a series of studies in Proverbs called Lifecraft from God.

Sally started us thinking about walking wisely and gave us three things to do: worship God, walk with the wise and let God's word sink in. David Wallace then opened up Proverbs 31 for us to see how we could work well; Ben rode his niece's little bicycle around the stage to demonstrate trusting in the Lord; I explained how knowing God's call on your life helps you make good financial decisions; James got us thinking about the wisdom of starting with rest; Peter taught us how to use words and speak wisely and then last week Matt showed us about making friends.

It has been a great series which I am bringing to an end with a simple question, how do I make good decisions?

Big decisions, little decisions. Making decisions is a lifecraft. How can I make Godly decisions? How can I develop a lifecraft of good decision-making? Let's start with this famous Proverb.

### Proverbs 3:5-7

*Trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.*

Sometimes there are big decisions: do you remember the blue pill or red pill in the Matrix? Morpheus says to Neo,

*"You take the blue pill, the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes."*

And sometimes there are little decisions: shall I sit on the left or on the right today? Shall I have one shot or two, semi or full, and shall I have whipped cream on top?

Making good decisions is not about using God like a celestial slot machine – pray about a decision here and out pops a good solution there – but is about a relationship with him.

This isn't about decision-making styles either. Alison, my wife, and I have different decision-making styles. I can illustrate this with the way we approach roundabouts when we are driving. I consider it a good result if I can get from this side of the roundabout to the other without having to change my speed (which is below the speed limit of course). I look ahead, try and time a gap in the traffic and smoothly weave my

way through to the other side. Even better if I can use a bus or a lorry as a shield on my right!

It's all good for the environment, aids traffic flow, reduces tension in the queue behind and gets me where I am going quicker.

Alison, on the other hand, will slow to a stop at the junction, look carefully to her right to see that the coast is clear and then drive on (and she's a great driver, I feel very safe with her).

But we have different decision-making styles. Alison is cautious and takes her time, I take more risks and tend to make up my mind quickly.

Godly decision-making is neither a celestial slot-machine neither is about decision-making styles.

**It is about a lifecraft of decision-making: a life craft that lines you up with God's particular plan for your life.**

Some decisions don't impinge on God's plan – most of the time He won't mind whether you sit on the left or the right or whether you have cream on top of your hot chocolate or whether you brush your teeth with Colgate or Aquafresh.

But there are some big decisions which have big consequences. Red and blue pills have a long-term impact on your life.

Decisions made with God's help ...

- won't necessarily make life easy or safe – following him is a roller-coaster not a roundabout
- will help you deal with difficult times when they come
- will help you navigate and enjoy the life he has given you
- will lead to great fulfilment in your life over the long term

You will face many significant decisions but here are three big ones which we all have to face at some point, at least once and each of which have significant long-term consequences:

1. What shall I do with my life?
  2. How shall I use my money?
  3. Who shall I have sex with – if anyone?
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**Proverbs is full of wisdom about making decisions.**

But there is one strong underlying theme about how it becomes a Lifecraft from God. Let's look at those verses from Proverbs 3:5-7 again,

*Trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.*

The underlying theme is - which way are you facing?

1. Are you facing outward, externally – toward God, aware of his presence, expecting him to be interested in you and your life? – *“Trust in the Lord”*.
2. Or are you facing away from God, facing internally. You may be thinking, “there is no God, I am on my own.” Or, “there may be a God but he is not interested in me, I am on my own.” Or, “there may be a God and he may be interested in me but I don’t like what he says, I am on my own” – *“Lean not on your own understanding - do not be wise in your own eyes.”*

This is a very fundamental question of posture – which way are you facing?

You may be a Christian, a follower of Jesus, and know this in theory but it doesn’t always become your practice. You may be a seeker, or an atheist, or just not sure

And although many people are convinced about the truth of Christianity they can’t get over this hurdle – trusting in Him rather than in yourself – because it affects decisions about their life which they don’t want to secede to anyone else.

If you are being wise in your eyes your decisions will be made on one basis.

If you trust in the Lord your decision will be made on a very different basis.

If it is no to God – I am facing away - I am sorting this out myself, then how do you make decisions?

The current dominant ethic in our society is Tolerance. Everything is fine, do what you like (so long as you don’t hurt anyone?), let others do what they like. Everything is relative – there’s no right or wrong – so how dare you tell me that there is an ultimate moral/ethical code which tells me I might be doing wrong? This is not a climate in which it is easy to make an objective judgement about a big decision.

So we ask ourselves, “Does it make me feel better?” I like the feel of this better than that – becomes a short term view and again leads to poor decision-making.

Or maybe we seek advice from others: celebrities (Madonna is adopting another child from Tibet so maybe that is a good thing for me to do), marketing (L’Oreal tell me I’m worth it so it must be a good way to spend my money), other people (who may have some wisdom but are under the same influences as I am), maybe just me (but surely there must be someone out there who is better, wiser, stronger, more gracious than me? And if so why don’t I go to the best possible source).

You see the enemy's plan is to coach us into making decisions which may seem fine - or even wise - on the surface but which take us further and further from following Jesus by getting us to turn our ear toward gods of this world and away from Him.

On the other hand, if I am facing toward God – if the magnet points away from me and points to him, when my light becomes strangely dim in comparison to his blazing brightness – then the sequence works like this:

I am facing the wrong way but I hear his voice of gentle rebuke, "Hey, you're going the wrong way, turn around", I turn around to face Him – that's called repentance. That gets my spiritual posture right. And I simply pray. I enter into conversation with Him, "This is what I have to decide about Lord. What is the right thing to do?"

And what happens next? He pours out His heart to us. See what it says in **Proverbs 1:23-25**, *If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But (since) you rejected me when I called and no-one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, (since) you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke.*

Our God isn't a distant God with no interest – he is close, leaning forward. He is so committed to you and so passionate to see you live in fullness of life, that he became as a man in Jesus, to identify with you, to die for you and, rising from the dead, to offer you the power of new life.

This is not slot machine decision-making – put in a prayer here and out comes the right decision there.

This is relationship – the God of the universe wanting to pour out his heart to you, stretching out his hand to you.

**A lifecraft from God about making good decisions is based on a relationship with him.**

As we worship God, as we walk with the wise, as we let God's word sink in: over time, as we hear his voice, experience his love, learn his wisdom – we make better and better decisions.

He won't make decisions for us, we are not relinquishing control: He has given us free will, but He loves to help us and He is so much wiser than the pages of the glossy magazines, the Youtube tutorials, TV documentaries or the prevailing orthodoxy.

**Some examples of how this works – questions with long-term consequences:**

1. Shall I change career and take this new job offer? A big jump in pay and responsibility even if it does mean I have to put in extra hours and travel.

*Don't be enticed by the material rewards and the glamour – pray and ask Jesus, shall I go into this career?*

2. Shall I borrow this extra money so that I can move into that dream house?  
*Don't listen to the seductive promises of the financial promoter or be bounced by others in your friendship group who all seem to have more – pray and ask Jesus, is this a good use of my money for what you have planned for me?*
3. I really fancy this person and they make me feel great. Shall I have sex with them?  
*Don't write into an agony aunt, don't copy whatever your favourite film/pop star does – pray and ask Jesus, shall I have sex with the person?*

As we grow in relationship with him decisions become not multiple choice questions but a conversation with our best friend and adviser. The one who loves us the most and knows us the best.

Decisions, decisions, decisions.

The longer you have lived, the more decisions you have made and the more you can look back and think – well that was stupid, that was a mistake, or that worked out well.

But equally, as you follow Jesus for longer and longer you can look back and say, “thank you for guiding me down that route Lord, I didn't like it at the time, I felt your rebuke because I wanted to go the other way but I am so glad you reached out to me and that I listened to you.”

And we all have decisions to make - today, tomorrow, in the future. I urge you to face toward Him and not away. To enter into a relationship with him, get to know him better and better. I urge you to worship God, walk with the wise, let His word sink into your hearts.

Allow him to rebuke you and call you to repentance when you are going off-track and then *pour out his heart to you and make His thoughts known to you* and guide you so that your decision-making becomes a true lifecraft from God.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

David Flowers  
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