

Becoming Decisive

Your action starts with a decision. The birthplace of actions lies in decisions. Sadly, we see many Christians with great ideas and theology but very little action. Great leaders have a bias towards action. "Chronic indecision is not only inefficient and counter-productive, but it is deeply corrosive to morale." — Robert Iger, The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company. What decisions are currently pending in your life? We don't like it when decision-makers take too long yet we are in that same pending state for many decisions that we need to make. One of the biggest causes of inaction is indecisiveness. Decisiveness ignites action in your life.

Decide to trust, decide to start, decide to love, decide to decide, decide to forgive, decide to lose weight and decide to do the specific things you need to do in order to lose the weight. Just make a decision. For example, make a decision to reduce your sugar intake. Decide to fast for X long, decide to pray for X long, decide to commit, decide to go to bed earlier at X time. Decide to stop drinking, decide to leave or redefine unhealthy friendships, decide to stop flirting or cheating. Many people struggle with Decision Paralysis. It is easier for them to not make a decision, especially when there are many options. In shops sales people make it easier for us when we delegate the decision to them. We sometimes delegate decisions to strangers.

Not making a decision is a decision in and of itself. People need to know that not making a decision is not the only option they have.

Rather make decisions and live by design instead of not making decisions and live by default.

There are consequences when you don't make certain decisions. For one, you remain double minded and your prayers are not answered. Often we are waiting for God to do something whilst He is waiting for us to make a clear request.

When you are decisive it inspires followers. One of the things people look for in their leaders is decisiveness. The person who is most clear in a room tends to have the most influence. This can happen even when they are wrong. If it is misty in your mind then it will be foggy in the minds of those listening to you.

"Decisiveness is the number one quality of a dynamic leader; his ability to communicate a decision with passion and integrity is an art form." — Farshad Asl

Jesus was decisive: He said, "Follow me". He encouraged us to choose between God and mammon. We see throughout scripture that those used greatly by God were decisive. For example:

Joshua 24:15

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

God was decisive. He created man in His image and He created them male and female. That was a decision.

Ps 75:7

It is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

He decides to promote one and demote another.

“Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checked by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the grey twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.” — Theodore Roosevelt, Strenuous Life

As a believer you have an edge in decision-making. We should be making wise decisions.

Isaiah 30:21

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

We need to include God in our decision-making. This message is not about making decisions for the sake of it or in the flesh. My goal today is to encourage you to be decisive and then to show you how to ensure your decisions are Godly.

Why do people avoid making decisions?

1. To keep their options open

Some people see decisions as bondage. They need to realise that most decisions do not permanently alter your life. You can change your mind.

2. Fear of accountability

Often they are afraid of being blamed if things don't work out. This is particularly true when the stakes are high. Decision-making gets more complex when there are many variables to consider. Some of these people hide behind consensus decision-making. It is important to know what's for the group and what's for you when it comes to making a decision.

3. Low self-esteem

Some people keep second guessing themselves because of their low self-esteem.

4. Lack of training

Many people were never trained to make decisions because of dominant figures around them. This happens with some last borns, or those who lose a spouse who used to do everything.

5. Passivity

Linked to fatalism. You put things in God's hands that He is expecting you to figure out.

6. Insatiable need for information

Analytical people need this. It goes hand in hand with logical analysis and evidence based thinking.

7. Delaying the inevitable

Sometimes we procrastinate decision-making because we are trying to avoid a certain emotion. For example, closing down a business, grieving some loss, and struggling to let go. A lot of times this delay is due to pride. We are too proud to downsize.

8. Confusion about role players

No one is going to choose a career for you; it is your responsibility. Do you know who the decision maker is or are you still expecting your boss to tell you what to do with your life?

9. Mental exhaustion

Some people are so tired of making decisions at work that they fail to be decisive at home. For example I know a couple where the husband was strong at work but abdicated at home. You need to lead at home too!

10. Neuroticism

This is a condition embedded in some people's personality where they believe the world is unsafe, threatening and distressful. Often this is coupled with the fear of failure or danger.

I appreciate how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were decisive about being thrown into the fire. They saw that God was still with them despite the outcome. This is the mindset we need to have. Apparent failure needs to be redefined.

Dan 3:16-18

¹⁶*Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."*

There are a lot of people that are decisive but unfortunately they do not make wise decisions.

How are we to make wise decisions?

A lot of people do not have a framework for decision-making. I have highlighted 7 major dimensions to consider when attempting to make wise decisions.

1. Develop self-awareness with regards to your default decision-making mental processing

Agile Thinking helps you to shift from one mental process to another.

- Logical Analysis
- Evidence Based Thinking
- Possibility Thinking
- Gut-feel judgement
- Scenario planning

It is important to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of these ways of processing.

2. Develop self-awareness with regards to your decision-making interpersonal style.

- Directive – It's my way or the highway
- Consultative – I need to make a decision but would appreciate your input.
- Affiliative – How will this impact everyone else?
- Democratic – What does everyone think? Let's vote.
- Consensual – What does the collective want?
- Delegative – You can make the decision for this matter with the following restrictions.
- Abdicating – It's up to you guys. Do whatever you want.

It is important to use different decision-making styles for different situations. If there is a fire and you are the floor warden, it is unwise to be too affiliative or democratic in your approach. It requires a directive approach in expressing your decision. A lot of conflict arises when we don't understand each other's default styles. Perhaps I am trying to be democratic whilst someone else wants me to call the shots and make a quick decision. Perhaps on another occasion I am directive and someone else feels disrespected because they wanted me to have asked them for their opinion. It is important to pre-decide your approach for different matters in your life. For example, how does decision-making work when it is your child's birthday? Sometimes because we have not thought through this we have problems when kids end up with an entitlement mentality around their birthday.

3. Align with God's Word

Ps 119:105

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

On the one hand it is important that the decision you are making is in line with God's principles as stated in his Word. This often has to do with accumulated wisdom that you have gained with regards to how God operates. When we are aligned with God's Word we will make decisions that glorify Him.

Luke 7:35

But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

4. Align with the inward witness and Peace of God in your heart

Acts 20:20-23

²⁰*You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*

²²*"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.*

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

5. Listen to Godly Counsel

Prov 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

6. Yield to the leading of the Spirit

Ananias made a decision in response to God speaking to Him. Notice the intimacy he had with the Holy Spirit to converse with Him at this level.

Acts 9:10-19

¹⁰*In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹²In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."*

¹³“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

¹⁷Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

In Acts 10 we see another example of the Spirit’s leading in the case of Peter and Cornelius.

You still have to make a decision after the Holy Spirit has spoken the word of wisdom still has to be judged. It is interesting how Paul and Barnabas were released in a team setting and the commission did not happen in isolation.

Acts 13:1-3

¹Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Sometimes God will lead you in a way that doesn’t seem in line with the natural flow of things. Philip was in the middle of revival in Samaria yet he obeyed when he was led to minister to an individual. It is also interesting how first an angel spoke to him then later it was the Spirit. In all of this he still needed to be decisive. When he interfaced with the Eunuch he knew why he had been led there so of course he shared the Gospel. God will sometimes lead you to places then leave you to be decisive with regards to the approach you will use. It is important to remember the importance of judging prophecy.

2 Peter 1:20

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things.

Acts 8:26-30

²⁶Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian[a] eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” ³⁰Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

7. Be cognisant of providential circumstances.

Donald Gee writes, ‘There is scarcely anything more nauseating than professing to receive some personal “revelation” that flatly contradicts the ordinary, decent, and scriptural duties of everyday life’

2 Cor 2:12-13

¹²*Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, ¹³I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.*

Paul was working with a principle of partnership and teamwork. His circumstances were such that although a door had opened, he did not want to go through the door without his teammate. Sometimes providential circumstances can look like closed doors vs open doors or what seems like supernatural alignment of circumstances.

“One thing I've found...the road rarely rises up to meet you until you've begun walking.” — Michele Jennae, Creativity Coach