

The Power of Decisiveness

Luke 9:57-62 As they were walking along the road, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow You wherever You go." 58Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." 59Then He said to another man, "Follow Me." The man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60But Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You, however, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61Still another said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first let me bid farewell to my family." 62Then Jesus declared, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

It's one thing to make a decision, it's another thing to commit heart and soul to the implications of those decisions. For example, I can decide to get married, but have I truly committed heart and soul to serve and sacrifice for my wife's dreams. There are degrees of decisiveness. ***It is difficult to become successful in something you are not willing to fully commit to.*** Reflect on your life and think of the most important decisions you have made. Were they made for you? Were you forced to make these decisions or were they an act of your will? I believe God is in the business of restoring the will and He wants to show us that we are powerful and can decide. **To whom have you abdicated certain decisions in your life?** I remember asking my former VC at varsity where he thought I should study a specific postgraduate course. He responded by asking me what I wanted to do. I was surprised as I thought he would just tell me. It's important for us to understand the benefits of decisiveness and how central it is to Godly leadership. **The ability to make timeous wise decisions and align others in the same direction is one of the most important leadership capabilities.** Jesus' ministry was embedded in this. Many leaders make decisions but leave everyone behind.

Recently, I have worked with two leaders in different organisations who have decisiveness as one of their high leverage activities. It stood out to me, and it is one of the things that makes them so effective. It is interesting that these are older women. I have reflected on my own life and seen that when I have been most fruitful, I have also been most decisive. Decisiveness makes you productive and fruitful. Many of us make decisions but not wise ones. Others make decisions but they are too slow. Some make decisions but are impulsive. Some also make decisions but have not mastered the art of taking people with them. Decisiveness is a growth step for many of us.

Research has found that people who struggle with decisiveness (indecisive people) are more likely to experience anxiety and stress. Traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability have been found to be positively correlated with decisiveness. So being decisive is a good thing. As we examine decisiveness, we need to also acknowledge the capabilities, competences and activities that go with it so that we can develop them too. Some of these include, information gathering, choosing between alternatives, evaluating and processing information.

Jesus made a lot of decisions:

- He decided to get baptised
- He decided who the 12 disciples were going to be
- He decided to move from one town and go to another

Throughout His ministry, we see Jesus being decisive and committing to the decisions He made.

Luke 9:1-5 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. 4Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." 6So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

Examine this passage and see how many decisions Jesus made and carried out. Think of the clarity and efficiency that came as a result of His decisiveness. He was decisive concerning what they should preach, what they should take or not take, where they should stay and how long they remain there, how they must respond to rejection etc

Reflect on your own leadership journey. Decisive leaders set direction. They are decisive about the direction, the culture they want to create, the consequences of not adhering to that culture, their use of time, their priorities and standards. People who are productive with their use of time and deficient are often decisive about it. This is how I will use the next hour of my day They don't procrastinate. Procrastination is often linked to indecisiveness. If you are anticipating having a difficult conversation with someone, ask yourself why it is difficult. Often it is linked to decisions we are avoiding.

- What decisions do I or we need to make?
- What decisions am I avoiding?
- What decisions am I hesitating to commit to?

One of the growth-steps we need to make if we are going to rise as leaders, is becoming decisive.

What stops us from being decisive? What are the missing pieces you need right now in order to make sound decisions? Ask God for wisdom to make sound decisions. Some of us just hope the situation goes away, but not making a decision is a decision in and of itself.

A. Why do we struggle to be decisive?

1. Inability to evaluate alternatives

In order to make decisions it is important to know how to weigh the relative importance of your alternatives. For example, there are levels of loyalty; you are loyal first to God, then your spouse, then your company, then the leaders who you represent etc If someone on your team is stealing from the company but you decide to keep covering for them you have just shown that you are more loyal to an individual than the company. Some people make the mistake of giving outsiders perspectives the same weight as their spouse. As a result, they struggle to make decisions when these perspectives clash.

2. The decision involves other people

The impact our decisions have on others (when you are single you can decide to go overseas, when you are married and have kids the decision involves a number of other people).

3. Double-mindedness

James 1:6-8 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Often our double-mindedness comes from inner-conflict where we know we need to do something but it doesn't align with our self-concept. **What inner conflicts are hindering your decision-making?**

4. People pleasing

Gal 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

5. Luke warmness

1 Pet 3:15 – 17 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17 For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

6. Over-reliance on one approach to decision-making

e.g. Over reliance on data and research (Intuition matters too)

Agile thinking encourages us to use logical analysis, scenario planning, evidence based thinking, gut-feel judgement, systems thinking and possibility thinking. Can you dance between these? Can you be led both by the inward witness and inner peace and also by providential circumstances.

7. Poor understanding of leadership

John 7:24 Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.

Leadership can sometimes be a lonely place. Oftentimes as a leader you are called to make unpopular decisions. We see this in Moses' life.

Ps 12:2-3 Everyone lies to their neighbor; they flatter with their lips but harbor deception in their hearts. 3 May the Lord silence all flattering lips and every boastful tongue—

8. Childhood issues

How we are raised affects us greatly. Some of us become passive because we are last born kids. Other last born kids grow up to become vehemently independent. Others become overly responsible and make decisions on behalf of others because they were the first born. We have a lot of proclivities because of how we were raised.

9. Perceptual distortions

(e.g. catastrophising the consequences of making a mistake or fearing that you permanently alter a relationship)

Ps 51:6-7 (NKJV) - Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

10. Workplace wounds

When we have made bad decisions in the past, we sometimes make inner vows that cause us to defer decision-making to someone else. **Sometimes past trauma actually breaks our will, and we begin to abdicate our authority.**

11. Group think

This occurs when we keep second guessing other's perspectives and desires. We don't answer honestly when asked what we think. We don't want to rock the boat. We become peace keepers instead of peace makers. This often takes place because we are misguided about the principle of consensus. We think that everyone has to agree and that we have failed if there are some who are not all in. We hide behind committees because we are afraid to state what we really think. It's easier to say, the committee decided than to say Paul thinks A, B, C. Sometimes group think can be deepened by peer pressure.

12. Easy Alternatives

We always have a strong personality around us who likes being in control and making decisions. We end up abdicating our authority. Sometimes this is self-deauthorisation other times it is a form of passivity that has come from years of abuse and low self-esteem. **What are some other alternatives for you for not being decisive?**

B. What are some guiding principles for decisiveness?

1. Trust God for the spirit of wisdom for all the decisions you need to make.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him.

2. Make all your decisions from a place of faith, not fear or anxiety.

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Proverbs 3:5-6 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.

3. Remember that the best decisions are founded on a heart that fears the Lord.

Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Psalms 112:1 Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

4. Seek counsel where necessary, and then make the decision.

Proverbs 11:4 Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

Don't hide behind looking for consensus because you are afraid of being accountable if your decision was not the right one. Seeking counsel sometimes slows you down but can also be done very quickly.

Prov 11:14 For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers

5. Remember that there is no decision you HAVE TO MAKE that leads you to sin.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

You can't say, "I couldn't help it. God understands."

6. Take a decisive stand regardless of what others are choosing.

Josh 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."

Joshua exercised boundaries here. He knew who was under his authority and allowed others to choose their own direction. Leadership is not about violating boundaries and coercing others. He exhorted them to just decide instead of pretending or being double-minded.

7. Remember that your decisiveness can affect generations.

Deut 30:19 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

The blessing on my life will affect my children. My foolishness will also have negative consequences for them.

8. Our decisions stem from either the Spirit or from the flesh.

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

What are you sowing into, the flesh or the Spirit? That determines the quality of your decisions.

9. Being decisive does not mean you are rash and hasty.

Prov 18:13 To answer before listening— that is folly and shame

Sometimes we think that seeking counsel takes too long, so we never do so. It doesn't have to. It can be quite a fast process. Gathering information and weighing alternatives does not have to take too long.