

DECISIONS, DECISIONS MAKING WISE CHOICES



PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:33-34

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 7:13-23;
Matthew 7:24-27

OBJECTIVES

- To challenge guys to think a little deeper about how good decisions are made
- To help them understand how decisions made today will affect their lives tomorrow
- To explain how to release stress and receive God's peace when it comes to big decisions

OVERVIEW

Anyone who has worked with teenage guys can be easily amused or pained by the incredibly irrational choices they sometimes make. When one of the guys in our ministry charred his backside while “blue-flaming” I couldn't help but laugh. When I heard that a different student from our church was killed in a car accident because he and his buddy, who was driving, were intoxicated, I couldn't help but cry.

For most of our guys, the connection between decision and consequence doesn't seem to work about half of the time. All sorts of psychological studies have been done on the development of the teenage brain. These studies speak of a part of the brain that processes cause and effect, and how in the teenager, this part of the brain is not fully developed. This provides some reasoning for the difficult reality that no matter how hard youth workers, parents, and teachers try, sometimes our guys seemed destined for a season – some seasons longer than others, depending on the guy – to learn things the hard way. This doesn't diminish our commitment to help guys learn these skills, but it does help us have a little more grace and compassion as we work with them and their parents.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus delivers radical teaching about right and moral decisions. Even more foundationally, He speaks

TIP:

If your youth group or community has experienced a recent loss like this, consider using it as an example during today's lesson about making wise choices. Or your guys may just need an outlet for talking about their feelings and emotions (check out that chapter for more advice).



about how to make those decisions. Outlining a process that includes prayer and the consideration of His words, Jesus helps us as youth workers take the perspective that it's not our job to make decisions for our guys, but to equip them with the right tools so they can make wise choices on their own.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:33-34 NIV).

LEADER'S STUDY

Let's take a quick look at the Scriptures used in this lesson:

Matthew 6:33-34 (NIV) - But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Jesus' words are so clear, so plain, and so simple. Yet we don't trust, don't obey, and don't pursue His kingdom, and then we wonder why we can't figure out His will for our lives. We're too concerned with what we're supposed to do while ignoring His commands about who He wants us to be.

Matthew 7:13-23 (NIV) - "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"



The fruit we bear reveals who we are. What we do flows out of who we are. When we get this backward, we quickly get into trouble.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV) - "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Many of us have heard this parable so many times that we miss its meaning. If we aren't basing our decision-making around the principles Jesus gives in this Sermon, we're in serious trouble. We're one storm away from complete collapse.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS FOR DEPENDABLE DECISION-MAKING

1. The focus must first be on who, not what (Matthew 6:33).

We get too focused on the question, "What am I supposed to do?" instead of asking the better question, "Who am I supposed to be?" And who you are is defined by whose you are. If we are first concerned with becoming a more devoted follower of Jesus and a more passionate seeker of God's kingdom, then our decisions become clearer and wiser.

TIP:

The struggle between "doing" and "being" is common for most guys. As youth workers, we have the opportunity to emphasize character development as a foundation for future success.

2. It is possible to live worry-free about your future (Matthew 6:34).

What college should I attend? Whom should I marry? What career should I choose? The stress of big decisions can trickle all the way down to the junior high level these days. But Jesus commands us not to sweat it. Is He crazy or is He really in control?

3. You have a destiny in this life and in the next (Matthew 7:13-14).

Our destiny on earth is abundant life as described by Jesus in John 10:10. Our destiny in heaven is eternal life full of incomprehensible adventure and indescribable beauty. Our decisions today affect our ability to enter the destiny God offers.



TIP:

If you have time, ask your guys where they want to be in 10 or 20 years. They could talk about career or family or a physical location. Talk about the steps it takes to get from “here” today to “there” down the road. Use this as an example of how today’s choices shape our destiny.

4. Who you are determines where you end up (Matthew 7:17-23).

Decide where you’ll be tomorrow by deciding who you’ll be today. Who you are is seen in the fruit you bear. (See Galatians 5:16-26 for a list of good fruit and bad fruit.)

5. Who you listen to can make or break you (Matthew 7:24-27).

We can build our future on solid rock when we listen to Jesus through His words to us directly and through other wise people who speak His word into our lives. Listening to the wrong voices can turn our lives into a heap of driftwood.

DISCUSSION GUIDE**Open Up**

- Share a story about the worst decision you’ve ever made.
- Share a story about the best decision you’ve ever made.
- What’s the hardest decision you’ve ever had to make?

Dig In

Transition into your study by sharing about a tough decision you made and how you went about making it. Talk about how your good and bad decisions as a teenage guy have affected the way your life has unfolded. Take the opportunity to pray that God would help your guys open their hearts and minds to His Word as it speaks to them about how to apply Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount to the decisions they make each day.

Read and discuss Matthew 6:33-34; Matthew 7:13-23; Matthew 7:24-27

- What do you think it means to “seek first his kingdom”? How does Matthew 6:33 relate to the way we should make decisions?
- Do you think it’s possible to not worry about the future? How?
- Have you been recently frustrated by a parent or other authority figure who wouldn’t let you make a decision on your own? What sorts of things could you do to convince them that you can make good decisions?



- Respond to the statement, “Our decisions affect our destiny.” Share an example of a decision you could make right now that would affect your future.
- Do you think it’s possible that you could be someone Jesus is referring to in Matthew 7:21-23 who calls Him “Lord” but doesn’t enter His kingdom? Why or why not?
- What does the wise builder base his decisions on, that the foolish builder doesn’t?
- Share an example of an older guy you know (personally or from a distance) who has built his life on solid rock by making decisions based on Jesus’ words.

CLOSE OUT

- What is one of the biggest decisions you are stressed out about right now? How might focusing on who you should be (building your identity in Jesus) instead of what you should do (the stress of the decision) change your perspective?
- What sorts of things are you doing to seek first God’s kingdom in your life?

TIP:

If your college major has nothing to do with your career today, use this an example of how God cares more about our character than other “big” choices we face.

- God doesn’t care nearly as much about the college you pick as He does the character you develop. How does that thought affect the way you approach big decisions?
- Do you have any older Christ-followers in your life who have wisely built their lives on solid rock and are helping you do the same in the big decisions you are making? If not, who could you ask to play that role?

