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## So, What Are My Choices?

**Joshua 24:15: (NASB) *If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.***



We make choices every day. Some are easy choices that we do not even need to think much about and there are others that require some on-the-fly time and attention. Then there are the choices that can be difficult and even agonizing. These are the choices that can make or break a life or shape a destiny or at the very least alter the near future. These are the biggest choices we face, but they may not necessarily be the most important ones. We probably do not think about how often our big decisions end up being a sum of many small and seemingly irrelevant choices we have made without thinking. The point is that all of our choices carry a measure of importance! So, what guides us in the choices we make? Are we most often influenced by how we feel about things or by what our friends or family will think? What are the most important factors in successful Christian decision making?

**We are told to focus on living that which we profess! This means making the right choices: James 1:22-24: *Prove yourselves doers of the word - step over that "line in the sand."* Do not just think it or say it; actually do what the word of God tells you to do. Do not be a hypocrite. To make a decision - to make a choice - is to employ some kind of process of the mind, even if it is on a subconscious level. Our objective is to identify those things that are parts of this process and to slow down this process so we can be sure the most important decision making elements of our pending choice occupy the most important positions in our actual decision. We want to do the most important things first. How do we know what those should be? Making good choices is a challenge, especially for a Christian. Proverbs 14:12**

**PRINCIPLES: The external fixed points of reference that are built upon integrity, morality and godly righteousness. Psalms 119:105-112: (NASB) <sup>105</sup>Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**

**<sup>106</sup>I have sworn and I will confirm it, that I will keep Your righteous ordinances. PRESSURES: The external factors or people that create a feeling of urgency to move in one direction or another. <sup>107</sup>I am exceedingly afflicted; revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.**

**PREFERENCES: The internal emotions that bend our desires towards one direction or another. <sup>108</sup>O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your ordinances. <sup>109</sup>My life is continually in my hand, yet I do not forget Your law. PASSIONS: The internal fire of our heart that can powerfully override all other elements of choice. <sup>110</sup>The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not gone astray from Your precepts. <sup>111</sup>I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart. <sup>112</sup>I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, even to the end.**

A lot of our passions are physical, sensual and far away from what our Christianity should be pointing us towards. How do we put all of this together to make sure our choices are holy, godly and reverent? Principles are not emotional, so we might not be as easily drawn to them.

**PRINCIPLES: The external fixed points of reference that are built upon integrity, morality and godly righteousness.**

**PRINCIPLES** are the firm foundation of our belief to build upon when all about us are the shifting sands of social status. They are the anchor that holds us steady in a turbulent sea of restless human behavior.

**FOUNDATION PRINCIPLE #1: God is sovereign, righteous and unchangeable!**

**Hebrews 6:16-19: God has a clear plan, and He keeps His promises. Because He is unchangeable, we can have sure hope. Unyielding faith in the character of God is a foundation principle on which we can build our very existence. This foundation gives our choices a smooth and solid surface on which to be based. We need to continually study the Bible to learn about Him. Will my choices be in line with the sovereignty of God?**

**FOUNDATION PRINCIPLE #2: Jesus is the absolute center of our lives, our cause and our passion.**



Will my choices be in line with having Jesus as my center? John 14:6 Hebrews 12:2: Jesus’ footsteps never falter. Unyielding faith in Jesus as the deliverer of God’s plan of salvation is the foundation principle on which we can build the direction of our lives. This foundation gives our choices an ultimate purpose. God gives us something to stand on. Jesus gives us a direction to go because we follow him.

**FOUNDATION PRINCIPLE #3: True Christianity is a mutual effort of many individuals called to be small parts of something big.**

Sometimes we think it is just “me and Jesus.” That may feel good, but it is actually you, Jesus and the rest of the body of Christ. It is so much bigger than you. Ephesians 4:11-15: Unyielding faith in the body arrangement of the followers of Christ is the foundation principle on which we can give our lives perspective. This foundation gives our choices broader meaning because it is about more than just “me.” This bond goes beyond our natural families.

Matthew 25:40: Our fellow Christians are counted as special in the Lord’s eyes, so we should also have a special relationship with them. We want to help each other in any way we can.

If *what* we believe is our decision-making foundation then *how* we believe and apply it is our decision-making anchor. To keep from being tossed about we need to be held steady by the practical application of the foundation principles of our faith. These principles will anchor us in our choices. Most people generally believe in the basic principles of God, Jesus and the brotherhood - but now we have to *apply* these. This gets tricky! That is why we need anchor principles that are heavy enough to allow us to grab onto something solid.

**Firm and stead “Anchor Principles” make our Foundation Principles live each day:**

2 Corinthians 6:14: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>*Do not be bound together with unbelievers;*

**Anchor Principle: Seek appropriate “fastening together” in a long term or permanent relationship.**

2 Corinthians 6:14: (NASB) *for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness...*

**Anchor Principle: Seek the highest levels of partnership - in agreements and in action.**

2 Corinthians 6:14: (NASB) *...or what fellowship has light with darkness?*

**Anchor Principle: Seek the most cohesive fellowship - agreement - in principle.**

2 Corinthians 6:15: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>*Or what harmony has Christ with Belial (those notoriously scandalous)*

**Anchor Principle: Seek “life harmony” - playing the same piece of music in the same orchestra.**

2 Corinthians 6:15: (NASB) *... or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?*

**Anchor Principle: Seek sensible common ground - the interlocking principles upon which we stand.**

2 Corinthians 6:16: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>*Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?*

**Anchor Principle: Seek reasonable accord - the general purpose for living our lives.**

**PRESSURES: The external factors or people that create a feeling of urgency to move in one direction or another**

For the young Christian: Choices regarding your friends, the college you go to, activities, career and marriage all exert heavy pressure. Sometimes this pressure feels overwhelming! What do you do? Find those EXTERNAL PRINCIPLES and build on them, using them as an anchor to hold you steady! It can be hard to find your principles when you are in the middle of the pressure, so have them already firm in your heart. Peer pressure is difficult to manage. You feel exposed and like you have no other choice than to bend towards the will of the crowd.

We normally look back and think, “What do I do now?” We are suggesting by using these foundation principles, you will start to look forward, asking, “What *should* I be doing now?”

PRESSURES can be both positive and negative when making choices. We would do well to identify and dwell on the positive pressures that press us towards godliness in our choices. Pressure can be positive in that it helps us to mature.



2 Corinthians 6:16: There is positive pressure in reminding ourselves that we are the temple of the living God. As a footstep follower of Christ, you have accepted giving up your own will to do the will of God through Christ. You are now given the Holy Spirit - God's power and influence. There is pressure to make use of that in a godly way.

**This positive pressure brings us to:** Ephesians 5:1-10: *Be imitators of God* - We try our best and our intent is what is counted. *As beloved children* - We smile when we see a child imitating an adult. Even when they do not do it well, we approve that they are trying. It comforts us that God sees us as children.

**Next come the Anchor Principles needed to identify what is truly appropriate for true Christians:** <sup>3</sup>*But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;* <sup>4</sup>*and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.* <sup>5</sup>*For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.* Do not let this negative list be a part of you. We should not curse, be rude or be a poor example. Our conversation and actions should be tasteful. Cursing is so common in everyday conversation. If you are a Christian, our language should be above reproach. If you stand for your principles and use better language, people will notice over time and begin to elevate their language to your level out of respect.

**Once we have all of these principles in order we can now more easily see what we are facing:** <sup>6</sup>*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* <sup>7</sup>*Therefore do not be partakers with them;* <sup>8</sup>*For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light* <sup>9</sup>*(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),* <sup>10</sup>*trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*

Do not allow yourself to be deceived with empty words. You have a choice! Pressure comes, bears down on us and makes us want to go in another direction, but we have to ask ourselves if our choices are in accordance with the principles of godliness. If not, what pressures can I exert to make me move towards those principles?

**PRESSURE Lesson: We can decide what pressures we will allow to influence us, and once that decision is made, our choices will follow suit.**

**PREFERENCES:** The internal emotions that bend our desires towards one direction or another

**As Christians, we have two sets of preferences to deal with:** Romans 12:1-2: The need to be urged to a different and higher direction indicates that we would naturally prefer another, more convenient way. The fact is, Christianity and Christian choices are inconvenient! They get in the way. They are HARD. To be transformed is to be changed, and that means discomfort, not normally our preference. Not only is Christian choice inconvenient, it is uncomfortable! We battle the flesh and its interests. Our preferences will quickly bow to the flesh's decision if we do not watch it! The default is to bow to the desires of the flesh. Unfortunately, much of Christianity is built this way. For example, the whole "Prosperity Gospel" is built upon the desires of the flesh. **If our Christianity is genuine, we become living contradictions in our decision making:** Romans 7:21-25: We gravitate toward others who like similar things. The problem is, as a Christian, your preferences are not the bottom line of your life. They are often something to be overcome. *...but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war* - we battle against earthly preferences and have to establish spiritual preferences. To manage and overcome the contradiction, we need those Foundation and Anchor Principles to rule in our hearts and our minds.

All of our earthly preferences are not necessarily sinful, but they can tug us away from the things that are most important. We have to decide how to deal with that. Using the example of a Christian married to someone who is not a Christian means a contradiction exists. But there is an example of how to apply spirituality in your decision making. Your non-Christian spouse is not going to be interested in reading the Scriptures, meditating upon them and discussing them with you. But you are married, so you need to make conscious choices and decisions to maintain that relationship. God blesses you for taking time with your spouse as you are honoring the promise you made.



**Our preferences in our choices need to be tempered with God’s will and His preferences:** James 4:13-17: It is good to make plans, but we must live according to the will of God. We do not want our own preferences to get in the way. We need our Foundation and Anchor Principles as a basis for assessing our preferences. **Preference for the Christian who sees themselves as self-sufficient - just Jesus and I...we can do it!** Romans 12:3-6: We need to remember our role *as a small part of* the unity of the body of Christ - it is not just us. Much of our own growth is related to the input we receive from others following Christ. This is a powerful decision-making tool.

**PREFERENCE Lesson:** Our personal preferences are engrained, and therefore must be focused on, in order for us to properly align our choices with God’s will. Sometimes when we think we are choosing God’s will, we may still be siding with our natural preferences to our own detriment.

**PASSIONS:** The internal fire of our heart that can powerfully override all other elements of choice.

**The bottom line:** The heart will always try and get what the heart wants. It goes without saying that our Foundation and Anchor Principles must have permission to be made relevant when confronting our passions, for passions always seem to feel like they are above the law. Passions make us rationalize to the point where we do not think clearly. We then act blindly.

Galatians 6:7-10: God is not mocked! Just because your passion says it is true, real, vital and important does not mean your choice is godly. No matter what choices we make, whether they are driven by passion or not, we are accountable! *Let us do good* - Not just be “nice.” This means complying with godly behavior and having godly passion in all things.

**Jesus as a man was faced with the passions of his humanity needing to be focused on the will of God:** Hebrews 4:14-16: This proves our passions can be channeled.

Christian choice is revealed in the Gethsemane experience of Jesus. **We know that as Jesus approached this experience, his principles were crystal clear:** Mark 14:32-38: (NASB) <sup>32</sup>They came to a place named Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, *Sit here until I have prayed.* Of course at this most pivotal moment, Jesus prayed. What pressures were on his shoulders! Under pressure, we find our principles by praying. **Jesus then reveals the external pressures he is facing which have caused him internal grief:** <sup>33</sup>And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup>And he said to them, *my soul is deeply grieved to the point of death (wow!); remain here and keep watch.* **Jesus prays regarding his deep personal preferences:** <sup>35</sup>And he went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass him by. <sup>36</sup>And he was saying, *Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from me; Abba! - means “daddy,” a deep, emotional connection between father and child.* **Finally, Jesus rehearses and relies upon his deepest and most convicted passion:** *yet not what I will, but what You will.* <sup>37</sup>And he came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, *Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?* <sup>38</sup>Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. *Yet not what I will, but what You will* - these were his final words on the matter. Jesus’ greatest passion was to do the will of his Father.

**PASSIONS Lesson:** In any hour of temptation, in any circumstance of choice, we are best served when we have our PRINCIPLES in mind, our PRESSURES managed, our PREFERENCES understood and our PASSIONS directed.

We can follow Jesus’ example and make decisions that will bring honor to God.

*So, what are my choices?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*