"Making Wise Decisions"

Genesis 13:1-18 & Selected Passages

Faith Baptist Church, Lebanon, PA - Teen Retreat - August, 2017

Introduction:

- Every decision is important.
- You are responsible for the decisions you make in life.
- Your decisions both reveal your character and form it.
- Your present circumstances are (in large part) a result of your past choices.
- The decisions you must make today may be a result of decisions you made in your past (Our choices can result in a vicious or victorious cycle)
- God is concerned about the details of your life. (He cares about the choices you make - Matthew 10:30)

I. Abram's GOOD CHOICE (v.8-9; 14-18)



A. Abram chose to stay cool & calm and did not make a hasty move (v.8)

B. Abram chose to graciously & unselfishly offer Lot the land he preferred (v.9)

C. Abram chose to trust God with the result of the decision

D. Abram's choice resulted in him receiving God's very best (v.14-18)

II. Lot's BAD CHOICE (v.10-13)



A. Lot chose based on what he saw with his eyes (v.10a)

B. Lot chose based on the prospect of material advantage (Monetary gain) (v.10b)

C. Lot chose out of selfish motives, seeking the best for himself. (v.11)

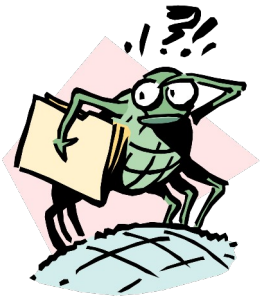
D. Lot's choice made him vulnerable to making other bad choices. (v.12-13)

E. Lot's choice negatively affected not only himself, but his entire family (Compare: Genesis 19:14-17; 26; 35-38)

Some Warnings about Decision Making:

1) Beware of making hasty decisions (Quick decisions)
2) Beware of making carnal decisions (Decisions when you are not close to God)
3) Beware of making self-serving decisions (out of selfish motives)
4) Beware of making unsure decisions (If its doubtful, its dirty)
5) Beware of making emotional decisions (without reason)
6) Beware of making faith-less decisions (throwing out "the fleece")

How do I make wise decisions?



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1. **Have I <u>prayed to God</u> about this decision?**
   Proverbs 3:5,6 - Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

2. **Do I need <u>Godly counsel (advice)</u> about this decision?**
   Proverbs 12:15 - The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.
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   Psalm 119:105 - Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

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   Make your decisions based upon what is <u>right</u>, not what is popular, or feels good.

6. **What would be the <u>long-term effects</u> of my choice?**
   Pr 14:12 - There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.
   Don't made decisions based merely upon <u>immediate</u> results.
   "Never sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the immediate" (Dr. Bob Jones Sr.)

7. **Do I have <u>peace</u> about my decision?**
   Phil. 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Concluding Remarks about God's will in your decisions:

- **God's will is not a "bitter medicine"**
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- **God never leads a person contrary to His Word**
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  Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

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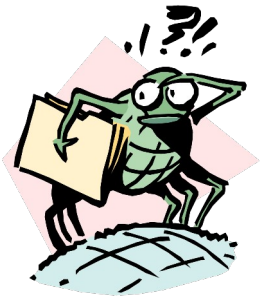

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Everyday, we make decisions (choices)…

When we were young (still under the authority of our parents) many of our decisions were made for us. We didn't have much choice other than to obey or disobey them.

However, now (as adults) there are many choices we must make.
For example:

How we will spend our time or money;
Where we will go to college
Our career choice (occupation; vocation)
Our marriage partner
Our location (where we will live)
Whether or not we will have our personal devotions today.
Etc.

God created man with an intellect (to think); emotion (to feel); and a will (to make choices).

- Every decision is <u>important</u>.

  There are 2 types of decisions we must make:

  1) Moral Decisions - Choices related to clearly defined Biblical commands or principles.

  2) A-moral Decisions - Areas of Christian Liberty where the Bible gives no specific command (Areas where we are free to make thought out, responsible & wise choices)

- You are <u>responsible</u> for the decisions you make in life.

- Your decisions both <u>reveal</u> your character and <u>form</u> it.

- Your <u>present</u> circumstances are (in large part) a result of your <u>past</u> choices.

- The decisions you must make today may be a result of decisions you made in your past (Our choices can result in a vicious or victorious cycle)

- God is concerned about the details of your life.
  (He cares about the choices you make - Mt 10:30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.)

v. 2
Abraham acquired more wealth during his sojourn to Egypt (12:16, 20b).

v. 3
Abraham returned to Bethel in the land where God wanted him in the first place. He returns to the place where he stopped to worship God (prior to his fiasco in Egypt) (cp. 12:8).

v. 4
"And there Abram called on the name of the LORD" – No mention of Lot calling on God. Abraham no doubt is asking God for direction, for His sovereign leading.

Abraham's devotional life with God would definitely serve as the reason why he would not make a bad decision in the midst of the problem which was about to occur.

Your private devotional life with God is the key to your making right decisions.

We must be walking with God before a crisis, to help us make the right choices during a crisis.

v. 6
Elbow room was tight and (due to the recent famine) green grass was scarce. God providentially allowed a circumstance which would separate Abraham from Lot. God wanted Abraham to leave all family (12:1). He wanted to begin a nation with only Abraham as the Patriarch.

v. 7
God's reference to **"the Canaanite and the Perizzite"** is to further emphasize the fact that there was an increasing shortage of available grazing land. They had taken over the best of Canaan land.

The two sides fought over who would get the better part of the land.

Pressures between the two families paved the way for an important decision to be made.

The abundance of wealth often leads to tension and strife.

Their great abundance resulted in their increase of need.

The abundance of livestock created a need for abundance of water and grass, so they would scrap (fight) for it.

v.1-7 – Pressures and Difficulties often force us to make important decisions:

I. Abram's GOOD CHOICE (v.8-9; 14-18)



A. Abram chose to stay <u>cool</u> & <u>calm</u> and did not make a hasty move (v.8)

"Between me and thee" – Apparently not only were the herdsmen quarreling with each other, but Lot was upset with Abraham. Maybe he was badmouthing his uncle.

v. 8-9
"I pray thee . . . I pray thee" – Notice Abraham's gracious tone of voice; he courteously says "please…please."

When you have strife with someone, how do you respond?

Never make a big decision when you are upset. If you don't have your emotions under control, you will inevitably make bad choices in the heat of a battle.

We need God's Spirit to keep us cool when the situation gets hot, calm when provoked, collected when in chaotic situations which would make us unravel.

"For we are brethren" – Some of our greatest conflicts will come from those closest to us. From family and church friends. It is imperative that we keep our composure, pray for wisdom, and make wise, not hasty decisions when those rough times come.

Abraham decided to be a peacemaker, not a trouble maker (Wiersbe, p. 26). One of the greatest decisions you will ever make is to be a peacemaker (Mt. 5:9; cp. Rom. 12:18).

Abraham's example shows us how to respond to difficult family situations: 1) take the initiative in resolving conflicts; 2) let others have first choice, even if that means not getting what we want; 3) put family peace above personal desires. (Life Application Bible, footnote)

B. Abram chose to <u>graciously</u> & <u>unselfishly</u> offer Lot the land he preferred (v.9)

"Separate thyself . . . from me" – the time had come for Lot to leave "the nest." He had been with Abraham long enough; God wanted them to build their own independent lives and families. As I mentioned before, God had always wanted to work with Abraham all alone (12:1).

"Take your pick"; "You take what you want first and I'll be content with what is left." -- What an unselfish attitude!

Abraham is the perfect example of Phil. 2:3-4 - Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

"As the 'elder statesman' of the camp, Abraham had every right to decide the issue and tell Lot what to do, but he gave Lot first choice" (Wiersbe, p. 28).

Rom. 12:10 - Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

C. Abram chose to <u>trust God</u> with the result of the decision

Implicit through the context is Abraham's trust in God. He seeks God's wisdom and direction in verse 4, and he offers Lot his choice in verse 9, and he decides to leave the results in God's hand.

By offering Lot the choice, Abraham basically relinquishes his control of the situation into God's hands and trusts His providence.

Many times we have to do this. Often we need to wait and let God work things out, let Him open or close doors, rather than forcing an opportunity and manipulatively orchestrating events to our liking.

Abraham let God choose for him.

D. Abram's choice resulted in him receiving <u>God's very best</u> (v.14-18)

v. 14
"Lift up now thine eyes" – While Lot lifted up his own eyes (v. 10), God now encourages Abraham to look at what the Lord would give him.

v. 17
"For I will give it unto thee" – God gives the best to those who leave the choices to Him.

"Lot chose a piece of land which he [eventually] lost, but God gave Abraham the whole land which still belongs to him and his descendents" (Wiersbe, p. 29).

v. 18
"Built . . . an altar" – "Not only did Abraham lift up his eyes and look (Gen. 13:14) and lift up his feet and walk (13:17), but he also lifted up his heart and worshipped God" (Wiersbe, p. 30).



Lot's BAD CHOICE (v.10-13)

A. Lot chose based on what he <u>saw</u> with his <u>eyes</u> (v.10a)

When the "lust of the eyes" governs your choices, you are heading down a path to destruction.

In our lives, we must walk by faith not sight. Seeing is not always worth believing, and things are not always what they seem to be.

Lot should have fallen on his face and begged God for wisdom, but instead he trusted his carnal eyes to direct his choice. Beware of fleshly decisions based on what you see. Pray! So many have married the wrong person because the primary criteria was looks, not character.

"Instead of lifting up his eyes to Heaven, Lot lifted up his eyes to the plain of Jordan and stopped there. . . Abraham had taken Lot out of Egypt, but he could not take Egypt out of Lot" (Wiersbe, p. 28-29).

Beware of choices based on appearance only; what appears to be the best may in fact be the worst!

B. Lot chose based on the prospect of <u>material advantage</u> (Monetary gain)(v.10b)

"It was well watered everywhere" – Not so today!

Today a few springs, like En-Gedi, provide a small oasis here and there, but the majority of that land is hot, dry, barren, and uninhabitable.

"Even as the garden of the Lord" – It was lush and beautiful like the Garden of Eden.

"Just as the tree in the garden of Eden had awakened Eve's desire, so the fertile valley of the Jordan attracted Lot" (Ross, p. 286).

Beware of decisions motivated by coveteousness.

When Lot saw this land, dollar signs flashed into his eyes!

(Decisions that are made primarily on the promise of monetary gain will probably always be bad decisions; Before making the move ask: "is there a good church in town?" "will my ministry be enhanced by the move")

C. Lot chose out of <u>selfish motives</u>, seeking the best <u>for himself</u>.(v.11)

"Lot chose <u>him</u>" – He didn't say: "Abraham, that land looks good, you take it." No, he, with self-interest in mind, chose the best for himself.

1Co 10:24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth.*
Php 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

D. Lot's choice made him vulnerable to making <u>other bad choices</u>. (v.12-13)

v. 12
"Pitched his tent toward Sodom" – Every day Lot woke up, as the sun would rise and shine in his front door. He would open his tent door, and there, staring him in the face, was Sodom.

Lot's bad choice was to pitch toward Sodom, then ended up in Sodom. Where is your life pitched toward? It's not so much where your are but where you are headed. Lot had a **T**ent **V**iew (TV) of Sodom.

Perhaps he didn't initially intend to move into that wicked city, but because he made a choice that would tease and tempt him, Lot would eventually end up in Sodom (14:12).

When it comes to decision-making, one choice often leads to another choice. One bad decision will often pave the way for another bad decision.

First, Lot lifted up his eyes toward Sodom (13:10), then he pitched his tent toward Sodom (13:11-12), and then he finally ended up moving into Sodom (14:12).

v. 13
"Wicked…sinners…exceedingly" – Due to their prideful independence and their moral debauchery, God does not soften His terms in describing them.

It is amazing that a so-called "Christian" element of our country can look so favorably on homosexuality and lesbianism when God describes such a society with such strong terms.

E. Lot's choice negatively affected not only himself, but his entire family (Compare: Genesis 19:14-17; 26; 35-38)

Lot lost it all!

--His vast wealth, herds, herdsmen, and home.

--His wife and sons-in-law

--His daughters to immorality.

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Some fundamental decisions you must make:

You must make a genuine, thought out, conscious decision to…

1. Trust Jesus Christ for your eternal salvation

Acts 16:31 - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house *(implied, if they believe also)*.

2. Surrender your life completely to God's will

Romans 12:1 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

3. Obey the commands and principles that are specifically addressed by the Bible (for the N.T. believer).

Such as…

a. Keeping yourself morally pure (in thought, word & action)

Daniel 1:8 - But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself

Ps 17:3 - I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.

Job 31:1 - I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

b. Communing with God daily

(Bible Reading, Meditation, & Memorization & Prayer)

Joshua 1:8 - This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Lu 18:1 - And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

c. Fellowshipping with God's people regularly

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

d. Husbands loving and leading their wives and families

Col 3:19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

e. Wives submitting to and helping their husbands

Eph.5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife…

f. Children obeying their parents

Eph. 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

g. Being Loving, truthful, sanctified, humble, a good employee etc.