

Making Godly Decisions



*Based on a message preached by Joe Tindall on
Sept. 4, 2010, at Fivepointville, PA*

We have a lot of decisions to make in life, don't we? Individuals have decisions to make. Families have decisions to make. Churches have decisions to make. The very word, "decision," tells you that there is going to be results from your decisions, consequences. "Consequences" is not always negative, even though it has that connotation. It just means when you make a decision, something is going to happen because of your decision. If you choose black, you're going to have black. If you choose white, you are going to have something that is white. Those are the consequences.

Another dynamic moves into that when we become a Christian, because we are not primarily concerned about profit and color, but rather looking to advance with the Lord and draw near to Him. And some of the decisions we have are kind of hard to make, and it can be kind of complicated. I would like to simplify things a little bit, probably an oversimplification, in helping you make a good decision.

Turn to 1 John 3:1-3:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Does the world know you? It doesn't mean to know your name. It means to understand you. The world didn't understand Jesus, and here it says if they don't know your master, they probably won't know the ones who are following the master. They won't understand the decisions you make. They ask, "Why in the world did someone make a decision like that? Why would they leave their business and go to Africa? What are they thinking about? Why is he doing this and that for the Lord; he could be working and making money. Why don't they take vengeance? Why do people let them step on them like that? Why do they do that? I don't understand ..."

They do not understand the child of God, because the goals and desires of the child of God are different. Their priorities are different. Ours goals, desires, hopes, and fears are completely different from theirs. We're not after the same thing that they are after, and certainly not for the same motive.

So our decisions are going to reflect that difference. They have to. If not, something's wrong. Maybe our goals and desires aren't really what we say they are. Maybe we know what they should be, so when somebody asks us, we'll tell them of what our desires *should* be. But our decisions will reflect what our goals and desires *really are*. You can stand back and look at somebody, and if you could gain access to the decisions that they make, you would know what their desires are. Watch them long enough, and you'll know what exactly they are aiming at by the decisions that they make.

Expediency

Brother Paul, the Apostle, gives us a little insight into his life. And he tells us three things that he uses to analyze a problem that comes up when he is making a decision. Maybe it's something to buy, maybe it is something with the direction of the church, maybe it's something personal. But there are three things that he brings to bear on his problems, and I think we'll be wise to do the same thing. He gives things a test, so he can bring these things into his life or put them out of his life. These first of the three tests is, "all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." 1 Co. 10:23

We are going to skip over the whole question of whether a matter is legal or not. Let's assume that Paul was simply clearing the air with his statement. Obviously there are things that are clearly not legal to the Christian, but Paul sweeps the whole question of legality to the side for the moment. He says, "Let's look at this from another viewpoint: is it expedient?"

Expedient is one of the words we have to think about for a moment. When I worked for an electric company, we had people called "expeditors," a word which comes from the word "expedient."

Every electric utility job has a lot of details. You have to notify the traffic control, you have to notify the police, you have to tear up the road, there are all kinds of material to get, you have to maybe build a manhole, and all kinds of things ... just to get the job done. So they have expeditors. The job order would come down on the expeditor's desk, and he has to call for the permits, he has to do this or that to prepare for the job, he has to send somebody to mark off all of the utilities so they do not tear them up when they dig. There are all kinds of materials to order so that everything would be ready on the morning of the job.

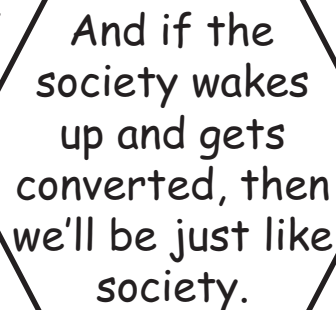
So the expeditor does his job, and you the worker come in the morning and they'll hand you the paper for the job, maybe three weeks to a month after the expeditor first started working on the project. All the workers go to the yard, and all of the material is there in a big clump. They get the men to load it up on a truck, they go to the jobsite and everything is prepared so they can get to work. The expeditor helped them to get the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

In our text, Paul is essentially saying, "I have a goal. I have a destination. I want to get there. And I want to ask you concerning this thing, 'Is partaking in this thing going to be expedient for us as a congregation?'"

Then, we have to back up and ask ourselves. "Wait a minute. What is our goal? What are we trying to do? What is our calling? Is this thing we are considering really expedient; is it going to help us? Is it going to help us to move in the right direction? If it is, bring it on!"

Habits, music, whatever ... is it expedient to take it, or to leave it? Some things are being taken away from the church and we're just letting them go. Can we just drop things because it doesn't fit in today's society? Ask yourself. It is not a question if it is legal or not legal. It is a question if it is going to work. Is that really what we're about?

Is our calling to blend in and not be radical, not be extreme, not to be noticed? We do not want to put a yellow band on our sleeves so that people will know that we are "separate." That is not what we're talking about. We're talking about our calling. What are we going to be in this society? We are not called to be artificially different, but we are called to goals and desires and a direction that is going to make us separate. It is not our business to try to artificially get different, but it is our business to get serious with what God has for His people, and being conformed into His image. And if the society wakes up and gets converted, then we'll just be like society.



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What?! Neither here nor there?!

The question is whether the thing we are considering is expedient to the goal. Is it consistent with the goals that He has here for us? Or do we have to skip a few verses when we read the Bible because we don't want to put them to practice? We think, "If we ever took that thing serious, people would mock us. They would say, 'You don't even make sense! That is awful to do something like that!'"

Beware the "never-never" land of "neither here nor there"! Beware, I tell you, of that land! You know what I mean, when folks say, "Well, it doesn't help, but it doesn't hurt either."

Pilgrims, you do not have the luxury to load your life up with things that are "neither here nor there." When Paul talks, he talks about walking circumspectly, he talks about diligence, he talks about pressing, he talks about the race, he talks about a fight. Circumspectly means looking all around, taking all things into consideration.

So if you are wandering around, making a lot of decisions that are "neither here nor there," guess what your life is going to be? It is going to be "neither here nor there"! That will happen because it lacks direction. Folks like that end up saying, "Well, we'll take this, it is not illegal. Bring that in, too. Bring the other thing in, and take this out, it is neither here nor there."

Beware of that "neither here nor there" land!

The giveaway question

It's kind of interesting when people come in for counsel sometimes. They come in and they say things like, "My car is broken down. I need to buy another car. It is this model, and that color and has these options. And it will cost this much. Do you think that will be alright?"

The question "Do you think that will be alright?" is what you call "a giveaway." What do I mean by "a giveaway?" It shows that we are not approaching things as we ought to be approaching them. We are saying, "Do you think I am going to 'get away with this' in the church? Is anybody going to have a problem with this?" If the person who asks that question didn't think that one of their brothers would be grieved by his decision, he probably wouldn't be asking the question. Sometimes all people are trying to do is to get somebody to say "yes" to something that they haven't looked at from the standpoint of expediency.

Because nobody, me included, wants to tell somebody "no." We don't like to do that. Well, let God tell you no. And



Beware of that "neither here nor there" land!

one of the ways that He does that is by putting that uncertainty in your mind. He gets us thinking, “You know, there is just something about this that I think that maybe some of the brethren would have a problem with.” Would that question in your mind be sufficient for you to understand that God is saying “no”? Is letting God lead you in that way “legality”? I don’t think it is. I think that’s giving your life for your brother! You are not a solo bird. What we do affects one another.

Do you know that when you spend your time on things that don’t have a positive good, you just fill your life and waste your time? You only have so much energy, you only have so much time, and if you spend it on nonessentials and on those things that “are neither here or there,” they are just there to make you feel good and pass your time. And that certainly is not expedient! Time is one of the most precious commodities that you have, and if you use your time on things that are questionably legal—you know, “I can do it because it doesn’t make any difference”—you are fooling yourself! Time makes a difference. Time you can write a letter. Time you can make a phone call. Time you can make a visit. Time you can meditate. Time you can read. Time you can pray. Time to do many things that other people (who are complaining “I don’t have time”) only wish they could do.

You have 24 hours in the day, just like it was from the creation to now. It is just a question on how you decide to use your time. If you’re out there and you have a computer and you run it for some information, that is perfectly “legal” ... and it is fun to read this, and it’s fun to do that, and it’s fun to communicate with these other people. Then you end up consoling yourself by saying, “I didn’t realize that two hours have gone by; but after all it is not “illegal.” I didn’t do anything that was really bad or anything, I just frittered some of my time that God gave me. Oh, I want to write to that sister; she asked for prayer and I want to write her an encouraging note. Well, I’ll have to do that tomorrow maybe ...”

We need to be proactive in our decisions. I mean, not sit back and wait until situations happen, then trying to solve the situation. I read a sign one time in which I think there is an application in a Christian’s life. It said, “Don’t sit back and let circumstances happen, go out and happen the circumstances.” What it means is go out and make things happen the way things should be happening. It is like maintenance on your truck or car. Go check to see if the oil is up where it should be. Go check to see if everything is right where it should be in your personal life right now. Don’t wait until things are falling apart and then start trying to fix them.

It is like the Uzza and the ark. They had the ark on the cart, with the oxen pulling. They were so happy and rejoicing, and they were getting blessed ... they were so blessed

that they were doing this. They got their idea from the Philistines ... they thought it would work. It did work for the Philistines! But what the Philistines wanted to do is to get rid of God. So the Philistines put the ark on the cart, and put some gold items on the cart. It worked beautifully; it got rid of God.

When the Israelites saw it, they saw that the cart carried the ark. Maybe they thought, “Hey, the guys won’t get sore shoulders carrying the ark, and an ox and a cart are clean things. There are all kinds of benefits for using a cart to carry the ark.” So they made a cart too, and put the ark on. Well, the ox stumbles, and behold, the ark is going down, the ark of God! Perhaps they remembered, “Do not touch the ark,” but the ox stumbles and the ark begins to fall and Uzza is there.

What is he going to do, stand back and let it fall in the mud, or is he going to save it from falling? Why not save it from falling? Why not let it go? Perhaps he reasoned, “But if I let it go, we will have to pick it up anyways.”

The whole problem was that they copied from the Philistines. Be careful on how you made your decisions and where you get your ideas from. Don’t be fooled by the fact that when the Philistines carted the ark, they were carrying the ark away; and it worked. But if you try to bring it home, you have to do it God’s way.

Building up, or tearing down?

“All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” Edify means to build up, profitable for our goal, to build up in our faith, to make stronger, to enlarge. Is it edifying ... that activity that we are planning? Recreation can be a good thing if it is done in a good way. It renews the body and mind. Let’s take a look at it though. Is it going to build up spiritually, and not just be a time of “having fun”? Is it going to build the wrong thing?

If you have to compromise some other principles so that we can have recreation, that is not edification. That is shrinking, tearing down. Maybe the activity will encourage an undesired boy-girl relationship. Or, maybe have the girls moving in indecent ways or bouncing off the boys when they go for the volleyball. There is nothing inherently wrong with exercising and enjoying it. But let’s look at recreation closer. Are we doing our recreation with that idea called “neither here nor there”? If we are, remember there is no such thing as “neither here nor there.”

We all want to edify each other in love. We can say that pretty easy; but does our decision say it? The decisions in our life are saying if that is true. We want to build up, and we refuse to pay spiritual prices to get something fleshly.

Power to lay it down

Let's turned back to 1 Corinthians 6:12; there is one more point. We use "expedient" and "edify" to help make our decisions. But let's look now at "but I will not be brought under the power of any." It is not enough that it is "legal"—and might be expedient and edifying—but does this thing have the tendency to put me under its power?

Liberty can be defined as when you pick something up, you can also put it down. When you are in bondage, you can pick it up, but you can't let it go. Where is your liberty if you only can pick things up, but you can't put them down for your brother or sister or your wife or children? You are not experiencing liberty! You are experiencing the worst kind of bondage, because it is a spiritual bondage. I'm not talking about great big things, about earth-shattering things.

"Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak ... and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" 1 Co. 8:9,10 Paul's conclusion is, "If therefore meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh as long as the world standeth."

We can ask, "Didn't he have the liberty to eat meat?" Of course he did! Let's subject the question to these three criteria: it was expedient for him, it would edify him ... but if he insisted on this "liberty," wasn't he under its power? When you sin against a brother and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ!

We have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated to the kingdom of His dear Son. If a decision requires the shades to be pulled down in our lives, you ought to put a big question mark on that thing. If it is something you are going to do that requires secrecy—darkness, undercover—it's a good indication that something is wrong. Take a look: What I am going to do, can it be done openly and freely before my brothers and sisters and before God?

If you are in the house and you pull down the blinds, what does it do? It keeps you from looking out, as well as others looking in. When you start operating in darkness, you are cutting off your perception of what's going on around you. And, you just cut off a valuable input in your life. If you do it enough, pretty soon you will be an island.

May God bless your decision-making! ~

He who sows justice makes an offering to God.
—Mark Felix (2nd-century Christian)