

Proverbs- Making Wise Decisions, 7/15/18

We love the ocean. Sometimes if you look out on the horizon far enough you will see blinking lights, especially at night. Kids ask what are those? **Buoys**...What are they for? This is when you kind of make something up... Something to do with ships... I've since come to find out. Buoys have several purposes. They Mark a channel to help ships safely navigate into a harbor without bottoming out. Also buoys can be used to mark out danger- a hidden shipwreck or submerged iceberg that could tear up the hull, still other buoys are used to detect sudden changes in undersea water pressure that could result in Tsunamis. You can see why buoys would be so critical for navigation out in the open water.

Sometimes navigating life can feel like open water. **We have to make all kinds of decisions.** 35,000 conscious decisions a day. Some decisions are pretty simple and straightforward. Should I brush my teeth today? Kids, the answer is always yes. Many are very straightforward in Scripture. Should I love my neighbor, share my faith, avoid explicit sin. Yes...but other decisions are not so straightforward, they are more like open water. Should I get married? Who should I marry? Should I join this church or that one? Should I take this job? Pursue this career? Move to this place? Buy this house? Or it's not so much a yes or no, but a decision of when or how. When should I make a change? When should I retire? How should I approach this difficult health decision? God hasn't left us in the open waters. God has given us buoys in the open waters to help us navigate life's decisions wisely, so that we don't shipwreck our lives. Our anchor verse...pun intended...is Proverbs 3:5-6. Many of us have memorized this passage.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Illustration- two sturdy volunteers. Lean on them...Remember week 1, it all comes back to the fear of the Lord. Taking in the bigness and the goodness of God. You are God I am not. God is saying, you place your trust in me, you lean into me, you make me the authority of your life, and I will help you navigate the open waters. In the book of Proverbs, God gives us buoys to make wise decisions.

5 Buoys to Navigate Decisions Wisely

Buoy #1 The Foundation of God's Revealed Will

Proverbs 8:33-36- God's wisdom is speaking

Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life

and receive favor from the Lord. But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death.

Q: What biblical principles should inform my decision?

-The Bible isn't going to tell you whether you should marry your girlfriend. But it will tell you what to look for. Someone of character and inner beauty- Prov. 31. Someone who knows the Lord- 1 Corinthians 7:39

-The Bible isn't going to tell you whether you should leave this job and pursue another one, but it will tell you, Colossians 3:23, to work hard at whatever you do as unto the Lord. 1 Cor. 10:31 whatever you do, do to the glory of God. Prov. 10:9 Make sure your career has integrity and isn't contributing to crookedness.

Buoy #2 The Counsel of the Holy Spirit

One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to cross-examine our hearts and motives. One of the mottos of our pop-culture that if you are on social media you will see given as advice over and over again is "Follow your heart." You will hear it in pop songs- Band Roxette from the 80s, Listen to your Heart...don't pretend, you know you like that song. Selena Gomez- The heart wants what it wants. The problem with this advice is that it's bad.

Proverbs 16:1-3

To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

Our hearts will deceive us. Our heart can be a code word for selfishness, fear, lust, retribution...our hearts are idol factories. Do not blindly follow your heart, that is a recipe to shipwreck your life.

Instead we must weigh our motives, weigh our plans and desires on God's scales. If you are a Christian, you have been given the Holy Spirit. John 16, the Spirit is our teacher, counselor. We must ask the Spirit as David did in Psalm 139, to test and examine us. We must learn to invite him into our decisions. I call this prinking... praying and thinking...I do a lot of this. It is a constant dialogue with the Spirit of speaking and listening. Of requesting and silence. In big decisions I will do prayer walks.

Q: Have I asked the Spirit to examine the motives of my heart?

Buoy #3 The Tutor of Past Experience

Proverbs 14:8

The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.

“ways” in Proverbs are well-worn paths...patterns. If we want to make wise decisions in our lives we need to give careful thought... evaluate the patterns of our lives. The prudent sees the connection between the past patterns and experiences and the present. That the past is the best indicator of our present. That our present is the best indicator of our future. That all of life is connected. The patterns, habits and decisions in your past explain quite well your present life and circumstances. In contrast, “Fools are self-deceived.” See fools believe their past is disconnected from their present and future. Doesn’t pay attention to ways, regardless of current habits or patterns they think something good will happen.

We are really good at deceiving ourselves. Every addiction, every bad habit, every bad decision begins with self-deception. I can stop whenever I want, not a big deal, No one will know, this won’t hurt anyone.

Proverbs 26:11

As a dog returns to its vomit so fools repeat their folly.

There is a myth out there that wisdom=experience.. This just isn’t true. Experience can equal foolishness, a dulled conscience and self-deception. **Wisdom=evaluated experience.**

If you keep quitting your jobs to find something better, or because you aren’t happy, relational issues- you may be the common denominator. Have you evaluated why this keeps happening? If you are moving from city to city or from relationship to relationship have you evaluated? In your marriage, the last time you responded that way to your husband or wife...If the last time you made that kind of investment it didn’t work out. If you are thinking about leaving another church...Some of us are in a never-ending cycle of repeating folly. Time to deal with that baggage.

Q: In light of my past experience what lessons have I learned?

Buoy #4 The Clarity of Time

Proverbs 19:2

Desire without knowledge is not good—how much more will hasty feet miss the way!

Proverbs 21:5

The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.

How many of you ever regret making a hasty decision? Turn to your neighbor and tell them your biggest, deepest regret.

-Salespeople know this and many of them make a living off of it. I will make you a deal but it’s only good if you don’t walk out that door.

-FOMO- We are sometimes deceived into thinking, if I don't act now I will never get another chance. Occasionally this is true, but more often than not, being hasty doesn't pay off.

Do you have all the facts?

Proverbs 18:17

The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.

Sometimes we don't do our homework.

Ill of my Macbook.

Ask a lot of questions! When in doubt, wait. Fool rush in...and fools rush out. Fools rush in and out of relationships, in and out of jobs, in and out of churches, in and out of investments...

Q: Is the pressure of time forcing you to make a premature decision?

Buoy #5 The Honesty of Community.

Proverbs 11:14

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.

Proverbs 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

We talk about this all the time, in fact it is one of our values, that we are designed to live in community. Isolation is a breeding ground for bad decisions. In isolation we get weird, we get twisted, we are self-deceived. If you don't have people who know you and love you anyway, that's a problem. Now wisdom and direction for decisions is not just found in numbers of advisers but in their quality.

Proverbs 13:20

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

You can have lots of foolish advisers and do we not tend to want to surround ourselves with people who will agree or justify our bad decisions and opinions? Get with people who know you, Get with people that you know will tell you the truth, That have lived longer, studied the Bible more than you and aren't afraid or intimidated by you, and those who have weight in your life, authority...pastors. And get them together. If you can get three or four people like that together and share with them what you are thinking about doing? You are setting yourself up for success. And then listen carefully to what they say.

Proverbs 10:17

Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.

If everyone seems to be uncomfortable with the decision, don't think you are the exception to the rule.

Ill- Mom at the beach, warning signs.

Q: What is the collective counsel of my community?

5 Buoys to Navigate Decisions Wisely

- 1) The Foundation of God's Revealed Will
- 2) The Counsel of the Holy Spirit
- 3) The Tutor of Past Experience
- 4) The Clarity of Time
- 5) The Honesty of Community.

All comes back to Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

What would happen if the captain of a ship said, "Forget the buoys, I know better. I don't trust those." He would be putting himself, his crew and cargo in danger. Are we in danger of shipwrecking? Many Christians are willing to trust God with their eternity but not for their today. Does God know what is better for my life or do I? But I'm tired of waiting...Does God know better? But I really love him...Does God know better? But I'm scared and anxious...Does God know better?

Jesus with disciples- John 14...anxious...do you trust me with your lives?