

What Should I Do...?

by Dennis Tucker

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Spiritual "equipment" for the contest of life.

Introduction

In my years of preaching I have faced the following scenario many times. A member calls and wants to talk. We get together and he is distressed, maybe to the point of despair. Something is wrong in his life and he just does not know what to do. After telling me of the situation, he wants to know what he should do. Problems such as a couple having trouble working out marital difficulties, children that are out of control, financial stress, in-laws interfering, parents that need help, sibling rivalry, divisiveness among brethren, depression, drug abuse, and a host of other problems are often heard. The common theme is that they feel as if God and everybody else have forsaken them.

I can understand the need to ask for help. People sometimes need a different and fresh perspective and want an objective viewpoint. Yet many times they want the impossible. Many want an answer that inflicts no pain and/or requires little effort on their part. In most situations I have sympathy toward those that face difficult and heart rending decisions. In some cases they have been placed in bad circumstances due to no fault of their own—like Joseph sold into slavery, lied about by Potiphar’s wife, and forgotten in prison. In other cases, they may be like Pharaoh who hardened his heart and caused Egypt to suffer through ten plagues. They themselves have made decisions which brought about their plight.

This series of lessons is intended to do the following: examine the Scriptures so as to avoid problems and to correct the ones we have. Mark Twain said, “We must learn from the mistakes of others for we do not have time to make all of them ourselves.”

Bad decisions will cause us to suffer. I want to encourage us to make the same good decisions that other children of God made in times past. Remember, the best solution is to make the right choice to start with. Sometimes we do make bad decisions and must make the best out of a bad situation. In that case there is usually a price to be paid; but if we are willing to pay that price, things will get better.

I hope these studies provide a source of encouragement, stimulate your mind, and build up your faith. Beware that most solutions are not painless and almost all will require effort on our part. Life is not always fair, but it can be lived, with eternity in mind.

–Dennis Tucker

Table of Contents

What Should I Do...

	<i>Page</i>
Lesson 1 When I Have Made Bad Decisions.....	6
Lesson 2 When I Have Sinned.....	10
Lesson 3 When I Have A Recurring Sin.....	13
Lesson 4 When I Cannot Forgive Myself.....	16
Lesson 5 When I Am Depressed.....	19
Lesson 6 When I See Christians Not Living Right Part 1.....	24
Lesson 7 When I See Christians Not Living Right Part 2.....	28
Lesson 8 If My Spouse Wants A Divorce, Or I Do.....	31
Lesson 9 When I Lack Confidence.....	35
Lesson 10 When I Am Discouraged.....	38
Lesson 11 When I Am Angry Or Someone Else Is.....	43
Lesson 12 When A Loved One Dies.....	47
Lesson 13 When I Do Not Know What To Do.....	50

What Should I Do...

WHEN I HAVE MADE BAD DECISIONS

Lesson 1

Each decision we make impacts our life. Some such as where we eat for lunch or what to wear today may have a very limited impact. Others will change our life forever. Let me give you an example. A young preacher decides to preach for a congregation in Southern Indiana as opposed to preaching in Florida or Kentucky. One day as he enters the church building he is introduced to a young lady that happens to be visiting some relatives. A day later he is invited to dinner and spends the evening talking with the young lady. The next day he is to play mixed doubles in tennis and needs a partner. She accepts his invitation to play tennis. She invites him to visit her family in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He flies out to spend some time with this new friend and her family. Eventually he asks her to marry him. She accepts and they become husband and wife. A number of years later they have three children, a house, cars, and a life built together. It all started that first Sunday at the church building and the first decision to have dinner at her relative's house. How different life would have been if he had preached somewhere else. What would have happened if she had not come back to visit?

We cannot see the end result of our decisions at the time we are making them. Do you remember the Broadway play about a man who sold his soul to the devil? Satan promised this man the ability to play baseball for the New York Yankees. He left his home to go and play ball. The team starts winning and everything seems well. However, he started to face temptations that he had never known before. Satan reminds the man that his soul belongs to him. As the season starts to wind down, the man realizes the devil now has his soul and he looks for a way out. Many a person has made decisions to serve Satan.

There are a lot of people looking for a way out of their bad and often hasty decisions. They are unhappy in their marriage and want a way out. A young lady is pregnant, not married, and wants to know what to do. What is her way out?

Consider the following questions and their related passages.

1. List some bad decisions people make in the following areas:
 - a. Dating –
 - b. Marriage –

...That Make Up Our Lives

- c. Work –
 - d. Finances –
 - e. Recreation –
 - f. Children –
 - g. Entertainment –
2. What choice did Cain make when he offered his sacrifice toward God? Genesis 4:4-5; Hebrews 11:4.
 3. What warning and encouragement did God give Cain in Genesis 4:7?
 4. What decision did Cain make in regard to his brother?
 5. What were the consequences of Cain's decisions? Genesis 4:11-12.
 6. Was this fair? Before you answer, consider Cain's reaction in verses 13 and 14 and God's reaction in verse 15.
 7. What unwise decision did Esau make? Genesis 25:29-34.
 8. What problems did this create between Esau and Jacob?
 9. Could the consequences of this decision have been avoided once the decision was made? Hebrews 12:14-17.
 10. Was this fair? If not, why not?

Answering the Questions...

11. What did God want Israel to do as they entered Canaan? Deuteronomy 7:1-2.

12. What trick did the inhabitants of Gibeon play on Joshua and Israel? Joshua 9:3-10.

13. What mistake did the men of Israel make? Why? Joshua 9:11-15.

14. What consequences did the people of Gibeon face? verses 21, 27.

15. What did this bring on the children of Israel? Deuteronomy 7:16.

16. David decided to stay in Jerusalem at the time his men were out in battle, 2 Samuel 11. David made a number of bad decisions. What decisions were made in the following passages?
 - a. 2 Samuel 11:2-3 –
 - b. 2 Samuel 11:4 –
 - c. 2 Samuel 11:6-13—
 - d. 2 Samuel 11:14-15 –

17. What were the consequences of those decisions?
 - a. 2 Samuel 12:10-11
 - b. 2 Samuel 12:14a
 - c. 2 Samuel 12:14b, 19

18. Was this fair?

19. What heartaches did David face in the future? See 2 Samuel chapters 13, 15, and 18.

...That Make Up Our Lives

20. What decision did the young man make in Luke 15:12-13?

21. What consequences did he face in verses 14 and 16?

22. What decision did he make in verses 17-19?

23. Was this fair?

24. Promises are made voluntarily, Ecclesiastes 5:4-6. Are we obligated to keep those promises? Are there situations where we should break a promise?

APPLICATION:

A lady has been married a few years and is unhappy. Her husband is not providing for the family as she desires, and she is tired of his ways. She exclaims, "I just cannot live any longer with that man!" What should she understand, and what should she do?

You decide to sell your car, baseball card collection, house, etc. A friend makes you an offer and you accept but have not actually made the transaction. In the meantime somebody else offers you twice as much. What should you do?

A young lady, who is a Christian, calls with a problem. She is not married and is pregnant. She had planned on going to college but a baby jeopardizes her plans. What should she do?