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Series: Wisdom for your Summer

Title: Wise Decisions

Text(s): Proverbs 14:16, 4:26-27, 18:13, 16:2, 11:14, 18:1, 14:15, 27:12, 16:9, 3:5-6

Good morning, great to be with you this morning. Guests, thank you for joining us today. I hope that as you get to know and worship with us, our church can feel a bit like home to you. Just reminding you that beginning August 10<sup>th</sup>, we will have two services - 8:30 am and 11 am. We are excited about this decision because it provides us the opportunity to offer more parking, more seats, and more opportunities for you to serve. This move allows us to continue growing in hospitality as we seek to be a church that is available and ready to serve our community. We can't do that if all our seats are full.

As we think about changes like adding a service, it reminds us that life is full of decisions.

Some people have said that...

*"Life is a matter of choices, and every choice you make makes you." – John Maxwell*

*"Our lives are fashioned by our choices. First, we make our choices, then our choices make us." – Anne Frank*

*"The decisions you make today determine the story you tell tomorrow." – Craig Groeschel*

Wow, each quote reminds us that the decisions we make have significant power in our lives. No matter how big or small, our decisions have a way of shaping the course of our lives for better or worse. And considering the average person makes somewhere around 35,000 decisions every day, from what we eat to when we sleep to what we focus on and everything in between, I would say how we make decisions is really important.

So, how does wisdom inform our decision-making? Wisdom says we should make decisions with care. Proverbs 14:16 says, *"One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless."* There is a certain level of care that we should take with all decisions, which is why I have created a framework from Proverbs that can help us make wise decisions.

### **1. Is this decision biblical?**

This is the first question we should ask – does the Bible permit or prohibit me from making this decision? Proverbs 4:26-27 says, *"Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil."*

In other words, take a careful look at your life, where you are and where you are headed; for your decisions shape the direction of your life. If it is sinful, by that I mean it is a sin against

God, myself, or someone else, the simple answer is “Turn your foot away from evil.” Go a different direction, Solomon says.

But sometimes in life, we face morally neutral decisions – these decisions are neither inherently good nor bad, but require us to make a choice. It’s like being at a crossroads, and we have to go right or left, but can’t go both. Neither are inherently sinful, but we have to make a decision.

Consider this:

## **2. Do I know enough to act wisely, or am I reacting?**

Sometimes we make decisions without having all the necessary facts, or we base a decision on assumptions. Proverbs would say in 18:13, *“He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”* In every decision, it is wise for us to pause and collect as many facts as we can, so we are prepared to make an informed decision.

So often, we follow emotions or feelings, and that is helpful at times. However, we need to be careful that we don’t allow our feelings to overshadow the facts. A new car, for example - don’t let the excitement of a new car lead you to unnecessary debt you cannot afford.

## **3. What motives are driving my decision?**

Am I being led by fear, pride, or guilt? Or is this decision driven by faith, love, generosity, etc.? Here, a wise decision requires that we name what is really driving this decision, and we do that by taking it to God and asking Him to reveal our motives. Proverbs 16:2 says, *“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the Spirit.”*

Motives can be tricky. We can think that we have pure motives, and yet, not realize that this decision is being driven by impure desires. What motives are driving your decision – is it to be liked, promoted, accepted, impressed, or to be loved? These things aren’t inherently bad. It is not bad to be liked, loved, accepted, or promoted. It is bad, however, if we make poor decisions to gain those things.

Cheating, stealing, compromising boundaries for these things is not just unwise, but also unhealthy, and it will cost you.

So, take your decision to the Lord and ask Him to reveal your motives.

## **4. Have I sought wise counsel?**

We should all have a community of people around us to help us make wise decisions! This is one of the greatest benefits of being in a church, especially one that is multigenerational. Proverbs 11:14 says, *“Where there is no guidance the people fall. But in an abundance of counselors there is victory.”* In 18:1, Solomon continues, *“He who separates himself seeks his own desire. He quarrels against all sound wisdom.”*

Wise people have wise people around them to help them make wise decisions. We should all have a “community of wisdom” around us. And this community needs to be diverse. We need people in this community who don’t always think exactly like us. Far too many people build their community with people who will just confirm their thinking. But what value is that? We need people that we trust to say, “That seems like a poor decision,” or “Don’t do that.”

Young folks – you need some people in your community who are older than you and who have more life experience. It blows me away when people make decisions based on the advice of their friends. It’s not that your friends are wrong, but they have no more wisdom or experience in life than you do!

To my mature folks – you need young people in your life who can help you navigate the changes in life and make wise decisions, and not just give in to scams that show up on your phone or email. You need someone who can say, “Do not buy that lie.”

Wise decisions require wise community.

## **5. What are the consequences of this decision?**

Every decision, good or bad, has consequences. Even for Christians who live under grace, we still have to face the consequences of our decisions. We may be forgiven, but consequences remain. Proverbs 14:15, *“The naïve believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps.”* Further, 27:12 says, *“A prudent man sees evil and hides himself, the naïve proceed and pay the penalty.”*

Think about it this way - “What am I going to have to live with because of this decision?” After we have made the decision, wisdom is making the next decision to take responsibility for the consequences of those decisions. Listen to this very carefully - we are not victims of our circumstances, but we are products of the decisions we make in the circumstances given. In life, we are all presented with circumstances, and with every circumstance we have the ability to decide what we do with it.

## **6. What has the past taught me?**

I have always believed that the past is the greatest indicator of the future. What have past decisions taught you about yourself and God? If we are willing to listen, each decision is a mentor for future decisions. For every decision reveals who we trust, what we value, and where we place our hope.

What has the past taught you? What have you learned, and how does that inform your decision today? Proverbs 16:9 says, *“The heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”* How have you seen God show up and chart your path? Overcome obstacles, navigate you through difficult waters, provide at just the right moment, etc.

After seeking truth, facts, motives, and counsel, eventually we come to a moment of action. And this is where many of us pause. Why? Because doing the wise thing still requires courage.

It requires trust – trust that God will meet us in the unknown. What if we make the wrong call? What if we regret this decision later? Which brings us to the final step:

## **7. Just make a decision and trust God.**

Sometimes the best decision is to just do something. One of the best books on making decisions according to God's Will is Kevin DeYoung's book, *Just Do Something*. The whole concept of the book is that we don't need to wait for a sign, special word, or perfect peace to act – just live wisely, obey Scripture, seek counsel, and trust God's sovereignty. Then... just do something. Just make a decision and trust God with the outcome.

In other words, live by Proverbs 3:5-6 that says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."*

Listen, God is in the business of making crooked paths straight. When we live for Him, we make decisions, and God has a way of helping those decisions align with His will. We make a decision and then choose to do what is probably the hardest thing for us to do – trust God by surrendering to Him.

Okay, I know that is a lot to consider when life only gives you a few seconds to decide. And, while major life choices deserve that level of care, we don't always have that luxury. So, here is a simplified version – a 30-second decision filter to help us move forward with wisdom and faith.

Consider these three questions:

**1. Is it right (God's word, my motives)?**

**2. Is it wise (facts, counsel, past lessons)?**

**3. Can I trust God with the outcome (act in faith, not fear)?**

Of course, we won't always get it right – we're human. But here's the good news: your life is not defined by perfect decisions. It's defined by God's perfect love and His decision to call you His own.

So, every decision we make flows from this truth: God loves you, He wants the best for you, He will show up for you, He will not let you fall, and, even when we make a poor decision, He stands ready to help make your crooked paths straight. Remember this: God is faithful, and your foundation is secure in Christ!