

Character Helps

To help encourage each other to practice good character monthly so that we, and all those whose lives we touch, may experience its valuable benefits.

April 2001

Thoughts ⇨ Actions ⇨ Habits ⇨ Character ⇨ Destiny

Decisiveness

"The ability to recognize key factors and finalize difficult decisions."

I WILL...

Not look back

Looking back keeps our focus distracted. We are to live in the present, with an eye to the future. Focusing on the past distracts us from the purposes and blessings God has for us today. Sometimes the past holds memories of hurt and pain. It may be difficult to forgive, forget and let go. But with God's wisdom and healing we can look back at the past through His grace, power and mercy. Accepting God's wisdom and healing can set us free and enable us to redirect our focus from the past to the present and future.

Do what I say

To be a person of your word is important to you, others and the Lord. It is key to being worthy of trust - of enabling others to confidently proceed on the basis of their trust in your words and actions. Make it a habit of accomplishing what is expected of you. Say what you mean, then mean what you say. The Bible says, let your yes be yes and your no be no. This practice alone can mend and strengthen relationships, and can enable others who depend on your words and actions to be more peaceful and effective. Practice this "I will" and you will become a person who is trustworthy.

Make the right decision and stick to it

Making the right decision is not always easy. Once the right decision is made it is not always easy to carry it out. It is always right to do right. To make and implement the right decision we must have wisdom and strength. Ultimately, wisdom comes only from God. Seeking His wisdom will lead us to make right decisions. And asking strength of Him will give us the grace (power) to carry through with those decisions, however difficult they may be.

Look at things from more than one point of view before making up my mind

"See both sides." That is a familiar saying. What does it mean? This is especially important in relationships in the home. So often we make decisions based solely on how things will affect us personally. Seeing both sides means asking the question, "how will this decision affect my family, my friends, my co-worker, others?" Seeing a situation from a different perspective gives understanding and insight to help make the right decision. In choosing to look at differing points of view, don't forget to ask God to see things from His all-knowing perspective.

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"If any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

James 1:5

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Not give in to peer pressure.

Peer pressure and peer dependency can appeal strongly to desires for personal acceptance and gain, but giving in to their appeal can very seriously degrade the quality of our decisions, actions, and their consequences. To make a good and right decision it is wise to seek counsel from people of varying ages. Often with age and experiences comes wisdom. It is also wise to reflect

back on your own experiences. When you have personally passed beyond a situation and look back through the eyes of experience, you can often see how making a different choice would have brought a better result: "hind sight is 20/20." Most importantly, it is wise to seek the counsel of God, who not only can provide wisdom for good and right decisions, but can also provide good solutions for personal acceptance.

Decisiveness in Nature



The badger is a member of the weasel family. It is a fierce fighter and has few natural enemies. Its only real threat is man. Although only thirty inches long,

the badger can be a serious hindrance to farmers. With two-inch claws it has the ability to dig itself out of sight in ninety seconds. The badger digs burrows in the pasture to store food. The intention of the badger is not to harm the

sheep or other animals but to prepare a place of safety to protect himself. The burrows dug by the badger would not be a problem were it not for the small holes left when it decides to surface. Sheep, cows or other animals break their leg when stepping into these small holes. When discovered by farmers, the badger saves its life by its decisiveness: it darts into a burrow or, if none is accessible, digs itself out of sight in seconds. At the first safe opportunity it then vacates that location and moves on to another area in which to dig its burrows.

Decisiveness in History

It is decisiveness that brought our forefathers to America. It is decisiveness that led to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Sometimes decisiveness means we must be willing to strive against all odds. Exclaimed Patrick Henry at the convention of Virginia, "...Our brethren are already in the field. Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen would have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet,

as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" What decisiveness! What in our life is worth dying for? Make a decision to live for Christ, and realize to die to self for Him is gain.



Decisiveness in Daily Life

At Home

The quality of decisiveness - the quality of wisdom, promptness and resolution in decision-making - can bless and preserve the home. So many things press in on families of today. Choosing decisively to make the practice of good character a priority will eliminate many of the conflicts, and will contribute to considerate and peaceful resolution of the rest of them. Deciding as a family what is important will encourage time commitments that will promote unity in the home and effectiveness in the lives of family members.

At Work

The workplace needs people who are decisive - who are wise, prompt and resolute in decision-making. Managers, owners, employees, customers, suppliers, family members - all will benefit greatly by people in the workforce who practice good character! By people - Who make the right decisions and stick to them! Who do what they say! Who don't get distracted with the past but stay focused on the present and future! Who don't give in to unwise pressures! Decisive people in the workplace can create significant benefits for many. Choose to be a person who is decisive.

At Church

Occasions for decisiveness begin with a choice. Joshua had a choice. (Joshua 24:15).

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Joshua was decisive. He chose wisely and resolutely; he obeyed the Lord decisively. He also encouraged others to decide to obey the Lord. Obey the Lord decisively, and encourage others to benefit by doing the same.

In the Community

Responsibility is an important aspect of good character. Look around you today. What is your responsibility to those who live around you? When you see responsibilities and accept them, you will have decisions to make. When these occasions arise, be decisive - wise, prompt and resolute in decision-making - and thereby be a positive benefit to people who live around you. As Christians, we can be "movers" and "shakers" in our area of responsibility and influence, by being responsible and decisive. Make a difference in your sphere of influence. Be a decisive Mover and Shaker.

Decisiveness

Decisiveness in the Heart

Decisiveness encompasses the notions of promptness (as contrasted with procrastination) and firmness, resolution and determination. Implied also is the notion of wisdom - of choosing the highest and best goal, and the best means of attaining it. Decisiveness - wisdom, promptness and firmness in making decisions - is, at its core for the Christian, a matter of the heart. It is therefore very important. *

"Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless do, but as wise (sensible, intelligent) people, making the very most of the time (buying up each opportunity) because the days are evil. Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:15-17, Amplified Bible)

First we are to be wise - seeking the highest and best goal, and the best means for accomplishing it. Clearly the starting place for our wisdom is to be our attitude of respect, awe and humility before the Lord (Proverbs 9:10). Being infinite in knowledge (Psalms 139, Proverbs 15:3) and wisdom (Job 36:5), He knows everything about me, all the possible alternatives to my decision,

"He knows everything about me, all the possible alternatives to my decision, and the outcomes of choosing each."

and the outcomes of choosing each. Moreover, He loves me deeply (John 3:16, John 14:21, Zephaniah 3:17-18) and has plans "to prosper me and not harm me, plans to give me hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). And, out of His deep love for me He invites me to ask Him for His wisdom whenever I am not sure of His will:

"If any one of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him."

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord." (James 1:5-8.)

He promises to give me wisdom generously if I ask for it, but only on the condition that I am single-minded in my devotion to Him and commitment to follow His wisdom whatever it may be. He may provide it through His Word, the Holy Spirit, counselors, circumstances, and/or other means, (e.g. the celebration of the sacra-

"God is the rightful owner of everything, including my life and all of my resources..."

ments [Roman Catholic], but He will keep His promise. By not asking Him when I don't know His will, or asking Him in double-mindedness (inclined to compare His thoughts and my thoughts, and to choose whichever I prefer), I personally grieve Him and quench His Spirit (Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19), impairing my intimacy with Him and the possible value of my efforts.* He grieves because I communicate to Him in my heart I don't value His competence and care for me, and don't submit to His lordship. It also hurts Him to see me, and those I affect by my decision, needlessly experience the consequences of a decision possibly less than the best. At the core of wisdom is my heart's attitude toward the Lord.

Second, we are to be prompt (as contrasted with procrastinating) in our decision-making, "making the very most of our time." This is a matter of good stewardship. God (not me) is the rightful owner of everything, including my life and all of my resources - time, abilities, material goods, relationships, influence, etc. (Colossians 1:15-16). He entrusts all of these to me to man-

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age for Him for His purposes - to act as His steward. He expects me to manage them well (Matthew 25:15-29; Luke 12:41-48), and will hold me accountable. In heaven He will judge my earthly stewardship as a Christian (2 Corinthians 5:10); the reward or loss will contribute to a more or less enriched experience for me in heaven [although we are not told in what way]. (1 Corinthians 3:10-13). Making decisions promptly without procrastinating is important to good stewardship, so that I don't miss opportunities, and so I don't waste time, energy or other resources of myself or others by unnecessarily putting decisions off until later. At the core is my attitude toward who owns me and my resources.

Third, we are to be resolute in our decision-making, "*firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is*" and acting forth on the decision. In this way we demonstrate to the Lord our confidence in and love for Him. Possibly also, this demonstration of our confidence and love for Him will be observed by others, and possibly serve to encourage them in or toward the Lord.

Decisiveness is, at its core for the Christian, a matter of the heart. Will you join me:

[Protestant]

Ask the Lord to search me for anything displeasing to Him; confess and forsake everything displeasing He reveals; and ask Him to help me practice the habit of decisiveness, beginning in my heart?

[Roman Catholic]

Ask the Lord to help me in making a thorough and daily examination of conscience; reveal anything displeasing to Him; take these burdens to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, seeking His presence and His grace to help me practice the habit of decisiveness? His grace will be especially helpful to my heart in being decisive for Him and His will.

* The heart is the innermost center of our life: the center of our thoughts, feelings, affections, will, moral life, and conscience. The Lord looks upon the heart. The heart is therefore very important for the Christian. (For further discussion, see "In the Heart" in [Character Helps - Enthusiasm](#), March 2001.

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