

HOW TO MAKE WISE DECISIONS!

Success and happiness in life — EVEN finally achieving the KINGDOM OF GOD depends on making RIGHT DECISIONS. Here are SEVEN RULES which will help YOU make the right decisions — EVERY TIME!

by Albert J. Portune

HOW OFTEN do we find ourselves in *trouble* because we have made a wrong decision? Why is it at times we launch into some endeavor — begin a project — enter into a business arrangement — decide to make a major move or make a long-term purchase — then find that things turn out **WRONG**?

Many people have had the sad experience of discovering they have made an *unwise* decision. There is a way to *avoid* this pitfall! God has made available certain principles which, if diligently applied, will always result in the **RIGHT CHOICE**. Yet many do not know these principles. Most of us fail to apply them **ALL**. Many are too **IMPATIENT** to take time to apply them.

Right Choices — the Whole Purpose of Human Life

God has shown from the beginning that it is up to us to **CHOOSE**. Our very lives and ultimate *eternal life* depends on making the **RIGHT CHOICE**!

Notice God's deadly and serious warning in Deuteronomy 30:19. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you **LIFE** and **DEATH**, **BLESSING** and **CURSING**: therefore **CHOOSE LIFE**, that both thou and thy seed may live."

God wants us to make the right choices. He wants us to *learn how* to make right evaluations and come to the right decisions. Every decision we make in life is either a **RIGHT ONE** which leads toward *life, happiness* and *prosperity*, or it is a **WRONG ONE** and

leads toward *unhappiness, destitution and death*.

Man's Basic Ability to Make Decisions

Our primary **KEY** we *must learn* before we learn the **SEVEN** rules to making wise decisions is what **NATIVE** ability man has for coming to right conclusions.

Whenever we have a decision to make, the first step we take is usually the most *disastrous*! That mistake is assuming that we — **OF OURSELVES** — have the *ability* to come to a right conclusion. Yet, the Word of God clearly shows us that the basic equipment man has been given to make decisions is equipment that will irrevocably lead him to make the **WRONG CHOICE**.

The basic nature that all mankind has inherited — believe it or not — will inexorably lead him to make the **WRONG DECISION**.

Notice Jeremiah 10:23: "O Lord, I know that the *way* of man is **NOT IN HIMSELF**: it is **NOT** in man that walketh to **DIRECT HIS STEPS**."

If we could only learn this *primary lesson* we would be over the greatest hurdle in directing our lives to successful conclusions. Yet, contrary to God's direction in His Word, we too often lean to our *own understanding* and misguided ability to make decisions instead of looking to God! (Prov. 3:5.)

Whatever decision or choice we have to make in life, *IF* we can only realize that the *basic nature* we have will **ALWAYS** tend to lead us to make the **WRONG DECISION**, we will be able to

take the first step in avoiding disaster. Almighty God is careful to tell us in Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25: "There is a way that **SEEMETH** right unto a *man*, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Rule One — Ask God for Wisdom

This brings us to the *first* rule in making wise decisions. If we are to reach a right choice we must go to a source **OUTSIDE** of *ourselves* for the answer!

The Word of God tells us "... for the Lord is a God of *knowledge*, and by **HIM** actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3).

God is the source of ALL knowledge! He alone can guide us to make the right choice. Whenever we have a decision or choice to make, the *first thing* we must do is **GO TO GOD** in **PRAYER** and acknowledge that *He alone* can direct us to make the wise choice. Ask Him for the **WISDOM** to see what is right. Ask Him for guidance in your pursuit of the right course.

Too many of us leave God out of our decisions. Too many of us plunge ahead seeking advice from other sources and gathering facts **BEFORE** we acknowledge God as the primary source of right direction. Seeking God's wisdom and direction is **FIRST**, then we can follow the next six rules successfully.

God tells us *three times* in His Word: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10). When we come to the place where we *fear* to go ahead with-

out FIRST going to God, then we will stop making wrong choices.

Solomon an Example

When Solomon became King of Israel after his father David, he knew he was faced with many momentous decisions. The responsibility of ruling a mighty nation and making all the decisions that are part of being a monarch weighed heavily upon him.

What was the first thing Solomon did? His actions are an EXAMPLE for us — recorded in the Word of God. “And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead . . . for thou hast made me king over a people like the *dust of the earth in multitude*. Give me now WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can JUDGE [decide for] this thy people, that is so GREAT?” (II Chron. 1:8-10.) Because Solomon sought God FIRST and acknowledged Him as the source of RIGHT DIRECTION, God granted him wisdom and knowledge to make right decisions and choices. God blessed him and the nation Israel over which he ruled (verses 11-17).

No matter how large or small a decision we have to make, we should *always* go to God FIRST and acknowledge Him as the source of direction, wisdom and knowledge to make the right choice.

Even if we must make a quick — rapid-fire — decision, we always have time — even if for only an instant — to pray within ourselves, “Father, help me to see *your will*.”

Rule Two — Search God’s Word for Examples

After FIRST acknowledging God and asking Him for wisdom and guidance, we must next realize that God has recorded for us IN HIS WORD literally hundreds of examples of right and wrong choices and their *results* in people’s lives.

In the Old Testament, when God was bringing Israel out of Egypt, the people had to make many decisions; some were right — *many were wrong!* These examples are priceless in helping

us avoid making similar mistakes in decisions we must reach.

Some of the *wrong decisions* which led to disaster for the people are recorded a second time in I Corinthians in the 10th chapter. Notice what the apostle Paul says about these occurrences: “Now all these things happened unto them for *ensamples*: and they are *written* for OUR ADMONITION, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (verse 11).

By a deep knowledge of God’s Word — through constant study and meditation — we have a *backlog of experience* to draw upon. We certainly can profit by the mistakes others have made, and also from their wise decisions.

Jesus’ Example

Jesus, under severe temptation from Satan to make a wrong decision, knew this principle well. When the Tempter sought to entice Jesus to choose *immediate* world rule — showed him luring world kingdoms to tempt Him — Jesus said: “IT IS WRITTEN, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Jesus also said twice more “IT IS WRITTEN!”

Jesus knew God’s Word. He drew *heavily* upon it to make His choices. *We should follow His example!*

The unjust judges of this world follow this *principle* even if their choices may be wrong. No judge presiding over a court case ever comes to a decision without knowing the decisions that have been rendered previously in similar cases. Lawyers always rehearse previous court cases for what has happened in the past.

We have literally hundreds of “court cases” upon which God has rendered *HIS* verdict — IN THE BIBLE. Yet far too many of us neglect to seek that knowledge from God’s Word and apply it to our decisions. Far too many of us just do not know God’s Word *well enough!* Therefore we make wrong decisions on points for which there are *direct examples* in the Word of God.

Rule Three — Get the Facts

The third rule for making wise decisions is one many of us NEGLECT

because we are in too much of a hurry to come to a decision — we are IMPATIENT.

Each decision we have to make will usually have *many* factors to consider. Having only a portion of the information available may cause us to decide *prematurely* and WRONGLY.

One of the high-pressure selling “gimmicks” or procedures today is to overwhelm a prospective buyer with a lot of “loaded” or one-sided truths and half-truths. These “facts” *seem* to show *conclusively* that to buy is the “right choice.” But often to the buyer’s chagrin he will only discover *too late* that there was *another side to the story!* Had he *CAREFULLY CONSIDERED*, he would *never* have made the purchase.

Whatever decision or choice we have to make, in whatever time is available to us, we should ferret out and weigh every possibility and contingency so we can see every facet — every angle of the choices available to us and what the results and effects might be. NEVER BE HURRIED OR PUSHED INTO A DECISION!

A good course of action to follow is to sit down and *make a list* of all the pros and cons on a sheet of paper. Forcing yourself to take the time to do this will cause you to see things you would not have considered before. List objectively all the facts you have at hand, then ask yourself questions for which you *do not* have the facts — then GET THOSE FACTS before you decide.

One key which will save you many headaches and pocketbook pains is learn to “wait 24 hours” — especially in reference to impulse buying. Every salesman knows a person is most apt to buy on the spur of the moment after he has been pushed “off balance” by his basic desire to possess plus the strong “pitch” he has just been given. But if you will say, “I’ll think it over” — leave the store — go home and wait until tomorrow — most likely many factors will come to you which you were unable to consider under the pressure of the moment.

The key also applies to any choice you have to make. We are always “off

balance” until we have carefully weighed ALL the facts.

Rule Four — Seek Wise and Abundant Counsel

In getting the facts, we should not always lean to our own knowledge of the subject. We should seek those who have the most accurate information relative to our choice.

Let us suppose you are considering a change from one area of the country to another. This involves a change of job — change of home — change of school for children — change of climate — change of cost of living — and many, many other things. A wise decision cannot be reached without learning what these factors are like in the new area. One way to learn these facts is to ask or counsel someone who is an AUTHORITY on these factors in the new area.

In every case seek wise counsel from a *reputable authority* or sources you can *rely on*. Don't rely on backyard advice or “*water-cooler wisdom*” for a decision in *your* life.

Don't be satisfied with *one opinion only!* A primary principle from God's Word shows us to seek wise counsel: “WHERE NO COUNSEL is, the people fall: but in the MULTITUDE OF COUNSELLORS THERE IS SAFETY” (Prov. 11:14).

Rule Five — Make a Definite Decision

In applying the preceding rules, we will have come to the place where we are ready to make a definite decision. Now is the time!

We have asked God for wisdom and direction; we have searched His Word for examples and lessons; we have gathered and weighed all the facts and eventualities; we have sought authorities, wise and abundant counsellors and ministerial guidance. The choice or decision should now be CLEAR.

Make that decision DECISIVELY — POSITIVELY!

Don't vacillate! Don't waver!

Again God's Word gives us the example. “For he that *wavereth* is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed . . . A *double minded* man is UNSTABLE in all his ways” (James 1:6, 8).

This brings us to the *sixth* rule.

Rule Six — Have Faith in Your Decision

Faith is one of the most *powerful forces* we can employ to cause circumstances to turn out right. Once we have come to a decision based on God's principles we can have FAITH it will work out correctly.

We should EXPECT our choice — to turn out RIGHT and GOOD. We can have ABSOLUTE FAITH that it will!

“Faith is the substance of things [or conclusions] HOPED FOR, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Believing is now *our part!* The whole eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a testimony of those who made choices and decisions in their lives toward an ultimate goal and they attained them THROUGH FAITH!

Jesus said, “If thou canst *believe*,

ALL THINGS are possible to him that BELIEVETH!” (Mark 9:23.)

Trust your decision. Trust the God who led you to it. Believe in it and HAVE FAITH!

Rule Seven — Follow Counsel and Work Diligently for the Desired End

The last rule is where many fall down. The right conclusion to a decision is NOT AUTOMATIC! We must go *all out* to bring the desired end to reality.

In the course of obtaining all the facts and getting wise and abundant counsel we will have discovered many things to DO!

Now that we have made our choice and have faith that it will work out, we need to “*roll up our sleeves*” and “GET TO WORK”!

Another basic principle from God's Word will help. Wise Solomon learned from God: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, DO IT WITH THY MIGHT” (Eccl. 9:10).

Here is where many of us fail. We do not diligently and systematically go step-by-step through every phase of effort toward the desired goal!

Resolve, in every choice or decision, to thoroughly and judiciously DO YOUR PART.

There is never a time in YOUR LIFE when you can afford to NEGLECT these principles.

Write them down on a card and *carry them with you*. Learn them — make them a part of you. Put them into practice in YOUR life.