

Making Good Decisions

Joshua 24:15

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

The Christian life is in great part about making good decisions. As young adults, we are faced with making the most important decisions of our lives. The purpose and intent of this class is to study how we make decisions, and what we need to consider when making our most important life decisions.

- 1. Making the decision to follow Christ**
- 2. Setting goals in life**
- 3. Setting SMART Goals**
- 4. Setting SMART Goals Pt 2**
- 5. Making good decisions with friendships**
- 6. Making good decisions with school**
- 7. Making good decisions with work**
- 8. Making good decisions with dating**
- 9. Making good decisions with the church**
- 10. Making good decisions in entertainment**
- 11. Making good decisions with health**

CLASS 1: THE DECISION TO FOLLOW JESUS

READING: Luke 9:57-62, Mark 4:3-20, Luke 14:25-35

THE MOST IMPORTANT CHOICE

For those who have decided to follow Jesus, we have made the most important decision of our lives. We have made a decision that few people make (Matthew 7:13-14). Sadly, many who make this decision will not remain faithful to that decision. Jesus taught us this in Mark 4 and the parable of the soils. In that case, four people heard the Gospel, three responded to it, two began to grow, but only one was successful.

COUNTING THE COST

When we decide to follow Jesus, we are told we need to count the cost. Jesus taught us this in Luke 14. He used the example of building a tower; one did not commit to it without knowing what it would cost. When we committed to Christ, we need to understand that the cost is uncertain; it could even cost us our lives. It is not that Jesus wants us to reconsider our commitment, as He will provide us with all the things necessary for our success. He gives us a complete manual of Christian life (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and a support group to enable our success (Hebrews 10:23-25).

DECIDING TO FOLLOW JESUS MEANS PUTTING HIM FIRST IN ALL THINGS

Jesus uses the term “disciple” to describe being His follower. It means that our entire life is within a pattern that He has created in Himself. In effect, we live a life that asks at every decision “what would Jesus do?” Everything else has to come second to that. Our families, our work, our hobbies are all under the umbrella that is Jesus.

DECIDING TO FOLLOW JESUS MAY MEAN TURNING OUR BACKS ON OTHERS

Jesus taught us in Luke 9 & 14 that being His disciple may require us to turn our backs on those whom we love or are close to in life. It is not because we want to reject them, but if they either turn away from Christ or if they hinder us from seeking Christ, it may be that they cannot remain in our lives. If we refuse to separate ourselves from those in error, we may be breaking our promise to put God first, or we may end up falling away.

FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION

We are warned on several occasions (2 Peter 2:20-22; Hebrews 10:26-31) that if we fall away after obeying the Gospel, our condition is now worse than before. We need to see that God does not permit disloyalty to His kingdom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the Parable of the Soils, who fell away? Is there a difference in falling away and not being fruitful? What is the fruit we are to bear as disciples?
2. When we count the cost to follow Jesus, can we know everything that it might cost us? Is there any cost that is too high for our salvation? How are we to understand this command?
3. How do we put Jesus first in our lives in work? At home? In recreation?
4. Is it wrong to have friends who are not Christians? What is the benefit of having non-Christian friends? What might be a dividing line for us to know when non-Christian friends are not safe?
5. How might it be the case that we are worse off if we join the Kingdom and then leave it than if we had never joined it in the first place?

CLASS 2: GOAL SETTING FOR SUCCESS

READING: Matthew 25:1-13, Matthew 25:14-30, Matthew 6:19-20,

FAILING TO PLAN MEANS PLANNING TO FAIL

Jesus taught us an important series of parables in Matthew 25 about the Day of Judgment. He told us that many people who follow Jesus will be caught unprepared when He comes. How we prepare for His return and our judgment is crucial. It requires that we understand that we have goals to achieve for Him. Success in our goals only comes when we have set the proper goals and when we have planned for accomplishing them.

FOLLOWING JESUS MEANS SETTING SPIRITUAL GOALS

Jesus is an example of spiritual priorities. We realize this by His constant statements that His purpose was to put the Father’s will above His own (e.g. John 5:30, Matthew 26:39-42). As people who have put on Christ, we need to put on this mind (Philippians 2:5-8), meaning the will of our Father needs to be our priority around which our spiritual Goals are created.

SETTING GOALS

Sometimes children say “I want to be an astronaut or a cowboy when I grow up”. We do not take them seriously, as they are merely expressing their obsessions or interests. Yet many young adults are still not serious or mature in their goals. We might consider that there are two types of Goals: Spiritual and Worldly. We need to understand that our worldly goals come second to our spiritual Goals.

Spiritual Goals	Worldly Goals

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean when we say failing to plan is planning to fail?
2. What happens when we fail to make spiritual goals?
3. How are some goals built on other goals? How do we rank our goals as to priority?
4. What goals have changed in your life? Why do goals change?

CLASS 3: SETTING SMART GOALS (PART 1)

READING: Nehemiah 1-2

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING GOALS

How do we go about implementing our spiritual resolutions? In this let us consider the man Nehemiah. He was charged with a daunting task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, something that had been tried but for over six decades had failed. Nehemiah presents three steps necessary for spiritual resolutions. First, Nehemiah entered into prayerful acceptance of his purpose (Nehemiah 1:5). Nehemiah's next step is of great importance too; he conducted careful examinations of the work he needed to do (Nehemiah 2:11-12). We are told as Christians to test ourselves and examine ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5). Finally we come to Nehemiah's great gift: organization. Nehemiah used the people to accomplish the work (Nehemiah 3). Consider the people as we do time; he used each person in the place they were best able to work. So the wall, which stood unbuilt for 60 years, was built in 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15).

SETTING SMART GOALS

92% of people who set goals fail to achieve them¹. There are a number of reasons, but they can all be summed up in failing to set SMART goals. SMART is an acronym for:

- **S**pecific (simple, sensible, significant)
- **M**easurable (meaningful, motivating)
- **A**chievable (agreed, attainable)
- **R**elevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based)
- **T**ime bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive)

SETTING SPECIFIC GOALS

Your goal should be clear and specific, otherwise you won't be able to focus your efforts or feel truly motivated to achieve it. When drafting your goal, try to answer the five "W" questions:

- What do I want to accomplish?
- Why is this goal important?
- Who is involved?
- Where is it located?
- Which resources or limits are involved?

Consider Nehemiah again. His goal was specific: the repair of the walls of Jerusalem. It mattered because Jerusalem was defenseless until that occurred. He knew he needed the Persian rulers and the people to help. He knew it would be costly and require a lot of building materials. Nehemiah is a model of setting a specific goal.

¹ <http://www.statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolution-statistics/>

SETTING MEASUREABLE GOALS

One reason we struggle to achieve our goals is that we don't think of a way to measure our goals. To say "I want to grow in Christ" is not enough; we need to think of ways to measure that growth. Instead, we say "I want to teach a class by the end of this year" or "I want to invite five people to church this year". Setting measurable goals helps us to define success or failure. A measurable goal should address questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What motivated Nehemiah to undertake his work of restoring Jerusalem?

2. What are some Scriptural parables or examples of people setting goals and not achieving them? What do Scriptures say about making a vow to God and not keeping it (Eccl. 5:1-6)?

3. What are some specific goals we set in Christ? What are some specific goals we set in the world?

4. How do we measure Spiritual growth? How might we use the fruit of the spirit as a measurement of growth?

CLASS 4: SETTING SMART GOALS (PART 2)

READING: Nehemiah 1-2, 2 Peter 1:5-10

SETTING SMART GOALS

From our last class we discussed the importance of setting goals successfully. We used the acronym S.M.A.R.T. SMART is an acronym for:

- **Specific** (simple, sensible, significant)
- **Measurable** (meaningful, motivating)
- **Achievable** (agreed, attainable)
- **Relevant** (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based)
- **Time bound** (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive)

SETTING ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Nehemiah did not make it a goal to rebuild all of Jerusalem or the kingdom of Judah. His goal was clear and achievable. He desired to make Jerusalem safe by rebuilding the wall. It was something that could be accomplished by his efforts and resources.

Too often Christians fail to achieve their goals because their goals are not achievable. Not just that it is impossible, but that it is something that cannot be achieved without setting other goals first. Let us take the example of perfecting love. Love is the ultimate goal of Christian growth (1 Cor. 13:13, Rom. 13:8). But simply stating that you intend to perfect love is likely not to work. Instead, we must do as the bible says, to set goals in stages. In 2 Peter 1:5-7 Peter offers a suggestion for spiritual growth. It begins with faith, then to that we add virtue. To our virtue we add knowledge, and to that self-control. As you see, it is a stepping pattern of growth.

SETTING RELEVANT GOALS

Goals that we desire to achieve need to be relevant both to our ultimate purpose and to the immediate point. If someone says that they intend to set the long term goal of being an elder or an elder's wife, setting a short term goal of being the fastest runner on the team is not relevant (or realistic) to that purpose. In Nehemiah's case, the short term goal of collecting resources to build clearly spoke to his ultimate purpose. Nehemiah was the man for this job; are you the person to achieve your goal?

SETTING TIMELY GOALS

Nehemiah rebuilt the wall in 52 days. It is interesting, since that purpose had existed for nearly a century. But Nehemiah accomplished it quickly. In Nehemiah 2:6 Nehemiah gave the king a timeline to accomplish his task. Thus, both he and the king expected to finish in that time.

Sometimes we fail to accomplish our goal because we do not create timelines to accomplish a task. IT is too easy to procrastinate or put off something if there is no accountability. Setting a time to accomplish a goal makes us accountable and more likely to do what we intend. We need to set a reasonable timeline of accomplishment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Nehemiah see the solution of Jerusalem's distress in the walls (1:3)? What role does vision/envisioning an outcome have in setting goals and making them happen?

2. When Nehemiah set out in purpose to achieve the goal of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, how could he know that this was an achievable goal? How do we know what goals are relevant to spiritual growth?

3. We see that Nehemiah gave the king a timeline to achieve the goal. Why did the king want this? How do we go about choosing a time table to our goals?

CLASS 5: MAKING GOOD DECISIONS WITH FRIENDSHIPS

READING: Proverbs 1:10-19, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, 10:23-33,

THE NEED FOR FRIENDSHIPS

God decided in the beginning that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). This led to the creation of the institution of marriage. But throughout scripture we see that friendships were a valuable part of the lives of Godly people. David's friendship with Jonathan is well known (1 Sam. 19:1-4), and perhaps it is this friendship that Solomon is thinking of when he tells us in Proverbs 18:24 that some friends are closer to us than a brother.

CREATING FRIENDSHIPS

Many of us are not aware that the Bible says quite a bit about creating friendships. First, we are told some things that are obvious: if we want friends, we need to be friendly (Proverbs 18:24 NKJV). But there are deeper truths in Scripture too. Jesus said that we ought to consider making friends with those who have need (Luke 14:12). Jesus was friends with many undesirable people (Matthew 11:19) who became utterly devoted to Him.

KEEPING FRIENDSHIPS

While it is easier to start a friendship, it is harder to maintain it. We are warned that if we gossip, we can break friendships (Proverbs 16:28, 17:9). But that does not mean that we ignore the sins of our friends, for "*faithful are the wounds (rebukes) of a friend*" (Proverbs 27:6). Harsh words, selfish actions, or unforgiving hearts kill friendships.

MAKING WISE DECISIONS WITH FRIENDSHIPS

"The righteous should choose his friends carefully" is the advice of Solomon (Proverbs 12:26). This is especially true because "*bad company corrupts good morals*" (1 Cor. 15:33). While we are permitted to have friends who are not Christians (1 Cor. 5:9-10, 10:23-33), we need to know that while we are trying to influence them, they are necessarily influencing us.

This is an important point, for many people keep friends who are causing them to commit sin because they believe that they can be a good influence on such friends. We need to establish ahead of time a point when we end friendships. We need to determine that if we are asked to do something, or led to do something, we need to break our relationship with that person.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. David and Jonathan were very close friends in the Bible. How did this friendship benefit these men (1 Samuel 18:1-5, 19:2)?

2. What actions can result in the end of a friendship? What actions can restore a friendship that has been broken?

3. Where would you draw the line in friendships with someone who is not a Christian? When would you consider ending a friendship with someone who is not a Christian? Is this different for someone who is a Christian?

CLASS 6: MAKING GOOD DECISIONS WITHIN SCHOOL

READING: Proverbs 8:8-13, Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Our God is a God of knowledge. He tells us that He cannot be seen or felt, but only known (1 Timothy 2:4). He desires that we should be able to read (Ephesians 3:3) and to use critical thinking to understand His ways (Proverbs 20:5). One of the oldest public education systems was the priesthood of Levi, charged with teaching the Israelites the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 24:8). In the New Testament we see that schools were used as places to preach (Acts 19:9). Our God is revealed in the creation (Romans 1:19-23).

As well, an education has a value to other parts of our lives. It enables us to pursue a career or other means of employment; we are commanded to labor in 1 Thessalonians 4:11. Getting an education is a means to properly fulfilling this and other commandments (1 Timothy 5:4, 1 Corinthians 16:2).

THE DANGERS OF EDUCATION

We all can see that education is important. Whether it is the education we obtain in lower grades or a college education, it is an opportunity to learn more about the creation or to prepare ourselves for a vocation. However, there are also dangers involved in the process of education. Solomon once said that with much learning is much sorrow (Ecclesiastes 1:18).

Many things we are taught are contrary to the truth. Our education system is founded on the philosophy of materialism. This ideology is based on the idea that anything that is real is material (including thought and consciousness). Obviously, such an ideology discounts the existence of God (Hebrews 11:3, 1 Timothy 6:15-16), who exists in a reality that is apart from ours. Our education system promotes ideas such as humanism, atheism, evolution, and moral equivalency.

MAKING WISE DECISIONS BEFORE COLLEGE

While in high school there is a temptation to not take seriously the work we are doing. It is because of immaturity that many fail to realize that their conduct has consequences. Many of the sinful habits of life are learned in high school or even before; drinking, drugs, promiscuity and vulgarity are all common in high school. As well, there is a theme of disrespect and rebellion that is promoted by many of those in school. We need to make wise decisions in high school; many lives have been ruined by a 16, 17 or 18 year old who wanted to fit in but failed.

MAKING WISE DECISIONS IN COLLEGE

After high school many people go straight into the work force. Others will choose to go into school. From a spiritual perspective, neither is better or worse. College is an important step that many make, but fail to spiritually plan when doing so. When you choose what school to attend, is your spiritual life first among priorities? Is there a church that you can faithfully attend?

As well, college offers more opportunities for worldly conduct that require greater self-control. Sexual activity is rampant in college life, as is drinking and drugs. Many Christians leave home at 18 and then fall away because they made poor decisions in choosing their school and then their lifestyle. As well, the educational environment in most schools is even more ant-Christian than any other environment, and many feel compelled to conform to fit in, or are deceived into denying God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What knowledge did Solomon pursue (Eccl. 1:13)? How did that work out for him?

2. Define these ideas:
 - a) humanism
 - b) atheism
 - c) evolution
 - d) moral equivalency.

3. What is the temptation in believing ideologies that deny God or the Scriptures?

4. What are some wise decisions in choosing a college to attend?

CLASS 7: MAKING GOOD DECISIONS WITHIN WORK

READING: Ecclesiastes 5:15-20, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, Ephesians 6:5-9, 1 Timothy 6:6-11

CHOICES IN WORK

Christians are obligated to work for a living; Scriptures teach this in places such as 2 Thessalonians 3. We also are obligated to work in a way that glorifies Christ, as seen in Colossians 4 and Ephesians 6. One of the great blessings we have is to be able to choose the profession or work we enter in life. We can choose anything we desire; to be a doctor, a farmer, a lawyer, a mechanic. In the New Testament we see Christian men and women who were soldiers (Acts 10), politicians (Romans 16:23), fishermen (Luke 5), business owners (Acts 16), jailers (Acts 16), philosopher teachers (Acts 17), and doctors (Colossians 4) just to name a few.

SEEING DANGERS IN DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS

Aside from the danger that all professions present in regards to the love of money, some professions present different dangers of themselves. As Christians we are to be committed to a local congregation. Some jobs can take us away from that obligation weeks or months at a time. Other jobs require us to move often or to places where there are no Christians with whom we can gather. Our service is to God first; *“you were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men”* (1 Corinthians 7:23).

Jobs are also places where sinful behavior can be rooted. Many different jobs offer social interactions where drinking is common place. Inappropriate socializing is also a temptation in the workplace. Some jobs require employees to entertain clients in inappropriate places.

Another danger the work place can have is the competing sense of comradery or fellowship some jobs offer. Some professions have a sense of “brotherhood”; this is not a bad thing of itself. However, sometimes we become more attached to that brotherhood than to our true brotherhood.

MAKING WISE DECISIONS REGARDING WORK

One of the biggest mistakes Christians make with work is not looking ahead to the consequences of our decisions. We need to think more about what our labors will cost us rather than what they will pay us. Will this make me miss meeting with brethren? Will this prevent me from serving the church in roles like being a teacher?

We can avoid many of these dangers simply by being prepared ahead of time for them. We can make it clear to our supervisors that there are some things we cannot do, or some

days we cannot work. We can find alternative actions that accomplish our goals without compromising our principles. Sometimes it will simply be necessary to turn down opportunities or promotions because they may cause a conflict with our spiritual growth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What sins come about by Christians who are not willing to work?
2. Have you ever considered a job that you later decided would not be a wise choice spiritually?
3. How can a Christian know if their work relationships have become more important than their spiritual relationships with Christ or His church?
4. What types of questions could you ask at a job interview to see what problems might come up in a job?
5. How could you speak with a supervisor about not being put in a position to violate spiritual principles?

CLASS 8: MAKING GOOD DECISIONS IN DATING

READING: Song of Solomon 8:4-7, 1 Corinthians 7:25-40, Proverbs 4:23

MODERN VIEW OF DATING

In times past dating was very, very different than it is today. Chaperones were always present, and dating was a firm commitment. Even when people were engaged, they were not expected to spend time alone. However, this all changed when the automobile was invented. Today, dating looks a lot different than ages past. As Christians, it is probably pretty clear that the world's view of dating and ours is going to be dramatically different.

DANGERS IN DATING

There are multiple dangers in dating today that Christians must overcome. Some are obvious, and some are not. Perhaps the most dangerous issue is fornication. We are repeatedly warned in the New Testament of the danger of fornication (Matthew 15:19, Acts 15:20, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, etc.). But most Christians who stumble in this sin did not intend to do so; they simply put themselves into situations where the temptation to sin was too great to resist. As Christians we need to know that overcoming sin means avoiding temptations. We need to see that there are circumstances that we can be in that may not be sinful of themselves, but offer temptations that are difficult to overcome and then give birth to sin (James 1:15).

The second danger in dating is not guarding our heart. We are encouraged by the world to follow our heart, and to "fall in love". But simply allowing our hearts to be emotionally unstable is dangerous. Solomon repeatedly provided this advice: "*do not awaken love until it pleases*" (Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4). We must guard our hearts (Proverbs 4:23). This means we need to not be anxious (Philippians 4:6-7) about the one whom God will enable us to find, and devote this to prayer. Too many people are obsessed with finding someone, and date someone with disastrous consequences. People who allow their hearts to attach themselves to others without spiritual consideration hurt themselves terribly.

DATING WITH A PURPOSE

Christians act with purpose; this includes dating. The world's mindset of dating is to have a good time. This will only lead to sadness and ruin. The Christian purpose of dating is to find that help-meet as described in Genesis 2. Dating is meant to become familiar with a person and determine if they will enable you to better things. Dating can be fun, and that is okay. But if that is the only reason we are dating, we are not pursuing a wise course of action.

SHOULD I DATE ONLY CHRISTIANS

It should seem obvious that Christians are most wise to date and marry Christians. However, there is no commandment to this effect. But we need to consider that if a marriage is successful only when it permits us to be enabled to serve God, and that this requires joint Christian commitment, and that dating is for the purpose of finding that life partner, then it would be the wisest course of action to date those who have similar faith.

As well, dating non-Christians usually means dating those who do not have the same values as us in dating. They may have different concepts of purity and integrity, and may pursue situations we know are dangerous. But to be clear, these dangers are present with Christians too. We need to not let our guard down just because someone is a Christian.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What things in dating are different between Christians and non-Christians?
2. What are some of the situations which, although they are not sinful themselves, a Christian ought to avoid because of temptation?
3. How did Joseph handle sexual temptation?
4. Why do we need to be careful in dating a Christian?

CLASS 9: MAKING GOOD DECISIONS WITH THE CHURCH

READING: 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, Acts 9:26-29, Hebrews 10:23-29

MAKING THE CHOICE IN CHURCH FAMILY

While we are young, the choice of our church family is usually not given to us. However, we all must at some point make a decision as to what church family we will join ourselves. In the New Testament, the Bible calls this joining “membership” (1 Corinthians 12).

JOINING A LOCAL CONGREGATION

In Acts 8 we read about how Paul joined the church in Jerusalem. This is an example for us of making an identification with a local church. Since a local church is like a family, joining them establishes the commitment to work together. Local churches worship together (1 Corinthians 11:17-29), work together (Ephesians 4:11-16) and ultimately seek to go to our eternal reward together (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). If we do not show a love for the other Christians with whom we assemble, we do not have the love of God (1 John 5:7-11).

MAKING GOOD DECISIONS IN JOINING A LOCAL CHURCH

Many of us may not have a choice on what congregation with which we assemble. Maybe our family or parents made that choice. Maybe there is only one congregation with which we can assemble in town. But at some point we will be able to choose for ourselves what congregation we choose to associate.

Not all congregations are the same. In Revelation 2-3 there are seven churches mentioned; two of them are firm in their faith (we might use the expression “sound”, as it speaks to integrity); three of them are in trouble; two of them are dead. All may have called themselves a “church of Christ”, but they were not all the same. If you had lived in that time and in that area, what congregation might you have chosen for membership?

Too often, people use the wrong criteria in choosing their church family. They look at worldly things such as which church has the most people, or which church has the largest group their age. Maybe they choose the richest church, or the one with the most eloquent preacher. Maybe they choose the one where their friends or family attend. But is that always the best choice?

There are some important things that we need to consider when we find a local church. First, is this a church that is pleasing to God? Second, is this a church that I can work?

IS A LOCAL CHURCH PLEASING TO GOD?

David once told his son Solomon that the temple is for God, not men (1 Chronicles 29:1). The church is the temple of God today (1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:21, 1 Peter 2:5). The church may be for us too, but fundamentally it is built by God, and it is a dwelling place for God among us. When we choose what church to join, we need to find one that is pleasing to God.

Many local congregations lose their integrity when they fall into common traps. We can determine a congregation's soundness by finding out what types of things are taught there (2 John 9-11), and whom they receive to teach. We can see whether that church practices discipline (2 Thessalonians 3:6-14). We can look at their works, and see who they are. This is an important discernment that we must have.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR ME TO SERVE A LOCAL CHURCH?

An important consideration in choosing a church is not what it can do for us, but what we can do for it. We are called to serve one another (Galatians 5:13). We ought to consider that if a local church has a need, we might be the one to fill it. As stated in 1 Corinthians 12, God desires for all members of a church to have a work. It is tempting to find a local church where everything is already perfect, but that may not be seeking God's will.

REMEMBER LOT

The Bible says that Lot was a righteous man in an unrighteous town (2 Peter 2:7). Why was he there? He made an important decision based on worldly perceptions, and ultimately suffered for it. If we choose our local church family based on worldly criteria, we too might suffer greatly, possibly even eternally, as a result.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the reasons we should join a local congregation?
2. How does not assembling with other Christians show that we do not have the proper love for them and for God?
3. What are some consequences in choosing to be a member of an unsound, unhealthy or dead church?
4. Why might some churches not follow God's directions on church discipline? On teaching only Bible doctrines?
5. What are some of the consequences to choosing unwisely with a local church?

CLASS 10: MAKING GOOD DECISIONS WITH ENTERTAINMENT

READING: Psalm 101:3, Philippians 4:4-8, Mark 6:31-32

THE NEED FOR RECREATION

One of the first things that the Bible teaches us is the need for a rest from our labor (Genesis 2:3). We see that on numerous occasions Jesus withdrew from people to rest. God permits us to seek out entertainment and recreation, but in order to do so we must have the proper mindset.

DANGERS IN RECREATION

There are many dangers we face in recreation. It can cause us to sin. It can become an addiction or driving force in our life. It can become an idol before God. Finally, we need to avoid allowing our mind to be changed out of Christ. All of these things are spiritually deadly.

First, we need to avoid recreations that are sinful. The world enjoys recreations such as drinking or gambling. We have put off drinking (Ephesians 5:18-19), and we understand that gambling is merely a robbery of choice. The world pursues entertainment that is just a step above pornography in television, movies or books. We cannot participate in things that cause us to sin, or cause others to sin.

We also need to have a mind that avoids allowing entertainment to become a purpose in our lives. We are commanded to work for a living. According to the Bible, work is good AND necessary. Ecclesiastes 3:9-13 teaches us that we are to find our joy in our work. Ephesians 6:5-9 commands us to work as though it is for the Lord. Finally, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 shows us that those who would not work are to be marked as walking contrary to the faith of Christ.

We can know that entertainment is too important when it begins to take the place of spiritual obligations. When Christians miss the assembly in order to go to a sporting event, entertainment is no longer for recreation. When we define ourselves not by Christ but by our hobbies, we have lost sight of our head, Christ. When we neglect familial obligations to pursue hobbies, we have fallen.

Finally, many types of entertainment change the way we think or behave. If we read a lot of books or watch TV, we can begin to see the world through a mind other than Christ. If we play a lot of violent games, we can begin to behave without kindness towards others. These things do not always happen, but we must accept that they could.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED

Sometimes we engage in activities that we tell ourselves are not affecting us, but we are merely deceiving ourselves. The Bible warns us about deceiving ourselves a number of times (1 Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 6:7, Titus 3:3, James 1:16). We don't change our mindset overnight; we are slowly changed by subtle influences. Entertainment is one of the most

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why would God want us to have recreation and entertainment? What did Jesus do as entertainment?
2. What is pornography, and why is it a sin?
3. Is there a danger in violent video games? Are they sinful of themselves?
4. How can we know if we have become too involved in entertainment?
5. When you consider the television you watch, books you read, or games you play, are you proud or ashamed of them?

CLASS 11: MAKING GOOD DECISIONS WITH HEALTH

READING: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Colossians 2:20-23

YOUR BODY: A TEMPLE OF GOD

The Bible says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, a temple was the place where sacrifices were offered and prayers were made. Today, we are able to offer our lives as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2), and our prayers can be heard without the intercession of anyone except Christ in heaven (John 14:13-14). A temple was a holy place, sanctified and separate for serving God. It was a sin to permit it to be desecrated. According to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, we desecrate our temple when we sin.

STEWARDSHIP OF OUR BODIES

Christian care for the body focuses on the idea of stewardship. It is not about living as long as we can, but serving as long as we can. It is not that we desecrate our temple by making decisions that are harmful to our bodies, but we deny its service to God. If God purchased our bodies from sin, that means we owe Him a reasonable effort to make that body useful to Him.

SINFUL SELF-HARM

Many in the world teach that it is our body and our choice. But this is not so. Self-harm and self-murder are a sin; in fact, self-murder is a sin from which we cannot repent. Self-harm is also a sin, for several reasons. First, it is committing violence upon ourselves. We are told that we need to learn to love ourselves so that we can love our neighbor (James 2:8), our spouses (Ephesians 5:28), or seek after wisdom (Proverbs 19:8). Second, denies God the service He deserves.

Why do people struggle to love themselves? Perhaps they cannot forgive themselves. Of course, without Christ's sacrifice (and obedience to the Gospel), no one can be forgiven. But sometimes we don't forgive ourselves because we are not being spiritual. We need to esteem the work of Christ in removing sin. We need to believe God that when we confess our sins, He will cleanse us of ALL unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Sometimes people struggle to love themselves because they have a worldly view of life. They think that they need to be more attractive, more successful, or more interesting as people. Certainly these are things that the world measures as value. But it is not so with Christ. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting. We need to esteem the fear of the Lord.

EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

It is not just our physical body we need to care for. Our mental health is important too. Some may think that emotional or mental health is purely a spiritual condition, but this is not true. Many times in Scripture we meet men and women who are emotionally drained and distraught. There are some conditions of the mind that are medically discerned and treated. We need to see that even Jesus, from time to time, needed to restore His emotional self (Luke 4:42, Matthew 14:13, Mark 6:31).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does God want you to view yourself?
2. If your body is not sanctified as a temple of God, what happens to your prayers (consider John 9:31)?
3. There are six or seven people in the Bible who committed suicide. Does the bible speak of them as righteous or unrighteous? What can that tell us?
4. What are some of the worldly ways people measure their self-value? How would Jesus compare to these measurements (consider Isaiah 53:2-3)?
5. What happened when Cain did not lift his countenance in Genesis 4:6-7?