

This past March, The History Channel presented The Bible, a dramatization of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The first episode begins with Noah and his family aboard the Ark and riding out the flood. As the Ark is tossed about, Noah seeks to calm his family by retelling the story of Creation. When Noah comes to the choices made by Adam and Eve and their family, listen for his commentary that sets up our message this morning.

Video

Did you hear Noah's words; 'wrong choices, wrong decisions.'

I wonder if you've ever found yourself looking back and making the same statement: 'wrong choices, wrong decisions.' Who you are today is the result of the decisions that you made in your life. Choices to do the right thing, choices to *not* accept a situation as it is, and choices, that looking back, you wish you had not made.

As we think about making life choices there is probably no other game that fits better than the Game of Life. Invented in 1860 by Milton Bradley, the game has undergone several changes; but the game is still at its heart a game of life choices. One game box even came with the tag line, 'Where will your choices take you?'

Well I have to confess that it has been a while since I played the Game of Life so this week I went back to read the directions. As I was reading along I came to this great line:

*Always move your car 'forward.'*

Then in parenthesis is this note:

*Just as in real life, you can't go back in time!*

Apparently, the little cars in the Game of Life don't come with a reverse gear!

And in real life we can't go back in time and undo our choices. We have to keep moving forward with the realization that our choices today will be, in the words of Denis Waitley, to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them.

While I don't want to focus the message on past choices, but on how we make good choices going forward; I want to take a moment to share a thought about choices we've made in the past.

First, there is no choice that you make which cannot be redeemed by the grace of God. If it wasn't that God's grace is available to redeem our past choices then God would never have been able to get the church to this point.

The Bible is full of people who made the wrong choice; but God was still able to use them and most importantly to redeem the situation. Just think of Peter who denied Jesus. I'm sure that looking back Peter must have regretted that choice. Peter could not imagine himself worthy of Jesus' love let alone being called upon to lead the movement of Jesus' disciples; but that is just what happened.

Whatever the choices you have made in your past, choices that you look back on and ask ‘*Why did I make that decision?*’ hear me when I say that no choice is beyond the redeeming grace of God.

And what I would like to do right now if offer a prayer ...

In the Game of Life it doesn’t take long for you to be faced with your first big choice; college or career. Again, those directions are interesting to read:

*College offers more career choices, money and options;  
but it takes time and puts you in debt.*

Apparently the person who writes the game directions has been to college or is a parent who is putting their child through school.

**Making choices is what life is all about.** And one of the questions that we are bound to ask when it comes to making the choice just happened to be the topic of our devotions at the SPRC meeting on Thursday night...

Mike Henry began this devotional thought with these words: *How do I know this is the right decision?* Then he continued:

“Often there’s no scripture that addresses in detail the particular choice we need to make- for example, what kind of car to buy, the best investment to make, which job to accept...Rather than specifying exhaustive rules that speak to every possible situation in life, God’s Word contains principles and instructions to guide our decision making.”

So what are the principles that help us to make the right choice? We’ll get started on that answer this morning and pick it up during the next two weeks in the game Sorry and Twister.

Well, let me take you back to the Old Testament first for a look at a group of God’s people who had to make a choice. Now to set the stage for this passage from Deuteronomy 30 you need to understand briefly where we are in context.

God’s people had spent 400 years in Egypt; the last as slaves making bricks for Pharaoh. Then Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and to the mountain where God handed down the 10 Commandments. (Remember that this was a nation of slaves who had never had any of their own rules to govern how to live together. So, God gave them the 10 Commandments.)

But this fledgling nation didn’t get off on the right foot with God. As a result they spent 40 years wandering around in circles before they could enter the Promised Land. And that is where we pick up the story.

Moses is giving the people one last recap of God’s commands that were to govern how they were to live in the long-awaited Promised Land. And listen to how Moses frames this in **Deuteronomy 30:15, 16**

Moses didn't beat around the bush. You have a *choice* between **life** and prosperity or **death** and destruction. The key to life and prosperity is **choosing obedience to the great commandment**- love the Lord your God, walk in obedience to him and keep his commands.

So, *How do I know this is the right decision?*

Does it help me to love God and be obedient to his commandments?

But how does that help me know what car God wants me to buy? (By the way, do you know the only car mentioned in the Bible? It's a Honda Accord. How do I know? Because it says that the disciples were all in one accord.) Seriously, making the choice about your car isn't that hard to understand...

First, will the car become an idol that takes your time and attention away from God?

Second, will the car put me into debt so that I am hampered in using my finances to honor God and in helping others?

The answers will vary depending on who you are and where you are in your relationship with Jesus Christ. But you see the keys; **does the decision help me to love God and love others, all while seeking to be obedient to God's commands.**

One of the spaces on the Game of Life where you must stop is to get married. Now that decision is a little higher up on the scale from purchasing a car. And I've had plenty of people who asked me over the years: *How do I know this is the right decision?*

That is certainly a choice where the options often leave people questioning. This is also a choice that can determine the direction of your life so you want to make a wise, prayerful decision.

Again the questions are somewhat simple: *Will this relationship enable me to grow more and more in love with God? Will this relationship help me to be obedient to the commands of God?*

There is a reason that Paul admonishes the Corinthians not to be yoked together with unbelievers. (2 Corinthians 6:14) When people are plowing in the same direction it is much easier than when they are headed in the opposite direction. So when it comes to making a choice for dating or marriage; ask yourself if the choice is going to help you walk toward God or pull you away. He or she may be great; but good looks fail and money fades away and in the end you want to choose wisely.

So that leads me to the other passage from Galatians 6:7, 8.

A man reaps what he sows. (NIV) A person will harvest what they plant. (CEB)

A great way to visualize your choices is to see each choice as a seed that you plant. **If your choice is sown of selfishness** (CEB) the outcome, according to Paul is **devastation**. But if your **choices plant life-giving seeds** the reward is not just temporal but **eternal**.

So with that in mind every choice you make has not only temporal/earthly consequences; but also eternal consequences.

And that leads me to a very important choice that is before every person; **will you follow Jesus?**

The folks who stood before us this morning as new disciples at Linglestown Life understand that they were making a choice. They were choosing to follow Jesus.

That is the **most important choice** that any of us will ever need to make. Will we follow Jesus; *will we decide to make our choices in life in keeping with our desire to follow Jesus?*

Some days the choice to follow Jesus is going to bump up against your selfishness. On those days you will need to ask yourself if you are planting seeds for now, for selfish reasons, or if you are willing to plant seeds that bear eternal fruit.

Choosing to take the path of career or college in the Game of Life will determine the next 10-20 minutes of your life. But the real choice that is set before all of us is the choice of the wide and the narrow road. (Matthew 7:13, 14) One path leads to destruction while the other leads to life.

I pray that today you will begin to make choices from the perspective of following Jesus. As Moses said to the Israelites on the edge of the Promised Land:

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Deuteronomy 30:19, 20