

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Feb 21, 2021. "Choosing the better things. A life setting priorities"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're well into 2021 and thankfully we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

Even though this Sunday was not technically a continuation of last Sunday, the topics do somewhat overlap. And so we want to make sure we connect them here. Last Sunday we looked at a letter Paul wrote about his own understanding of what a life going deeper spiritually looks like. And in talking to an educator following the service, I learned about the difference between a *'fixed mindset'* and a *'growth mindset'*. A fixed mindset is inflexible and lives in 'can't'. They just aren't convinced there is a better 'there' out there for them. A growth mindset is flexible and lives in 'not yet'. They are at the very same place in developing a skill or changing their behavior, but instead of getting stuck in the belief change is impossible, they realize that it will take intentional effort and desire to grow. This was the entire premise of Paul's letter. Yes, the people may not be where they want to be at that moment, but a growth 'not yet' mindset gives them hope that that 'there' out there is not only possible, but achievable...with the help of God. So, it's with that understanding we move into the topic today.

II Sunday.

The material Sunday was deeply inspired by the book *"better decisions, fewer regrets"* by Andy Stanley. It gives us five questions to ask that can be applied in nearly every situation to help navigate new, rough, uncharted waters. What we discovered is that the four questions we covered, (we left the final one for next week), are a great process to run all of our big decisions, and choices through. But first some discussion starting questions.

What struggles do you face when trying to make a big decision?

What has helped you make 'better decisions'?

Our scripture was a specific teaching from the Sermon on the Mount, but we landed on one particular verse. So, read this passage and then we'll run verse 24 through the four questions covered Sunday.

Matthew 6:19-24.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did verse say to you about the struggle AND importance of choosing the right path?

Let's run verse 24 through the four questions from Andy Stanley's book.

1. Am I being honest with myself...really?

Are you familiar with those magnifying mirrors with the bright light? It shows more about you than you can see with the normal eye. That's the purpose of this question. To not only push you to ask what your motives are, but for you to double check to make sure you're fully aware of any deep seated wants and needs that may be driving our decisions. Our ability to deceive ourselves is endless.

In what way are you capable of deceiving yourself?

2. What story do I want to tell?

This is the legacy question. How do I want to be remembered. At your funeral, how do you want those who knew you best to speak about you? And an even more pointed question; **Is the life you're living now creating the sermon you want preached at your funeral?** We know our decisions have long term effects and consequences. And this question is a great centering one to help us frame our decisions in the legacy we will leave.

What do you want said, how do you want to be remembered at your funeral?

3. Is there a tension that deserves my attention?

We all are familiar with the 'idiot lights' on the dashboard of our car. First, we know why they're called idiot lights. I'll just leave that there. But they serve the purpose of creating a warning for us that should move us to ask what our response to that warning will be. Our conscience creates the same warning system within us. And that is a sense of tension, something's not quite right, that we need to respond to. Even if we can't put our finger on exactly what may be causing that inner sense of unsettledness, we know it's there. And it should cause us to do some serious self-reflection. This question is important to make us pause and see if there is something that we need to pay attention to.

How do you experience tension in tough decisions? How have you learned from that tension?

4. What is the wise, (not right), thing to do?

This last question creates such an important distinction between what is right and wrong, and what is wise and unwise. The reason this is important is because our heart is capable of such deception in convincing us that just because something is not technically wrong then it's okay to do. This question forces us to look past our ability to deceive ourselves, playing the word game of right and wrong, and asks if the choices we make are really in our best interest. The person who we want to be.

We don't practice this as often. How could this question help you make better decisions?

IV Challenge.

This material is unbelievably useful. There isn't any decision or situation you will face that one or nearly all of these questions will help you narrow down the options so you can make a wiser, better, less damaging decision. Some decisions require pretty quick responses, but most don't. And mastering this four question process can make you better at making decisions even in the moment. So, the final question is actually a challenge. Commit these to memory and try them out this week.