

THE CHOICE- Week Two Sunday, March 13th 2022

“The Great Disconnect”

Introduction

Last week Pastor Jim kicked off our new series about the choices we make in life and provided us the backbone of the series which is on the screen behind me: **“Direction, not intention, leads to our destination”**.

He asked us a question right at the beginning of the message, who remembers it? Have you ever had an “I told you so” moment, this week I have a new question:

Question: Who here has ever had a crash & burn moment in their life?
Why is it that in those crash & burn experiences we were totally clueless, yet everyone around us saw it coming a mile away?

My pole vaulting experience

I love my parents and they would probably deny this if they were here today...but surely they knew I was not at all going to make it as a pole vaulter!!

They also probably knew if they tried to tell me that, I would have just dug my heels in EVEN harder to try and prove them wrong!! I had to fail all on my own.

We all have this innate ability for choosing paths that do not lead in the direction we should be going in.

We struggle to connect the dots between the **choices we make** and the **outcomes they create**.

Culture now more than ever is selling us the notion that as long as our intentions are good or our hearts are in the right place or we “live OUR truth” (whatever that means), the paths we choose really don’t matter.

That could not be FARTHER from the truth!!!

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Let's look at what Scripture tells us about this...today we'll be camping out in **Proverbs 7:6**, where King Solomon tells a powerful story from his perspective of a young boy that was headed in the wrong direction. Here's what he says...

Warning Against The Adulteress

Proverbs 7:6-7

At the window of my house I looked down through the lattice. I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense.

Another translation says "a youth who lacked judgement". My first thought when I read that was **what a ROAST**- Solomon just looked at this kid walking on the street and could tell he was kinda dumb.

You might be wondering, how did Solomon know this kid lacked judgement? The simple answer: all young people lack judgement. That's not meant to be mean-it's just a fact! In order for judgement to develop in the brain, time and experience are necessary. "Youths" haven't lived long enough to acquire the experience that **can** produce good judgement.

Now I say that and want you to imagine asterisk's around the word CAN, because experience alone does not **guarantee** good judgement. But it is certainly critical.

Studies of the human brain have shown that the frontal lobe doesn't fully develop until the mid twenties. And the frontal lobe is where **you guessed it** our reasoning skills develop.

This explains why young people tend to engage in high-risk activities; like my trying pole vaulting for example- they don't make the connection between their choices and the potential consequences.

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This is an important detail to understand as we continue in this story, let's read on:

v. 8-9 He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in.

You don't have to be a genius to know where this story is headed. We'll soon find out that this kid knew what he was doing. He knew who this woman was, knew she was married, knew her husband was out of town, so he's shooting his shot.

Meanwhile Solomon is watching this from his window and knows exactly what's about to go down. Why? Because the older, wiser king understood **from experience** where this path would lead.

This night was a step down a path. It was a choice. The young man knew what he was doing, only seeing excitement or thrill as the outcome. But Solomon knew better.

Funny how that works. What's so obvious to those watching often escapes us.

v. 10-12 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. She is unruly and defiant, her feet never stay at home; now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.

v. 13-15 She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: Today I fulfilled my vows, and I have food from my fellowship offering at home. So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you!

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Let's break this section down. What does this woman mean by "fellowship offering"? Essentially she's saying "look, I'm not a hooker. I have plenty of wealth at home so I'm not after your money- I want YOU!"

"Today I fulfilled my vows", implying she had been to temple and had everything squared away with God. She carried her big sin bucket to the altar, dumped it out, and was ready to fill it back up with this kid!

That might sound dramatic, but if you think about it her approach to religion is very similar to how some of us approach God with our sins. Catholics, they bring their sins to confession right? Their sins get absolved, and a week later they can pick things up right where they left off.

We Protestants do the same thing, but with one difference: we skip the confessional and go straight to the source- we pray something like "dear heavenly Father, forgive me of all my sins." Then some of us imagine God taking out a big eraser and wiping our slate clean, right?

But like the woman in this story, **we are quick to ask for forgiveness but slow to actually repent and walk away from our sin.** We get both the relief that comes with forgiveness and the thrill that comes with sin. Let's keep reading.

v. 16-18 I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let's drink deeply of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love!

Then she reminds him:

v. 19-20 My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon."

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Hook, line, sinker. The way this kid sees it, he can hang around for breakfast, watch a little TV, maybe even stay the weekend. **This just keeps getting better!**

But Solomon saw the situation in an entirely different light. Let's read his take:

v. 21-23 With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.

Solomon's point? This young man was throwing away his future. Possibly his life.

How maddening would this be to witness?!

- Parents, have you ever watched helplessly as your child chooses the wrong paths? Paths you KNOW will only lead to pain and destruction.
- How about a family member confiding in you the choices they're making in their relationship or marriage that you KNOW will only end one way: in heartbreak.

Now Solomon turns his narrative to his broader audience. These next words are directed directly at you and me.

v. 24-26 Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.

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“Many are the victims”. This kid wasn’t special. He wasn’t the first to walk into her house and he won’t be the last.

The enemy has a way of convincing us that we’re the exception in our sin.

So maybe things ended poorly for the last chump who walked into her house, but *I’m different*.

Let’s go back to an earlier statement I made: We all have this innate ability for choosing paths that do not lead in the direction we should be going in.

- A single woman says “I want to meet and one day marry a great Christian guy who’s really got his life together”...but then dates whoever asks her out, as long as they’re cute.
- A mom says “I want to have a great relationship with my husband”...but makes the children a priority over him.
- A dad says “I want my children to respect me as they grow up”...but is consistently checked out at home.
- Parents say “We’d like our children to develop a personal relationship with God and choose friends who have done the same”...but skip church every weekend and head to the lake or to camp or some sporting event.
- “I want to develop a deep and lasting intimacy with God”...so you get up every morning early and scroll Facebook, never once opening the Bible or spending time in prayer.

This list could go on and on and on. Maybe you identify with one of these scenarios, I’m sure we all do. We can’t deny that the people these lists represent have legitimate goals and maybe even *good intentions*.

But like the young man in Solomon’s story, the paths we choose have the potential to bring us to an entirely different destination than the one we intended.

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And before we get ahead of ourselves, it can be so easy to listen to all of this and think “so-and-so really needs to hear this message”. No doubt there are names or faces coming to mind right now, right? Maybe you’re right.

But before you walk out of here walking on cloud nine because you think you’re killing it and everyone around you is the problem, ask yourself these questions:

1. Are there disconnects in your life?
2. Are there discrepancies between what you desire in your heart and what you are doing with your life?
3. Is there alignment between your intentions and your direction?

Direction is everything. Direction determines destination.

This is why we cannot afford to live disconnected lives. ***Life groups plug***

When life gets tough, who are you allowing to pour into you? In the crucial decision making moments, do you have a person or a group of people who are of like-mind to help and support you?

Don’t take my word for it, look at what Scripture says:

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.

Ephesians 4:29

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Proverbs 13:20

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

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Hear me: I'm not preaching this AT you- God convicted me every which way this week while prepping for this. I wasn't supposed to speak today, this wasn't supposed to be my topic. Bailey and I had to switch last minute, and I don't think for a second it was by accident. I needed this as much as you.

BAND

Last week Pastor Jim talked about getting lost or missing an exit while driving. It's frustrating, but you can always take the next exit and get back on track or simply turn around. So you waste a few extra minutes or add travel time, big deal.

But when you get lost in life, you can't backtrack. You don't just waste minutes or hours, you can waste an entire season of your life. Nobody wants to do that.

Nobody wants to wake up in their fifties and wish they had taken a different path in their thirties.

Nobody wants to arrive at the end of a marriage and wish they had taken a different path during their dating years.

You only get to be the age you are right now, once.

You only get one first marriage.

You only get one shot at parenting.

You only get this one life.

The path we choose at the critical junctions of life don't just determine our destination for the following year, maybe not even the following season of life. Perhaps our entire future.

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We make choices every day. Big, small, quickly or with serious thought. Choices that effect our financial path, our relational path, our moral and ethical path. And each one of these paths have a destination.

My hope is that by becoming aware of these principles, you will have the wisdom to know which path to choose and the courage to stay the course.

PRAYER and CLOSE

Life Group Questions:

1. Share a “crash and burn” moment you have experienced in your life. (funny, embarrassing, serious- treat this like an ice breaker!)
2. Talk about the story in Proverbs 7:6-26. Can you identify a time you were in a similar situation? (Not *exactly* like this one, of course) If so, were you like King Solomon watching from the sidelines, or the foolish young man heading into clear destruction?
3. We asked ourselves three questions on Sunday in regards to our intention vs our direction. Talk through them again, share anything that comes to mind:
 1. Are there disconnects in your life?
 2. Are there discrepancies between what you desire in your heart and what you are doing with your life?
 3. Is there alignment between your intentions and your direction?
4. If you can identify areas that need work from answering those questions, what can you do to make improvements?

**Being in a life group is a GREAT step- pat yourselves on the back! (: **