

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"DECISION MAKING AND GUIDANCE" | PROVERBS | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What's a funny impulsive decision you've heard of or made?

"Trust God Before You Trust Yourself Because Feelings Aren't Guides" Proverbs 3:5-6

Our culture says follow your heart, but Proverbs says submit your heart to God instead of relying on your own understanding.

- Why do so many of us trust our gut, instinct or feelings in life decisions?

"Independence is Not Maturity; Wisdom Slows Us Down" Proverbs 11:14, Proverbs 15:22

Wise people invite counsel which takes time, while bad decisions are made independently and quickly.

- What are ways to slow down and seek God's direction?

"The Decision Grid" Genesis 37-50: Joseph, Proverbs 14:12

Joseph's story highlights both wise and unwise decisions and the importance of seeking God in ALL your ways.

Decisions can be categorized into the following grid.

Category	Wise	Unwise
Easy	Rare but good	Very common
Hard	Often the best	Usually destructive

- How do you know when you're doing something right instead of just convenient?
- How do you know when you're being courageous in a hard decision?

"Christ Connection: Jesus Modeled Dependence on God" John 5: 19-20

Jesus consistently prayed before deciding and acting, living in constant dependence on the Father.

- What is something you can do different or more of to be dependent on God like Jesus?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Wise followers of Jesus take time to seek counsel from God and His people so they can make the hard wise decisions that take courage that show they are walking with God.

- How often have you been praying about your decisions lately?
- Have you been giving into urgency or convenience in your decision making?
- Pray that God would quiet your heart so you can listen to His lead and have His strength in hard decisions.

8 - Decision-Making and Guidance

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online 2nd.
- B. Slide1-5 Lar: Easter Event. Holy Week. Easter Weekend. Preparing to Go. Men's.
- C. Slide6 At Risk: Join us for meeting TODAY at 3pm in the Agape Room.
Dr. Brenda Navarrete will be sharing on being "*Resilient and Ready!*" - She will be discussing *how to recognize signs, speak up, and have courage w/in our community to help reduce vulnerability.*
- D. Slide7a Prayer:

II. Pre-Intro:

- A. Make a point about **Pride** from Last Sun: [*Can you be proud of lil Johnny hitting a home run?*]
 - 1. Biblically, I believe there are 2 very different kinds of pride:
Pride that replaces God (condemned in Proverbs).
And Joy that reflects God (gratitude for what He has done).
 - 2. The Bible condemns pride that exalts *the self* above God, **but I do not think it condemns** the **joy** of faithful work, **pleasure** in someone or something, **or** the **dignity** of a life lived well.
- B. **Pride** that competes with God is **sin**. **Satisfaction** that reflects God is **gratitude**.
- C. C.S.Lewis, "*A man can take pleasure in walking or in solving a puzzle without being proud.*" - Mere Christianity
- D. Rob Sheppard: the French actually uses 2 different words: **orgueil** (aw-ga-ri), the kind of pride Proverbs clearly warns against, **and fierté** (fi-air-ti), which reflects a healthy sense of accomplishment. The Hebrew & English do not have such a clear distinction, but I believe both concepts are there in scripture.

III. Slide7b Intro: Decision-Making and Guidance or making wise decisions?

- A. Big Idea: Wisdom seeks **God** before *acting* **and counsel** before *deciding*.

B. **Illustration:** If you start walking 1 degree off your course, after 100 yards you will be **5.2 feet** off your course. After 1 mile you will be **92.2 feet** off your course. LAX to SFO (San Francisco International airport) you'll be **6 miles** off.

1. Small directional decisions **today** - create very different destinations **tomorrow**.

a) **Examples:** 1 **relationship** decision. 1 **financial** habit. 1 **moral** compromise. 1 **spiritual** drift.

2. **Direction** - not *intention* - determines **destination**.

C. **Life** is a *Series of Decisions*. **Most of life** is simply the *Accumulation of Decisions*.

1. Think about it: Who you marry. Where you live. How you spend money. Who you listen to. What you prioritize.

a) A few big decisions shape the direction of **an entire life**.

D. Your life **tomorrow** is largely the result of decisions you make **today**.

E. **Proverbs** isn't trying to *eliminate decisions* - It's trying to teach us how to make them **wisely**. *That's why Proverbs spends so much time teaching us how to make wise decisions.*

IV. Slide8a **1 TRUST GOD BEFORE YOU TRUST YOURSELF**

A. Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

1. Trust in the Lord **vs.** Lean on yourself.

B. **Our instinct is self-reliance.**

1. We think: *I'll figure it out. I'll follow my gut. I'll trust my instincts. I've Got This.*

2. **But** Proverbs warns us: **Your understanding is not a reliable compass.**

C. **Slide8b Feelings** are *real* - **but** they are not always *reliable*.

D. **Culture** says: *follow* your heart. **Proverbs** says: *submit* your heart.

V. Slide9a 2 FEELINGS AREN'T GUIDES

A. This is where many decisions go wrong.

B. Feelings are: powerful, immediate, persuasive, **but** they change quickly.

1. You may be like the 1 hit wonder, Swedish rock band - *Blue Swede* who were, "*Hooked on a Feeling, high on believing, That you're in love with me.*" (ooga chaka - Björn Skifs/Blue Swede)

C. Illustration: Weather vs climate.

1. **Feelings** are like **weather** - **Wisdom** is like **climate**.
2. **Weather** changes daily. **Climate** reveals long-term patterns.
 - a) Eg. Our weather today in **So Cal** is **87*** - our climate *is a mild Med climate*.
 - b) Slide9b Eg. Our weather is our **mood** - our climate is our **personality**.
3. **Wise decisions** are **not** built on *emotional weather*. **But on** long term climate of: **Scripture. Prayer. Counsel. Time.**

VI. Slide10a 3 INDEPENDENCE IS NOT MATURITY

A. Proverbs 11:14 *Where there is no **guidance**, a people falls, **but** in an abundance of counselors there is safety.* [for bible only people]

1. **Guidance** (תַּחְבּוּלָה - tachbūlôṭ) is a nautical term used of *steering a ship*. The "steerings" or counsel of advisers can be helpful. A wise person is **open** to others' opinions **and** counsel. Without such counsel, he may make *serious mistakes*.

B. Many people believe maturity means: *I don't need anyone, **or** anyone's counsel, **or** anyone's advice.* **But** Proverbs says the opposite. **Wisdom** invites counsel.

1. **Isolation** is not strength - it's *vulnerability*.
2. Slide10b *The goal isn't many voices, **but** the right voices. Emphasizing diverse wisdom, **not** endless opinions.
3. **But**, "*If you keep asking people **until** someone agrees with you, you're not seeking counsel - you're seeking **permission**.*"

- C. **Healthy decision-making includes:** Mentors. Friends. Spiritual leaders. Wise voices.
- D. **Ask:** Who has permission to challenge your decisions?

VII.Slide11a **4 WISDOM SLOWS US DOWN**

- A. Proverbs 15:22 *Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.*
- B. **Many bad decisions happen because of speed.** [don't rush decisions]
- Examples: *Impulse purchases. Reactionary words. Rushed commitments.*
 - Urgency** is often *the enemy of wisdom*. (Insert here: *Speed Kills!*)
 - Slide11b Wisdom asks: Have I prayed? Have I waited? Have I asked wise people?
- C. **Feelings** react to the moment. **Wisdom** watches the pattern.
Feelings *rush* the decision. **Wisdom** slows it down.
- So**, often **Time** exposes foolish decisions.

VIII.Slide12 **5 CHRIST CONNECTION: JESUS MODELED DEPENDENCE**

- A. **Jesus never acted independently of the Father.**
- Examples:** The most important leadership decision of Jesus' ministry began with **a night of prayer**. (Lk.6 choosing His disciples).
 - In Gethsemane, **the greatest decision in history was made in submission to the Father**. (not My will be done, but Yours!)
 - After healing crowds, the disciples say *everyone is looking for Him*. **But Jesus** responds by *moving on to preach elsewhere*. Mark 1:35–38
 - He withdrew** to pray repeatedly. He said: *"I only do what I see the Father doing."* [He *watched* the Father. He *followed* the Father. He *trusted* the Father]
 - Again, **the wisest person who ever lived made decisions in constant dependence on the Father**.

IX.Slide13 **THE DECISION GRID** *let's go really practical*

	Wise	Unwise
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Easy	Rare but good	Very common
Hard	Often the best	Usually destructive

A. Most decisions we make fall into one of four boxes. The challenge is learning which box we're actually standing in.

1. **Easy + Wise** (rare but good) - rare but wonderful.

a) These are decisions where: *the **rt thing** is obvious & it's **not** particularly **difficult**.*

(1) **Examples:** being generous to someone in need. **telling the truth when nothing is at stake.** encouraging someone.

b) **These are good moments, but they're not the decisions that usually *shape your life*.** - **Easy & Wise** decisions are *blessings* - **but they're not** where most of life's battles happen.

2. **Easy + Unwise** (very common) - where most *temptation* lives.

a) This is the most dangerous box. **Why?**

(1) Because these decisions: feel good. feel easy. feel justified.

b) **Examples:** impulse spending. Gossip. cutting ethical corners. moral compromise. choosing comfort over discipline.

(1) **Proverbs warns about this repeatedly.**

c) **The easy path** now often becomes *the painful path* later.

d) **This is where Proverbs 14:12 fits:** *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its **end** is the way to death.*

3. **Hard + Unwise** (usually destructive) - pride-driven decisions.

a) These are decisions that are **difficult** but still foolish.

b) **Examples:** doubling down on a bad decision. refusing to apologize. staying in a destructive relationship. ignoring wise counsel.

(1) **These decisions are hard because *pride* is involved.** [Pride keeps people in the hard and unwise box]

c) **Sometimes we make things harder than they need to be because we refuse to **humble** ourselves.**

4. **Hard + Wise** (often the best decisions)

- a) This is the box where **most good decisions** **live**.
- b) **Examples**: telling the truth when it costs you. forgiving someone. setting boundaries. staying faithful in marriage. choosing integrity over profit. raising children with discipline. leaving a comfortable path to follow God.
(1) These decisions require: *courage. Humility. Patience. prayer.*
- c) **The wise decision** is often the one that **feels hardest** in the moment.
- d) Tie it to **Jesus**: Gethsemane was **hard and wise**. The cross was **hard and wise**.

B. **Slide14** Here's How We Use the Grid

C. **When facing a decision, Ask:**

1. Which box am I standing in? - Then **Ask** ...
2. Is this decision **easy** because it's right - **or** because it's convenient?
3. Is this decision **hard** because it's wrong - **or** because it requires courage?

D. *Wisdom often chooses the hard right over the easy wrong.* [**or**: Easy now, hard later. Hard now, life later]

E. **Slide15** *Highlight the **Hard + Wise** box in **green**. [if you want a simple life rule, aim for this box]

F. **Slide16 Joseph** (in Gen.37-50) is a fantastic biblical example *because* his story actually touches every box in the **decision grid**. It helps us see that **the grid** isn't *theoretical* - it **shows up** in real life.

1. **Easy + Unwise** Gen.37 (Joseph's brothers are *jealous, and angry, and sell him into slavery*).
 - a) **Selling him into slavery is**: Easy. Emotionally satisfying. Immediately solves their problem. [But it's clearly unwise]
 - b) You could say, they felt right in the moment, **but** it was devastating in the long run. [That's Proverbs 14:12 in action: *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death*].

2. **Hard + Unwise** (The brothers hiding their sin).

a) After selling Joseph, they: lie to their father. fake Joseph's death. carry the guilt for years. [This is hard, but still foolish] Why?

(1) Because **pride** won't allow them to confess.

(2) Sometimes **the hardest path we walk** is the one we created by refusing to **humble** ourselves.

3. **Easy + Wise** (Joseph interpreting dreams).

a) Joseph often chooses **wisely** when it's **not particularly costly**.

(1) For example: he serves faithfully. he uses his gift to interpret dreams.

(2) These are **wise choices** that align with God's calling. But they're not the most dramatic moments of his story.

4. **Hard + Wise** (Joseph and Potiphar's wife).

a) Genesis 39. This is the perfect example. Joseph is tempted.

b) Choosing sin would be: *Easy. Pleasurable. Secret.*

(1) But Joseph refuses. Why?

(2) He says: **How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?**

c) This is **hard + wise**. And it **costs** him. He ends up in **prison**.

(1) Daniel made a Hard + Wise decision and ended up in a lion's den.

(2) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made a Hard + Wise decision and ended up in a fiery furnace.

(3) Paul made a Hard + Wise decision to keep sharing the gospel and ended up in prison multiple x's.

(4) Jesus made a Hard + Wise decision and ended up on a cross.

d) Sometimes the wise decision gets you the hardest consequences in the short term - but the best outcomes in the long term.

G. The End of Joseph's Story. Years later Joseph becomes **ruler of Egypt**.

a) The brothers who chose the **easy wrong** now face the **consequences**.

2. Joseph, who chose the **hard right**, sees God redeem the whole story.

a) Gen.50:20 *You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.*

H. Your life is shaped not by one big moment, but by **the box** you choose *again & again*.

I. *Easy decisions often feel right. Wise decisions often feel costly. But over time, wisdom always leads to life.*

J. *Here's something simple.* Before your next major decision ... **Pause**.

1. **Ask 4 questions:** What does **Scripture** say? Have I **prayed** about this? Have I **invited** in wise counsel? Am I **rushing** this decision?

a) Many mistakes could be avoided with a simple *Proverbs Pause*.

K. **Closing**

L. Bring it back to Proverbs 3:6 *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths*. God doesn't promise easy paths - He promises straight ones.

1. Like: *Clarity. Direction. Alignment.*

M. **Wisdom** **isn't** about *eliminating uncertainty*, it's about walking with **the God** who knows the path.

N. The **safest place** in life **isn't** knowing the future - **it's** trusting the **God** who does.

O. Keywords: