



## Wisdom

Wisdom is making wise choices, making good decisions. Whether we are talking about daily choices, choosing which habits to develop (or not), choosing media and entertainment, choosing a wife, choosing a career - in all areas of our lives, making good choices often determines how our future turns out and the quality of the journey we have along the way.

This morning in my Men's group, one of the guys said that "Wisdom comes from experience, and experience from bad choices." I would add that we have three choices of how we gain the experience - we either learn God's word and do it, learn from other people's bad choices and avoid their mistakes, or learn from our bad choices (ouch - we get burned on this path).

We can liken this to hiking. Imagine you are going on a long hike in the Ozarks on a trail you have never hiked before. In one scenario you have a map and a GPS, in one only a map, and in the third you have neither. You have a compass in all three scenarios.

Choosing to learn God's word and believe He has our best interest at heart, doing what He says, is like bringing a map and a GPS. We have a really good chance of success on our hike. God's view on life is like the GPS satellite's view of the trail. He sees everything, knows everything, and He can keep us from getting lost. We can still make mistakes, but we have a really good chance of completing the hike in grand fashion. We may even see some unplanned points of interest on the GPS

and go visit them along the way. Life with God is full of good surprises, and we always know right where we are, how far we have to go, where we've been, what's ahead, etc. And even when we hit a waterfall or the trail vanishes for a mile or two across a scree field, with the GPS we can navigate through even the most difficult sections of the trail. The GPS is amazing.

Learning from other people's mistakes is like bringing a map but no GPS on a trail that has lots of people on it. We have a chance of succeeding on our hike, but we may get lost along the way. We get in some thick woods or in a valley, it gets hard to see where we are on the map, we miss a fork in the trail, we get landmarks confused or turn one creek too early. It can get ugly quick if we don't pay careful attention at all times. There is usually a lot of backtracking, climbing to a high point to get our bearings, etc. - lot's of unintended detours that detract from the hike. Since there are lots of people on the trail, we can ask directions when we run in to other hikers, and as long as they are not lost we get good advice from them. In this scenario we often get into quarrels with each other regarding which way to go, which fork to take, whether or not to keep going. Because we aren't 100% sure where we are on the map, we often have to guess which way to go, and often we guess wrong. But with a map, we usually make it to the end of the hike. We may not be speaking to each other anymore because of the arguments we had, but we finish the hike.

Learning from our own mistakes is like not having a map or a GPS on a trail that no one is on. All we have is our compass, so we have a general idea of which way to go, but it is very vague and if we miss a turn we can easily end up off course or cliffed at the top of a waterfall. Without a map or a GPS, we are completely dependent on our ability to see and follow the trail, and that rarely goes well. Since this is the first time any of us have been on this trail, we are probably not going to make it. We end up following deer trails to dead ends and having to go back. We get cliffed at waterfalls and have to jump to trees to get down to the valley below. We get to forks in the trail and have no idea which way to go - having to guess usually. We come out on a paved road and have no idea where we are or whether to go right or left to get to our car. Have we gone too far or are we still not there? We rarely make the full hike unless the path is really good and very well marked. When I was canoeing in Canada once, we came across some guys that had been lost in the boundary waters for two weeks. Eating fish three meals a day, they had just been paddling around, trying to find their way

out with no success. They were way off course. We showed them on a map where they were and how to get to where they wanted to go. I wonder if they made it? Maybe they did, maybe not.

So if we choose to let God's word guide our choices, it is like having a map and a GPS, and we can make the best choices in life to get where we are trying to go, getting the most out of the hike. We can also still learn from other's mistakes along the way. And because of free will, we still make some of our own mistakes and learn from them too. We get the full triad experience if we go this route, experiencing all three styles of life, but always having the overhead reference of God's word to guide us (our GPS).

Ultimately the choice is ours. God says the burner on the stove is hot - we can listen to God and not touch the burner, watch what happens when someone else touches the burner then decide, or just go ahead and touch the burner and get burned. Each of us has to make this decision for himself. We can believe God is right and has our best interest at heart or not. If we believe God, if we trust in Him like we trust a GPS, then we can base our life on His word and navigate through life like a pro. If we don't trust God and don't believe what He says, then we are left to figure it out for ourselves without the aerial perspective that God brings to life. When we find ourselves in the thick of the trees or in a dark valley, we make our best guess regarding which way to go. Sometimes we get lucky, sometimes we don't. It's 50/50 at best, whether we are learning from our own mistakes or from other's.

This reminds me of one of our favorite passages in Joshua:

"Choose you this day whom you will serve.....  
but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."  
*Joshua 24:15*

Don't wait. Choose today!