

Theme: "To Make a Decision."

Scripture: Joshua 24:14-15.

Text: Joshua 24:15 (RSV).."....choose this day whom you will serve.....; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Proposition: The decision to serve God must be acted on promptly and continuously if it is to be of the great worth in an individual life that it can and should be.

Dates written: February 14-18, 1961.

Dates and places preached:

*Feb-19, 1961, SHERIDAN, WYO., 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.*



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Introduction:

1. A prominent lawyer of Tennessee in an address once told this story: His son came home from school one day and asked him if he were a good mathematician

"Yes, my boy, I think I'm pretty good," the father replied.

"Well, then, I have a problem I'd like to have you work. There were three frogs sitting on a log -- a bullfrog, a tree frog, and a toad frog. The **bullfrog** decided to jump off. How many frogs were left?"

The father smiled. "Why, that's easy. Two frogs were left."

"And that's where you are wrong!" exclaimed the boy, grinning. "Three frogs were left. The bullfrog only decided to jump off. He didn't jump."

Then the **lawyer** impressed upon his audience that a person who would win success must act promptly to act on his **decisions.\***

(#1229, p. 322, Master Book of Humorous Illustrations, ed. by Leewin B. Williams, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1938).

2. Our theme today is "To Make a Decision." The type of decision we are

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talking about is the type on which you act. According to the dictionary, to decide, or make a decision, on a thing is to settle or terminate a matter. To settle a thing by picking a course of action means that one carries out that action. We're thinking today of decisions that are **decisives**: ones that are acted on. ~~xx~~

I. There are decisions about how you will operate and act in your ~~lifexfor~~ ~~yourxxxxbenefitx~~ personal, private life.

1. Early in life such decisions may deal with the problem of survival, or at least with satisfying the elemental needs of ~~thexxexd~~ cravings of the body.

a. It is interesting to watch a baby graduate from milk to cereal to soft (strained) foods to diced or more course foods until he reaches the stage of childhood where he can eat about the same things as anybody else. At first the baby couldn't be credited with making much of a decision about what he drinks or eats, though it is surprising how early they can show their liking or disliking for a given food. When he is given a choice between such a foods as



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spinach and peaches the baby probably will reach for the peaches. After all, not only do they taste better, but if he is in the beginnings of the feed-yourself stage anybody should know that the color of peaches looks better when smeared on ones face than that of spinach! Perhaps the choice of a food of ones liking at an early age is the first stage of decision-making.

b. As a child progresses to 2,3, 4 or older he learns to like candy, especially if it comes from the store. He also learns that money will buy candy. It doesn't take him too long to see that "white money," as our little boy calls ~~everything~~ all coins except those that are obviously brown --pennies --, will buy more candy than brown money. So given a choice between a penny and a nickle or dime he will reach for the dime, because he knows it will get more candy at the store. Here is a decision not much above the level of the baby reaching for the peaches, but its a decision surprisingly like some of those that most of us make for most of our adult lives.

c. As the child chooses the candy instead of the food for dinner, as he



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indulges in more of it than he could be-  
fore he could make the decision for  
himself, he may find that his tummy  
is a bit uncomfortable. He may or may  
not associate this with the candy, but  
older folk around him know that his  
decision to eat a lot of candy was not  
a good one for his health or happiness.  
Later on he probably will come to un-  
derstand this strange adult wisdom, and  
be able to control his decision-making  
a little bit more in keeping with his  
real, basic bodily needs and comfort.

2. Adults, too, must make ~~xxxxxxxx~~  
decisions dealing with their health.  
The amount of food to eat, and the types;  
the hours to sleep; ~~the~~ type of work to  
do; the development of personal habits  
of cleanliness; the seeking of medical  
help in the matter of preventive medicine  
-- immunizations, regular physical check-  
ups, etc. -- are all things that are  
matters of decision when one is on his  
own. Frequent visits to hospitals help  
convince ~~xxx~~ any keen observer that all  
these areas deal with matters in which  
the right decisions are important. A  
neglected or ill body is a hindrance to  
a person and to all who must help care

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~~CARE~~ FOR HIM. Yet, the care of the body during most of life is a matter that is left to a multitude of individual decisions over which the person himself has complete control.

3. Personal decisions also must be made as to the vocational and avocational skills and abilities one develops. Sometimes it may seem that a person is sort of trapped by forces greater than himself to enter a certain trade, profession, or way of living; and this may sometimes be true. For the most part, however, in the United States a person does have the right and privilege to work toward the way of spending his waking hours in a field of interest to him. To be a bum may be the decision, but this must be acted on by finding some way of getting shelter, food and clothing without working for it! If the decision is for some profession which demands a great degree of formalized schooling or training, the acts based on the decision may include saving money, or borrowing it, to attend the training institution and to "set up" in business or profession. If the decision is to start earning money as soon as you can, without much formal training,



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that probably will be followed up by seeking a non-skilled type of job, or a paying apprenticeship in work in which skill will develop -- with the prospect of less income and less interest in many of the traditionally "finer" aspects of life as the years go by.

In avocational, or off-work, recreational hours decisions have to be made too. It may be to work on the house and lawn and spend most of the time with family. It may be to spend time with hobbies, or groups. It may be to find excitement or release from resentments and tensions in doing things which one realizes bring harm to self and others.

4. Personal decisions include looking ahead to the future. This means planning for the years of old age, for possible sickness, for "hard-times" when it is impossible to work or for other reasons income is cut down. For many people pensions and insurance plans are the chief means of planning for care in old age. Perhaps this is true for most people. Some sort of similar schemes are usually true now, too, for medical care. Savings programs are still carried out by many people, however, as evidenced by



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still-rising figures of savings in banks and in stocks and bonds.

To look ahead and save for the future is strictly within the Methodist tradition, though as I think of my own plight and hear stories from some others of you I sometimes wonder if there are any of us sticking with the tradition. Anyway, John Wesley did say, and write, "Earn All you can, **save** all you can, give all you can." Most of us are interested in earning all we can, at least for a little time and service as we can give for it, I'm afraid. Some of us work at saving all we can, and most of us wish we could find ways to save more. But probably most of us disagree with Mr. Wesley on the "give all you can." We'll look in a bit at what that might mean. ~~But~~ To give all you can is to make ~~a decision~~ a far-reaching decision about our relationships to other people, and this is our second great area of decision-making.

II. There are decisions about how to act towards others.

1. To speak of "personal decisions" as we did above, is to speak of some-



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things which actually don't exist. Every decision sooner or later affects others in some way. But there are decisions which are more private than public, and there are decisions which determine how you act toward others. It is these that we talk about now.

2. When a person decides to "give all he can" he is making a decision that will affect other people. If we do some very conservative figuring from the membership of this church we can illustrate what we mean. We will use a figure of 450 families or folks with separate addresses as our conservative membership figure. We will further conservatively figure that 150 of these folks are retired folks or widows. Here we ought to be honest and admit that many retired folks have more to live on per capita than family groups do. A \$6000 income which must care for 6 people is not as good as a \$2400 income which must care for 1 or 2 people. We ought to remember, too, that widows are often left with income-producing property and assets, and that women control much more wealth in the United States than do men. So we may not be at all realistic, and are



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certainly conservative, when we take our approximately 150 widows and retired folk and estimate an average annual income for them of \$1500 each, for a total of \$225,000. For the remaining 300~~x~~ family groups we might think of a \$4000 per year income. Considering that some of our folks are in the wealthy class, and that a great many of our folks are professional people with incomes much better than this, we may be low. There are some with less income than this, we would admit. But \$4000~~x~~ seems conservative and reasonable, and this would be \$1,200,000 a year. Add that to the former figure and you have \$1,425,000. If our folks were like the Seventh Day Adventists, the Wesleyan Methodists, or other strongly committed folks, and tithe on their income to the church our church would be receiving \$142,500 a year. As a matter of fact, all giving and earnings of all groups and persons into all areas of our church amount to about 1/4 of that, or about \$35,000 a year. You are familiar with the program our church carries on now, with the equipment and condition of the building. You may consider it good -- and it is not bad, we hope --, but think how much



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better it would be if we had four times as much money to work with. How much more we could do in missions and relief, in our own country and all over the world.

If you object that all of ones giving shouldn't go to the church, I wouldn't argue too much. But suppose our church got only half a tithe -- 5% -- annually of our estimated low income. We still could be doing so much better a job.

Well -- do we give all we can? I can answer only for myself, and you only for yourself. But the total picture for our church, and for our community charitable concerns, would force a total answer for us of "no."

In the matter of giving my decision is one which affects others greatly.

3. In the matter of community living decisions are important too. If you decide for representative government are you willing to let your representatives make the major decisions, or do you decide to make life miserable for them? In the matter of group decisions on any project, can you accept cheerfully and cooperatively the will of the majority when you disagree. Your decision on your attitude toward representative



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government is pretty important, for you live under 4 representative forms -- city, county, state and national. You might even add a fifth, the United Nations, which though not officially a government still makes some decisions that are pretty important in your life or mine. Ask any guy who went to Korea and any family that was affected by that decision!

Or, in community living your degree of participation in community activities, like civic clubs, school groups, church activities, and many others, helps determine not only the success of these things, but also what others will think of you and how they will accept you.

4. We could go on listing many ways which we have not touched of how your decisions of acting toward others makes a great difference in your life and theirs. Certainly we should not move away without mentioning attitudes of tolerance, forgiveness, respect for individuals, firmness in standing for ones beliefs while respecting persons of varying beliefs, and lots of other attitudes. As you make decisions in these areas and act on



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you are determining to a large extent what you actually are as other people see you, and you are helping set the tone of the area in which you live.

5. There is one area of decision in which if the right decision is made many of the decisions of ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ personal or social nature fall into line and are easier to make. We mean

### III. The decision of how one should react toward God.

1. The modern evangelist Billy Graham calls his radio broadcasts "The Hour of Decision." In his services, and over the air, he consistently tries to do one main thing: get people to decide to ~~XXXXXX~~ believe in Christ and then to follow him. The decision that Dr. Graham seeks -- and gets in surprising numbers -- is a decision in the true sense, to arrive at a conclusion, opinion, or belief, and then to act on it. The first action he calls for is the coming forward to the altar, or rail, or front, to make a public confession of ones belief and decision. Then in the counseling rooms the decision-makers are given an opportunity to record their



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their name, denominational preference, and other personal data -- including special personal problems --. Following this they are urged to turn to their local church for regular worship, help, and service; and the church is urged to seek them out and help them make good on their decision to "live for Jesus." The true conversion has always been more than just changing ones belief; it has always included that, plus living quite a bit differently and better.

2. I may not feel very comfortable in Dr. Graham's meetings, and you may not. Perhaps that's because we need a bit more converting. But I must admit that his basic concept of decision-making is sound.

3. When you do decide to live for God, as he is revealed in Christ and as Christ reveals the life God wants you to live, your life will be different. All of us know this, and expect to see something different in the person who claims to be converted, to have made a decision for Christ, to have had a real "spiritual experience," to know God in their hearts. I suspect one reason that church people are so often called "hypo-



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crits<sup>0</sup> by non-church people, or even by others within the church, is that they fall so far short of the converted or changed life that one expects of the truly religious, godly, Christian person. Sometimes it seems that the person who emphasizes spirituality and conversion is about the most grasping, selfish, self-satisfied, do-nothingest person you can find. The spirituality sometimes seems to be a smug assurance that "I've got something ~~more~~ better than most people, so I'm good enough and don't need any more change." This is the danger in overworking terminology like "I'm saved," and "I'm a Christian": that one is apt to stop at that point and ~~convert~~ switch a pretty good start into a race in which he never really stands up and runs.

I have a lot more respect for another type of person, the one that takes his vows of church membership or of profession of faith without much fanfare, then gives himself ~~fully~~ as fully as he can to service of the church and of his community in quiet, helpful Christian ways. When he backs this up with obviously generous giving of his money and possessions I can only assume that he really is a changed person.



## RESPONSIVE READING FOR BOY SCOUT SUNDAY

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Minister: Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own Inheritance. (Ps. 33:12) My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments. (Prov. 3:1)

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4. When one gives himself to God he will be a changed person, too. He will take care of himself, in body, mind and soul, as best he knows how. He will seek better ways of taking care of himself. He will do this because he seriously believes his body to be a temple of God, and he wants God to have use of a good and healthy and capable house. He wants an alert mind for his master, too, so he trains himself. He will want to help other people for the same reason -- to please God. He knows that God loves all people and wants them to be his children, so he treats others with respect. This means such things as leaving gambling alone, for to gamble (which is different from just taking a chance) is to seek to get all you can from another person without giving him any more time or goods in return than you have to. He won't charge overly-high prices for his merchandise, for he knows that this would be to charge others more for his services of distribution than those services are worth. He will be forgiving of those who err, and will always help hold the door of forgiveness and love out to them. Better than that, he will always be their friend

~~xxxxxx~~



0:51) Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Cor 9)

People: On my honor I will do my best to keep myself physically strong.

Minister: A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. (Prov. 24:5) Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. (Prov. 4:1)

People: On my honor I will do my best to keep myself mentally awake.

Minister: Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. (Prov. 4:5) Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word. (Ps. 119:9)

People: On my honor I will do my best to keep myself morally straight.

Minister: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isa. 55:7)

People: He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?



4. The story of the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt to their promised land ended, you probably remember, not with Moses leading the people into Canaan but with ~~his brother~~ Joshua doing so. Joshua is credited with planning and executing the strategy by which the Israelites overcame the Philistines and established themselves in Canaan. He did much to wield Israel into a nation. But his chief contribution was to solidify for them their belief in one almighty God, and to create around that belief a national religion. Just before his death Joshua had the people come around him, and in a speech he summarized what God had done for them and him. He pointed out to them the many tempting and false gods and customs they could follow. He told them that if they chose to follow their own peculiar beliefs in the one God they would find that the Almighty was a demanding and fierce but just God. Then he asked them what they wanted to do, ~~and~~ ~~answered~~ ~~the~~ ~~question~~ ~~for~~ ~~him~~ ~~if~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~word~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~text~~ ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~asked~~ serve God or turn to the religion of the people among whom they had moved? He answered for himself the question that he had asked, and his answer is our text. Joshua said



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"as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people answered him, "we also will serve the Lord, for he is Our God." (v.18). Joshua did not live very much longer. Most of the people continued for sometime to serve God, and prospered. The Old Testament is full of accounts how they suffered when they turned from actively serving God. In serving God they found a full and satisfactory way of complete life.

### Conclusion:

1. Everyone has to make decisions. As we have used the word "decision" we mean more than just to arrive at a belief or opinion, but a conclusion which determines action and attitudes.

2. We have said that most of life's decisions are ones which affect either our personal private lives, or ones bearing on our social living -- our dealings with others.

3. We have contended that the easiest and best way of arriving at correct personal and social decisions is to make a major decision to give yourself completely to God and to attempt to do His



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in your life. It is very important to have your belief and opinion of God be a real decision, for the decision to serve God must be acted on promptly and continuously if it is to be of the great worth in your life that it can be and should be.

4. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." The right choice is life's biggest decision.

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