



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

THE KEY TO MAKING WISE DECISIONS

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 5:14-28 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Daniel 1:1-16; 3:1-30; 6:4-24 | John 14:6
1 Corinthians 6:19 | 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 | 2 Timothy 3:16 | Hebrews 13:5

► SUMMARY

How do you make significant decisions?

Some people simply give in to the desire of the moment. Others carefully consider the pros and cons, then make the choice that seems most beneficial. However, both of these approaches can be based merely on a person's preference. The best way to make decisions is to rely on the principles found in God's Word.

Daniel knew how to make choices based on the unchanging truths of Scripture. Although he was under tremendous pressure to live like the Babylonians, he stayed true to the biblical principles he had learned as a young child.

► SERMON POINTS

The Historical Setting

Daniel lived in Babylon during the period of Hebrew exile. After conquering Jerusalem, King Nebuchadnezzar selected the brightest and most capable young Jewish men. His plan was to make them act and think like Babylonians. Along with others, Daniel was trained in the culture, literature, religion, and world view of his captors.

Daniel and the other young men cooperated with the king's plan as long as it didn't conflict with their faith in God. They knew how to make righteous choices, even in an ungodly setting.

Principle and Preference

There are two fundamental bases for making decisions.

The first is principle—a fixed or predetermined mode of conduct or moral rule based on the Word of God. As Christians, we should live by convictions that are grounded in the Word of God. For example, the Ten Commandments tell us not to steal, lie, cheat, murder, commit adultery, or worship false gods. Issues such as these should be non-negotiable for believers.

The second basis for decisions is preference. These are moral choices based on likes and dislikes—whatever seems best in the moment. A person who operates on this basis asks, "What is going to make me feel good, please me, honor me, or benefit me?" He or she is like someone speeding down a dark highway with no centerline. Without clear boundaries, that person is in great danger.

Daniel's Example

As part of their regimen, Daniel and the other young Jewish nobles were expected to eat the king's food—the best the nation had to offer. However, the meat was not kosher; it had not been prepared properly according to Mosaic law. Moreover, it had been offered to idols. That's why Daniel asked his supervisor if he and his friends could eat only vegetables and water for 10 days. After the trial period, Daniel and his friends not only looked fine, they looked healthier than the other young men. God honored them for keeping their convictions (Dan. 1:1-16).

Daniel lived such an exemplary life that, years later, some of his fellow leaders became jealous. They convinced the king to outlaw prayer to any god or man except himself. Those who disobeyed the law would be thrown into a pit full of lions. Despite this threat, Daniel

continued to kneel daily before the Lord. Although he was arrested and thrown to the hungry beasts, God spared his life (Dan. 6:4-24). Not only was Daniel restored to his position of authority, he also had the opportunity to serve as a leader for approximately 70 years under four different kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. He had a tremendous influence on the kingdoms they represented. He also wrote some of the most significant prophecies in the Bible.

Areas of Principle

Our choices should be guided by core beliefs such as these:

- **Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world.** He is more than a good man, a prophet, or a healer; Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6).
- **The Bible is the inspired Word of God and, as such, is infallible and inerrant** (2 Tim. 3:16). We can't discount certain passages because they are hard to accept.
- **Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit** (1 Cor. 6:19). Believers should not abuse their bodies with drugs, alcohol, immorality, or other destructive behaviors.
- **Money is not a god.** Accumulating wealth is not our highest priority (Heb. 13:5).
- **The proper place for sexual relations is within the sanctity of your marriage** (1 Thess. 4:3-7).

Living by Preference

Why do people fail to align their lives with the Word of God? Common reasons include:

- **The fear of rejection:** People are afraid that if they go against the crowd, others will not like them.
- **Greed:** Some are willing to be dishonest or unkind to acquire more money or get the promotion they seek.
- **Compromise:** Rationalizing sin is a quick route to bondage to it. For example, many people think, "One drink won't hurt." They fail to consider the long-term effects on themselves and others.

Living by Principle

Although the Lord ultimately delivered Daniel and his friends from the fiery furnace, they were willing to die rather than worship a false god (Dan. 3:18). We should have the same commitment to obeying God. Sometimes He will rescue you; other times, He will walk with you through difficulty or persecution.

How can you become a person of conviction?
You must:

- **Live for a cause greater than yourself.** In other words, live for Jesus Christ and His kingdom.
- **Know what you believe.** Some things should be non-negotiable for you. Don't even consider choices that are forbidden in God's Word.
- **Expect conflict.** If you live by godly principles, not everyone will understand. Your high standards may make others so uncomfortable that they reject you.
- **Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.** Decide to follow His direction without regard to the results of obedience. He is with you no matter what happens.
- **Remember our Lord is sovereign.** He is absolutely in control of all that happens in this world.

► RESPONSE

- Principle or preference: Which of these words better describes how you make moral decisions?

My prayer is that you will choose to live your life based on the unchanging truths found in God's Word. His guidelines will save you from many different kinds of heartache.

Will you still experience difficulty? Yes. But obeying Him always results in internal peace and joy. Surrender your preferences to God, and let Him show you how to live by His holy, unchanging principles.

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