

Growing Stronger Together
The Most Important Decision • Message 7
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Pray for wisdom to keep Jesus at the Center of your life every day.
- Ask God to help you choose friendships that encourage your faith and growth.
- Pray for discernment to recognize and avoid relationships that pull you away from God.

Scripture Reading:

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

1 Kings 11:1-6 (NIV)

A. Introduction

Today I want to talk about the most important decision...

Now, I want to be honest with you... it's technically the second most important decision you can make...it just didn't sound as good as a title.

The first, most important decision is committing to keeping Jesus at the Center of your life... As it was once said... the two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why you are born...

The second most important decision you can make is choosing to surround yourself with the right people. And here's the thing... I know some of you go... *Really? The second most important thing I can do with my whole life is getting connected to Godly people... come on, Pastor.* And for those who say that... Game on... Challenge accepted.

What I want to do today is two simple things. First, I want to try and convince you why this is the second most important thing... Second, I want to show you how to get connected to the right people... So why and how. I heard a pastor at Lakepointe in Texas share some of this, and it really stirred some things in me, and I hope it stirs you.

B. The Most Important Decision

First why... Why is the whole community thing one of the most important things?

1. The right RELATIONSHIPS lead to the right LIFE.

(1 Kings 3:1. C/R: 1 Kings 11:4,6)

The wisest man to ever live: Solomon.

Solomon was the son of King David... and oh by the way, he was the child of King David and Bathsheba... which is a reminder that no matter how bad you have wrecked your life, he can redeem it! Amen...

Now, if you don't know a lot about Solomon, let me just tell you some great things he did...

How things started:

- **Inherits a great kingdom and grows it.** (At first.)
- **Filled with a spirit of wisdom.** (Wisest man that ever lived except in one area.. Bro had 1,000 wives ...1000 mother-in-laws. One is enough. Amen?)
- **Solomon's wealth.** (In today's terms, it would be around 2 trillion dollars.)
- **Builds a temple and is a part of a revival.** (Spirit of God falls in such an amazing way.)
- **Wrote three books of the Bible.** (Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes)

How things ended:

- **Worship and follow other Gods.**
- **His children and grandchildren follow these demonic false Gods.**
- **God removes his blessing.**
- **Addicted.** (Can't read his story and not think this.)

- **Depressed.** (Read the book of Ecclesiastes.)
- **Loses his kingdom.**

How did he get from there...

Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter.

1 Kings 3:1 (NIV)

You go, *What's up with this... What's the big deal?* In Deuteronomy, God clearly said not to marry a foreign spouse... (Now this isn't a verse against interracial marriage, it's against interfaith marriage.)

Whatever God says, we must be faithful to.

When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in 7 years...

- **Mark Twain**

Listen, there are small things we all have in our lives that we seem to dismiss. We look at the big things in culture. And we think, what's wrong with a bad attitude, or a little lust, or a little greed, or a little unforgiveness, or a little busyness that keeps me from seeking God first? We can often do it with relationships. What's the big deal? And we think we know a little better than God.

"What seems small can sink it all."

(God places places)

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

1 Kings 11:4 (NIV)

Listen to verses down...

So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

1 Kings 11:6 (NIV)

How we got here:

- **One bad relationship.**
- **Multiple bad relationships.**
- (caused him to) **Think like Ungodly people.**
- **Walk like Ungodly people.**

Have you noticed that when you hang around a person, you can actually talk and think like them? I shared this before, but a friend of mine was proposing to his wife, and when he dropped to one knee, he said... *I love you. Always have, always will... and I want you to marry me.* She looked at him and said, *Are you quoting Braveheart?* He spent a little time watching that movie...

The point is that movies, songs, choices, and culture affect us, but nothing affects us more than those we bring into our lives. No one can outrun this principle...

Nobody can get past this principle.... You cannot live the right life with the wrong friends...

That's why I have often said, if you show me your friends, I'll show you your future.

See, the problem is that when I say, *Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future...* some of you go, *How can a few relationships really affect my whole life? It just seems too small a thing, and I'm in control...*

People who say this stuff are the same people who go... *Just one chip... Just one bite...* and 30 minutes later the whole bag is gone... oh, it's just one chip... oh, it's just one decision... it's just a friend... and listen, you wouldn't be alone. You know who else made this mistake of thinking small things don't have a massive effect?

Second, how do you make sure you connect to the right people?

2. How to Discern Who to Walk With: (Proverbs 14:16-17)

When it comes to finding community, there are two possible dangers or pitfalls we can fall into...

	<u>Discernment</u>	
Trust everyone		Suspicious of everyone

Those of you who trust everyone... You are like, *I'm just going to share everything with this stranger I've never met and entrust him or her with the deepest secrets in my life...* You're too trusting... You are the type of people who say: *Hey sweetheart, I just got the kindest email from a Saudi prince who needs our help financially...* or you get one of those texts from a number that's not even from America saying you owe something and you're like... *I got to pay that quick... don't want it to mess up my credit.*

Second, some of you, even when I speak... You sort of cross your arms, and you're always guarded. Yeah, I see you, and I know who you are... because you are suspicious of everyone. (You sit at the end of the aisle.)

Like your kid can break their leg, be dirty and bloody... and they say, *Dad, I need you.* And you're going, *What's your angle? What are you trying to get from me?*

So, we don't want to trust everyone, and we also don't want to be suspicious of everyone; we want to live with discernment....

When it comes to picking people, I want to give you a discernment grid... so you don't judge everyone and don't trust everyone...

In the Bible, there are three types of people mentioned... like three general categories of people... as we see in Proverbs.

One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless. A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Proverbs 14:16-17 (ESV)

a.) **WISE people.**

(Proverbs 9:10)

Wise people are led by the spirit.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)

There is a big difference between knowledge and wisdom. Some of the smartest people I know aren't wise in this sense because knowledge comes from books... while wisdom comes from the Spirit. Some of the least educated people are some of the most Godly people I know...

Represented by this... (Shepherd Picture)- Shepherd... in many ways, these are small group leaders and other volunteers because they are pouring into others.

b.) FOOLISH people.

(Proverbs 14:16-17. C/R: Proverbs 18:2)

One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless. A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Proverbs 14:16-17 (ESV)

Foolish people are led by feelings or desires.

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

Proverbs 18:2 (ESV)

Led by their desires.

Notice it says above that they are reckless. Now, a lot of people fall into this category... because they have a good heart but an undisciplined mind. They are still trying to figure it out. And let's be honest, how many of you would say you do dumb things from time to time? If you didn't raise your hand, that was a dumb thing...

But in the Bible, they are represented by sheep... (SHEEP PICTURE)

And if someone is making foolish decisions, love them. I'm not telling you to pull away from them... I'm just saying you better make sure you have wise people in your life as well.

But some of us are going to struggle with this one...

c.) EVIL people.

(Proverbs 14:16-17. C/R: 1 Kings 3:1; Proverbs 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:33)

One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless. A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Proverbs 14:16-17 (ESV)

Evil people are led by the demonic... many don't know it... We have the same demons; it's just a new day...

Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

Proverbs 4:14-15 (NIV)

Notice what it says about evil people... avoid it... don't walk with them...

See here's the thing... evil is defined as those who hate or oppose things of God...

And this is important, that means you can have nice, evil people... if they oppose and hate the things of God, the Bible calls them evil...

See, evil people are led by demons, and they are represented by an (Eagles Fan Picture), no, I'm joking, it's a (Cat Picture)... for real, it's wolves...

There are some people who claim to be Christian, but they aren't; they are called wolves in sheep's clothing...

Satan is called Beelzebub, which means lord of flies... because what happens is... Satan gets access to our lives through some unhealed wound; he gets control of your life from that unhealed wound.

An evil person will corrupt a wise person faster than a wise person will change an evil person.

Some people go, *That's not me; I can change this person. I will influence my closest friends instead of them influencing me.* You are deceived... *Well, how do you know I am deceived?* Because we have a verse that says this...

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV)

Our closest relationships should be with COMMITTED Christians... people who show up on Sunday... people who are involved... who believe in the whole Bible.

This is important. Some of you go... *This is great, I've gone through this whole sermon, and it's not really touched me... I'm not walking with the wrong crowd...*

For some of you, the problem is not that you're in the wrong crowd... it's that you have no crowd...

It's interesting that David was a man after God's own heart... but did you ever notice that he constantly had men around him? When you read about Solomon, there is not one mention of any male friends.

And buddies aren't going to cut it... because relationships should be rooted in Christ, not rooted in a hobby.

Seven weeks of content, form a group of friends—men, women, couples—not asking for seven months, but seven weeks, and watch how much it shapes things.

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1 Kings 3:1 (NIV)

- 1.) Walk with Godly people.
- 2.) Repent if anything small is in your life.