Making Wise Decisions [1]

Submitted by Wessel on Monday, 5 July 2010 - 23:04
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Last night, CESA bishop Des Ingelsby preached at TBT. His sermon on wisdom and making plans for the future was really good and one which I enjoyed and found relevant. At present I do not know what will happen after this year, when I finish my studies. Preliminary thoughts are to stay in the Cape area, but I have no idea whether I'll move to the City, stay in the Boland or go somewhere else (perhaps back to the northern suburbs?). With difficult and daunting life decisions laying in front of me, it was a great encouragement to hear a message on how to make wise decisions.

The passages for the sermon were Proverbs 16:1–9 and James 4:13–15, but we also jumped around much in Proverbs. Below is a very brief summary of the sermon (it has been transcribed from notes which I took down).

Wisdom

All decisions must honour God. We should take our lead from the fear of God: that should be the start and the end of the process. To make decisions which will honour God, one needs wisdom. Wisdom is knowing *what* to decided *when*1. Wisdom can come from several places:

- it can be learned from other people;
- it can be observed, especially in nature (e.g. Proverbs 6:6);
- it can be acquired through experience;
- it can be sought from God (see James 1:5).

Wisdom is ultimately fulfilled in us in receiving the Holy Spirit.

Guidelines for Making Decisions

Once one is secure in knowing where wisdom comes from, there are a few guidelines which can (read: should) be followed. These four points were really the crux of the sermon.

1. You need to have a plan for your life.
2. Whatever plan you have for your life, it needs to be *good*. A plan can be tested for "goodness" by looking at the *motive behind* your plan: is it God-honouring, or self-honouring?
3. Seek counsel: don't make decisions on your own2. The counsel of older people are especially valuable, as they have more *life experience* than you. The idea that decisions are not isolated and individualistic makes sense when one considers the fact that we are part of God's family along with other believers. We should work towards the good of God's holy church—the body of Yeshua—not just ourselves.
4. Submit all your plans to God. God must permit one's plans3, or they won't succeed.

Personal Reflection

These last four points are vital for a Christian to know. I suspect that I shall soon have to make several major life-decisions. The truth is that, up until this point, I have pretty much gone with the flow: school, university, post-graduate: almost as if the next step has always been laid out before me. But soon I shall have to make real decisions about which direction I shall go with my life. This is scary and daunting, and I push it to the back of my mind so that I can finish my studies (so that I can finally reach that point—something I desperately crave for).

It is good to have this as advice, and it is good to know that I have a loving Father to guide not only my decisions, but the enacting of them as well. Gloria in excelsis Deo!

- 1. See Proverbs 26:4–5. At first glance, they seem to be contradictory, but then one realises that what is being said, is that *context* should be considered. The book of Proverbs contains many wise sayings, but after reading them, a person does not automatically become wise. Wisdom is also knowing when to apply certain principals.
- 2. In a husband-wife relationship, for example, the man is the head of the relationship and the wife must submit to him. While this view of marriage is often regarded negatively by the world, one must realise that in such a relationship, a good (and wise!) man should look to his wife for counsel, rather than domineer. With him lies the final decision. But a good wife will give wise counsel! See [ibib]80[/ibib] for more information.
- 3. Cf. Luke 22:42.

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