

# We Must All Choose

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Most of us remember John F. Kennedy Jr. He was the son of JFK, our thirty-fifth president of the United States, and I remember the day President Kennedy was assassinated—it was one of those times you’ll never forget. John Kennedy Jr. was a little child, I think he was about three years old when his father’s horse-drawn carriage came by carrying the coffin; he saluted and that was an iconic image of that time. John Kennedy Jr. grew up and he was one of the most popular young men in the country, certainly one of the most eligible bachelors in the country. He was an Ivy league graduate, from a very powerful family, and he married a publicist for Calvin Klein—one of those showcase weddings. As we would say today, John Kennedy Jr. kind of had it all as a young man—very nice-looking young man.

In 1998 at the age of thirty-eight he got his private pilot’s license and he bought an airplane. It was a six-passenger Piper Saratoga for those of you who like airplanes. When you get your private pilot’s license you’re rated for VFR only (that means “Visual Flight Rules”). You can fly in clear air, you can fly at night but it has to be clear air. The next step after that is IFR (“Instrument Flight Rules”); that means you’re authorized and trained to fly in cloudy conditions or low visibility conditions—he was not. On July 16, 1999, he made a flight from the New York City area; it was an airport just west of New York City in New Jersey—he made a flight from that airport to Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts where the Kennedy compound is located and he was taking his wife and her sister, and, I just guessed it, it’s about 200 air miles between New Jersey and Martha’s Vineyard. He checked the weather earlier that day and it looked good. His sister-in-law was late getting out of work, then she got held up in traffic so she was very late in getting to the airport, and so you have to make a decision—do we go or do we not go?—and his wife put pressure on him to go because they wanted to get to Martha’s Vineyard [for a wedding the next day]. So instead of taking off in the late afternoon, he took off just a little after sunset.

That day, throughout the day, he made a series of disastrous choices; if he had not made any one of those choices, he would still be alive, his wife would be alive, and her sister would be alive. He didn’t check the weather at the airport and when he got to the airport—he didn’t know it, had he checked it—the forecast had changed to deteriorating weather with low visibility conditions due to haze; a hot, muggy, summer day with a lot of haze around—he didn’t know that. His instructor, who was an IFR pilot, offered to be co-pilot and accompany them there, and he said no, we don’t need that, we’ll be okay—another mistake. Then he yielded to pressure from his wife because she wanted to get there and he took off in marginal weather conditions—marginal visibility conditions, sun going down, haze all around. After takeoff, about halfway into the flight, he got into a situation where the horizon couldn’t be seen due to the haze and the darkness. So here

he is a VFR pilot, cleared license to fly in clear air, where you can see everything; suddenly you're in darkening conditions, you can't see the lights from the city (and part of your flight is over water) so you have no visual horizon, and now all of a sudden you're in trouble.

He had an autopilot—all he had to do was activate the autopilot; throw a switch and the autopilot keeps the nose level. It will automatically correct and make sure your nose is level. It also keeps the wings level so you don't get into a bank or a turn. If he had thrown that switch then he could have at least kept on his current course, got on the radio, calmed himself down and worked on a solution, but he did not activate the autopilot and what happened was he became spatially disoriented. When that happens you have no frame of reference so your mind starts playing tricks and your inner ears start playing tricks. You can be flying level but your mind says you're in a turn. Or you can be climbing but your mind says you're diving, and all of those things came to bear, and what happened is he started a gradual descending turn, it got tighter and tighter and tighter until they crashed into the ocean, killing all three aboard.

John Kennedy Jr. made some very bad choices. You always check weather at the airport—you just do. He had the opportunity to have a trained, skilled co-pilot in case there was a problem and he rejected that. One of the big problems is he yielded to pressure—maybe your gut says we should do this the next day but his wife and her sister wanted to go and he felt pressure—okay, we'll make it happen. Last of all, probably because he was in a state of panic, he didn't activate the autopilot. If he had done any of those things, he would probably still be alive. I'm sure down that screaming spiral—because as you're going down, the wind rushes over, the engine speeds up and there is a lot of noise during that screaming spiral—I'm sure he wished he had chosen differently if he could go back and do it over again. Of course, isn't that true of hindsight—I just wish I could take it back or take those minutes back. It's true for all of us; hindsight is 20/20.

Translating it to us, for all of us, there are crucial times in life—for John Kennedy Jr. this was a crucial time—and for us there are crucial times in life when we must make choices; we come to a crossroads and we have to make a decision. Sadly, some people freeze and they make a decision by not making a decision. That's kind of a cop out but some people do that. The point is, God puts us in situations or we put ourselves in situations where a choice needs to be made. God expects us to exercise His Spirit in making such choices—making these crucial choices by using the mind of Christ, by exercising God's Spirit and then God watches us to see what we do. The fact remains there are times in our life when we must make crucial choices and that leads to the title of the sermon:

### We Must All Choose

We have an obligation—God puts us in situations where we must make choices. To look at the subject, the first point we want to make is:

## 1. God allows mankind to choose.

We're not robots. He hasn't designed us as robots, which He could have done. He gives us free moral agency so that we can make choices for ourselves in our own lives. Let's go to John 17:17. God established early on what was true, and a wise person would find out what's true and obey what's true. We're going to see that mankind does just the opposite. A very familiar scripture—Christ is speaking.

**John 17:17** *Sanctify them through thy truth [then this profound statement]: thy word is truth. (KJV)*

That is the only truth—God's word, nothing else. Man's word means very little unless it aligns itself with God's word. God also, to give us a guidepost or a guideline for living, established an instruction book based on His truth. Let's go to Psalm 119:105; these are not new scriptures but we're just setting the context for what we want to talk about. The Psalmist knew the purpose of God's word—God's word is truth and it's there for a reason, it's there for a purpose. We're told very plainly:

**Psalm 119:105** *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (KJV)*

The meaning here is very clear. God's word shows us how to put one foot in front of the other, how to select the right path and stay on the right path. God has left us through His Bible, the Bible we have in front of us, a guide for living. However—and this is a critical point—God allows mankind to choose, to choose what path he follows. Let's go back to a huge turning point for a large group of people in front of whom God performed miracles, beginning in Deuteronomy 30:15. Moses is speaking, not long before the end of his life. He is summarizing in Deuteronomy everything that had happened to them since coming out of Egypt and he is laying it out for them—that they have choices to make, as a nation.

**Deuteronomy 30:15** *See, I have set before thee this day life and good [that's one choice], and death and evil [another choice]; (KJV)*

As God did with Adam and Eve, He gives mankind the freedom to choose and He watches us to see what we will do. He allows us to come to the crossroads and watches and waits and sees what kind of choice we're going to make.

16) *In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, [if you do that, He says] that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. (KJV)*

They were on the eastern side of Jordan; after Moses' death, they crossed the river into the Promised Land. Verse 17, here's the *but* ...

17) *But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;* (KJV)

This is the *first* thing Moses says that could draw people away, to put something in front of God Almighty—to go to other gods and serve those other gods.

18) [If you do that] *I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.* (KJV)

What we're being told here is that God allows us to choose but there are consequences for the choices that we make, good or bad, life or death. Now let's go to Joshua 24:14. Joshua is doing the same thing that Moses did. Joshua is nearing the end of his life and he is warning the nation of Israel and telling them you have a choice in life, here's what it is.

**Joshua 24:14** [They're in the Promised Land now] *Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [this is a pattern before the time of Noah], and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.* (KJV)

He's saying, *don't you follow in their footsteps!*

15) *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, [this is the big word] choose you this day whom ye will serve [you have a choice]; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood [because that's where all of these pagan gods originated, if you look into history], or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell [they're the same gods]: but as for me and my house [Joshua says], we will serve the LORD.* (KJV)

As we've talked about before, Israel had a history of worshipping anything but God— isn't that a shame? The God who brought them out of Egypt; the God who performed all the miracles; the God who brought them through the desert and gave them this Promised Land—they had a history of worshipping anything but Him. That's just amazing to me—anything *but* Him. Now the Bible tells us (in this first point, God allows mankind to choose) that there are consequences for our decisions. Let's go to a New Testament reference, Galatians 6:7; we'll read verses 7 and 8. Paul is telling the church in Galatia and, by extension, us today, look, you can't get away with anything with God. You make a choice, you have to live with that choice, the consequences of that choice.

**Galatians 6:7** *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

8) *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* (KJV)

We see here, very plainly (number one), that God allows us to choose whether we want life or death, if we want Spirit or flesh—we have the freedom to choose but we have to face the consequences of the decisions that we make.

That leads to the second point that we want to make today:

## **2. Mankind has chosen to follow his own way rather than God's way.**

We all know the story of Adam and Eve, that they chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They did so under the provocation of Satan—he was right there, pushing and prodding, leading them away from God. Since that time, apart from God, mankind has made choices that take man farther and farther from God. Look at our country—it's getting to the point that the majority in this country no longer believe in a God, no longer recognize God as the supreme authority. The issue is that mankind is inherently incapable of making correct choices. It's just not in man. Let's go to Jeremiah 10:23—one of my favorite scriptures, it's kind of a guidepost scripture. When we think we can do it on our own—inside of us, apart from God, just humanly, that we can do good things, make right choices and all of that—we *need to read this scripture*.

**Jeremiah 10:23** *O LORD, [YHVH] I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (KJV)*

Man—apart from God, of himself—does not know the way and apart from God mankind will stumble. Look at the world we live in today and look at the history—roughly 6,000 years of written history, look at the result. Now let's go to Proverbs 1 and see that Solomon, as we know, up until Christ arrived, was the wisest man who ever lived. We're going to begin in verse 20 of Proverbs 1, and notice what Solomon says at the beginning of Proverbs about wisdom.

**Proverbs 1:20** *Wisdom crieth without; [he personifies wisdom as a female] she uttereth her voice in the streets:*

21) *She crieth in the chief place of concourse [where people go to and fro], in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,*

22) *How long, ye simple [foolish] ones, [I'm quoting out of the King James, the Hebrew means "foolish"] will ye love simplicity [foolishness]? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?*

23) *Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. (KJV)*

That's exactly what has happened to all of us. God has made known His words to each one of us—happens through the Holy Spirit which is available through the sacrifice of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He's made His words known but outside of this small group that God has called, mankind is headed in the opposite direction, absolute opposite direction. Going on in verse 24.

24) *Because I have called, [think about this] and ye refused;* (KJV)

That's a choice—the King James says *because I called and you refused*. People refused God's calling, that is a choice.

24 continued) ... *I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;*  
25) *But ye have set at nought all my counsel, [that is another choice] and would none of my reproof: [that's another choice, not to listen to God]*  
26) *I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;*  
27) *When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.*  
28) *Then shall they call upon me, [notice the consequences] but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:*  
29) [Why?] *For that they hated knowledge, [notice this] and did not choose the fear of the LORD ...* (KJV)

I'm sure when Jerusalem was being overrun by the Babylonians the people there were crying out to God to spare them, to spare the children, to spare the temple, and God said no, enough is enough, I'm not going to hear because you had plenty of warning, plenty of time, and now it's too late. Herein lies the danger for those who choose not to follow God: there's a time limit with God. He will put up with it for so long. People rejecting Him and rejecting Him and picking other things to put in front of God; God will put up with it for a time, but after a certain time, He will not answer. Let's go to the prophet Isaiah, chapter 65, verse 2. Isaiah is a prophet who wrote for his time but he's also prophesying for today. God is speaking here; Isaiah is quoting God.

**Isaiah 65:2** [God says] *I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, [He didn't give up on them, He stretched out His hands to them] which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts [not God's thoughts];*  
3) *A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; [notice what they do] that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;*  
4) *Who sit among the graves, And spend the night in the tombs; Who eat swine's flesh, And the broth of abominable things is in their vessels;*  
5) *Who say, [notice what they say] 'Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, For I am holier than you!'* (KJV)

Let's just stop there. What does that sound like today? I don't need anything, I don't need anybody to tell me what to do—that's as Laodicean as it gets. I'm holier than you, keep to yourself, don't give me any advice, I've got it all, I have everything I need.

5 continued) [Notice God's reply] *These are smoke in My nostrils,* (KJV)

If you have to stick your head over a fire and endure the smoke for a long period of time, it's very irritating.

5 continued) *A fire that burns all the day.*

11) *"But you are those who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who prepare a table for Gad,*

I'm reading out of the New King James; the Hebrew word for Gad is "Fortune", a Babylonian deity. So they prepare a table for this Babylonian pagan god.

11 continued) *And who furnish a drink offering for Meni. (NKJV)*

"Meni" means fate. The Babylonians also worshipped the god of fate and if they made an appeal to that god, and made an offering to that god, then the god would smile on them and their fate would be good rather than bad. Didn't look to God Almighty, looked to these pagan gods.

12) *Therefore [because you do this] will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and [here's the word again] did choose that wherein I delighted not." (KJV)*

They brazenly, openly chose to thumb their nose at God and do what they wanted to do.

13) *Therefore [because you did all of this] thus saith the LORD God: Behold, [notice the contrast here coming] my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:*

14) *Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. (KJV)*

What this prophecy tells us is that there's a coming separation between those who put God first and those who put something else in front of God. They refuse to put God first and they substitute something before God. Now let's go to Isaiah 66, the next chapter, verse 1.

**Isaiah 66:1** *Thus saith the LORD [very familiar scripture]: The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool [not some pagan gods]: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?*

2) *For all those things hath mine hand made [God made His throne in heaven, God made the universe, God made everything that they saw at that time], all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (KJV)*

The contrast of course is the ones who refuse to follow God, refuse to obey His word—they don't tremble at God's word at all. We're going to do this, we're going to do that, with no thought of obeying God. As we begin verse 3, notice the religious hypocrisy because as we go through this, the word "if" is in italics—it doesn't need to be there. I'm going to eliminate the word "if" because it's not in the original.

3) *He that killeth an ox is as ... he slew a man ...* (KJV)

The meaning is (as we'll see as we go through this) there are people who will kill an ox to sacrifice it to God and then turn around and kill a human being—the hypocrisy of it all; appear righteous on the one hand and then go out and commit murder.

3 continued) *... he that sacrificeth a lamb [meaning to God], as ... he cut off a dog's neck ...* (KJV)

This individual would go in the morning to sacrifice and offer a lamb, and then in the afternoon go out and behead a dog—that tells you something about the person's character.

3 continued) *... he that offereth an oblation, as ... he offered swine's blood ...* (KJV)

Make an offering to God and then go offer swine's blood to your god in some pagan temple somewhere.

3 continued) *... he that burneth incense, as ... he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul [the King James says it means "life"] delighteth in their abominations.*

4) *I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and [here we go again] chose that in which I delighted not.* (KJV)

Look at the results we have today. Look at the world, the chaos, the evil that we have today as a result of mankind choosing not to follow God. It's just amazing.

The third point we want to make:

### **3. Some examples of bad choices.**

Maybe as God's people we can learn from them. Let's look at Lot because he was presented with a choice and he made a bad choice. Let's go to Genesis 13:1. Abraham was the patriarch of the family, Lot was his nephew. It tells us that Abraham went on a journey and Lot with him.



**Genesis 13:1** *And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.*

2) *And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.*

5) *And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. (KJV)*

His father had died, he had inherited all of this, and he was going with his uncle.

6) *And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.*

7) *And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and [in addition to all this] the Canaanite and the Perizzite [pagans to the core] dwelled then in the land.*

8) *And Abram said unto Lot [this is a very converted attitude], Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.*

9) *Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. (KJV)*

Lot is presented with a choice. What choice to make? Let's notice as we go on in verse 10 what is the basis of Lot's choice—is it righteous or is it carnal?

10) *And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, [the next is a parenthetical phrase, should be a parenthesis here:] (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) [end parentheses], even as the garden of the LORD [it was well watered everywhere], like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. (KJV)*

What did Lot do after seeing this beautiful land?

11) *Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.*

12) *Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.*

13) *But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly. (KJV)*

As I said, Abraham was the patriarch and Lot was the nephew, and what Lot should have done is said, no, I can't make this decision; you have far more experience than I do; you're the head of the family; you choose and you tell me where I should go, what is best for me; but it's your choice, not my choice. Then Lot would have allowed Abraham to choose and then he would have gone not too far away—staying in reasonable proximity. Lot made a bad choice to move close to Sodom. What was the basis of the choice?—we all know—lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, the pride of life; 1 John 2 tells us that. Then, if that wasn't enough, in chapter 14, Lot chose to move *into* Sodom. Not

just camp in the area, and build something for himself in the area, but he chose to move into Sodom. He got caught up in the deceitfulness of sin: Oh, they're not so bad. Oh, I can have a good influence on them (or something like that). Paul tells us in Hebrews 3 that sin is indeed deceitful. We know the rest of the story. In Genesis 19, the angels had to drag Lot and his wife, kicking and screaming, out of Sodom. In Genesis 19:17, let's go there and notice what happened.

**Genesis 19:17** *And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, [the angels had dragged Lot and his wife out of Sodom] that he [referring to one of the angels] said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. (KJV)*

Then they had a choice: look back or not look back. Look forward or look behind.

26) *But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. (KJV)*

Bad choice. Just couldn't resist—turning around and looking backward. We see here that Lot could have saved himself a lot of trouble if he had made a godly decision.

Let's look at another example—Samson. This is one guy that made one bad decision after another, after another. Let's go to Judges 16:4; I'm going to read this out of the New King James. We won't go into the background but it will come out a little bit later.

**Judges 16:4** *Afterward it happened that he [referring to Samson] loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. (NKJV)*

Right out of the shoot, Delilah is a pagan and Delilah is a foreigner; she's not an Israelite, so that tells you something.

5) *And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us [if you do this] will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." [Lots of money.]*

6) *So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you." (NKJV)*

Why would somebody even go there?

7) *And Samson said to her, [so he's starting to play this game] "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."*

8) *So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. (NKJV)*

9) *Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room [probably a very big room and they hid themselves somehow in the room]. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire [easy to break]. So the secret of his strength was not known.*

Then in verses 10 through 14, she tries two more times with the same result. You'd think this guy would learn. Two more times, three times now, total.

15) *Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies."*

If he was in his right mind, he could have turned around and said, *How can you say you love me and yet you want the Philistines to come and afflict me*, but he was not of that frame of mind.

16) *And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him [we would say today, nagged], so that his soul was vexed to death,*

Now he's at a crossroads, he's got a choice to make ...

17) *that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." (NKJV)*

I'm going to stop here. This is my opinion. I remember the movie, *Samson*, the first Hollywood blockbuster movie about Samson in the '50s, and the actor—a famous actor, Victor Mature I think it was—he bulked up for that movie. He lifted weights and shaved all the hair off his body, had big biceps and everything like that, and that was part of the Hollywood portrayal. It's my opinion that Samson was not a bulky, strong, body builder type because then he could take the credit for any strength that he had. If he was built like an average guy and had this strength, then who gets the credit—God does, not a human being; that's just my opinion.

18) *When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand.*

19) *Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. [When that happened, this woman, who says she's in love with him] ... began to torment him [the Hebrew means "to look down upon"], and his strength left him.*

20) *And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!"* [He did not believe God] *But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.*

21) *Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.* (NKJV)

The whole story of Samson is that he had nothing but problems with foreign women, and he had a previous problem with a woman not keeping her secrets—that's in chapter 14. The fact is, the man never learned. He didn't learn from his previous experience and his previous sins, and at several junctures he could have chosen not to play this deadly game. It went four times; the first three and any time prior to the fourth time he could have just walked away—didn't do it. He made bad choices and he paid a very heavy price. Just to let you know, if you look into the history of gouging out eyes, it was a science. There were several ways to do it and the torturers of these pagan nations made it something very practiced, something very varied depending on how much pain you wanted to cause and how you wanted to do it—sad.

Let's go to another example of a bad choice. This is probably the most obvious one; David had to choose. Let's go to 2 Samuel 11:1. We're not going to belabor this but notice how many times the series of sins that David committed could have been stopped by making a godly choice. It just went on and on and on.

**2 Samuel 11:1** *And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle [this is the springtime], that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.* (KJV)

Let's stop there and ask the question, why? Why did David not go to battle? He led the army every other time. David was a warrior and he relished it because he was fighting for God. What was going on that this time he stayed home? Leisure, laziness, not as close to God as he should be, bad attitude—we don't know. But because of the decision to stay back, notice verse 2; it begins with an "and"...

2) *And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.* (KJV)

Okay, he could have turned away his eyes, walked off the balcony and gone and done something else—that's a choice; he did not do that. So, in verse 3, we have another big "and" ...

3) *And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?* (KJV)

Now that he got the information of who this woman was, and that she was married, he could have said, well, okay, and then gone about his business, but he did not.

*4) And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.*

*5) And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.*  
(KJV)

He could have stopped right here and he could have admitted before God and the whole nation, if necessary, I messed up, this is what I've done, I shouldn't have done it, I apologize to Uriah, I apologize to Uriah's family, to Bathsheba, to her family, it will never happen again—he could have done that but he didn't.

*6) And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.* (KJV)

Then what happened—David chose to commit murder; he made the choice. This could have been stopped at any number of points but these are bad choices from a man who knew better, but he was caught up in selfishness and caught up in lust and he made some really bad choices.

Let's look at one final one under this third point; we'll go to the New Testament this time. Acts 5:1, this is Ananias and Sapphira—they had a choice to make. Remember, the Church was growing by leaps and bounds. It was the talk of the whole Middle East—this new religion, the Messiah has come, this Jesus Christ—and people were talking about Christ and talking about this movement. The Church was growing exponentially.

**Acts 5:1** *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession [we'll find out in just a minute it was a piece of land],* (KJV)

They sold this land, now they had a choice to make. They could be honest and straightforward, and they could say, we sold this land (I'll put it in modern terms) for \$50,000 and we're going to give the Church \$25,000—they could have done that. Or they could be deceitful and say they sold the land for \$25,000 when they really sold it for \$50,000, and here's the full amount (being deceitful to gain favor).

*2) And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part [we don't know what fraction of the total], and laid it at the apostles' feet [as though it was the full amount].* (KJV)

They were being deceitful and dishonest. Why would they do that? We'll see.

3) *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (KJV)*

Where did that come from—the thought. Of course it came from Satan.

4) *Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?*

Why indeed—to curry favor, to buy a position, to make themselves look good in the eyes of the Church.

4 continued) *thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

5) *And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: (KJV)*

There's one Greek word for "gave up the ghost" and it just means *to expire*. Ananias expired—life just left him.

5 continued) *... and great fear came on all them that heard these things.*

6) *And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.*

7) *And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.*

8) *And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? [Did you really sell it for \$25,000, was that the total price?] And she said, Yea, for so much.*

9) *Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt [the King James says tempt, the Greek means "to test"] the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.*

10) *Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost [she expired]: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.*

11) *And [can you imagine?] great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. (KJV)*

You see, when we come to a crossroads, the big lesson here is we need to stop and consider what's going on and then ask the question, what would Christ do in a situation like this. If Ananias and Sapphira had asked that question, they wouldn't have done what they did. It's a lesson for us to just stop and say, what does God want me to do, what does Christ want me to do, which leads to the fourth point:

#### **4. Let's look at some examples of good choices, good decisions.**

Let's look at Moses—we'll turn to Exodus 2:11. We don't know all the details but he found out at some point that he was an Israelite. These slaves who are working so hard to build Pharaoh's cities, he's related to them—he came from them.

**Exodus 2:11** *And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, [so he obviously knew somehow, some way] and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.*

12) *And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. (KJV)*

When Moses saw this altercation he had a choice to make—do I ignore it and it's not my problem, even though these people are my people? No, he chose to support and defend his people. And because of that one choice look what it led to—Israel coming out of Egypt, going into the Promised Land, based on that choice. Paul talks about this in Hebrews 11:23; let's go there. Paul understood this and he knew that Moses had to make a choice—he was offered a choice; he had to go one way or another—go with Pharaoh or go with my people.

**Hebrews 11:23** *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

24) *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;*

25) [Here's that word again] *Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; (KJV)*

His choice was not what most people would choose. He had the riches, the glory, the position and all of that in Egypt, and to walk away from that and to align himself with the slave people—not a popular choice, not a choice most people would make but it was a godly choice, and look at the result.

Now let's look at Solomon because he had a choice to make. Let's go to 1 Kings 3:5—David has died and God appeared to Solomon. It doesn't say how he appeared, whether it was a voice or a vision, we just don't know, but it was in a dream.

**1 Kings 3:5** *In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. (KJV)*

So now Solomon has a choice—he can ask for something carnal, physical, or he can ask for something godly. Notice what he chose to ask for:

6) *And Solomon said, [notice his attitude] Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.*

7) *And now, O LORD my God [he knew who he was talking to], thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: [he could have had a haughty attitude—look at me, look at what I've done] I know not how to go out or come in [Jeremiah 10, we read it earlier—I don't know how to put one foot in front of the other].*

8) *And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.*

9) *Give therefore [here's his choice] thy servant an understanding heart [why, what purpose] to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?*

10) *[As a result of that] ... the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.*

11) *And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies [all physical stuff]; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;*

12) *[Because you've done that] Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. (KJV)*

Here He is referring to kings—there won't be any kings that arise after you who are as wise as you. We know Christ came and Christ was wiser than Solomon, so this is referring, when he says neither shall any—it means kings—arise like unto you.

13) *And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. (KJV)*

By choosing to serve, God blessed Solomon. His attitude was of serving others—making their lives better, promoting God's way of life on earth.

One last example under this fourth point of good examples is obviously Jesus Christ. We're going to go to the Old Testament to see this (Isaiah 7:14-15) because Christ had choices to make when He was on this earth—every day He had a choice to make. This is a prophecy, obviously, and talking about God giving a sign.

**Isaiah 7:14** *Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (KJV)*

God gave the sign regarding His Son.

15) *Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, [notice this, here's this word again] and choose the good. (KJV)*



When you think about it, every morning Christ woke up, He had to choose to live a perfect life that day. He made the conscious choice: I am not going to sin today, I am going to live the way God, My Father, wants Me to. He set an example for us of leading a sinless life, and He chose that way every day of His physical life.

The fifth and last point—now that we’ve collected all this information, let’s ask the question, as it relates to us now:

## **5. What should be the foundation of our choices today?**

We’re going to talk about two: A and B. What should be the foundation of our choices? It’s really very simple—the Bible is very clear. It’s hard to do sometimes but in concept it is absolutely clear and simple.

### **5A. We must choose to obey God rather than men.**

That’s obvious—let’s go to Acts 5:26. We won’t cover the whole story but this is after the Apostles were miraculously released from prison. They got right out—they were put in prison for preaching the truth—by a miracle they were released from prison and they didn’t go hiding, they went right out and preached the truth again.

**Acts 5:26** *Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they [these captains and officers] feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.*

27) *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: [this is the Sanhedrin] and the high priest [himself] asked them,*

28) *Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. (KJV)*

29) [I’m going to read this out of the New Living Translation] *But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than any human authority. (NLT)*

The King James says *man*. Peter says, we have to obey God, not any kind of human authority.

30) [Back to the King James] *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, (KJV)*

If you ever want to know who the God of our fathers is, it says so right here—the God of our fathers raised up Jesus. (You can check Acts 3:13; it’s repeated there.)

30 continued) *... whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. (KJV)*

He’s talking to the Sanhedrin and the high priest.

31) *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

32) *And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom [the King James says “whom”; the Greek can mean “which” also] God hath given to them that obey him.*

33) *When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. (KJV)*

Despite their lives being at stake, what did they do—they obeyed God and not men, and if you read down in verse 40 they suffered a beating as a result. They were not afraid, they just knew they had to obey God. It all comes back to the two great commandments. We have to put God first in everything we do, every thought, every word, every deed; we put God first and then we love our neighbor as ourself—pretty clear. So point A, we have to choose to obey God rather than human authority or men.

## **5B. We have to choose to please God.**

We can obey God with a bad attitude—we’ve all done it—but if we obey God and choose to please Him at the same time, then we obey God with a good attitude. Let’s go to Isaiah 56:1. I’m going to read this out of the New Living Translation. By the way, sometimes I’ll quote another translation—New Living is particularly problematic here. These translations list new versions every few years—every four or five years, or ten years, so if I have an older version it might not exactly word for word sync up with the new version but that’s just the way it is. So I’m quoting the NLT that I’ve got.

**Isaiah 56:1** *This is what the LORD says: “Be just and fair to all [this is what pleases God]. Do what is right and good, for I am coming soon to rescue you and to display my righteousness among you.*

2) *Blessed are all those who are careful to do this. Blessed are those who honor my Sabbath days of rest and keep themselves from doing wrong.*

3) *“Don’t let foreigners [we’re all foreigners, most of us are not Israelites, maybe way back when, but by intermarriage and all, God called the weak of the world] who commit themselves to the LORD say, The LORD will never let me be part of his people.’ And don’t let the eunuchs say, ‘I’m a dried-up tree with no children and no future.’*

4) *For this is what the LORD says: I will bless those eunuchs who keep my Sabbath days holy and who choose to do what pleases me and commit their lives to me. (NLT)*

Making a choice to please God.

5) *I will give them—within the walls of my house—a memorial and a name far greater than sons and daughters could give. For the name I give them is an everlasting one. It will never disappear! (KJV)*

What a blessing. Now let's go to 1 John 3:22 and see that in the New Testament we are encouraged to do exactly the same thing—please God. John makes it so plain, so clear, so straightforward. John tells us:

**1 John 3:22** *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, [why?—he tells us why in the latter part of the verse] because we keep his commandments, [not only just keep them] and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (KJV)*

We keep the commandments with a desire to please God, to love God, to show God we love Him by our actions, by our words, by our thoughts.

Let's go to an example of Paul in Acts 13:20 (under point B of choosing to please God). Paul is speaking in a synagogue in Antioch and notice what he says. He's going back to Ancient Israel, giving them an example of pleasing God.

**Acts 13:20** *And after that he [referring to God] gave unto them [referring to Israel] judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.*

21) *And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.*

22) *And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said [God says this about David], I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. (KJV)*

If you look up the Greek word “after” it means *after the manner of*; it's Strong's #2596. A man after the manner of my own heart. We see here that David sought the heart of God. He sought to have the very heart, the mind of God, and then as a result of that seeking he developed a heart that resembled God's heart. He thought the way God thought, he acted the way God would have acted—he was human, he made mistakes, obviously—but in the main that's what David did.

The truth here is we must *seek* the heart of God in order to *have* the heart of God. You won't have it unless you seek it. If I don't seek God's mind, God's heart, to do it God's way, it will explode in my lap—it won't go anywhere. But if we seek to have the heart of God, the mind of God, then we will please God. We have to do the things that please Him. For us, the only way to do that is to exercise God's Spirit which is in us. If we do not exercise God's Spirit we will not have the heart of God. We will not have the mind of Jesus Christ. If we exercise God's Holy Spirit we can make godly choices and the end result is we please God. Very simple—very, very simple.

Let's close now. We started off talking about John Kennedy Jr. He made a series of bad choices that cost him his very promising life, the life of his wife, the life of her sister. When we look at all the scriptures we've covered today, it's obvious God is telling us what he told Ancient Israel, but He's telling us today, the Church of God today, choose

whom you will serve. You choose—He’s telling this to all of us. Are you going to choose Me and put Me first or are you going to choose something else and put something else first? What will you do?

Remember, in the beginning of our conversion, we know that God chose us. John 6:44, that’s a whole sermon in itself, but God first chose us—turned us over to Jesus Christ, Head of the Church, but God did the original choosing. God chose us but then we chose repentance and baptism. After our baptism it is we who must do the choosing. God chose us to get us here and, yes, we chose baptism; yes, we chose repentance, but after that, having God’s spirit dwelling in us, we must choose every day of our life. The rest of our converted life is full of daily choices and God watches us to see what we will do. Will we follow Him or will we follow something else? Will we follow God and what God’s word says, or will we follow a man, or church tradition, or humans in some form or fashion—what will we do? We have the same choice as Ancient Israel. Let’s go to one final scripture, back to Deuteronomy 30. We stopped at verse 18 and now we’re going to read verse 19 in closing. Remember Moses was setting before them life and death, and this is the sum of it all. It couldn’t be any more plain—it applied to them (Israel) for physical blessings; it applies to us for eternal life—very clear.

**Deuteronomy 30:19** [Moses says] *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, [he is quoting God] that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore [here is this word again] choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*

20) [If you choose life] *That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: [Why?] for he is thy life ... (KJV)*

He was their physical life back then, He is our spiritual, eternal life, right now. As the end nears (and it can come faster than we think), with this interconnected world things can happen very quickly, things could collapse very quickly—we just don’t know. As the end nears, all of us should have a sense of urgency to follow the Almighty God and the example of His Son, Jesus Christ.