

Life Choices

By Jason Green, Executive Director

I recently entered into a discussion that has caused me to contemplate several processes and practices and has challenged me in thought which isn't all that hard to do. The topic was making a choice to do something or stop doing something whether that be in action or in mind – “just say no”. I am not trying to over simplify hard choices nor am I making light of those that struggle with choices due to a number of circumstances or unknown conditions or physical or chemical conditions. An example might be with two people trying to decide whether to get married or to divorce. The choice of marriage often seems easier, but may, for some be laced with questions, doubt or the inability to say no. Some may say to take your time and date for one or two years until the excitement and newness wears off and then use your judgment wisely; others would say if it feels good, do it. The divorce scenario may be easy in decision but hard on the emotions due to fighting, cheating or other such terrible things that we get into or it may be that the two are just tired and have given up on hope and hard work. Do we never get a divorce; it's not an option or do we not get one because of emotions and feelings for kids or memories, etc. or you made me mad and I will never forgive you, etc.? With divorce and marriage, no two cases are exactly the same and judgment and advice comes easy from bystanders.

Every choice, decision or action, results in a reaction or consequence(s) that follows. In most everything we do we have choices; yes or no, attitude, what we think about and what we do. Do we have a choice to be angry, forgive, say yes or no, show compassion or let a tear drop? Again, I don't want to over simplify these things but there is a difference with a factual decisions and an emotional decision, though the two are often linked. A dangerous circumstance may develop when emotions rule our decisions and we act upon them before bringing them captive to our thinking. What keeps us in check in doing right or making good, moral or wise decisions – for ourselves, our family or our employees/employer? How many say we are the type that learns better through experience rather than instruction? That is true with many, but shame on us if used to excuse or justify what we, selfishly, want to do but know its wrong or we did not spend

time to research, etc., to obtain an answer. What about thinking, researching or asking someone who might be wiser than us and then being responsible for the consequences of our decisions – and learn and pass on this life lesson to the next generation?

Another thought has been trying to teach three young daughters to be careful with boys and learn how to say no and mean it (I hope) and to not say “I love you” based on emotion but rather, after thinking about it and making a choice and decision. Once the action is done or something is said, one can never take it back. In this same thread of thought are the ways we act or choose to act around a boss or someone we think important; do we act the same when they are absent? What about not being able to tell someone no who has asked you to do a job you're either overloaded to do or it's beyond your ability? How about in our thinking? If my boss made a decision or said something to me that hurt me or that I didn't want to do, is my thought process still a choice or am I allowing my mind and words to run as a result of an emotional feeling? What about decisions made under peer pressure or listening to the squeaky wheel? Life is full of daily choices that may be uncomplicated or have huge ramifications and consequences, possibly for years to come; whether its business or in our personal lives. For some, they struggle and seem to always have a challenge making decisions. Others will come to grips with something and decide on the spot. Certainly experience, wisdom and practice play into these similarly to practicing steps in problem solving.

Have you ever considered your decision habits? What makes you or how did you conclude a choice? Was it based upon feelings or selfishness, a call for action, a real need, a want or desire or was it based upon real tangible fact and research? Do we need to challenge ourselves in these matters? What do I practice and do I make wise choices?

The conversation I previously spoke of revolves around choices based on emotion and feeling compared to a choice or decision based upon fact, truth or need. A story shared with me about a psychologist who wrote about someone visiting him in his office and was seeking help due to being afraid of heights. The psychologist said “I will either show you how to solve the problem yourself in less than five minutes at one dollar per minute or

after five minutes you owe nothing.” His answer to the patient “Stop, just stop. Stop being afraid. It’s your choice. Think it through ahead of time and choose now.” Can it be done? Well, let’s see. I began comparing a new Marine recruit with a seasoned veteran in a combat zone. How do you think each would respond and why? What about in teaching a child how to turn a light switch off or on? Conditioning, training, mind set and preparations... it’s not always that simple but worth thinking about when we have time to prepare.

I will leave you with a simple Sunday School lesson I was taught a long time ago: How did I get here? Little steps... just like placing a frog in a pot on the stove and slowly turning the heat up until the frog is cooked. The frog had no idea what was happening. Just kicking and swimming around, just like we do; often we complicate our own lives due to poor decisions we previously made and we don’t want to admit it, we like to blame others or we wonder “How did I get here?”. We do have and make life choices. It only takes lots of little steps to place ourselves in a pickle and that pickle can be dang hard to get out of. The same way we get into those pickles is how we stay out of them, both at work and at home. One choice and decision at a time but make the wise choice! Our challenge: that we make the most of our time and be wise in those choices that we know we have now. Not only for you and I, but for those watching and learning or those we love or those we work with or for. One way or another, we all reap the consequences of either wise or poor choices we’ve made. Best wishes.