



SEVEN STEPS

**TO A BETTER
DECISION**



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Seven steps to a better decision

Choices are always followed by consequences. We love to imagine the ways a good decision will improve our life, but we also worry about the consequences of a bad move. If we're not careful, our "what-if's" will paralyze us and render us incapable of making decisions. God knows we struggle with this, and He gives us a process that will help us make wiser choices:

Step 1: *open your mind to God.*

This step is what separates the Christian goal setter from the secular goal setter: tuning in to what God tells us in His Word and through the Holy Spirit. We don't simply trust our intuition. We know "there is a way that seems right, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12). We must first turn off our endless internal dialogue and schedule time to be still. And making time to sit quietly in the Lord's presence can't be something we do only when making a "big" decision; it's a lifestyle choice. If we're not seeking God's wisdom in our little decisions, we won't be inclined to turn to Him when faced with bigger ones. In the wake of disastrous choices, people have asked, "Help me understand why my vision failed. What happened?" When we get to the source of the failure, it's usually caused by skipping step one--they formulated their plan without God's guidance and then asked Him to bless it. We need to stop praying, "Lord, bless what I'm doing" and start praying, "Lord, lead me to do what you are blessing."

Step 2: *do some research.*

Never make decisions out of ignorance. The more information we have, the more informed our decision will be. Proverbs 13:16 reminds us that, "wise people think before they act; fools don't." We can't ignore this step. Praying is not enough. God gave us a brain for a reason. Whatever we are feeling led to do, whether in our career, a relationship, a ministry, or anything else, we should first do some research. One of the major causes of all business failures is uninformed zeal. Ask yourself, "what do I need to know to make a wise decision?" and then find that information: go to seminars, read books, watch videos, take classes... use your God-given intelligence to gather what you need to make a knowledgeable decision.

Step 3: *ask for advice.*

Talk to folks who have walked down the path you are considering. "The more good advice you get, the more likely you are to win" (Proverbs 24:6). The Bible says it is wise to learn from experience, but it is sometimes wiser to learn from the experience of others. And when you're seeking

advice from those who have "been there, done that," remember what Proverbs 18:15 says: "Intelligent people are always open to new ideas. In fact, they look for them." Asking for advice is hard for some of us because we don't want to appear like we don't have all the answers. But is it more important to look smart or to be smart?

Step 4: *get organized.*

Think through your vision in accordance with Proverbs 17:24, "An intelligent person aims at wise action, but a fool starts off in many directions." The key word in the proverb is "aims," and the question to ask is, "what is my target?" Answering that question always determines where we should aim--which means the secret of effectiveness is selection. You can't do everything, so you need to learn the difference between doing things efficiently and doing things effectively. Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things. While efficiency is wonderful, it is only helpful when applied to doing the things God wants us to do. One of the primary reasons our lives get complicated is because we make choices that ignore God's priorities. For example, many of us have focused on building financial resources (a helpful goal), but we have allowed our pursuit of money to interfere with more important priorities, and we're suffering the consequences.

Step 5: *count the cost.*

Proverbs 22:3 says, "Sensible people will see trouble coming and avoid it, but an unthinking person will walk right into it and regret it later." Ask three questions to count the cost of your decision: First ask yourself, *is what I'm thinking about doing important enough for me to invest my life in?* If the answer to that question is yes, ask yourself a second question: *what will the decision cost in terms of time, energy and money?* Then you're ready to answer the third question: *when all is said and done, will it be worth the effort?* That's a question we can never answer fully in advance. There are just too many variables. And that paralyzes some of us. We hesitate to act because we don't have all the information, but consider this: even the wisest among us will never be more than 80% certain about outcomes. Which brings us to step 6.

Step 6: *be willing to risk.*

Many of us are not comfortable with risk because we don't want to face our fears. Despite God's admonition in Proverbs 29:25 that a person's fear sets a trap for him, all of us are fearful to some degree, and we rarely admit we're afraid. But courage is not the absence of fear; courage is moving ahead in spite of our fears.

Step 7: walk by faith.

Once we have sensed a green light from God to move forward, there remains one last step: *Whatever it is God is leading you to do, move forward by faith and claim God's promise to bless His work.* "Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed" (Proverbs 16:3). If you go through the process and you are convinced God is in it, there comes a point where you need to say, "God is calling me to do this; I'm going to do it."

Making wise decisions can be hard, but God gives us a process that can help. I described it in seven steps, but I could have just as easily explained it in three steps or twelve steps. How we slice up the process isn't as important as seeing it holistically. Reread the steps a few times to see the bigger picture of how to move with God--then apply the seven steps to the decisions you are wrestling with now.