

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Staying in Step With God

KEY PASSAGE: Exodus 2:11-15 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Numbers 32:23 | Ephesians 4:16
Philippians 4:19 | 2 Timothy 1:7

► SUMMARY

There are three questions we should all ask whenever we are facing a major decision—what, when, and how.

If we leave out even one of these, we could make the wrong choice and have to suffer the consequences. Therefore, the wisest approach is to come before the Lord, asking Him what He would have us do, how He would have us proceed, and when would be the right time according to His perfect will.

► SERMON POINTS

The story of Moses in Exodus 2:11-15 is an example of the importance of seeking God's guidance before making a decision. Although Moses was a Hebrew, he was raised as the son of Pharaoh's daughter in the palace—a place of Egyptian power, prominence, and prestige. When he was an adult, he saw an Egyptian beating a fellow Hebrew and made a rash decision that radically changed his life. He intervened by killing the Egyptian, and as a result, he lost everything and became a fugitive fleeing for his life. Eventually he settled in the desert of Midian and became a shepherd.

Getting Ahead of God

Just like Moses, we sometimes jump ahead of God by making hasty decisions without considering the consequences.

- **Moses focused on an event rather than the big picture.** The Hebrews, who had sought refuge in Egypt hundreds of years earlier, had been forced into slavery by Pharaoh,

who made their lives bitter with hard labor. When Moses saw a man being mistreated, he focused on the unfairness of the immediate situation rather than thinking ahead—that the remedy for the problem was a task only God could solve. His plan for delivering His people would not be enacted until 40 years later.

- **He followed his reasoning rather than listening to God.** This is often what we do as well. We look at the situation and come to a faulty conclusion regarding what we should do, based on our own limited understanding. God, on the other hand, knows exactly what course of action is best, and He is willing to help us if we will seek His guidance.
- **Moses acted on impulse rather than seeking to know what God would have him do.** His desire was to defend the Hebrew slave, but he didn't think about the consequences. Although defending the helpless is good, Moses should have considered if his impulsive action was the wisest way to accomplish this.

People tend to react rashly for several reasons:

- Because of their attitude toward the situation.
- Because of their prejudice in the situation.
- Because of their selfishness.

When we act impulsively, we're more likely to make decisions we may later regret. God wants us to first seek to know His will in the situation.

- **Moses acted on his own strength rather than in God's power.** Human strength is very limited, but the Lord God is almighty. Later on, God's power was illustrated when He delivered all the Hebrews from Egypt and destroyed the entire Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

■ **Moses acted in anger.** If we hold onto anger rather than quickly forgiving others, it will hide in our hearts until a situation triggers it (Eph. 4:16). Then we are likely to respond in an embarrassing, hurtful, or destructive manner.

■ **He failed to consider the consequences.** Instead of responding impulsively to a situation, we should seriously think about the long-term ramifications. Some choices carry consequences that may last a lifetime.

Staying in Step With God

In order to make wise decisions, we must walk according to God's will rather than doing whatever we think is best. If we seek to live His way, we can expect the following benefits:

■ **God will provide everything we need.** When we have a relationship with the Lord of the universe, we can confidently come to Him with our requests, knowing that He will supply our needs according to His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19).

■ **The Lord will give us specific instructions.** However, the only way to receive His guidance is through His Word. We must not make the mistake of merely praying about our concerns yet never opening the Bible to hear what the Lord has to say. We do not have the knowledge or insight to know what the future holds, but we have a God who knows every detail of the past, present, and future, and He has given us His Book for guidance. The Scripture contains everything we need to know spiritually and morally in order to live according to His will. Without it, we will never know what He would have us do. In fact, we are unable to live the Christian life without a consistent intake of His Word.

■ **God will remove our fear.** Since we don't know what the future holds, making decisions can be a fearful experience because we cannot see the outcome or the consequences that may follow. But when we faithfully seek God's

guidance through His Word, He replaces our fear with confidence in Him.

■ **We will see God work in unusual ways in our circumstances.** However, we must trust Him and wait for His timing. If His answer to our prayer request is not answered immediately, it's because He knows we're not really ready to receive it or perhaps the timing isn't right. If we want to experience God's power in our lives, we must read His Word, wait patiently, and trust Him to answer at the right time.

■ **We will learn God's ways.** When we seek His guidance by reading and obeying His Word, we will see how He operated in the scriptures as well as how He works in our lives. If we truly want to gain a greater understanding of the Lord, we must become well acquainted with His Word.

■ **God will use our weakness and failures to help us understand His will for our lives.** Our inadequacies and needs drive us to the Lord in prayer. Therefore, we should not think of them as negative experiences but as the means by which God draws us to Himself.

■ **God can accomplish more in a brief period of time than we can in a lifetime.** The Lord can do greater things His way than we ever could with our ways. Therefore, we should always seek His guidance rather than plunging ahead on our own.

► RESPONSE

■ When making decisions, do you tend to think more about the situation or the consequences that could result from an impulsive choice? What has been the result when you've acted impulsively without seeking God's guidance?

■ Where do you go for help when making decisions? What place does God's Word have in the process? When you receive guidance from the Bible, do you readily obey it or make excuses for why it doesn't apply in your situation?

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