

Moment of Decision

Joshua 24:14-15

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Today we will be looking at moment of decision from the Old Testament book of Joshua. Joshua was about to die. How he knew his end was coming, I don't know. He had been with God's people as a slave in Egypt. He was with Moses as God delivered them through the Red Sea. Joshua was one of twelve men who went into the Promised Land and returned with a report. He saw a land with milk and honey. Ten other men saw a land of giants and refused to enter the promised.

Joshua wandered the wilderness with Moses and the people for forty years. He then lead the people into the Promised Land. He lead the people around the city of Jericho everyday for seven days. On the seventh day he lead the people around Jericho seven times. Then on the seventh time Joshua had the trumpets play and the people gave a mighty shout. God brought down the walls of Jericho.

Joshua lead God's people to conquer the land by the power of Lord. The people trusted God sometimes and at other times they ignored God. As Joshua was about to die he gave them a very specific command.

Joshua 24:14–15 (NIV) “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

Your decision to follow Jesus is a daily choice. We have a habit of not keeping Jesus first in our lives. Old habits die hard. Joshua was reminding the people how easily they fall back into sin. God delivers His people and they are grateful. It doesn't take long and they forget the Lord and return to their old ways. They would repent and return to the Lord only to fall away from Him again and again. I'm guessing this is like looking in the mirror, right? This is why people who don't know Jesus call Christians hypocrites. We profess one thing and do another.

The answer to this troubling problem is putting and keeping Jesus first in your life. To help do this every Christian needs to be around other Christians to be comforted, encouraged, and challenged.

Every Christian needs to be alone with Jesus, speaking to Him, and listening to Him. I call this meditation, and I'm not the only one. It is the very reason we ride the rollercoaster of keeping Jesus first. We don't have the time or make the time to be with Jesus and listen to Him.

We will come back to this in a few minutes. First, I want to talk about the future. In four years I will no longer be the pastor of this church. Either someone else will be standing here sharing how to make disciples or we will have faded away and sold the building. It's unusual for a church to know exactly what's in the future. Most pastor's wait until they find a new church or retire, and not provide four years of advance notice. We have an opportunity in front of us that God is providing. We have two choices. The realities are very clear.

I can identify with Joshua. He was direct and straight forward with God's people. He know what he would do: follow God. He gave them the options. So, during this year we are going to develop a new plan to live like Jesus as born again people. We are going to develop a new strategy for sharing His grace as Kingdom people. I can either hand over to a new pastor the keys to this building or I can give them to a real estate agent. We are going to make a choice, it's decision time.

To help with this decision several things are going to happen. We will pray, mediate, and study scripture about our relationship with Jesus. This is always first. We are either like Joshua, ready to serve the Lord or not. We will pray, mediate, and study scripture about our talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts.

Each week I will be providing a five day study guide focused on leading you to meditate. The study guide is in this week's bulletin. There is also a card for you to write down what you are learning about yourself. We will pray, mediate, and study scripture about our resources. Those resources include everything. We're going to create a list of resources. We will seek out ways to put those resources to use for Jesus' Kingdom.

We will pray, mediate, and study scripture about our passions. You're passionate, right? Everyone of us has some passions. These are the passions about the things of God.

My wife is putting together a team that will help develop a plan and a strategy. Within a few months we will begin to implement this plan and strategy if we choose to be disciple makers and not fade away.

Joshua spoke to the people saying, ***Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped. Joshua 24:14 (NIV)***

With every decision we need to be right with Jesus. My confession of my sins and my proclamation of Jesus as my Savior and Lord is once and for all time. I am saved from my sins. I have been redeemed from the eternal punishment of hell that results from committing sins. I have been delivered to a new life now and for all of eternity.

My old sinful desires, thoughts, and actions don't want to leave. I fall back into some sins more frequently than others. They are old habits. They are selfish ways of thinking. They sometimes make us feel good. They also keep us from trusting Jesus. They put a barrier between Jesus and us. They make us feel like we can do what we want.

The answer to this is spending time with other Christians being comforted, encouraged, and challenged. The answer to not falling back into our sins is to spend time reading God's Word. The answer to not being a slacker is to spend time with Jesus, meditating on Him while focusing how to live like Him.

Daily life often gets in the way of living for Jesus. Some folks it starts with getting out of bed. The harder it is be motivated to get out of bed the more you need Jesus. Some folks don't know how God wants to utilize them. Joshua was a leader ready to be used by God. He spent his entire life ready to be used by God, to carry out God's plans.

I'm not Joshua and neither are you. But whatever God calls us to be and to do He will give us what we need to do it. All of our daily activities may or may not align with God's plans for us and His church. That means we need to mediate on Jesus, His words, and be ready to serve to the Lord. This will require confession of some linger sins and attitudes. This will require ongoing proclamations of faith and love for Jesus.

The decision we need to make is fading away or being disciple makers. Everyone of us needs to make this decision. As an individual you need to talk with Jesus. You need to mediate on His Word and Jesus' desires for you. The overarching question is should I fade away, being passive, and looking forward to doing as little as possible? Or do you want to be part of making disciples?

This seems like a straight forward response. When Joshua gave the command to the people their response was quick. Yes, they would follow the Lord and stop doing what they want. As you read the rest of this passage you will hear Joshua telling the people that when they fall, when they stop trusting Jesus and start doing their own thing bad things will happen. The enemies God helped defeat, those enemies will wage wars and win. God's people will eventually be destroyed because they failed to trust God.

I want to be careful, because God is not telling me that we will be destroyed. But, God is telling me that we are to be disciple makers, mentors. We as individuals and as a family need to decide if that is our future.

But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. Joshua 24:15 (NIV)

To discern the will of God and be faithful make the time to meditate. A quick prayer in a crisis is good for the crisis, but your day is more than just the crises. Am I right? But that is how our relationship with Jesus looks. Jumping from one crisis to the next, praying to get through the crisis. You are more than one crisis. You are living your life like Jesus, sharing His grace. You are a Kingdom person. You are born again.

This week in the bulletin are five devotionals for Monday through Friday. You get to take Saturday off. The Hebrew Sabbath, the day of rest to meditate and worship God. From Friday sundown to Saturday sundown will be your day of rest. You won't have a devotion to read, meditate, or provide insights.

But, this month of January is going to be a time of meditation, reading scripture, and writing down your insights. Each day create the time to focus on these devotions. Be quiet and still in the presence of the Lord. Invite the Lord into your thoughts. Think about the words of scripture. Let them stir your thoughts. Visualize how God's Words are alive in your life.

God's plans and purposes are in contrast to our ideas and actions. We're focused on us, our situation, our circumstances. God is working toward a moment when we will all be in heaven with Him. Jesus is not absent from our lives but is making the world spin toward His return. Jesus wants others to join Him in heaven for eternity.

Heaven is the place where we won't be distracted by random thoughts. Heaven is the place where everyone is working together. Heaven is the place where God's will is always accomplished.

On this planet and in this life right now we choose our plans, but God wants us to be aligned with His plans. We're going to be distracted. We're going to go our own way. We need the power of Jesus at work in our lives. Then we can choose to follow Jesus. May our desire be to always trust in Jesus, to live like Him and to share His grace.

Joshua lead the people into the promised land. God empowered them to defeat their enemies. God's desire for His people then and now is that we would always choose Him. Whatever distracts us from doing God's will we need to set it aside. We need to fill our minds with thoughts of Jesus' attitudes and actions. Then our actions will be in alignment with God's plans. This is the beginning of doing God's will. It is for us a renewing of our spirit, creating within us a right spirit.

As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15 (NIV)

We need to choose between fading away or making disciples. Everyday we're older and grow more tired. I never thought I would be the person I am today. I thought I would always be filled with energy. I believed that my mind would be focused on God's Kingdom. But Jesus has brought each one of us to this point in our lives. He knows our past, our present, and our future. He has always been the one to empower our daily lives. Every kingdom action of the past has been empowered by Him. Every act of grace has been nurtured by His spirit.

I am choosing to put Jesus first everyday. I am committed to live out the next four years as the pastor of a disciple making church.

When you read on in Joshua twenty-four he is straight-forward and direct with the people. He warns them that they will fall away from the Lord. He speaks a prophetic word over them. Their failure to choose to serve the Lord will result in their enemies rising up and defeating them.

I don't know the exact parallels between us and Joshua's audience then. I don't want to say that we will fail to follow the Lord. I do know that by His grace and His power I can hand the keys of this church over to a new pastor in four years.

Choosing Jesus brings challenges and power. When you made your decision to ask Jesus into your heart, your life you was filled with His power. There was joy; there was strength; there was passion. All of that is still yours. Jesus is still working in your life. Jesus is your power.

That's good because everyone of us faces challenges. We struggle as we face temptations. We struggle to remain motivated. We struggle to do the will of God.

There will always be challenges. But those who choose Jesus, who trust Jesus are empowered. We live in that power every day as we cast upon Jesus every issue and challenge. We live in His power to do His will day after day. Those who choose to follow Jesus are pointed toward being in heaven and doing God's will now. We are empowered to overcome the challenges. We are given the wisdom to make the choices that fulfill God's plans and purposes. We are provided with the skills, talents, and the gifts to God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

May we all choose Jesus. May we all live like Jesus. May we all share His grace. May each one of us be a disciple maker.