



Update

July 2019

Vernon & Martha Hedge

We are so grateful for all the words of encouragement and prayer support. Vernon is getting stronger each day. The stroke did not cause any paralysis, for which we are thankful, but it did injure the speech area of the brain. That's talking, reading, and writing. Because he has made so much progress in five weeks, we are encouraged. They tell us the first 100 days are the most important, so Vernon is working hard in therapy and looking forward to being able to talk normally again.

As we considered this newsletter, he chose this teaching on decision making in the hope it would bless you. How to make decisions has been a common counseling issue with many of the people who have come to him through the years. It's a subject we also revisit often. – *Martha*

Wait until the Mission is clear

The setting is the end of a brutal and bloody coup attempt. Absalom, David's son, had declared himself king, betrayed his own father, and relentlessly pursued him with an army to kill him. It was a vicious battle that left over 20,000 men killed, including Absalom (2 Samuel 18). King David waited in the city gates for word from the battlefield, not so much if his kingdom was restored, but if his son was alive.

There is more to discover in this multi-layered story than a full-length movie could present. What I would like to focus on are the runners who brought news to David. Runners were important and were entrusted with vital information. They needed to be fast, dependable, and accurate with their messages.

On the battlefield, Joab, commander of David's army, had

killed Absalom and defeated his army. Ever loyal, he needed to get word to David quickly. Ahimaaz plead with Joab to let him run and carry the news of victory, but Joab refused. Instead, he told a Cushite runner, "Go, tell the king what you have seen" (v 21). But Ahimaaz persisted and after the third plea, Joab relented and said—run.

Although not the major emphasis of the story, how the two runners dealt with their responsibilities make a good example of decision making, both good and bad. Ahimaaz was the son of Zadok, a priest loyal to David. He was probably a priest

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too. Even the King considered Ahimaaz "a good man" (v 27). He was an excellent runner, so fast that he overtook the Cushite and reached David first.

But his message was incomplete. All he could do was tell David his kingdom was restored. When asked about Absalom—what David desperately wanted to know—all he could say was, "I saw a great commotion, but I do not know what it was" (v 29). That great commotion was Absalom hanging from a tree where he was stuck, surrounded by ten of Joab's armor bearers, and killed by Joab and his men. The troops took Absalom's body, threw it into a great pit, and covered it with a heap of stones.

Ahimaaz only saw the commotion; he didn't see what happened. Authority did not send him. Joab only gave him permission. He ran with zeal, but because his message wasn't complete, he failed his mission for the King.

The Cushite ran with a mission, with defined purpose. He was a soldier who had personally witnessed what had happened—he had the message the King needed. The one in authority sent him, which meant his message had authority. There was no impulse on his part, only obedience to tell the King what he had seen.

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We aren't runners for a king, but we make decisions all the time. Some are automatic and add to our lives without much additional thought. Some are so important they are life changing. The rest are somewhere in between.

Decision-making categories

When looking at these categories, it's not hard to see which ones Ahimaaz and the Cushite fit into. Perhaps we can see where we have fit at times.

There's the **Impulse**. This is when we act suddenly on an urge without thinking it through. Could be a purchase, a place to go, an activity. Ahimaaz was impulsive. The opposite is **Reason, Common sense**: These are decisions based on logic and rational thought with proper analysis.

Prophetic words: A decision made as a result of clear communication you receive from God. (If someone gives you a prophetic word, it must line up with your own spirit and information you have before you act on it.)

We can be **Proactive** with a forward-moving decision based on the positive principles of common sense that line up with the work of the Kingdom and the principles of Christ. Or we can be in **Reaction**, making decisions out of an emotion and deep displeasure with present circumstances.

Bare Bones

Probably the most sought-after help about making decisions has to do with knowing the will of God. If we look at the **bare bones** of

determining the will of God, the first is a **word** or prompting from the Holy Spirit. It's a clear answer. Maybe it's a yes, a no, or not now. Another question to ask is, does it conflict with the teachings of Scripture? Does the Scripture give **confirmation**? The final basic questions are, are **circumstances** agreeing? Is the **timing** right?

Wise Counsel

Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety (Prov 11:14 NKJV).

Joab told Ahimaaz no. Not because he wasn't a good runner, but because Joab had the bigger picture and knew Ahimaaz wasn't the best man for the job. With counsel we can discover if we need more information or perhaps find a better way to do something. It can reveal if we are acting out of impulse or with wrong motives. Maybe there's selfishness. Maybe there's no real value to your mission, your goal. If you are on the right course, there's strength in having the support of wisdom from others.

If you are under godly leadership that has your interest and welfare at heart, listen to their counsel. They can't make the decision for you, but they can help you discover what's best. If you are married, what does your spouse say? Again—listen. Intuition is worth weighing.

An example

A lady came to see me because she wanted an in-ground swimming pool in her backyard. She had talked with installers, had a design, figured how much it

would cost, and wanted me as her pastor to go to the banker and help her get the money for the project.

To shorten the story, her husband knew nothing about what she was doing, she falsely believed that because it was a "desire of her heart" to have a pool that God would give it to her, and she had not considered what it would do to her relationship with her husband for her to put them in serious financial stress. Especially since she had not even talked to him about it.

Once we talked through the common sense (or the lack of common sense) of going into debt (circumstances not good) assuming God would bail her out (no scriptural basis), we talked about what she was doing to her husband. Her relationship with him was important and she had no desire to dishonor or hurt him.

After a moment of silence, she quietly said that she would never do that to her husband and that she would drop her plans for a pool.

(As to timing, if she talked with her husband, maybe together they could plan ahead and eventually get a pool in a better way.)

When waiting is over

After prayer, wise counsel, and having a clear picture of your mission, your goal, your purpose—whatever you choose to call it—run your race with your ear tuned to the Holy Spirit. We constantly make all types of decisions, so we constantly need wisdom. Our King will never leave us, and He is personally involved in our lives.

The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives (Ps 37:23 NLT). ✨
