

You Don't Need a Prophetic Word to Make a Life-Changing Decision

When I left Miami Beach after my ex-husband abandoned me with our then-2-year-old baby, I insisted I would never return to South Florida.

It wasn't a difficult decision. After all, who wants a constant reminder of a life transition that left you in shambles? I continued to head farther and farther away from South Florida—and all the pain it represented—until I wound up in a tiny town in lower Alabama where no one knew my name.

I hated it most of the time. Looking back, it was clearly a **wilderness experience**. When I finally surrendered to the possibility of me, a city girl, spending the rest of my life in this small country town that didn't even have a movie theater or a shopping mall, I was suddenly faced with a difficult decision.

I had a job offer as editor of an aviation magazine—in South Florida. It was an exciting opportunity as I was working to rebuild my life after a financial devastation. But there was one problem: I already vowed never to return to South Florida. Was I really ready, just 13 months later, to go back to the place of my crushing? Was I ready to deal with the people and places that I'd tucked away in a bygone chapter of my life? It was a difficult decision.

Your Fork in the Road

We all face difficult decisions in life. We come to a fork in the road where we need to decide which way we'll turn, knowing that our choice brings consequences that could change our life for better or worse. The difficulty of making those decisions is compounded when our choice also impacts the lives of

others.

So how do you make a really difficult decision? I'm not talking about a decision on where to go to dinner. I mean a potentially life-changing decision. First, let me say that you don't need a **prophetic word** from a prophet every time you have a tough decision to make. God doesn't want you depending on other people to tell you what He is leading you to do. You need to learn to follow the **Holy Spirit** for yourself.

Now, some say follow your heart—if it feels good, do it—but we know the heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9) and that God's will doesn't always feel good at the time. Some look for signs from heaven. But I've learned from experience that the devil can show you what you want to see to get you to head in the direction he wants you to go.

Scripture offers some guidelines. For example, "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov. 15:22). In other words, there is wisdom in the counsel of many. Praying for wisdom in the midst of a difficult decision and seeking wise counsel is, well, wisdom. But ultimately you still have to make the decision yourself, don't you?

Scripture also tells us, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). Being a student of the Word will give you more wisdom and plant the seeds of good decision-making in your heart. Following God's principles will always lead you in the right direction. But ultimately every decision we have to make isn't laid out nicely and neatly in the pages of our Bibles, is it?

When Emotions Hijack God's Will

We should do many things when we have a life-changing decision to make. We should **pray**. We should be totally open to obeying whatever God may tell us to do. We should even use our mind to reason through the options. After all, God gave us an

intellect and He expects us to use it. Often I'll reason out the options and then pray over each one until God illuminates the path.

On the other hand, many poor decisions I've made simply defied common sense. Our emotions can hijack our judgment and lead us right out of God's intentions for your lives. Of course, every choice we make isn't monumental and I believe God gives us a wider latitude than we may think with many decisions. But we're talking about life-changing decisions here, even decisions that impact others.

So, yes, we should pray. We should be students of the Word. We should seek wise counsel. We should follow peace. We should use our God-given ability to reason. But over the years I've learned to do one more thing, which requires patience and maturity that I once lacked—I've learned to take a deep breath and just wait upon the Lord. In other words, I've learned not to make rash or hasty decisions.

The Danger of Hasty Decisions

Indeed, making hasty decisions is dangerous. Both Ecclesiastes 5:2 and Proverbs 20:5 warn us not to make rash promises. Proverbs 19:2 warns "haste makes mistakes." Proverbs 14:29 says a hasty spirit exalts folly while Proverbs 19:2 says those who are hasty with their feet sin. The Bible tells us to count the cost before we start a building project or wage war to make sure we can finish (Luke 14:28-32). Hasty decisions are often regrettable decisions.

These past two years have been decision-making years in my life. Do I leave an unhealthy church or stay and push for reform? Do I file a lawsuit against the believer who stole \$10,000 from me or do I turn the other cheek? Do I plant a church or plug into another one? Do I move into a new dwelling or stay in the old one? Do I cut off certain toxic relationships or bear up under them?

Unfortunately, I've made some decisions rashly based on emotion or what others thought I should do and some situations turned out miserably. More recently, I became more aware of how **Holy Spirit's** prompting in the midst of the decision-making process. Earlier this year, He instructed me "Pray for 30 days first" and recently He told me, "Don't do anything until September." I believe it's His way to get me to slow down and wait on Him even when emotions, circumstances and colleagues are pushing me in one direction or another.

Whatever you do, remember this: Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps and makes them sure." It requires faith, trust and patience to wait upon the Lord amid pressures from circumstances, colleagues and even your own soul. But the outcome is worth it: You will be in God's perfect will. And there's no better place to be. Amen.

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