

“Repeat Offender”

Among many things that we have in common as followers of Jesus Christ is the unflattering fact that we all make stupid mistakes and bad decisions. In fact, we make *many* stupid mistakes and *many* bad decisions. Amazingly, these mistakes are repeated frequently. In fact, at times it appears that we can't even get out of our own way. It is almost as if we do not learn the first time so we continue to make the same boneheaded mistakes and decisions, and continue exercising poor judgment. Sadly enough, in many instances, these mistakes can result in harm to ourselves or someone else and derail real progress in every area of our lives, especially, our walk with the Lord. Has anybody ever been there? Of course, you have and so have I. So then the question becomes how can we avoid making the same mistakes (or new ones) and bad decisions? What are the new behaviors that God lays out for us to embrace that can help us from being repeat offenders? God wants us to develop new habits and behaviors while improving upon some existing but underutilized ones. It is developing wisdom.

There are steps that we can take that God has given us, that if followed, can drastically reduce (if not totally nullify) the occurrence of making stupid mistakes or bad decisions. In Proverbs 2:1-11, we can see how the following biblical principles, guidelines or behaviors, when adhered to, will bring about less mistakes and better decision making. I have identified the following five as being critical:

1. (Vs. 1) Acknowledge that God has the better path for you and that He knows which decision will bear much fruit. Make a decision today that you will include God in your decision-making process. He is the One that you cannot leave out of the equation but put first instead. In fact, we are instructed to “present our requests to God by prayer and petition....” (Phil. 4:6- *paraphrased*).
2. (Vs. 2) Be open to hearing wisdom through active listening and the relentless pursuit of it. Turn your ear to wisdom by speaking with those whose Godly counsel you value. Many bad decisions are made through lack of wisdom to assess the situation. I believe that most people don't make bad decisions or poor choices purposely. They never intend on doing that. I believe they make *ill-informed* decisions, meaning that they make decisions, choices, or take action on whatever information they have to go on. It is only after the fact that things have gone wrong that they realize they did not have enough facts to make a better choice. Wisdom says to get all the facts *first*, as best you can, *then* make a decision.
3. (Vs. 2) Put wisdom into practice. Do not just listen to wisdom and then sit on it. You must apply it to your decision and, if necessary, continue referring to it for further decisions. Wisdom is not a “one shot deal”.
4. (Vs.3) Do not be afraid or too prideful to ask for help, clarity, or direction in understanding everything that a particular decision will involve. Specifically in areas where commitment, resources, sacrifice, and even consequences may be involved. Do not try to figure it out all on your own. There is wisdom in *asking* for wisdom.
5. (Vs. 4) Finally, be relentless in your search for wisdom. Do not stop at the first stumbling block. Instead, keep digging for truth and answers. The pursuit for knowledge must be flamed daily. One can never stop learning. When you think that you know enough, go find more, if possible. Exhaust every avenue available to learn more.

These practical and biblical principles can help avoid making the same dumb mistakes and bad choices that seem to plague every single one of us from time to time (or at least, more often than we'd like). In fact, vs. 10 speaks of the ultimate benefit of putting these principles and behaviors into action, and that is the development of “discretion that will protect us and understanding that will guard us.” In other words, keep us from continuing to be repeat offenders.

By: Jesus Maymi