

BARAH MINISTRIES
Choices – January 26, 2014

/ Welcome To
BARAH MINISTRIES
a Christian Church
Good Morning!
Let's Make a Mental Shift

Good morning!

Today's date is...

/January 26th, 2014

TODAY'S STUDY
Choices

/ROM 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.\

As we allow our mind to be transformed, let's take a minute to be alone with our Lord and Savior while we listen to our opening song...

/MUSIC AND REFLECTION

Be Occupied with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ

Enjoy the Singing of His Praises

Lift My Life Up - Unspoken

/OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray...\

We're grateful Heavenly Father for the privilege of studying the absolute truth... the Word of God...

Please help us today to learn about our Choices. Help us to learn that You ultimately are the choice. Help us to learn that any crossroads we ever find ourselves in, we can't go wrong by choosing You.

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We ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit... in Christ's name... Amen.

/WELCOME TO BARAH MINISTRIES

Caleb Alburn
Deacon\

Welcome to Barah Ministries. My name is Caleb Alburn. I'm a Deacon here at Barah. And, again... today's study is going to be about choices.

/TODAY'S STUDY

Choices

This is a new year. I'm not a fan of looking back on last year and thinking of all of the different choices we could have made. That's not the point. Those choices have already been made. I'm interested in looking forward to choices that are going to present themselves to us this year, this month, this week, tomorrow, and even today.

I want to focus on our choices NOW.

We can't change the decisions we made last year, so I'm not even going to try. But, we can learn from them, and this lesson, to maybe make different choices this year.

A warning... don't use this lesson to beat yourself up. Or worse... to beat other people up. Don't think in your head that this lesson would be good for so-and-so to hear, or that this lesson would be good for so-and-so to watch, or that this lesson would be good for... anyone but you.

This lesson was inspired by God The Holy Spirit especially for you. He designed it in a way that's going to pierce your soul... if you feel like letting Him in. That's a choice that you get to make this lesson.

/Are you going to learn the lesson that God is teaching you today?\

You get to make that decision. You get to make the decision today if you're going to allow this message to inspire you to make bold choices throughout 2014 with absolute confidence.

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That's the hope and prayer that I have for you today... not that you use this lesson as a weapon on others, but instead that you equip it as armor, so that way you can walk boldly in the face of difficult decisions.

I don't want to see us stand paralyzed by the fear of consequences any longer. That's what we're going to learn today. We're going to learn not to focus on our consequences of decisions like we usually do. We're going to learn to focus on Christ while we make our decisions.

We're going to learn to boldly make decisions for Him... not for ourselves, not for our spouses, or boyfriends, or girlfriends, or parents, or friends, or anyone else. We're going to learn to...

/Make decisions for Christ\

We're going to learn that if you...

/MAT 6:33

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.\

We're going to learn that when we make decisions, we don't need to...

/MAT 6:34

Worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will care for itself...\

We're going to learn that...

/ROM 8:28

God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...\

We're going to learn to have faith. We're going to learn to have confidence in every decision that we make. We're going to learn that it's better to give your life to Christ than to keep it for yourself.

That reminds me of an illustration that I learned years ago.

Back when I was in high school, I used to take a trip every year to California. Not me only, but the high school youth group from my church. Every year for spring break the youth group would take a road trip throughout the state.

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We would stop in major cities and engage in street evangelism. Yes... I was one of those annoying people who would come up to you and ask you questions...

Well, actually it wasn't like that. We simply had conversations with people. We got to meet hundreds of individuals and we got to learn about their lives. We talked to everyone from wealthy business owners, to politicians, to families, to homeless people.

We got to learn about all of their stories. And, for high school kids, this is a pretty powerful experience for them. We got to learn about human beings from all walks of life.

Well, I remember during a conversation I heard one of the leaders say to someone...

Imagine that someone gave you the most beautiful car that you could ever think of in the world.

/Sports car PICTURE\

Imagine driving it down the road. Imagine showing all of your friends and family this beautiful car of yours. Whatever car that is for you. Just imagine all the experiences you get because of that free gift.

Now, imagine that same person who gave you that car, asked you if he could drive it... would you let him?

The obvious answer is yes. Of course you're going to let this person drive you around in the car. He gave it to you for free for goodness sake.

Well, the person who gave you that car is God, and the car is your Life. So, that begs the question...

/Are you going to let Christ navigate your life?\

Are you going to let Him be your GPS? Are you going to go to where He's leading you? Or, are you going to take the wheel yourself, because you have to be in control of your own life?

Are you someone who feels that you always have to be in control of a situation? Do you feel that if you need things done right, you have to do it yourself? I ask this, because it's not true.

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It's not true, just because I'm telling you it's not true... It's not true, because you're a Christian. It's not true, because you're a believer in Christ. It's not true, because He gave you a book of promises that tell us otherwise.

If you really want to feel that... if you really want to feel what it's like to give all control of your life away to God... go sky-diving... think about it... that's giving absolute control over to God.

You have to trust that God's going to provide the funds to go.

You have to trust that God's going to get you there safely.

You have to trust that God's going to provide you an expert who will be on your back.

You have to trust that God's going to get the plane to 12,000ft safely.

You have to trust that God's going to make sure the equipment works.

And when you jump...

You have to trust that God's going to land you safely.

Now, I know some of you are thinking of other ways this could end... You've seen YouTube. You've seen the news.

What's the worst case scenario? You make it to Heaven just in time for an endless supply of Last Suppers with Christ?

Think about that!

Now, I know I'm making light of that, but seriously... what is so bad about that situation? Heaven is not a bad alternative to life...

Paul tells us in Philippians 1:21 that...

/PHI 1:21

...to live is Christ and to die is gain.\

I'm pretty sure he believed that. Now, to refocus our attention on the car example...

God is begging us to let Him drive the car He gave us... are we going to let Him?

That's the question we have to ask ourselves. God gave us this gift called life, and He wants to drive that vehicle to ensure that we get to experience it to the fullest.

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John 10:10 tells us...

/JOH 10:10b

...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.\

That's what Christ is saying. Christ came so that way we can live life to the full!

Are we going to let our decisions be based on Christ? Or, are we going to let our decisions be based on selfishness?

Are we going to let our decisions be based on other people. Are we going to let our decisions be based on money, or fun, or anything else we base decisions on?

Or... are we going to let our decisions be based on Christ?

That's a difficult decision to make isn't it? Are we going to go sky-diving or not? That's a tough pill to swallow, I understand... so, I'll tell you what... I'm going to give you a 5 minute break to think about it...

Go ahead and take a 5 minute break. Our break song is Remind Me Who I Am by Jason Gray

/BREAK

Remind Me Who I Am - Jason Gray

When I Think About Home

Welcome back!

So... did you decide if you're going to go sky-diving?

I want to focus our attention on some literature. We've read this writing a dozen times over the years here at Barah.

I just want to examine it again today, maybe from a different light.

It's from Teddy Roosevelt who in a speech that he gave said this:

/It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit

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belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming... who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.\

That's a beautiful passage. You can take what you want out of that, but what he's saying here is to make a choice, and not to think about the consequences... not to dwell on all of the possible outcomes. He's telling you not to be scared to get into the arena. He's telling you to get up to bat and swing, not worrying about home runs or striking out. He's telling you not to focus on success or failure. He's simply saying make a choice.

As humans though... how do we typically make our choices? Let's be honest with this question.

/How do you typically make a choice?\

We make hundreds of choices a day. How do you make them. Do you even think before you make them? And, again... if we're being honest. Sometimes we don't. But, when you do think before you make a choice, what goes through your mind?

Do you think about how it's good for YOU?
Do you think about how it affects your significant other?
Do you think about how it affects your friend?
Do you think about how it affects your parents?
Do you think about how it affects your children?
Do you think about how it affects your life?

What about the "Life-changing" decisions that we make...

Get married or not get married
Marry this person or not
Go to school or not
What school do I go to
Work for a company or start my own
Buy this car or that car
Buy this house or that house
Have children or not
How many children do I have

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Move to this state or not

These are real decisions that you make in life. I want to help you make them. Yes, you heard me correctly. I want to help you make all of those decisions today. I want to make them simple.

Last time I was up here teaching I bombarded us with verses. This time I want to do the opposite. If there's only one verse that we get this lesson, I want it to be this one: Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 33...

/MAT 6:33

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.\

Or, said another way...

/Focus on Christ... everything else is taken care of.\

You know what that means? That means we can finally put down the pros and cons lists...

/Pros and Cons PICTURE\

How many of you have done them? Let's be honest. How many of us still do them?

I, personally, don't even understand them. I have never changed my mind as a result of a pros and cons list... not once... All I did was use it to reinforce whatever decision I was already leaning toward.

But, I know people who do use them. This is what humans do... we muck up everything.

Satan has us deceived into writing down a dozen reason why or why we shouldn't make a decision. He has us convinced that talking ourselves into a decision is going to sustain us through life.

Here's how you make a decision...

/MAT 6:33

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.\

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That means you don't focus on yourself. And, believe it or not... that means you don't even think about the people that decision impacts...

I know that might be hard to wrap your mind around. That means that you're not making a decision for you or anyone else...

It means you...

/Focus on Christ\

It means, that if you focus on Christ and make decisions with His discernment that He teaches you loud and clear in the Bible, you don't need to think about the outcome. You don't need to think about the consequences. You don't need to worry about everyone else, because God's going to take care of it.

That's all it means. It means that your life doesn't have to be so complicated.

Do we still remember those old bracelets that said WWJD?

/WWJD PICTURE\

What does it stand for? What Would Jesus Do?

Well, let's take it back one step. Because, before we can DO, we have to THINK. So, let's change it to WWJT...

/What Would Jesus Think\

If you ask yourself that question before you make decisions, the answers are pretty simple... even the hard questions... even those "Life-changing" questions we talked about earlier.

You can make a decision while thinking with the Mind of Christ and be okay...

And why is this again? Because...

/ROM 8:28

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...\

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We don't have to make every decision in our life so trivial. We don't have to focus on the "What ifs"... even the difficult decisions... like choosing a spouse or a career.

Now, I know that some parents might not like to hear this, because it means that their children might not make the decision based on what their parent's advice...

But, maybe we can take Jesus' advice and have faith like a child. Maybe, we don't have to complicate every decision with everyone else's voice in our ears. Maybe, we can drown out all of the background chatter, and just make a choice for God.

That's all I'm saying. I told you I wanted to help you make all of these decisions in your life easier. So, how do you make them?

/MAT 6:33

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.\

No pros and cons list. No analysis paralysis. No over emphasis of consequences. Simply love God, and make decisions with the mind of Christ. Use the Bible for discernment.

I want to close this lesson with a poem. I don't believe this lesson on Choice could be complete without a little Robert Frost.

As you probably could have guessed the poem is titled "The Road Not Taken"

/The Road Not Taken - Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;\

/The Road Not Taken - Robert Frost

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there

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Had worn them really about the same,\

/The Road Not Taken - Robert Frost

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.\

/The Road Not Taken - Robert Frost

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

When I was a kid and I first heard this poem, I thought that it was telling me that whatever most people were doing, just to do something else. I thought it meant to always go against the crowd, or to always go against the grain.

As a child this wasn't bad. It was at least nice to have a compass. But, it still made those decisions really, really hard.

Now, that I'm older and I've grown closer to God in my relationship with Him, I look at this poem differently. I think of the "road less traveled by" as Christ and the other road as EVERYTHING else in the world.

That makes decisions so easy, even the scary ones... even the hard ones that are difficult to make... because...

All I have to do is make my decision for Christ. I can ignore all of the other noise from the other road.

/ROM 8:28

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...\

We also know that God knows the plans He has for us... plans for our welfare and not for calamity... to give us a future and a hope.

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Think about that this year as you make decisions. Think about this lesson as you make some of those "Life-changing" choices this year.

Make those decisions with absolute confidence knowing that God is in control. Make them, knowing that can't make a mess too difficult for Christ to clean. Make them without fear that things aren't going to go your way.

Why? Because, I'm assuming that Paul was talking about you when he said...

/ROM 8:28

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...\

So, in closing today... my hope and prayer is that you...

/2 COR 10:5b

...take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.\

Our closing song today is Holding Nothing Back by Ryan Stevenson

/CLOSING SONG

Holding Nothing Back - Ryan Stevenson

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/CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray...\

God, thank You for teaching us that decisions don't have to be so difficult. Thank You for equipping us with Your word, so that we can make decisions with absolute confidence in you. I pray that help us make decisions in our lives with this in mind. I pray that You help us shut out the world in 2014 and listen to Your voice. We pray that You continue to shape the messages from this pulpit that are an accurate reflection of Your person, Your thinking, Your work, Your reputation, and Your essence. And we ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit, and in Christ's name... Amen.

/Thanks for coming!
Thanks for watching!
Thanks for listening!

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