

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

JOSHUA 24

¹Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, and he summoned the elders of Israel, its heads, its judges, and its officers, and they presented themselves before God. ²Then Joshua told all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel has said” ... ¹⁴Joshua said, “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly and faithfully. Remove the gods that your fathers served in the region across the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵But if you see no benefit in serving the LORD, then choose for yourselves today whomever you will serve—whether the gods that your fathers 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!”

¹⁶The people responded by saying, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD in order to serve other gods! ¹⁷For the LORD our God, he is the one who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, where we were slaves. He is the one who performed these great signs right before our eyes and protected us on the whole journey that we made and among all the peoples through whom we passed. ¹⁸The LORD drove out of our presence all the peoples and the Amorites who were living in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God!”



Not every choice in life is so dramatic. But my favorite moment of deciding for Jesus Christ appears in the movie Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. It is toward the end (spoiler alert) when the villain, who, as usual, has struck a deal with the Nazis, decides which cup is the holy grail. There is a table full of fancy cups, and the villain chooses an impressive golden goblet, saying, “Oh yes. It is more beautiful than I ever imagined!” He fills it with holy water, and gulps from what he believes to be the grail. Then, as usual with these villains, special effects clay-mation takes over, his face melts, and his corpse blows away. The knight says with a hint of humor, “He chose ... poorly.”

Then Indiana Jones makes his decision for the cup of Christ when he selects—of all the cups—the least fancy, made of clay, not gold or silver, essentially the ugliest. “That’s the cup of a carpenter,” he says, and gulps down the holy water. The knight Templar verifies, “You have chosen ... wisely.” Then the hero is allowed to heal his mortally wounded father and they ride off in the sand.

Not every choice in life is so dramatic. Many Christians are unable to pinpoint a personal day of decision for Christ. That is because the unconverted cannot make that decision. The dead cannot decide, and the spiritually hostile always decide against God, desiring the exact opposite of God. If you’re making decisions for Christ, you’ve already got the Holy Spirit.

However, once we have the Holy Spirit, we believers can make decisions. We are able to battle sin. We are enabled to cooperate with God. We can want what God wants. We believers are faced with daily decisions for Jesus Christ. What decisions will you make? Sure, you believe in Jesus. But in your life of sanctification, will you decide for Christ? What should you watch out for—what can budge you from deciding for the Lord and for Him alone?

THE BELIEVER’S MOMENT OF DECISION

The Lord had fought for the people of Israel. All throughout the book of Joshua, the Lord blessed battles and brought His people one step farther into the promised land, until they were finally settled and only a few enemies remained. Jericho, Ai, Lachish, and many more were hamstrung and backbroken under Joshua’s command. The Lord even caused the sun to stand still for Joshua to finish beating up the bad guys.

Here at the end of the book, Joshua gathered the people to reaffirm the covenant with the Lord. Here at Shechem, where God first promised the land to Abraham, Joshua emphasized the Lord, not Joshua, was their Commander in Chief. These people hadn’t conquered the Holy Land; the Lord gave it to them. Nor was this their permanent possession; Israel could forfeit the land by disobeying the Lord.

So here the Lord required something of the Israelites. He required fear and service to Him, just as Joshua had given. Joshua had risen in the ranks his whole life long, from spy to general, and, from the outset in the book of Numbers (32:12), followed the Lord “wholeheartedly.” Thus the Lord required the people’s wholehearted, undivided allegiance.

And there were obstacles, gods of the past, present, and potential future. These gods amounted to trash, garbage, and filth next to the true God, the Lord of heavenly hosts. Joshua suggests the gods of their fathers from across the Euphrates River, lingering from Abraham's family lineage and original hometown. He mentions the gods they picked up while in Egypt, perhaps the sun-god Ra, the sky goddess Nut, or the holy cow Apis (reflected in the golden calf incident). Joshua finally implies the gods of the Amorites in the very land they were now settling. Joshua essentially says, "Now that you have the Lord who offers choice meats, wine and a land flowing with milk and honey, don't go back to the trash, garbage, and filth of other gods."

Vestiges and rituals of idolatry still remained. The combined worship of this, that, and the other god alongside the Lord of heavenly hosts could not continue. A decision needed to be made.

You, believers, have the same decisions. Which false god are you tempted to serve? Which one harasses and threatens your decisions for the one true God? Surely you aren't tempted by stone images and holy cows. If I held before you a dollar bill and a statue of Baal, and, if I asked you which one is a false god, which one would you pick? Of course they are both false gods, because they can both be worshiped in the heart. Not only that, but you can spend your whole life working for one or the other thing. This is your idol, because that is what you are tempted to worship.

What do you desire more than the Lord Jesus? That is to say, what do you spend your time thinking about, talking about, working toward, living for? Is it success? It is possible to order and arrange our lives just so that success takes its seat in the center of our hearts. Pats on the back,atta boys, awards, positions, titles, and authority within the ranks of our occupation can feel meaningful. But when life ends and all is said and done, no one wishes they could have worked more hours. The god of success will utterly curse you.

Is it money? It is possible to order and arrange our lives just so that dollar bills take the seat in the center of our hearts. If you spend your time thinking about, talking about, working toward, living for, and spending money, and it will crowd out that which is most important. Fat stacks and astronomical credit feels meaningful, but you can't take it with you on your deathbed. In eternity, the only earthly mammon that matters is what was spent toward saving souls with the gospel message. The god of dollar bills will utterly curse you.

Is it sensual pleasure? It is possible to order and arrange our lives just so that romantic escapades take the seat in the center of our hearts. Butterflies of a new flirtation, palpitations of stealing away secretly, appetites of the flesh, heavy petting, and rolling in the mud or hay feels meaningful; but in the end jealousy and guilt will torment you to the core. A friend who cannot seem to figure out marriage just never bothered to follow the 6th Commandment he learned growing up. Turns out God's will was always the best guide to meaningful relationships.

Where is your heart? Is it undivided and wholly devoted to the Lord? What is your idol? Is it gaming? Is it addiction? Is it sports? Is it children? Is it health? These are disordered loves, holy cows, holy grails, and fancy containers for vanity and sadness.

Once upon a time a man was selling his house, but he insisted that the buyer allow him to keep just two rooms. "Why?" asked the buyer. "How can you possibly keep two rooms if you're selling me the house?" The seller said, "I want to keep two tigers in one room and I want to keep my snakes in the other." What an absurd proposal! That house will never sell. How much less will our hearts belong to the Lord if we insist on reserving a couple rooms for the idols we worship? These idolatrous sins are deserving of the cross and hell.

Joshua said, "*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house—we will serve the LORD!*" Even if no one followed Joshua, his stance would not change. He had conviction. Yet the people followed suit. They knew how to respond to the Lord's election, redemption, and preservation in faith. They vowed their allegiance 4x in verses 16,18,21,& 24. They listed the reasons why: The Lord brought them and their fathers out of Egypt, He did before their eyes great signs, He guarded them in all their ways, and He drove out all the nations. The Lord has made a decision for His people. He would die for them and redeem them. There is forgiveness with Him, therefore He is feared. He chose us before creation. He died to take away our idolatry. He placed good decisions in advance for us to do. Set Him as a seal upon your heart, for you were foremost in His heart. Oh yes! For whom do you think Jesus Christ thought about, talked about, worked, lived, and died? It was for you. He treasured you to be for you, and He still is. The grail is lost, but the body and blood remain. You have the Lord's undivided attention. Whom else will you serve but Jesus? He has everlasting life. **Amen.** Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**