

Pastor, how do I know I am making the right decision?

Some questions seem to get asked more than others, and the one written above is one of the questions I hear most often. I would like to make a humble attempt at answering this question. Granted, all situations are different. This question is asked about important issues such as marriage, child-rearing, reconciling a relationship, changing jobs, and even where and when to serve in the church. However, I would submit that no matter what the specifics around a decision are there are some basic truths that will help us navigate our way to the right decision. I would offer the following:

1. **Live obediently.** When we are living according to God's word and will, we instantly put ourselves in a great position to discern more clearly what we are to in any situation. There is nothing that obedience in our life does not help. In other words, you can't go wrong when you are living right. Mistakes will come but major sin caused by poor decisions will not be a part of our lives if we seek obedience on a daily basis.
2. **Determine what kind of decision you are making.** For example, the decision to intentionally hurt someone or be dishonest about your taxes is a "no brainer." In fact, you don't even have to pray about it. God's word is clear that those things are wrong and should not be a part of our lives. These are moral decisions and many of them are cut and dry. However, life is not always that simple. Many decisions are not so cut and dry. When there is no obvious right or wrong answer then one must trust God to show him or her the right direction.
3. **Seek counsel from three important places.** First, seek counsel from God through His word. Find Scripture that addresses your situation. If this is difficult ask for some assistance from a pastor, Sunday School teacher, etc. Second, seek counsel from those closest to you. Your spouse and/or close relatives and friends only want what is best for you. They can be a powerful source of wisdom. Many people fail to do this because they believe they must appear to have all the answers and that asking for help shows vulnerability. This is not true. Asking for counsel shows wisdom and a strong desire to do what is pleasing to the Lord. Third, seek counsel from godly men and women in your life that you consider spiritual leaders. Use your pastor, Sunday school teacher, or mentor. Many times these people have the gift of discernment and can serve as righteous prayer warriors on your behalf.
4. **Pray.** But do not just pray about the decision. Pray about your motivations, desires, and any prejudices that might exist within your heart. Ask the Lord to cleanse you of anything that might hinder clarity within your thinking. Pray for all others involved in the decision and ask for the ability to encourage them. Pray for the patience to wait on the Lord's timing in the decision. Pray for godly counsel to come your way and for the ability to recognize it when it does. Finally, ask the Lord simply and humbly what He would have you do and for the strength to do it.
5. Once you diligently complete steps one through four and you have determined that what you are deciding is not against God's will or His word then **MAKE the decision.** God filled His Bible full of people who were not afraid to step out on faith. Be humble, be obedient, be prayerful, be wise, and THEN BE DECISIVE.
6. Once your decision is made look, listen, and feel for peace. God's peace is not always relief from burdens nor is it instant gratification for a job well done. Rather, His peace

is an inner calm and sense of assurance that you have done what is right and made a well informed decision to the best of your ability. If you do not sense His peace do not be afraid to acknowledge that God could be calling you to reexamine your decision. No matter what you or I do we will not always make perfect decisions. But we can live a life filled with the blessings of choosing God's best when life brings us to a fork in the road.