

Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets

Session 4

The Conscience Question – Is there a tension that deserves my attention?

Overview

5 questions will be at the heart of this study.

1. The Integrity Question – Am I being honest with myself?
2. The Legacy Question – What story do I want to tell?
3. The Conscience Question – Is there a tension that deserves my attention?
4. The Maturity Question – What is the wise thing to do?
5. The Relationship Question – What does love require of me?

Key Summary in Session 3

Never underestimate the power of a measured response.

It's easy to forget that a response is a decision. A measured response – in contrast to an emotionally fueled, eye-for-an-eye reaction – has the power to reverse the course of a life, thwart the intentions of evil people, and heal the hurts inflicted on us by others.

The Conscience Question – Is there a tension that deserves my attention? Sometimes when making a decision, an option we're considering creates a tension inside us even though we have no idea why. My dad refers to this experience as a red-flag moment. And when we have a red-flag moment, we should ask, "Why does this bother me?" Don't ignore it. Pay attention to the tension.

There's a fascinating narrative from the life of King David long before he became king that illustrates the life-altering power of paying attention to a seemingly irrational tension. When David was a kid, a prophet showed up at his house and announced that God had chosen David to be the next king of Israel.

Problem was, Israel already had a king...King Saul. But Saul wasn't doing a very good job kinging, so God decided to replace him. Saul becomes jealous and tries to kill David. David flees and becomes a fugitive. As the story goes, Saul gets some good intel on David's whereabouts and leads 3,000 men into the Desert of En Gedi to remove this threat to the throne once and for all.

At some point during this grand adventure, Saul stops the entire caravan so he can find somewhere private to relieve himself. But the cave he enters is the one David is hiding in.

If you're David, it's the perfect opportunity. No need to pray. Just do it. Kill the king before he kills you!!

But David hesitated due to the tension within. "Wait a minute, I'm about to murder the king! This can't be right. Besides, who made Saul king? How smart would it be for me to replace what God put in place? This can't be God's plan. I can't kill the king... even if the king is trying to kill me." So, in spite of the pressure to act and the expectations of those around him, David changes course.

The author tells us David was "conscience-stricken." That's how we know he was paying attention to the tension. He was aware of his conscience. And he changed course mid-stream.

That leads us to our third decision – The Conscience Decision: I will pause even when I can't pinpoint the cause of my hesitation. I will explore, rather than ignore, my conscience.

Let it bother you until you know why it bothers you. It may be God's way of protecting you from making a decision you will live to regret. Or it might be God's pathway to an option you've never considered, a response so unprecedented and unexpected that it reverses the natural order of things.

Questions

1. Do you sometimes forget that a response is a decision? How would remembering that make a difference?

2. What's an example of a response you've made or seen that reversed the natural order of things?
3. When has a red flag – whether internally or from others – caused you to pause before making a decision? What was the outcome?
4. Do you tend to justify your responses based on what seems right in the moment? If you had been in David's situation, how hard would it have been to let King Saul walk out of the cave knowing his goal was to kill you?
5. We often ignore other people's advice or the voice of our consciences because we think we already know what's going to happen. How have your attempts at predicting future outcomes led to disappointment?

Closing

We need to value the role of our consciences more.

If there's something in you, something you can't put your finger on, or perhaps something someone else has put a finger on that bothers you about an option you're considering, pause and pay attention.

That tension may very well be God's way of protecting you. It may be his way of waving you off from a decision you'll later regret. Every time you make a decision, especially a decision that takes you by surprise (like David's decision), ask yourself, "Is there a tension that deserves my attention?" Don't ignore it. Don't brush by it. Let it bother you until you know why it bothers you.

In this session, you've discovered the power behind Decision #3: The Conscience Decision. It's a decision to *pause* even when you can't pinpoint the *cause* of your hesitation – to *explore*, rather than *ignore*, your conscience.

That's a decision you will never regret.