

Series: Life's Defining Moments

VBC

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2 Chronicles 10

“Who Influences Your Decisions”

In their book, Decisive, Chip and Dan Heath note that if you study the kind of decisions people make, you will find that humanity does not have an impressive track record

- career choices are often regretted—44% of present attorneys recommend that young people not pursue law
- 83% of corporate mergers were not good decisions—they failed to create value for shareholders
- 88% of New Year's resolutions are broken
- most people make the kind of decisions that do not save enough for retirement
- half of marriages fail
- but here's what really proves the point—some 70,000 tattoos are reversed annually
- “When it comes to making decisions—it's clear that our brains are flawed instruments”*

Most of us can point to a bad decision

- the Bible is full of examples—which include Rehoboam
- Rehoboam was Solomon's son—and now he is the king
- and he will make a regrettable decision
- one that will change the course of Israel
- and his story teaches us how to avoid bad decisions
- it happened at a place called Shechem—read verse 1

- with Solomon's death—the first order of business was Rehoboam's formal inauguration
- this is what kings do—Saul at Gilgal; David at Hebron; Solomon at Gibeon
- it made sense to have the ceremony at Shechem
- it was an important gathering point—a military, political, a religious center
- it was the place where Abraham and Jacob worshipped—where Joseph's bones were laid to rest—Joshua 24:32
- but it was more than historical—this was a political move— (MAP)

- going here would enable Rehoboam to assert his rule, secure allegiances amongst the ten northern tribes
- tribes that had submitted for 73 years to the two southern tribes, led by David and Solomon—and now Rehoboam
- and they were becoming restive

-as with other kings—the whole assembly of Israel gathered

- but unlike the others—God was conspicuously absent
- there was no anointing by a priest—no sacrifices—no divine encounters
- just Rehoboam and the people, led by Jeroboam, the one—time Secretary of Forced Labor for Solomon in the north—read verses 2-4

- Israel hoped Rehoboam would be a different leader
- Solomon's accumulations—his luxuries, his forced labor, his arms trafficking, his building projects, his many wives—put a huge strain on the nation
- and the northern ten tribes likely bore the brunt of it all
- they pleaded for the weight to be lightened
- their cries echo Israel's cry to Pharaoh when they were under his forced labor

-Rehoboam was faced with a decision

- but chapter 13 tells us Rehoboam was young and inexperienced and unable to assert himself

- suggesting he grew up in an insulated environment where he was coddled, pampered
- not skilled in the dynamics of leadership
- decision making did not come easy
- he would need time to consult—read verses 5-7

- Rehoboam first consulted with the elders, the older, the mature men who stood in Solomon's counsel

- they likely carried a certain weight in a patriarchal, tribal culture
- they were men of caution—exposed to Solomon's excesses—but also to his wisdom
- and over time they too had learned the value of softening tones
- of being less dogmatic—more humble
- there is wisdom in using words that placate and soothe
- do this and they will not vote you off the island

- but for whatever reason—their counsel was not received—read verses 8-11

- Rehoboam appears to have had his mind made up
- even before turning to his peers—he had dismissed the counsel of the elders
- we know how to do this—sometimes it looks like we're gathering information when we're actually fishing for support
- it's what business calls "confirmation bias"

- the counsel of his peers was more to Rehoboam's liking
- these were men he had grown up with—men who thought like him
- likely royal princes, half-brothers
- pampered men who had also never grown up
- men with the arrogance of youth—acting out adolescent folly

- impressed with power and wealth and metrics

-they saw these people as whiners—bellyachers
-viewed the elders' advice as enabling—as a sign of weakness
-leaders—real leaders—are assertive, strong—men with gravitas—who command fear and respect—and impose their will on others

-their advice was vulgar—let people know that there is a new Solomon on the stage
-only his power is more formidable
-his “little thing”, a euphemism for a male sexual organ, is bigger than dad's

-this is crude language—but then, these are crude men
-I picture them like Nigerian militants associated with Boko Haram in Nigeria
-young men without compassion—obsessed with control
-in a defining moment—one that changed everything going forward—Rehoboam followed their advice—read verses 12-14

-that Rehoboam repeats rather than speaks his own words suggests that he was too weak to put things in his own terms
-it was a tragic miscalculation—read verse 16

-it was the end of a united nation
-“to their tents” is a way of saying they no longer recognized Rehoboam—the north was lost
-for the next 200 years—the northern kingdom would have 19 kings—all disastrous
-in the south—the empire of Solomon would be reduced to the hill country of Judah and Benjamin
-who would be a mix of good and bad kings for 350 years

So what is the text saying—God saying?

1. Some would say—*THIS A CULTURAL LESSON ABOUT INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT*
-Rehoboam's folly was ignoring the elders—as we can do
-we live in a culture infatuated with youth—we have a tendency to disregard the counsel of those with more years
-if only the Millennials would listen to the Boomers—and if only the Boomers would listen to those before them
-we would be in a much better place—but is this the point?
(some of you are nodding—yes—preach it)
2. Others might say—*THIS A LEADERSHIP LESSON IN THE IMPORTANCE OF INTUITION*
-effective leaders learn to read the signals, study the hearts, sense the mood, and know the context
-they decode the collective mood, discern the morale, and get in alignment with the spirit
-Rehoboam was just the opposite—a good case study for management theory

-in his article “I Have This Feeling”, Gordon MacDonald writes—“My nomination for the most unintuitive person in the Bible is Rehoboam”

-he misjudged the situation and chose poorly—leading to a divided kingdom and political instability

-both of these are valuable lessons—but they may miss the most important one of all

3. *THIS IS A SPIRITUAL LESSON ABOUT HAVING A PROCESS FOR DISCERNING THE WILL OF GOD*

-effective decision making always begins with seeking the mind of God

-this is what Israel’s leaders were called to do—what the church’s leadership is called to do

-but discerning the will of God was not how Rehoboam chose to lead—nor anyone else’s

-the elders did bring some wisdom to the situation—“effective leaders are aware of and consciously manage the dynamics of their relationship with followers”¹

-the counsel of the young men had some merit—it is important for a leader to be assertive—establish authority rather than delegate it

-*but they all missed the most important counsel of all—“Go after God-discern His will!*

-no one stepped in and stopped the flow of words and ideas long enough for God to get a word in edgewise

-like ours—Israel had become a culture where God was more tradition than conviction

-what if Rehoboam had gone to God?

-here’s what I imagine God would have counseled—

“Be Me to these people—shepherd them with compassion and authority

-don’t enable—nor coerce

-live out integrity and justice

-lead with wisdom and courage and vision

-hate idolatry like I hate idolatry

-be a man of God before anything else”

APPLICATION—maybe you are in a similar place—facing a decision—one that may require you to be more conciliatory or severe

-and differing voices are giving you counsel

-but here is the critical question—have you sought the mind of God?

-Barton, in her Pursuing God’s Will Together, tells us what that looks like

1) *It begins with ENTERING THE SOLITUDE*

-where the first thing we do is acknowledge our need

-*Rehoboam created some space to think—what he failed to create was space for God*

¹ LOF-125

- admit that God is the writer of the story—maybe this is why the story teller interjects verse 15
- ultimately everything relates to God's purposes
- entering the quiet—we acknowledge that apart from divine intervention, we stumble in the dark

2) Engage in WORD AND PRAYER

- we enter into a conversation where God has the first word
- this requires going beyond reading—to the place of deep listening
- with the aim of recognizing the presence and activity of God
- stepping into the space our salvation has made possible

- then responding in prayer—for prayer is response speech
- our best decisions come out of prayer that has asked

a) Help me to be indifferent to anything else but God's will

b) Help me to be unattached to anyone else's agenda

- the only outcome I want is one that honors God's purpose

c) Help me to die in order for the will of God to come forth

d) Help me to find those counselors who are committed to seeking the mind of God together

3) Step Out IN FAITH

- for whatever has God's will stamped on it will require risk—it will be far bigger than us

LG QUESTIONS

- 1) Is there a critical decision you are presently facing?
- 2) What are your decision making lessons that you take away from this story?
- 3) Why was Rehoboam so bent on being an oppressive leader?
- 4) What are the flaws in the wisdom of the elders?