A Woman's Guide to Making Right Choices

ELIZABETH GEORGE

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Did you get it? Did you get it?” came my husband’s rapid-fire questions even before he was halfway in the door after work.

“Get what?” I innocently replied as I stopped from working on our dinner to greet him.

“Did you get your letter?”

“What letter?” (I wasn’t sure how much longer I could keep up this act of feigned ignorance. After all, we did get more than one letter that day.)

“The letter from the church. About the new women’s ministry.”

“Ooooh, that letter.”

“So what do you think? Are you going to be a part of it? Did you sign it?”

“Well…I threw it in the trash. I just don’t think teaching is my thing. I’m sure there are many more women who could do a much better job of teaching the Bible. And you as a pastor should
know that the Bible says, ‘Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment’ (James 3:1).”

Well, this is a little of the scene that transpired in our kitchen as Jim and I discussed the letter I received from the leadership board at our church. It announced the formation of a new women’s ministry, and to kick things off, asked if any of the leaders’ wives would be willing to conduct an elective workshop.

Jim, ever the positive encourager—make that super-positive encourager!—gingerly picked through the trash to retrieve the letter and smoothed it out on the kitchen countertop. He smiled as he sweetly reminded me that I had been studying what I called “the pink passages” in the Bible for the past ten years. His final salvo shot across my resistant bow: “Don’t you think that, after all these years of studying the women of the Bible, you just might have something to say on the subject?”

Well, with that reality check and its stewardship hanging over my head, I had a serious choice to make. Would I choose to give in to my fears and decline this opportunity, or would I choose to trust God to somehow see me through the ordeal I suspected it would be?

Well, to finish the story, I did choose to teach a class on the women of the Bible. To my relief, there were only six women who enrolled for this elective. I was so thrilled! This I could handle. I went around the house for days saying, “Thank You, Lord! Oh, thank You, Lord!” My six new friends and I sat around in a circle and had an incredible time together week after week. And did I ever continue to thank God for His mercy!

Then, as the semester of the new women’s Bible studies was nearing its end, I got another letter. It, too, began, “Dear leader’s wife…” This time the board was asking me and the other women who had taught classes to pray about repeating our electives. So, having made the initial choice to teach, I agreed. But
this time, 60 women signed up. This was totally unexpected for me—60 women? This meant rather than a small, cozy setting, things would have to be more formal—a lectern, a microphone, a classroom. But I bit the bullet and I made it through just one more time…or so I thought!

Then I received a third letter: “Dear leader’s wife…” (As I read this I thought, By this time don’t you think someone would know our names? After all, here we are serving the church, helping this new ministry to take off?) This letter, as you’ve probably guessed, asked if I would be willing to teach my elective a third time so those who hadn’t been able to attend it yet could have another chance.

Well, I just knew I couldn’t possibly end up with more than 60 women in the class, so I said yes. Now, before I say what happened, realize that Jim and I were members of a church of 10,000 people. As it turned out, 600 women showed up, so we had to move my group into the church auditorium. All I can say is thank goodness God is faithful not to give us more than we can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13)! Whew!

The point of all this is not the size of the class or the number of people. Rather, my point is that I made a choice to step out in faith, to trust God, to set myself and my fears aside, and to concentrate on others. God honored this choice. That one reluctant choice made by a reluctant servant of the Lord ended up launching my teaching and writing ministry. Who knew?! Least of all, not me!

Your Life Is Full of Choices

Now, you might be thinking, I’m glad I don’t have to make that kind of choice! Teaching the Bible is definitely not my gift! But what about having to choose how to educate your children—
home school, private Christian school, or public school? Or what about figuring out how to care for a parent who has dementia—in your home, in a sibling’s home, in a nursing home? On and on the list of your choices goes. And it often seems like the decisions you need to make are bombarding your door before you even get out of bed each day!

As we begin putting together some guidelines for making right choices, you already know that life is full of choices. In fact, you had to make a choice to even start reading this book about how to make decisions! So, the issue is not the mere act of making choices itself, but rather learning how to make not just good choices, or better choices, but the best choices.

Here are a few thoughts about the nature of making choices that will help get us started:

*Choices always result in consequences.* Recently my husband was reading a book titled *How to Ruin Your Life by 40*, by Steve Farrar. In the very first chapter we are introduced to an 18-year-old woman named Jane. She had just lost her husband. She had no support of any kind, and was the mother of two small children. Destitute, she went to a bluff overlooking a lake with the very real thought of jumping and ending her life.

The story went on to relate how this distraught young woman’s attention ended up being diverted by something on the other side of the lake. With this break to her dark thoughts, she chose to turn around, leave the lake, and return home. Now, nothing had changed. Her life still seemed hopeless. But a few weeks after this experience at the lake, Jane came to faith in Christ. Later she met and married Captain John Guinness, whose great-great-grandson is Os Guinness, a well-known Christian apologist and author of more than 20 books.

This is how Farrar concludes this story of Jane Guinness:
Life Is Full of Choices

She [Jane] had a choice to make, and that choice would carry consequences.
That concept is known as cause and effect.
With the wrong choice she could have ruined her life and her future. With the wrong choice she would ruin the childhood of her young children.
But she made the right choice as an eighteen-year-old. And her family is still grateful today that she did, nearly two hundred years later.
The choices you are making in your life are just as significant.

Choices are not always of equal value. Obviously, the choice Jane made was of great value. It was a life-and-death choice. Many choices you make are more everyday in nature, like what to wear to a party or shower, or which cereal to eat for breakfast. But every now and then you are faced with more serious and potentially life-changing choices, such as which career to pursue, or whether or not to marry. Because you don’t know in advance how the vital choice you make in a single day will impact your life, you want to make sure you handle each choice with care, and call upon God for wisdom and guidance.

Choices happen by default. The fact that you keep putting off going to see the doctor about your persistent pain is actually a choice. You are afraid of what the pain might represent, so you keep delaying the call. Waiting to make a decision is not always bad, but in this case, a delay could mean the difference between life or death. When we feel uncomfortable about a choice, we sometimes delay in doing what is right, just, fair, or edifying—like asking someone for forgiveness.
At other times we delay because we are just lazy or we don’t think the matter is all that important…or it’s going to take soooo much time! Take a simple choice like reading your Bible. You can say, “I don’t have time to read my Bible.” So you don’t. But in reality, if you were honest with yourself, you would admit you are actually saying, “I’m choosing not to read my Bible.”

**Choices have only two outcomes.** Choices are either good or bad. Right or wrong. And half of a wrong choice—or a partially wrong choice—is still a wrong choice.

My favorite example is, “I’ll do that later.” While I might have all the good intentions of doing the right thing and making the right choice, what usually happens is my partially wrong choice to do it later leads to and blossoms into a full-out wrong choice when I don’t get around to doing it at all!

Recognizing there are only two outcomes helps make decision-making a clearer process for you. When you are faced with a choice to make, either do it or don’t do it—right now. And if you know there is something extremely important you need to do to benefit others, then do it right now.

**Choices are often made due to the influence of others.** You cannot escape the fact that you are constantly being influenced in your choices. Your environment, your culture, your family, your friends, your fears, your pride, your greed—all of these external forces are bearing down heavily upon you.

God’s solution? Surround yourself with as many positive influences as possible. Otherwise, the apostle Paul’s observation will always prove true and win out: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Corinthians 15:33 NASB).

**Choices made correctly will require forethought.** The book of Proverbs repeatedly warns against making hasty decisions, and calls those people who rush into trouble “fools” (Proverbs 13:16).
What can you do? Delay your decisions as long as you can. This will help you make as close to the right decision as possible based on time—time spent praying, time spent seeking the Bible’s direction, and time spent listening to wise counsel.

*Choices made correctly will put you in the center of God’s will.* God’s perfect will always comes with right choices. This is why it is so important to study God’s Word, pray, and seek godly counsel. “As you have always obeyed…work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13).

**A Few More Things to Remember About Choices**

— Attractive choices sometimes lead to sin.
— Good choices have positive long-term results.
— Right choices are sometimes difficult.

**Looking at Choices Through the Rearview Mirror**

Let’s focus for a moment. Earlier I said that choices always have a consequence. For me, when I volunteered to teach my first class, the consequence was having to study, prepare, and stand in front of all those women and pray like crazy with every breath that my mind and mouth would work…and my legs wouldn’t collapse! It was a frightening consequence at first, but in time—with the Lord’s help!—I gained some priceless experience, and I learned better to deal with the demands and my fears.

You’ve probably been to a women’s retreat or attended Bible study where there was a time for the women to share with one another, a time when they would talk about choices they had
made in their past. In a sense it’s as if they were looking at their past in a rearview mirror and seeing all over again what had happened to them.

Well, all I can say is, “Praise the Lord, God did some major healing in the lives of those precious women. Thank God they are no longer living back in their past.” But, at the same time, they can still see, remember, taste, and relive the consequences of their actions. Sometimes their language includes phrases like…

I wandered off the path…
I became like the prodigal son…
I fell away from the Lord…
I got sidetracked in sin…
I lost my first love…
I strayed from the truth…
I made some wrong decisions…
I went off the deep end…
I got in with the wrong crowd…

As you’ve listened to the stories during such sharing sessions, have you ever found yourself wondering, What happened? How does someone wander off the path, lose their first love for Jesus, stray from the truth, fall off the deep end, or get involved with the wrong crowd?

Well, we both know what happened, don’t we? Somehow, at some time, for some reason, a wrong choice was made. Maybe it was just a little lie. Just a little lack of concern for what was right. Just a little bending of a rule. Then little by little these lesser yet wrong choices became bigger and easier…until one day a woman finally realizes her life has become a mess.

**Women of the Bible and Their Choices**

I don’t know about you, but it comforts me and gives me solid assurance to know that the Bible is always relevant to my
Life Is Full of Choices

challenges as a woman. It is filled—and overflowing!—with God’s wisdom and 100 percent guaranteed guidance. And it never fails to offer help for the many choices you and I are facing today. Here’s what I’m talking about!

Eve made a choice—Literally right from the beginning of biblical history, Eve, the mother of all women, was faced with a choice. You are probably familiar with this part of Eve’s story, the first woman on earth and the wife of Adam (see Genesis 3:1-6). This woman was asked by the evil serpent to choose to do her own thing and eat some beautiful, delicious-looking fruit because doing so would make a person smart. To make such a choice meant she had to make a choice to disobey God, who had forbidden Adam and Eve from eating of that particular tree’s fruit.

Well, the whole world is still reeling from Eve’s wrong choice. She ate! Never mind God. Never mind her husband. Never mind the consequences that are still reverberating down through all of time. Never mind the marring of her future offspring. Eve wanted what Eve wanted—and Eve ate.

Lot’s wife made a choice—Don’t even get me started about her husband, Lot! Ohhhh! He chose—yes, chose—to move his family and possessions to the green valley of Sodom and Gomorrah, which just happened to be the two most evil cities of his day (Genesis 13:10-11).

The sad result of Lot’s flirtation with the world came when God sent two angels to save Lot and his family before God brought destruction on these wicked cities and their people. The angels distinctly warned Lot and his wife to not look back at the city. That’s pretty clear, right? But evidently the lure of the “big city lifestyle” was too much for Mrs. Lot and she looked back. She willfully made a wrong choice and it cost her her life as she was turned instantly into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).
Mary made a choice—Can you remember how silly you were as a young teen, back when you were 15 years old? Well, this is not how we find young Mary in Luke 1:26-38. When confronted by the angel Gabriel and told of her opportunity to become the human mother of God’s Son, she could have declined. You see, she was betrothed to a wonderful man named Joseph. She knew one consequence of choosing to accept God’s will for her would mean an instant dissolution of her engagement.

What did Mary do? She chose to trust God. And I just adore the words in her acceptance speech: “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word” (verse 38).

Another Mary made a choice—Who is the most important guest you have ever had in your home for dinner? Well, just imagine what a stir was caused when Jesus and His disciples showed up for dinner at the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Martha went immediately into high gear and tore into preparing food for her VIP guests. At some point Martha became frustrated. Without thinking, she complained to Jesus because Mary, her sister and helper, was sitting at His feet listening to Him while He taught instead of assisting with the serving.

Sure, preparations for dinner needed to be made. And 12 guests for dinner is a houseful! But this is how Jesus evaluated Mary’s choice to stop her busy serving, sit at His feet, and listen to Him: “Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (verse 42). It’s sort of like Jesus was saying, “Listen, Martha, you have all your life to fix and serve food, but today you have Me. Don’t berate your sister. Mary made a most excellent choice.” (And I know it’s not in the Bible passage, but I like to imagine that perhaps Jesus moved slightly to one side and made a place for Martha to sit down right next to Him.)
It’s Your Choice

I’m sure you already know your actions are a matter of choice. You also know that some choices are made for you because they are out of your control. You have no control over things like your work hours, the city or school bus schedules, the times for your church services.

You get the picture.

But multitudes of choices arrive with each new day—almost at the rate of one per minute!—which are yours to make. And these choices, my friend, are a matter of your will. You get to decide what you will or won’t do, how you will or won’t act. You get to make the choices, which means you can’t blame anyone else for what happens next! Hopefully if you are not already making good, better, and best choices, our time together will help you learn to choose wisely.

Just one more thing as we begin: You cannot take back a wrong choice or any of its undesired consequences. But you can choose to learn from each wrong choice. You can log those wrong choices and purpose to leave them behind. With the experience behind you, and with God’s help, you will do better the next time. You will make a better choice!

But regardless, our wonderful God wants to step in and help you take the shattered pieces of your life and put them back together with the salvation and grace that comes from accepting Jesus as Savior and walking by His Spirit. Nothing that has happened in your life is beyond the loving hands of the God of all comfort, the God of all grace, the God of all healing, and especially the God who loves you unconditionally regardless of your past—and regardless of your poor choices! What a great God you have and serve!
The following guidelines will help you proceed through your day, confident that you are seeking to make the right choices.

~ *Treat each day as being important.* “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

~ *Acknowledge your need for wisdom—and ask for it!* “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

~ *Develop a deep respect for God.* “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

~ *Maintain a vital relationship with Jesus.* “…that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Ephesians 1:17).

~ *Pay any price for the truth.* “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23).