



Practice Making Soul-Conscious Choices

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Introduction:

Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:24–27

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

One of the most popular television shows a few years ago was CBS's *Survivor*. Millions of people tuned in and watched people get voted off the island and off the Australian outback. It took a lot out of a person to be on that show. The men and women were eating bugs, sleeping in the rain, pushing themselves to the limit, physically and emotionally. On top of all that, after building relationships as a team, every few days they had to vote someone off the island.

Living here on earth is like living on an island that is not our permanent home. Peter reminds us of this. He writes, **Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.—1 Peter 2:11**

There are sinful desires that every one of us struggle with. In fact in Peter's letter he tells us that these sinful desires war against our soul. There is a spiritual battle and with God's help the outcome is determined. To thrive spiritually and be more than a survivor we have to abstain from sinful desires. Giving into those desires and not struggling against them is an option, but when we give into the flesh and the sin nature, we move down a path that ends in suffering the consequences of the sinful nature, which is death.

The apostle Paul says that **our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.—Philippians 3:20**

Part of the problem for followers of Jesus is that we think we're home. We're not. We are aliens, we are strangers, and we are foreigners.

Although living here is like living on an island, we are not survivors in danger of being voted off. We are more than survivors! After all, Jesus lost his life so that we might do more than survive. He died for us so that we might learn to thrive spiritually.

We are more than survivors. We can learn to thrive spiritually. We need someone who can teach us about thriving spiritually. In our spiritual adventure, we are going to be looking at several people who can teach us the principles of thriving to become more than a survivor spiritually.

Starting out as a prince of Egypt, the person who will teach us this morning moved to the desert and became a shepherd. He was called by God to deliver his people. His name was Moses.

Moses teaches us that we must practice making soul-conscious choices. We have the opportunity to live like residents of the earthly kingdom or make a better choice and receive a better reward.

You see, it's easy to make wrong choices while we live here on this earth. Now some choices are inconsequential. I'm not sure it makes much difference to God what you had to eat for breakfast this morning, or the kind of vehicle you drove to church.

But, friends, some choices have great consequences for us. Not only do they impact us here, whether we survive or thrive, but they affect us eternally. I read the story of one of the least known passengers who perished when the Titanic went down that tragic April night in 1912.

This passenger was a young thirty-something pastor from Great Britain. Reverend John Harper was on his way to America with his young daughter and niece. Harper had been invited to hold a series of meetings at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. When disaster struck and the ship began to sink, all women and children were permitted a seat in one of the twenty-one lifeboats. Men traveling alone with their children were also permitted a seat. But John Harper felt a check in his spirit. He placed his little girl and young niece safely in one of the lifeboats and remained on the doomed deck of that most famous ship. Harper, you see, made a choice to stay behind to witness to the passengers and crew that went down with the ship. For the sake of their souls and being true to what he felt in his soul was God's calling, he chose certain death for the chance to impact scores of lives with the simple message of the eternal hope found in Christ. Yes, he was entitled to join the women and children and survive the nightmare. But like the heroes of faith we read about in Hebrews 11, he made a soul-conscious choice based on the coming kingdom of God.

Soul-conscious choices are decisions we make on the battlefield of the brain. How and what we choose each day is determined by how we program the troops that march across the tissues of our cranium.

Moses made some important choices that were of great consequence.

I. Soul conscious choices should not be based on our comfort

If you look back in Exodus and Deuteronomy, you see that Moses was faced with many choices that had soul-compromising consequences.

- Whether to stand in his bare feet before the burning bush
- Whether to stand before Pharaoh on behalf of God's people
- Whether to trust God to open a path through the Red Sea
- Whether to follow his father-in-law's advice dealing with delegation
- Whether to bite his tongue or cane a rock when he got angry

- Whether to veil his face or go natural after descending from the summit of Mt. Sinai

II. Soul conscious choices should be based on God's word

Of all the choices Moses was confronted with, the most critical was the one the writer of Hebrews makes reference to - *whether to listen to the call of comfort and convenience, prestige and power, luxury and lust or hearken to the inner voice of God's spirit that reminded him of his true identity*. Sure, he'd been raised in Pharaoh's family, but he was not Egyptian. He was a descendent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Although prevented from being raised by his Hebrew parents, he had a sense of who he was and what God had promised for those who trace an ancestry of faith. Somehow he had been taught about his ancestral roots. Somewhere along the line he'd

been tutored in the oral tradition of his faith heritage. He'd come to understand that the attractiveness of pleasure and treasure is veneer-deep. He was aware that the joyful rush of sin gives way to a snail-like crawl of guilt and regret. Yes, he'd survived the Egyptian king's infanticide decree when he was a baby (thanks to an unexpected discovery Pharaoh's daughter made in the Nile). But there's more to survival than staying alive. What makes life worth living is the ability to make soul-conscious choices a day at a time. And based on the fact that our 50-Day Spiritual Adventure kicks off with this message on Moses, it goes without saying that I believe he made those kinds of choices. Yes, Moses was more than a survivor. Let's allow him to encourage us today to thrive spiritually.

Some preachers entitle Hebrews 11 "The Hall of Faith." Moses is listed here because Moses chose well.

Moses is a hero of faith because he said "no" to royalty and "yes" to slavery. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace. The king's daughter adopted him. He had a great life. He was well educated and respected. But he rejected that and chose to be identified with the children of Israel, who were living in slavery. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time (Hebrews 11:25).

Moses said "no" to palace life and "yes" to desert life. The writer of Hebrews tells us by faith he left Egypt. Now if you know the story, you know that Moses saw one of the Hebrew slaves mistreated and attacked the abuser. Did he have to flee? Probably not. He was royalty. He might have thought he was fleeing, but something else was happening. With that choice to get out of town, God prepared him to lead his people. Those forty years as a shepherd were Moses' years of basic training in wilderness survival.

Moses said "no" to prime rib and "yes" to manna. He began his life with the best of food and all comfort. But he ended his life eating the simple food God provided six days each week for forty years!

III. Soul conscious choices should be based on the future, not the present

Be a hero of faith like Moses and practice making soul-conscious choices. How did Moses make these wise choices? How did he avoid the spiritual danger and live for God? The answer is at the end of our

text: "He was looking ahead to his reward. . . . He saw him who is invisible."

Be a hero of faith like Moses and practice making soul-conscious choices.

Sin is pleasurable – for a season. It is fun to feed the flesh. It is fun to run on the broad road that leads to destruction. It may even seem justifiable as far as the world is concerned. Gratifying the flesh ends in death and separation from God. So often we choose the immediate because we fail to look ahead to what is beyond.

Moses looked beyond the current. He was looking at the future.

Do you want to pursue the right rewards? Choose to be like Moses; don't identify with the citizenship here in our "Egypt"; identify with God's family and kingdom.

The truth of the matter is that followers of Jesus are not planning to stay here. This is a temporary residence for us. Our identity is with the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven.

Do you want to pursue the right rewards? Choose to be like Moses; don't make this world your home, remember your citizenship is in heaven.

Do you want to pursue the right rewards? Choose to be like Moses; feast on God's provision, not the "food" of this culture.

God's provision is supernatural. That provision will nourish and give strength to our spiritual being.

Be a hero of faith like Moses and practice making soul-conscious choices.

IV. Critique soul conscious choices

I imagine you have a good question now. How can we practice making soul-conscious choices? In your journal you see Adventure Application 1: "Critique Your Choices." For those of us who've done the 50-Day Spiritual Adventure before, this won't be tough. Every day, you need to complete two sentences: "A wise choice I made today was . . ." "A foolish choice I made today was . . ." Doing this will force you to analyze some of your decisions and, hopefully, increase the number of wise ones! And don't worry, if you don't do it every day or make more foolish than wise choices, you won't be voted off the church roll!

We also need to read the daily Scripture and answer the questions in our Adventure Journals. Plus, there is a brief prayer to say each day. This prayer will remind you about making soul-conscious choices. Would you say this one with me?

“Lord Jesus, I live in a world that offers numerous pleasures and treasures. Scripture teaches that I am an alien here and I need your help to be more than a survivor. You said it made no sense to gain the whole world at the cost of one’s soul. Help

me, like Moses, to be sensitive to the soul-conscious choices I regularly face. Amen.”

Memorizing scripture is also an important component of this Adventure. We’re asking you to memorize 1 Peter 2: 9–12 over the course of the journal—that’s 4 verses over 50 days. You won’t win a million dollars if you are more than a survivor for 50 days. But you’ll have something better—you’ll be well on your way to learning to thrive spiritually!

Conclusion:

In his book *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Jerry Bridges offers some excellent questions designed to help us exercise our discernment muscles: Each question in the formula helps us pause to gain discernment before purchasing something new or signing up for a great opportunity.

- Is it helpful physically, spiritually, or mentally?
- Does it bring me under its power?
- Does it hurt others?
- Does it glorify God?
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Charles Swindoll speaks about the power of our thought-life this way:

“Thoughts are the thermostat that regulates what we accomplish in life. My body responds and reacts to the input from my mind. If I feed my mind doubt, disbelief, and discouragement, that is precisely the kind of day my body will experience. If I adjust my thermostat forward to thoughts filled with vision, vitality, and victory, I can count on that kind of a day. Thus, you and I become what we think about.”

—Charles Swindoll, *The Finishing Touch*