



worldoutreach  
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

## SERIES FOUR

### MODULE ONE: DECISION-MAKING

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## ***Outline Session 1 - 3***

1. Decision-making (Part 1)
2. Decision-making (Part 2)
3. Decision-making (Part 3)

## SESSION ONE: DECISION-MAKING (PART ONE)

Decision making is an inescapable task for ministry leaders. In the end, it is the quality of those decisions that determine the success (or otherwise) of one's leadership.

### **TYPES OF DECISIONS a ministry leader may have to make**

- Operational decisions
- Financial decisions
- Personnel decisions
- Vision decisions
- Culture decisions
- Spiritual decisions
- Personal decisions

### **TYPES OF POOR DECISIONS mentioned in the Scriptures.**

#### **1. Procrastination**

Procrastination means putting decisions off.

#### **2. Indecisive**

Indecision occurs when the leader, for whatever reason, is unable or unwilling to make a decision.

#### **3. Appeasing**

An appeasing decision is one made to keep disgruntled or disenfranchised people happy.

#### **4. Unethical**

An unethical decision is made when the decision-maker knowingly breaks a moral, spiritual or professional principle or practice.

#### **5. Impulsive**

Impulsive decisions are made without due thought, process or prayer.

#### **6. Ill-informed (or uninformed)**

This is a decision made without knowing all the known facts and factors, or made after listening to the wrong people.

#### **7. Selfish**

A selfish decision is one made for the personal interest and welfare of the leader with no consideration for the common good.

#### **8. Fearful**

Fearful decisions are those made when the decision-maker is overly concerned about the opinions of others rather than what they know is right.

### **Two classifications of decisions**

*Personal* decision making – when the leader *alone* has to make the final decision;

*Group* decision making – when the leader is part of a group making a collective decision.

### **10 PRINCIPLES FOR ‘PERSONAL’ DECISION MAKING**

#### **1. Clarify the vision god has given you**

#### **2. Understand your own style of leadership**

There are essentially two different styles of decision-making depending on your gifting:

“Born” leaders tend to display an *intuitive* style of decision making (gut feel);

“Made” leaders tend to display a more *deductive* style of decision making (process).

## SESSION TWO: DECISION-MAKING (PART TWO)

Last time, we noted that decision-making is one of the inescapable tasks of ministry leaders, which determine the success and effectiveness of their leadership.

We looked at an initial 2 (of 10) guidelines for how to make good decisions:

1. Clarify the vision God has given you.
2. Understand your own style of leadership.

Let's continue...

### 3. Pray

In the general tone of your whole life, foster a prayerful attitude and adopt the daily discipline of prayer. Ask that God would give you wisdom (James 1:5-8; Proverbs 4:7).

### 4. Reflect in scripture.

Reflect on the decision in light of Scriptural teaching.

Ask some questions like:

- Does the Bible have a specific principle that relates to this decision?
- Is there a precedent in Scripture?
- Is there a Biblical story or anecdote that gives me insight into this decision?
- Is the decision I am going to make consistent with the teaching of Scripture?

### 5. Clarify exactly what you need to decide and the various options.

To make wise and informed decisions, you need to know exactly with great clarity and specificity what you actually have to decide. Someone has well written that: 'to understand a problem is the biggest part of solving the problem'.

### 6. Be informed about the whole dimension of the decision.

Find out as much information as possible about the details.

Here are some practical ideas:

- If necessary, seek technical, specialist or professional information (e.g. legal opinion)
- Do research
- Be inquisitive
- Listen objectively
- Ask probing questions
- Seek clarification on any 'grey' areas within your thinking

### 7. Discuss with other experienced leaders

Another practical idea in the decision-making process is to discuss the whole scenario with other experienced leaders.

There are at least three levels on which this principle relates:

- Discuss it with the 'vision-bearers' within the local church (or ministry) – those who share the spiritual oversight (burden) with you (e.g. eldership or team)
- Discuss it with experienced ministers or leaders, especially those who may have had a similar challenge.
- Think of a prominent leader who you respect. Ask yourself the question, 'How would this leader respond to this decision?'

## **8. Decide**

After working through steps 1-7, it is time to decide. Let it settle in your mind and spirit until you have clarity and conviction about a decision. Importantly, seek a sense of inward peace about the decision you have made in your heart.

## **9. Communicate the decision**

Once you have made the decision, inform the relevant people in the appropriate order.

## **10. Implementing the decision**

Initiate and organise a step-by-step plan to implement the decision.

## **TWO OTHER FACTORS IN MAKING PERSONAL DECISIONS:**

### **1. Review the decision**

Part of successful decision-making is to regularly review your decisions. Ask some honest questions like:

- Was the decision right?
- Was it communicated and implemented correctly?
- How can I improve in my decision-making process?

### **2. Cautions**

There are a number of cautions that need to be sounded in regard to making decisions:

- Don't be pressured to make a decision. Have a time frame, but don't allow others to force you into a decision you are not ready or informed to make
- Don't allow yourself to be manipulated
- Don't procrastinate

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU MAKE A BAD DECISION?**

If/when you make a bad or wrong decision, Aubrey Malphurs, in his book, *Being Leaders*, suggests the following 5 things:

**1. Admit the mistake** – people are very understanding if we're honest, but very unforgiving if we try and cover up and never admit failings.

**2. Acknowledge responsibility** – take personal responsibility for the wrong decision or implementation. Nothing builds trust like a leader accepting responsibility. Nothing destroys trust as quickly as a leader blaming others for their mistakes.

**3. Apologise** to those affected and (if necessary) the congregation. It is wise to apologise within the sphere of those involved (e.g. church team) unless, of course, it pertains to the whole church or organisation.

**4. Accept the consequences.**

**5. Act to correct the situation.** Be quick and thorough in correcting the mistake(s).

## SESSION THREE: DECISION-MAKING (PART THREE)

In the first two sessions we covered 'personal' decision-making, which is when a ministry leader has to make the decision alone. But in this session, we'll look at 'group' decision-making, which is looking at the decision-making process of a group of which the ministry leader may be just one voice (such as a Board, Eldership or Vision team).

As a biblical backdrop, this session will use the decision-making process of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15. In Acts 15:1-2, Paul and Barnabas were deputised to go to Jerusalem to obtain a decision about whether gentile converts needed to be circumcised to truly be saved. A decision was needed, which had far-reaching implications.

From their example, a practical step by step guideline will be proposed for how to make decisions as a group.

### GUIDELINES FOR GROUP DECISIONS

#### 1. Clarify who is in the decision-making group and who isn't

(15:6) *'The **apostles and elders** met to consider this question.'*

A first step in making a group decision is to clarify which people constitute the decision-making group.

#### 2. Outline as clearly as possible the question (problem) that needs a decision

(15:6) *'The **apostles and elders** met to consider **this** question.'*

The apostles and elders met to discuss **the** question of whether circumcision and adherence to Moses' law was necessary for the salvation of gentile believers. A leadership group may be faced with numerous decisions, but it is imperative to clarify **the** question that needs discussion and resolution.

#### 3. Let everybody have their say

(15:7) *'After much discussion...'*

Welcome everybody's viewpoint. Graciously and patiently interact with each other. Let every person offer and defend their position until they are heard and understood.

#### 4. Let experienced people speak for perspective

(15:7) *'After much discussion, **Peter** got up and addressed them...'*

Peter had a right to be heard because he had been chosen by God to be the apostle through whom the outpouring of the Spirit would come to the Gentiles. Similarly, in the context of a local church (or ministry), give special weight to the views and viewpoint of the more experienced people.

#### 5. Get those at the "cutting edge" to share their experience and perspective

(15:12) *'The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders **God had done among the Gentiles through them.**'*

Barnabas and Paul were the ones on the cutting edge of the Kingdom's advance among the Gentiles. The decision would affect them more than anyone, so they needed to be heard

and their standpoint added to the mix. Importantly, in any discussion and deliberation requiring a decision, listen to those that the decision will directly affect. Their experience and perspective are invaluable.

## **6. You, as ministry leader, must show initiative and leadership**

(15:13) *'When they finished, James spoke up...'*

James was the recognised leader of the Jerusalem church. Everybody else had had their say. It was time for a resolution to be brought to the group. James was the last to speak. His job was to summarise the arguments, tie it all together and form a resolution.

Practical implications from James' example for ministry leaders:

- Exercise initiative and courage by addressing contentious issues or major decisions
- Listen carefully and chair the meeting discerningly
- Clearly summarise the various points of view
- Give Scriptural background, precedent, principle or context
- Suggest a decision in clear terms
- State your reasons why you are making this decision
- Give people time to absorb the decision
- Clearly ask for the decision to be adopted
- Ensure the group knows when a decision is made

## **7. Communication**

After the Jerusalem Council had made the decision, it needed to be communicated.

Note they had a methodical, organised plan to make the decision known:

- It was communicated to the Jerusalem church – note Acts 15:22
- They wrote the letter which contained their decision
- They worked out where the letter would be read – *'To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia'*.

In contextualising this to contemporary ministry leaders, once the decision-making group has reached a decision, it needs to be systematically and thoroughly communicated by answering the following questions:

- Who needs to know?
- In what order?
- Who will tell them or be responsible for the communication?
- What is the mode of communication?
- What is the timeframe to communicate with the respective people or groups?

It is vital to plan communication, delegate responsibility and record (minute) who will do what by when.

## 8. Action plan for the implementation of the decision

Now that the decision was reached, the early church facilitated a plan for how it would be implemented. They adopted a threefold action plan:

- They chose people to travel with Paul and Barnabas, presumably to authenticate the decision: *'decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas...'*
- They would write a letter which articulated the decision that had been reached: *'With them they sent the following letter...'*
- They determined where it would be read and by whom: *'To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia...'*

By way of application, when a Group of which you are a part has reached a decision, draft an action plan. An action plan is a step-by-step written document for the implementation of the decision. It outlines the strategic and methodical way in which the decision will be executed, such as:

- Who will be responsible for what?
- How it will take place (step by step)
- When each step will be implemented (timeframe)
- How the decision will be measured, followed through, and followed up

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***REFERENCES IN THIS MODULE:***

Aubrey Malphurs, **BRING LEADERS**, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.