

Six Questions to Ask Before Making a Decision

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We all make multiple decisions every day. Those of us in a leadership role make decisions that affect other people. The more responsibility you carry as a leader, the more may be riding on the decisions you make. Leaders want to make the best decisions. Rick Warren shares six questions to ask before making a decision.

Ministry leaders today are facing more decisions than ever before. We live in a multi-choice culture. And like a small hinge on a giant door, even the smallest decision can have the biggest impact on our lives.

The story of your ministry will be told through your decisions. Whether you decide to start a new outreach, add more people to your staff, or go out of your way to tell someone about Jesus, every decision you make is important.

Here are six tests to help you make decisions that honor God and align with his purposes for your life:

1.The Ideal Test: *Is this in harmony with God's Word?*

Seeking God should always be the starting point for every decision we make. All of us must decide who or what is going to be our ultimate authority. It comes down to two choices—God's Word or the world.

Pastor, if you choose the world, you'll always be out of date. Why? Because what the world thinks changes all the time. But God's Word never changes. Truth is always true. If something was wrong 5,000 years ago, it's wrong today.

The Bible says, "*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path*" (Psalm 119:105 NIV). The Bible helps us make decisions by shining a light on our next steps. Without the Bible, we're simply left in the dark.

2.The Integrity Test: *Would I want everyone to know about this decision I'm making?*

If you're afraid of someone finding out about a decision you're planning to make, that's a red flag. Most likely, it means you're about to make a bad decision. Poor decisions always lead to secrets. Those kinds of secrets always lead to pain in our lives.

Proverbs 10:9 tells us, *“People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will be exposed”* (NLT). The Bible doesn’t leave room for interpretation in that verse. People who follow crooked paths will eventually be exposed.

The test of integrity is whether your public and private lives match. Many ministries have fallen because a pastor taught a biblical truth in public that he doesn’t live out in private.

3.The Improvement Test: Will this make me a better person?

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:23, *“‘Everything is permissible,’ but not everything is beneficial”* (CSB). We have freedom as Christians, but not everything is good for us. Some things aren’t necessarily wrong. They are simply not necessary. Most of your choices in life won’t be between what’s good and bad; they’ll be between what’s good and best.

For example, it’s not sinful to watch a television show or go to a baseball game. But if your recreational activities crowd out what God wants to do through your life, then you’re not making the best decision. As leaders, we should consistently choose to make decisions that help us grow.

4.The Independence Test: Could this begin to control and dominate my life?

No matter how much you enjoy something, it’s always a bad decision if you let it control and dominate you. Paul writes, *“Even though ‘I am allowed to do anything,’ I must not become a slave to anything”* (1 Corinthians 6:12 NLT).

God doesn’t want you to become a slave to anything. Whenever something dominates you, it will eventually become your god. It’s no accident that the first of God’s Ten Commandments says to not put any other gods before him. God knew how easily you could slip into worshiping other things. He knew you could get addicted to your idols.

The truth is that you can become addicted to anything. You need to be honest with yourself about your likelihood of addiction before participating in something.

5.The Influence Test: Will it harm other people?

You’re a ministry leader, but even if you weren’t in ministry, your decisions would still affect others. Today’s culture urges us to think about ourselves and what we want. But God expects us to think of other people first.

Romans 14:13 says, *“Let’s stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall”* (NLT). Everything you do impacts other people. When you make a bad decision, you take other people down with you.

Sometimes it's your family, sometimes it's your co-workers, and sometimes it's your church—it can even be a stranger.

As a leader, you need to be aware of how your decisions impact other people.

6.The Investment Test: *Is this the best use of my time?*

You only have one life to live, so make it count. You can do that by using your time to maximize God's purpose for you.

That's why it's so important for you to understand what God has called you to do. Because if you don't understand your purpose, you're missing one of the key components for making good decisions. You don't have time to do everything; you have exactly enough time to do what God wants you to do.

Ephesians 5:15-17 says, *"Be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do"* (NLT). That's an excellent verse to keep in mind as you're making a decision—to ask yourself whether or not it aligns with *"what the Lord wants you to do."*

Your decisions determine your destiny. It's never too late to make better decisions in your ministry. These six tests can help you make decisions that honor God and lead to his blessing upon your life.