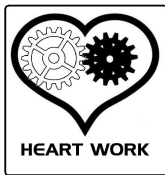


“Decision Making for Dummies” Proverbs 3:5,6

If you had the chance, what decisions would you make differently? Probably more than you could count. But as we know, we can't go back in time. We can't put the toothpaste back in the tube. Though God promises to work all things together for good to those who love him (Romans 8:28), redeeming even the bad decisions we make, who would argue that it would be best not to make bad decisions to begin with? Is there any sure way of knowing how to make good ones? Yes. The Bible calls it “wisdom” and it involves three things (Proverbs 3:5,6):

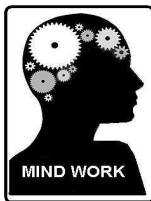
- **Heart Work: Motivation**



Of first importance in God's model of decision making is the condition of our inner-self: what we call the “heart.” The natural inclination of our hearts is self-protection, self-gratification and self-validation. This is the opposite of what God is commanding. If left to ourselves, our

decisions will always be based on this strategy. God commands us to “trust” in him. This is the opposite of self-protection, self-gratification and self-validation. Where do we begin the “heart work” of wisdom? With love for God, restoring our relationship with him

- **Mind Work: Self-Awareness**



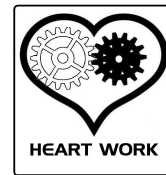
The natural process of decision-making involves a process called “inductive logic:” gathering the facts and making our best attempt at organizing them in some sensible way. The dirty little secret, however is that there is no purely inductive reason. We can never totally distance ourselves from prior knowledge and assumptions. Thus, Proverbs warns “do not rely on your

own understanding.” In other words, inductive logic does not provide a sufficient base in itself for wise decisions.

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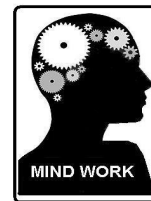
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The path of wisdom secondly requires “mind work.” We must assign the correct role to natural cognitive processes. However, we must limit the effects of this process because of the secrets of the heart. This requires an increasing level of self-awareness. We must seek to expose the “reasons of the heart” by recognizing how we have failed in the past to walk on the path of wisdom. This is why revealing secret memories, feelings and expectations through confession is so vital. How much time are we spending scrutinizing and questioning motives, processes and reasons of the heart?

- **Foot Work: Making a Plan and Living with it**



The phrase “all your ways” refers to the plans we make. What I would call the “foot work.” God’s model of decision making requires the formulation of a plan. Though the wisdom model places a premium on trusting God above all else this does not mean we don’t make careful plans.

Once we’ve taken that step, however, we move forward with the assurance that “he will make straight paths for our feet.” The implication is that once we have examined our hearts, rejected selfish ambitions and formulated a plan, we can go forward in the assurance that whatever happens, God is in control. He will work it out.

Note that phrase, “make straight paths for your feet.” Another way of saying this is “straighten out the crooked paths.” It suggests that when we use this model of decision making it doesn’t guarantee there will be no problems (“crooked paths”).



Things may go wrong. We may find ourselves in dark storms of danger, pain and failure. Even so, if we proceed in faith with wisdom, God will work even those out for his higher purpose. This is how God wants us to approach our failed decisions. In modern parlance, it’s called “cognitive reframing.”

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