

MAKING HARD DECISIONS!

WHICH WAY TO GO AND WHERE DO I GO???

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By sis bala samson

These teachings would sure transform your thinking and life! Meticulously read the entire 4 part teachings for better and crystal clear understanding:

The storm that is created because of a wrong move or decision will leave behind a trail of destruction ! This message comes with a caveat to be extremely careful in all that you do and decide as a Christian! I have given below first the brief guidelines followed by explanations through the life of saints like Ezra and Jacob, please read them carefully and be blessed!

Important Guidelines for making hard decisions in your life!

***Your decision must always line up with His Word!
When you obey & follow Him meticulously, He'll never steer you wrong!***

- 1) ***Fast and pray for a period of time*** – do not hastily rush to make decisions but place the matter at the feet of the Lord to guide you. You can fast and pray for a set period of time, may be 3 days or one week and read His Word meticulously. You don't have to frantically run hither and thither, handover the situation to God. Psalm 46:20 "Be still, and know that He is God...!"
- 2) ***Prepare your heart to obey God:*** God cannot speak to a rebellious person, hence humble yourself to accept whatever He tells you. Read:
 - James 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";
 - whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.
 - Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."
 - But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."

- 3) **Faithfully trust Him to guide you:** God would never leave you when you depend on Him wholeheartedly, be sure of His guidance and protection, read:
 - Isaiah 41: 13 "For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'
 - " Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you," says the LORD And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."
 - 4) **Honesty and truth:** Let your plans be rooted in integrity and truth, avoid every form of evil. God would never stand by you if you are planning a shady deal! Inept and dubious dealings will lead you down the path of destruction. Be warned! The Bible says, Proverbs 3:7"Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil."
 - 5) **Decision based on Word rather than world:** Psalm 119:102"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path." Do not be swayed by the opinion of others, strongly follow the instructions of godly people and their counseling.
 - 6) **Outward appearance is deceptive, trust His ways:** Do not be allured by outward glamour or pomp of a place or person and be deceived like Lot who went to Sodom and was destroyed. Stay where God tells you to stay and not where you feel would be comfortable.
 - 7) **Write down the pros and cons of your decision** on a paper very clearly and see if it is in line with His Word. Is it for prosperity or spirituality??? Would you grow in the Lord through this decision? Would your children be in the path of God this way? Would you have godly fellowship through your decision?
 - 8) **Decisions should be made to please God:** God would be pleased when Obey Him. Hosea 6:6 " For the Lord desiresknowledge of God more than burnt offerings."
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Which way to go?

Ezra 8:21 "Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions."

There are million decisions that we have to take in our life. "Is this the right job for me?", "Is this necessary for our family?" "Is this college going to take me where I want to go?" "Do I really want to remarry?" "Should I really take on this new challenge?" "Should I venture into this new business?" "Should I retire now?" "Do I really want to take this gamble with my life's savings?" "Is this the church God wants me to be a part of?" "Should I go and speak to my boss about this issue?" How do we take the right decisions

without goofing up?

Ask Him for guidance and then unleash it! You see, in each of these challenging situations and countless others, what we are looking for is some measure of success, some confirmation from God that what we are doing is right. We all want success. It is not my purpose this morning to berate you over the amount of time you spend in prayer. However, I would venture to say that most of us do not spend much time pouring our hearts out to God in fervent, heartfelt prayers for divine intervention. How many agree?

There are young people who regularly attend church, read the Bible and pray, yet these same people do not wait on God to make some important decisions in their life. Are you listening? They do not believe that God appreciates those who wait upon Him. They do not believe that what has been destined for them no man can snatch and no devil can snatch!! Read this sentence again and again so that it percolates into your system. Hallelujah! Job understood this in his life when he says, Job 42:2" I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose *of Yours* can be withheld from You." That's a superb statement! Many Christians go by feelings, situations and emotions, they would say, "I think he is the right person", "my pet dog died today so I don't feel comfortable to go ahead with this proposal" or "my visa got processed so I think it is God's will for me to go abroad." Don't fall for such silly feelings! Grow up!

Wesley L Duewel said, "Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose that dreams, voices, visions, or impressions are revelations from God. They may be from Him. They may be from nature. They may be from the devil. Therefore, do not believe every spirit but try the spirits to see whether they are from God."

In the above text we read about Ezra, who having received his commission from the king, had the great responsibility on his shoulder to take the Israelites to Jerusalem, now that the temple there is finished. They had to cross enemy territories, hence Ezra proclaimed a fast 'to seek of God the right way.' God wonderfully guides Ezra and the team. Look, let us commit all our concerns about ourselves, our families, and our lives to God, and allow Him to guide us.

The world's perspective is not our perspective. Paul warns us not to be conformed to this world. (Romans 12:2) Did you get that? We need to weigh our decisions according to the Word of God!

***Choose the right way.....
Life of Jacob- Part 1***

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Genesis 32:1 "So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him."

Someone said, "God's way will lead us to the destination chosen for us by God, which is God's eternal plan for us, but our way will lead us to our ultimate destruction". We have

almost reached the end of this year and now it is very important that we take the right course of action in our life. The older I get the more I am convinced that crisis are a regular way of life. The only thing that really changes is how you deal with them. We can let our crisis handle us or we can let God handle our crisis. Did you catch that?

Now, in the scripture given above we read about a man called Jacob. We can learn many lessons from the life of Jacob and today's devotion would be 'part one' of the series which is to follow for two more days. Jacob depended on his strength and wit to guide his life for 20 years. He committed many mistakes, walked in pride but now after many, many years, God instructs him to take a 'different direction' in his life. God says in **Genesis 31:13** "I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land and return to the land of your kindred." Jacob does not argue with God nor does he murmur and grumble about the big 'turning back' that he has to do during the prime time of his life. Jacob arrives at a stage in his life, when he understands that his present sufferings are because of him relying on his strength rather than God guiding his life. Each one of us should be convicted of our sins and rebellious attitude instead of blaming God for our sorrows. Remember **GOD MAKES NO MISTAKES!**

In a way you could say that God did away with Jacob's pride - the self determination. It seems like that is often the last thing to go when we encounter the Lord. We give our hearts to God and see him strip away the flesh as we depend on Him more and more - but there is still that core of us that wants to preserve the self. **But God has to break us, put barricades in our way, smash our plans and bring us to a stage where a 'complete surrender' has to be done. There is no longer a "me" - there is only a "He."**

Recently my husband and I went on three days of Esther fasting of no food and water and the purpose was to 'know His will for the coming year.' We wait on the Lord to know His will even if we have to make a small decision because we know that God hates a 'proud heart'. Before we take a decision, we place prayer requests with people closely connected with our ministry and wait until we have a Word from God. We should also be careful never to be deceived with 'false signals' like 'everything seems to be okay'. A senior Pastor of a church continuously asks his church to pray for Him, his travel and all decision that he takes, fearing never to be led by the flesh. If such senior servants of God need prayer support, how much more do we need friends? Please think about this! Many wrong moves, rash decision, hasty steps, and final crash could have been avoided, if only we could have been humble and waited on God!!!!

My dear friend, may be you had to go through many heart breaks, pain, failure and disappointments, but get up, put the past behind you, move closer to God and determine to start the New Year walking in the path that God shows you. Walking with God is a daily decision. It means saying "Yes" to God and God's ways and saying "No" to world's ways. Lessons from the life of Jacob will continue tomorrow as well.

**Angels of God met him.....
Life of Jacob – Part 2**

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Genesis 32:1 “...and the angels of God met him. “

There is something beautiful which happens when we follow the road that God shows us, watch what the scripture says, “...**and the angels of God met him.**” These divine messengers are there with Jacob but they don’t say a word, now, why does God send the angels to meet Jacob? It is because our loving Father knows the rough route that Jacob has to undertake and He knows that he needs help. **As you determine your heart to obey God, be sure to get heavenly guidance and divine help. HE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU!**

Dear friend, There are times when we feel utterly lonely and forsaken. Don’t you? That is how it is so often in life: we cannot see God, we cannot hear God, but we know and we know and we know He is there with us. I am speaking to someone out there! When I had to decide regarding a major operation, I would never ever say it was easy and cool; I had no angel whispering in my ears or God nudging my elbow – I had to fast, read the Word and wait on Him. I am one who has experienced several miracle healings in my life, many did encourage me to avoid operation and trust God for healing, but I chose to fast and pray. On that particular day, while I was waiting on Him, I got a call from a dear lady for prayer and casually she asked me to pray for a senior pastor who was undergoing operation the next day and she said that the entire congregation prayed for him. I took it as a ‘leading’ and went ahead with the operation and it was a great success; however, this kind of thing does not happen always, God speaks to us in different ways.

Remember the word of Job when he says in Job 23:9 “When he works on the left hand, I cannot behold him, when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take, when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.” May be you are not able to feel the Presence of God in your life now as you go through failure and pain, but the invisible Hand of God is guiding you, leading you and protecting you as well. Have you realized before taking you into a trial period, God prepares people for you ahead of time to guide you in the path of faith and also help you and comfort you? If you cannot see it now, you will see it later. When I look back into my life, I am amazed by the divine interventions of godly people in my life who led me in the path of salvation, who taught me faith and also led me to the right church. I fondly remember each one of them even today and thank God for the wonderful provision that He made in my life. **When we take care to follow His way, He would send care-takers to take care of us!**

As I type this, I remember a short man named Zacchaeus who climbs a sycamore tree to see Jesus and has a life transforming experience after his encounter with Jesus. Now Jesus after capturing the heart of this man, decides to go to his home and ‘stay’ in his place. Imagine Jesus STAYING! I mean He is going to camp in Zacchaeus home! Unbelievable! Now why does Jesus pick out only Zacchaeus from a huge crowd? Jesus has microscopic eyes that sees through and through into a person’s heart! **Jesus knew this short guy would obey! Jesus stays with a man who decides to whole-heartedly obey and follow Him and who is prepared to pay the price of any loss in his life for the sake of Jesus.** Anybody listening? Moreover, Jesus knew the hard decision that

Zacchaeus was going to take of parting with half of his possessions to the poor and also of returning fourfold to those whom he had cheated. Jesus stayed with Zacchaeus to help him execute his strong resolution. Boy, I am thoroughly enjoying what I type! Remember if you walk in His will, He will never leave you nor forsake you!!! **Did you know, God prepares the way for you by encamping angels down the road so that his child does not get lost in the way?** Dear friend, be sure to have angelic protection if you have chosen to walk in God's way. The Bible says in Psalm 34:7 "When we fear God, His angels will encamp around us and deliver us."

If Jacob had chosen to take another way, then there would have been no angels there!

***Kneel down rather than buckling down....
Life of Jacob –Part 3
By sis bala samson***

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Genesis 32:10 "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which you have shown Your servant...."

Worry will make you old; stress will kill you; prayer will set you free!

We need God's help not only on a daily basis but on a minute to minute basis, I know this by experience. I came across a little prayer in a Christian magazine, headed: "A Morning Prayer for Help" . It goes like this, "Dear God, so far today I've done alright, I haven't gossiped, lost my temper, been nasty, selfish or over indulgent. But in a few minutes God, I'm going to get out of bed and from then on, I'm going to need all the help I can get." Spiritual strength comes through prayer!

Today, I am going to again talk about the life of Jacob and let us learn some valuable lessons from his life, we read about the right direction Jacob takes in his life according to the Word of God. **Now listen, just because you are walking in the will of God that does not mean that we will not have any problems or hassles. Are you listening? There is no 'problem free' life!** We need to learn to overcome the hurdles that we face in our life with the wisdom of God and we should also have a clear understanding, if the problems that we are facing are placed by satan or is it because of our own doing. Got it? If you are going through marital problems, please search your heart to find out if there are any mistakes from your end. There are some couples who elope or marry without the will of God and their parents, in such cases, there are curses attached because of disobeying God and parents, hence analysis of the problem is essential. We need to humble ourselves and prostrate in front of God rather than saying "where is God now?" Friends, please understand, God is unchangeable, He remains the same, punishment is inevitable for those who disobey God, it may be an individual or a whole nation.

Jacob when he smells trouble runs to God and says ***“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies.”*** Jacob has finally learnt to RUN TO GOD FOR HELP RATHER THAN TO MEN. When Jacob starts his journey, he is surprised, shocked and very scared to hear that his brother Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men. (read Genesis chapter 32 for better understanding). Jacob was scared of his brother Esau because he had cheated his brother many years back. Listen to me friend, when you take a decision to follow Jesus, satan might send somebody to scare you and hinder your walk and faith by showing that there are 400 men on the opposite side, but let me tell you today, “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” The Esau in your life, may be in the form of a failure, delay or discouragement, but do not give up, get down on your knees to pray. Today, after returning from a successful two days of ministry, I least expected to face attacks on every side I turned, I was physically tired and exhausted and hence I felt weak to handle the blow, I found myself getting irritated and also not handling the situation with godly grace. Dear friend, please understand even for a servant of God like me, if not for God’s grace I would stumble and stagger. More than all of you, satan loves to tease me and see me make mistakes. I determined my heart to immediately to get on my knees and pray until I was filled with His grace to tackle the situation with much more poise and humility. Now, that you are strengthen in the Lord, when someone hits you, you are able to bear it and not hit back. This attitude comes only through prayer! My dear friends, when you are hurt for no mistake of yours, there is a tendency to tear that person apart who is hurting you into pieces, but I advice you never to do such things, but leave the matter into the Hands of God and remain silent. How do I do this? THROUGH PRAYER! LESS WORDS AND MORE PRAYER! There are lot of fights in your life and home because there is no prayer or less prayer in your life. Come on now, be convicted right now of your prayerlessness and start making plans to improve your prayer life! Jacob’s prayer reveals his dependency upon God! How do you handle crisis in your life?

***Bitter fights and sweet turn outs....
Life of Jacob –part 4***

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Genesis 33: 10 “ And Jacob said, “No, please, if I have now found favour in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.”

Today is the final lesson from the life of Jacob. Forgiveness has become a lost art. Now everything is about revenge, getting even, making someone pay. As we meditate the life of Jacob, I think that we will find the awesome power of forgiveness in today’s text. I am absolutely sure that many of you will have a life transforming experience through these teachings. The transformation process often involves the tearing away of our old self and the creation of a new self - one that reflects God’s character. Paul beautiful says in Colossians 3:10” we have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” Powerful scripture indeed! I feel sad when I hear some believer’s speech rather than being seasoned with salt and grace is sometimes oozing with revenge and bitterness. Sadly it reveals that we need more of God in our life.

In Genesis 32 we find Jacob preparing to meet his brother Esau. How scared Jacob would have been! He had tricked his brother Esau and deceived him. God allows

problems, fears and crisis in the life of Jacob in order to mend him and mold him. Many of us do not see the crisis situation that we are facing now as 'blessing' from God because we are short sighted and we are unable to see the big picture that God has planned for each one of us. Listen today!

Jacob could not face his trial, the Bible says that "Jacob was very afraid." We all face such situations! **Jacob could not face his trial, so he decided to face His God.** He went face down and cried "Oh God of my father Abraham.." (Genesis 32:9) Come on, let us turn to our God who chose us and who will hear our prayers. Let us weep lifting up our voice loud to Him and Him alone. It is high time, you set aside quiet moments to fast and pray to God with a loud voice! Jacob had been carrying around some unresolved issues for years. He knew he had done wrong. He had experienced the consequences of those wrongs. And he had learned from them. He was now a stronger person. God had given him a new name and a new life. But there was something left undone. He had not sought forgiveness from Esau. **God sometimes holds on to the answer to your prayer because you are holding on to some grudges and bitterness. FORGIVE AND FORGET! Anybody listening?**

Jacob feared that when he meets his brother Esau, he would kill him because of the huge army of 400 men along with him. But let me tell you something, God has power to change the circumstances upside down. Do you believe? Now, watch the effect of Jacob's wholehearted prayer, "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him and they wept. (Genesis 33:4) I am totally shaken as I type this scripture, I love the way Esau fell on Jacob's neck, I can imagine both the brothers weeping, sobbing and cuddling each other! If you turn to God seeking his help in any particular matter, **He would surely turn bitterness into sweetness!** With the long standing bitterness resolved with his brother, oh, the freedom that Jacob experienced must have been awesome! Someone out there desperately needs to seek forgiveness from another. Someone said, "When we face God before we face any situation we fear, we will be able to see God in that situation". Jacob says in Genesis 33:10 ...***I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God.***

Today if you feel you are alone, distressed, let me tell you, God has permitted you to be alone in order for you to cry out to Him. GO TO GOD. When you go to Him, He will change your situation completely.

