

**Classroom Guidance Newsletter**  
**Lesson Five: Decision Making Skills**

Dear Parents,

In Lesson Five, the students learned the importance of good decision making skills. God gives us the freedom to make choices. Whenever we are deciding what the right thing to do is, above all else, we must ask ourselves if this is a choice that is pleasing to God. We look to God's teachings to help us learn how to make choices that reflect what God wants us to do or be. Answers come when we look to God for a solution. Believing and relying on God's Word will shed incredible light on just about any problem. God has an amazing plan for us and our lives, and He does all He can to help us find and attain it. So when we work *with* God, He gives us the grace to make right decisions and show good judgment. ***We can make our own plans, but the Lord gives the right answer. (Proverbs 16)***

Decision making skills were reinforced with activities that focused on integrity, identifying blame, acceptable vs. unacceptable emotional reactions, the effects your choices have on yourself and others, and curing "victimitis" (making positive choices in negative situations).

### **Ages and Stages of Decision Making**

Children learn the decision making process in stages:

- First, they learn that they have the capability to make choices and that making choices makes them feel important.
- As they practice decision making, they discover the joy of making wise choices, and the difficulties and sadness that follow unwise ones.
- With freedom comes the responsibility to make wise choices.

A part of helping your children gain experience with making decisions involves educating them about the decision making process. Good decision making is complex and takes years of experience to master (no one ever really perfects it; even adults do not-so-smart things occasionally).

Because children lack experience and perspective, they tend to make decisions that are impulsive and focused on immediate gratification. The first step is simply to teach them to stop before they leap. With just a few seconds of hesitation, your children can prevent a lot of bad decisions. Of course, getting children to stop before jumping would require them to think, which is usually not part of their repertoire. You can help your children by "catching them in the act," meaning when you see them about to jump without thinking, stop them. Also, because you can't always be looking over their shoulder, you can use times when they do leap without thinking (and things don't turn out so well) to ask them how they could have made a different choice in hindsight.

### **More Ways Parents Can Encourage Their Children to Make Good Choices**

- Start with your own example. If you always base your own decisions on what you believe is right, that will mean more to your child than hours of lecturing.
- Take time to talk about issues of right and wrong with your child.
- When you watch TV or movies with your child, look critically at the way the characters behave and have a discussion about it.
- Be sensitive to what your child says about decisions involving right or wrong. Don't hesitate to correct statements like, "It doesn't matter—nobody will ever find out" or "Everybody does it."
- Encourage your child to think about whether something is right or wrong before acting.

### **Decision Making Skills Resources**

[http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/articles/let\\_your\\_kids\\_fail.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/articles/let_your_kids_fail.aspx)  
<http://christianity.about.com/od/practicaltools/a/decisionmaking.htm>  
<http://www.familiesonlinemagazine.com/kids-decision-making.html>  
<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5290.html>

Sincerely,  
Heidi Jolliffe  
Classroom Guidance Coordinator