

We must learn to subordinate our impulses to our principles

In order to do what is right, our conscience and our will sometimes have to overrule the desires of the moment. Moses, according **Hb. 11:24-26**, had more character than to let his life be driven by impulsive desires. In his choices, he elevated principle over impulse. Here was a man of integrity, willing to suffer affliction for a long-term good rather than indulge in the passing pleasures of sin. Because he “was looking to the reward,” momentary desires didn’t distract him.

There is much to be said for patiently learning the life-disciplines of godliness. If we’ve trained and exercised ourselves in these (**1 Tim. 4:7,8**), we’ll find that God’s commandments are “not burdensome” (**1 Jn. 5:3**). But no matter how strong we’ve grown, there will always be at least a few “hard moments.” These are those moments when the right thing and the easy thing are not the same thing. At such times, a choice must be made. We must firmly and decisively subordinate an impulse to a principle. If we aren’t willing to do this, then our character doesn’t have the thing that we call “integrity.” We aren’t true to our principles.

No one could have been more prepared for the ordeal of Gethsemane than Jesus was. Yet it would be an insult to suggest that His choice to do the right thing was easy. The decision was an “agony” in the most literal sense of the term (**Lk. 22:39-46**). We are told that He “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears” and that He “learned obedience through what he suffered” (**Hb. 5:7,8**). Whatever may have been the desires and impulses of those difficult moments, He chose to base His actions on the principle of love for the Father’s will. And this is the very essence of both obedience and character.

When we find ourselves having the desire or impulse to do something that’s wrong, we must say “no” to that impulse. ***We must learn to subordinate our impulses to our principles.*** Like Jesus, we must be willing to say to our Heavenly Father, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Real character consists of doing the right thing, both when it’s easy and when it’s not. Throughout the coming week, let’s work on clarifying our principles and then building up our commitment to those principles. Let’s do what’s right, regardless of anything else.

Monday: Genesis 25:29-34

Key Idea: We must keep in mind that which is most important to us, even if it is “far off.”

Questions for Family Growth: What are some reasons why Esau’s decision to give up his birthright was foolish? Why do our fleshly desires seem to have a stronger pull on us than our principles do? What does **Hb. 12:16,17** say about Esau?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:10.**

Tuesday: Genesis 39:7-10

Key Idea: We can make the choice to refuse temptation and do what is right before God.

Questions for Family Growth: How did Joseph answer the powerful seduction of Potiphar's wife? What did he recognize as the bottom line, the single most important reason of all to refuse sin? What does **1 Cor. 10:13** say about temptation?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:11.**

Wednesday: Hebrews 11:24-26

Key Idea: We can look beyond the pleasures of sin to the greater reward that God has for us.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what two things did Moses have to choose between? On the basis of what principle(s) did he make his choice? What is faith, according to **Hb. 11:1**? What difference should faith make in the way we make our decisions?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:12.**

Thursday: Galatians 5:16-24

Key Idea: We can choose to be led by the Spirit rather than be governed by the flesh.

Questions for Family Growth: Who determines whether we will be led by the Spirit or by the flesh? Do we have a will that is truly free? According to **vv.22,23**, what good things result from deciding to be led by the Spirit?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:13.**

Friday: Hebrews 12:1,2

Key Idea: Like Jesus, we can endure any "cross" if we keep our hearts set on the joy beyond.

Questions for Family Growth: Was Jesus' obedience automatic and easy, or did He have to make the choice to obey? What does **Hb. 5:7-9** say about His obedience? What, according to **Hb. 12:1,2**, is the key to being steadfast and faithful?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:14.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com