



Life is _____ **SESSION ONE**

CHOICES

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself... But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost... I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

•————— Thomas Merton —————•

1. LIFE IS CHOICES

Life is Choices. Every day you make hundreds of choices.

What to eat. What to wear. What time to arrive. Whom to hang out with. Whether or not to listen. What to care about.

Many of these choices can seem inconsequential. But one choice builds upon another, and in the end our choices define who we become.

Choices matter.

1.1 YOUR *Choices* MATTER

Learning to make great choices is one of the most practical skills you can develop. Decision making is central to everything we do.

You are so young and life is before you. Will you live it wisely or squander it?

Life is precious and beautiful. Ask a couple who have just welcomed their first child into the world—they will tell you how precious and beautiful life is.

Life is also fragile and fleeting. Ask someone who has just been told by his doctor that he has only three months to live—he will tell you how fragile and fleeting life is.

Life is before you. What will you do with your life?

This is what Joan of Arc wrote, just before she died at nineteen.

Learning to make great choices is essential.

James is seventeen years old and serving a life sentence in prison for murder. He lost his temper and shot a man who was disrespecting him. For a while James thought he was the victim of one bad decision. Over time he came to the realization that he was not the *victim* of a bad decision; he was the *author* of that bad choice. As a few more months passed, he came to understand that it was *not* one bad decision that led to that life-altering event; it was a long series of choices.



Mary made a choice. How much joy do you think it brought her?

"I know this now. Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing, and yet they give their lives to that little or nothing. One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it and then it's gone. But to surrender what you are and to live without belief is more terrible than dying—even more terrible than dying young."



He *chose* to hang out with gang members. He *chose* to join the gang. He *chose* to steal a gun. He *chose* to spend time in places where drugs and alcohol were used and abused. He *chose* not to go to school some days. He *chose* to start drinking. He *chose* to go out late at night. Then, one night, all these choices exploded together to change his life forever. He chose to lose his temper. He *chose* to pull the trigger.

Little choices matter.

Jessica is an incredible athlete and is about to graduate Harvard at the top of her class.

She *chose* to be a conscientious student. She *chose* not to stay out late at parties. She *chose* to wake before sunrise and go to training. She *chose* not to smoke or drink. She *chose* to eat food that fueled her body. She *chose* not to hang out with people who were a bad influence. She *chose* to push herself harder than anyone else at training.

And all these choices have transformed her and her life.

James and Jessica both made many choices, but their choices were very different.

Little choices matter because they become the foundation for bigger decisions.

But sometimes it only takes one decision to change the direction of your life for better or worse.

Martin was an above average student. School didn't come easy to him, but he worked hard and his hard work paid off. During spring break of his freshman year in college he got drunk, went back to his hotel, slipped in the bathroom, broke his neck, and died.

When he chose to get drunk he probably didn't think he was making a life or death decision, but he was.

Sometimes it only takes one bad decision to destroy a life. Sometimes it only takes one bad decision to end a life.

That's the thing about choices. Sometimes what you think is a small decision could end up being the biggest decision of your life.

Every choice you make is proof that you are free.

Free will is one of God's greatest gifts to humanity.



Joan was twelve years old when she had a series of supernatural experiences that included visions and hearing the voice of Saint Michael the Archangel. When she was seventeen, she led her first army and enjoyed a series of spectacular military successes with the French army. The following year she was captured by the British and placed on trial for heresy and witchcraft. In 1431, at nineteen years of age Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. Thirty years later she was exonerated of all charges and ultimately was canonized by Pope Benedict XV in 1920. Joan of Arc lived in France from 1412 to 1431. She is the patron saint of soldiers, and her feast day is May 30.

PEER PRESURE:

PEOPLE CAN PRESSURE

YOU TO DO THINGS,

BUT THE ONLY ONE

WHO MAKES THE

DECISION IS YOU.

THEY ARE NOT MAKING

THE CHOICE – YOU ARE.

OWN YOUR DECISIONS.



“HIS CONSCIENCE
IS MAN’S MOST
SECRET CORE AND
HIS SANCTUARY.
THERE HE IS ALONE
WITH GOD WHOSE
VOICE ECHOES IN
HIS DEPTHS.”

VATICAN II -
GAUDIUM ET SPES.

To guide you in the use of this incredibly powerful gift, God has also given you **reason** and **conscience**.

rea•son (ree-zhun)

Reason is the capacity for logical, rational, and analytic thought.

con•science (con-shuhns)

Conscience is the inner voice that encourages you to do good and avoid evil. God speaks to us through our conscience (CCC 1776–1779).

Reason and conscience work together to help you distinguish good actions from bad ones. Reason and conscience work together to help you discover the best way to live.

All choices are not equal.

Some choices are good choices, and some are bad. And you usually know at the time if you are making a good or bad choice. The inner voice of conscience encourages you toward what is good and right.

Are you good at making decisions?

What’s the best choice you made in the past twenty-four hours?

What’s the worst choice you made in the past twenty-four hours?

How can you make better choices in the future?

God wants you to become a great decision maker. This is one of the reasons he sends us the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and counsel you—and you will find yourself making better choices.

Every day you make hundreds of choices. These choices determine the direction of your life. Sometimes you choose the-best-version-of-yourself and sometimes you choose a-second-rate-version-of-yourself.

Every time you say yes to something, it changes who you are forever.

It’s time to start taking your choices seriously. Next time you need to make a decision, *ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.*



Discussion Questions



1) WHO DO YOU KNOW WHO IS A GREAT DECISION MAKER? WHAT MAKES THIS PERSON A GREAT DECISION MAKER?

2) DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU IGNORED YOUR CONSCIENCE AND REGRETTED IT LATER. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU LISTENED TO YOUR CONSCIENCE AND FOLLOWED IT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS DIFFICULT.

3) ARE YOU GOOD AT MAKING DECISIONS? ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (10 BEING THE BEST), HOW GOOD DO YOU THINK YOU ARE AT MAKING DECISIONS? WHAT'S ONE PRACTICAL THING YOU COULD DO TO BECOME A BETTER DECISION MAKER?



IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE
OR WHAT YOU ARE HERE FOR, IF YOU
DON'T KNOW WHAT MATTERS MOST
OR WHAT MATTERS LEAST, YOU MAY
BE EXPERIENCING AN IDENTITY
CRISIS. WE ALL EXPERIENCE THIS AT
DIFFERENT TIMES IN OUR LIVES. BUT
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, **GOD**
WANTS TO SOLVE YOUR IDENTITY
CRISIS. I AM BEYOND IDENTITY
CRISIS AND YOU WILL BE TOO THE
DAY YOU REALIZE THAT YOU ARE A
CHILD OF GOD, THAT GOD IS YOUR
FATHER, AND THAT YOU ARE HIS
SON OR DAUGHTER. YOU GET YOUR
IDENTITY FIRST FROM GOD. UNTIL
WE REALIZE THIS WE ARE LOST.