

## life group study guide

### TRADING THE FUTURE FOR NOW

August 12, 2012



#### HE WHO HESITATES IS PROBABLY RIGHT

When we make the wrong spiritual choices many times it is because our perception of life is distorted. Exaggerations can lead us to spiritual decisions that are dangerous. When we exaggerate the magnitude of our current circumstance it can cause us to sell out on our Christian convictions that should be good for time and eternity.

If Esau had taken just a moment to think about his inheritance, the present *versus* the future, the seen *versus* the unseen, everything that was involved, he would never have made such a rash decision. He didn't sell his birthright because he was so hungry that he was about to perish, or because there wasn't anything else to eat in the home of Isaac, but because his was a desire of the flesh and he was willing to trade all of his spiritual heritage for a whim of the moment. The man who had the birthright was in contact with God, and he was the priest of his family. He was the man who had a covenant from God. He was the man who had a relationship with God. In effect Esau said, "I would rather have a bowl of soup than have a relationship with God." The price of immediate gratification seems cheap but the actual cost is exorbitant. "If we entertain temptations, soon they will be entertaining us." - Neal A. Maxwell. **Read** Hebrews 12:14-17.

Q. Do I so value my present experiences that I fail to discipline myself to wait when waiting is best?

Q. Is God high enough on my priority list to cause me to spend time with Him, or do other things push Him out of my thoughts?

Q. In what direction are my daily choices leading me?

Q. Do we frequently find ourselves thinking, "I'll just do it this time but never again"?

Q. What is in our lives that may not even be a sinful thing, but given wrong priority, becomes sin for us?

Q. Are we—in any way—saying, "*What profit shall this inheritance be to me?*" by living for the here-and-now; by telling ourselves that we have to have this thing now; by giving in to the pulls of the flesh; by selling out tomorrow for a little satisfaction, good times, or boost to our ego today?

Q. Where is your treasure? **Read** Matthew 16:24-27; Matthew 6:21.

Sometimes the only thing standing between us and a life altering decision is whether or not we can say 'no' to temptation. "*The wise man sees the danger ahead and avoids it, but the naive go ahead and fall into the pit.*" (Proverbs 22:3,4) Weak moments can cause us to lose our character. Wise people make preparations for various situations so they are not tempted to make impulsive decisions that they always regret with tears. "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*" James 1:5 (NKJV) Remember - the Hebrew word for "back" is the word

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AHKHAREET - *"that which comes after, final consequence, ending"*. It is important in life to make decisions in light of the end.

Titus 2:11-12 says that the grace of God . . .*"Teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."* (NIV) The fear of God involves a recognition that you are accountable to a just and holy God for your every thought, word, and action. Making the right choices is not difficult when we follow God's Biblical principles. Always choose the spiritual over the carnal, the eternal over the temporal, God's will over man's, and commitment over convenience. Hebrews 11:24-26 - *"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward."*

### Making Right Choices

If you look at Satan's tactics, there are the same three patterns of temptation every time: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Look at his tactics in the garden and look at his tactics in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:1-11; Genesis 3; Job 1 & 2) You will find three questions with the same pattern every time: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Same attack, just new words. His methods are devious, but repetitious. There are a limited number of things he can do, so he does them again and again and again. We are to use the Scriptures the way Jesus did.

*And He answered and said, "It is written,"* - all three times. Then the devil left Him and the angels came to minister to Him. Only one weapon will make Satan flee. The Word of God. God's Word is the Christian's guide for making godly, successful choices in life. *Before* you make your decisions, compare your desires to what the scriptures say and ask yourself the following questions:

1. Would you be able to ask God to bless it? (Proverbs 10:22)
2. Could you thank Him for it? (Colossians 3:17)
3. Would it be to God's Glory? (1 Corinthians 10:31)
4. Would it be of the world? (1 John 2:15)
5. Would it be a stumbling block to others? (1 Corinthians 8:9)
6. Would it be a weight or hindrance? Would your decision be something that would drag down your Christian life or influence you toward disobedience? (Hebrews 12:1)
7. Would it please God or man? Whom do you hope to please by your decision? (Colossians 3:23)
8. How would the Devil react? Would your decision or actions be considered a victory or a defeat by the Devil's forces? (1 Peter 5:8-9)

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9. What would the consequences, long-term ramifications, be? God will forgive sin and poor judgment, but you may have to live with the results of your decision for the rest of your life. (Galatians 6:7)

10. Would it edify you? Would your decision or actions bring you closer to God or pull you farther away? (1 Corinthians 10:23)

11. Will your decision require you to yield to the demands of someone or something other than Christ? (Matthew 6:24)

12. Is your choice directed by the promptings and leading of the Holy Spirit, or by the appetites of the flesh? (John 16:13) (Galatians 5:16)

13. Would you want to be doing this when Jesus returns? (Matthew 24:44)

14. Would it promote love? (Romans 13:8, 10)

15. Have you sought the Lord about it? (Proverbs 3:6) (Proverbs 19:21)

16. Have you sought Godly counsel or advice? (Proverbs 11:14) (Psalms 1:1)

“It is therefore critically important that the Christian take full advantage of every provision God has made to save him from delusion. These are faith, constant meditation on Scripture, obedience, humility, serious thought, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.” A. W. Tozer

*“**Trust** in the LORD with all your heart, and **lean not** unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways **acknowledge** Him”, AND HE SHALL DIRECT YOUR PATHS.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV)*

Look to the Lord for wisdom, and consult him in prayer. Then you will make choices in which you can be assured that, in both your trivial and your monumental choices, God is sovereign.

Isaiah 40:31...“But they that **wait** upon the Lord shall renew (**exchange**) their strength - (**yours for His**)..... - (**then**) they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”