



Consider what you want from life ...

Why Making Choices MATTERS

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Every day you have choices to make. Some of those choices don't have much to do with your eternal salvation ("What color shirt should I wear?"), and some of them have everything to do with it ("Should I break this commandment?"). You may sometimes wonder, "Do my choices really matter?" Or you may even think, "If no one knows what I'm doing, do my decisions really affect anyone?" The answer is yes! Decisions *do* matter.

Why They Matter

In order to understand why your choices matter, let's go back to the premortal life. When Heavenly Father presented His plan of salvation, not everyone agreed. Lucifer objected to the plan and "sought to destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3). Because of this, he became Satan and he and those who followed him were cast out of heaven and denied the opportunity to progress by experiencing mortality. Agency was so important in God's

plan that those who wanted to destroy it were cast out of heaven!

Heavenly Father's plan gives us the opportunity to choose for ourselves because that's the only way we can learn, grow, and become more like Him. One of the purposes of life is to learn to use our agency wisely. But we weren't given agency just to do whatever we want. *For the Strength of Youth* teaches, "While here on earth, you are being proven to see if you will use your agency to show your



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love for God by keeping His commandments.”¹ Choosing to keep the commandments shows God that we love Him and are willing to follow Him. The choices we make—including our attitude in making those decisions—are a big part of the test of mortality.

Choosing Good

You’ve been taught repeatedly that choosing to disobey God’s commandments brings consequences. But have you considered that the same is true for good choices? *For the Strength of Youth* teaches: “While you are free to choose your course of action, you are not free to choose the consequences. Whether for *good* or

bad, consequences follow as a natural result of the choices you make.”²

So what are the consequences of good choices? You could probably come up with a large list of blessings that come from making righteous choices. A good place to look for these blessings is in the scriptures and your *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. For example: “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life” (D&C 14:7); “Observing the Sabbath will bring you closer to the Lord and to your family”³; or “When you are obedient to [the Word of Wisdom], you remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life.”⁴ Those sound like pretty great blessings, and there are many more you can find.

The Lord said that we “should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will,” and He promised that we can “bring to pass much righteousness” when we do (D&C 58:27). So we should not only avoid bad things but also actively seek to do good things.

Sometimes we get so worried about all the things that we are *not* supposed to do that we forget that obedience also includes doing things we *are* supposed to do. You can probably understand how choosing to break commandments negatively affects your life, but do you understand how choosing to do good things can



DECISIONS DETERMINE DESTINY

“Each of us has the responsibility to choose. You may ask, ‘Are decisions really that important?’ I say to you, decisions determine destiny. You can’t make eternal decisions without eternal consequences.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Pathways to Perfection,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 100; *Liahona*, July 2002, 112.

Things to Ponder for Sunday

- What is the role of agency in the plan of salvation?
- How do your good choices affect your life and the lives of others?
- How can small decisions help you achieve your larger goals?

Things You Might Do

- Write a list of goals you want to achieve now and in the future.
- Look at your list of goals when you have a choice to make.
- Share your experiences at church, at home, or online at youth.lds.org.

positively affect your life and the lives of others?

Live Intentionally

So how can you make sure you are making good choices? First, consider what you want from your life. Do you want eternal life? Do you want to



MAKE DECISIONS IN ADVANCE

“When I was a young woman, I learned that some decisions need to be made only once. I wrote my list of things I would *always* do and things I would *never* do in a small tablet. It included things like obeying the Word of Wisdom, praying daily, paying my tithing, and committing to never miss church. I made those decisions once, and then in the moment of decision, I knew exactly what to do because I had decided beforehand. When my high school friends said, ‘Just one drink won’t hurt,’ I laughed and said, ‘I decided when I was 12 not to do that.’ Making decisions in advance will help you be guardians of virtue. I hope each of you will write a list of things you will *always* do and things you will *never* do. Then live your list.”

Elaine S. Dalton, former Young Women general president, “Guardians of Virtue,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 123.

be sealed in the temple? Do you want to serve a full-time mission? Do you want to graduate from college and get a good job? If so, how do you get there? Just like builders need a blueprint to make a skyscraper, you need a plan to build a righteous life.

Write down some of your goals and how you plan to achieve them. Keep that list where you can see it often. Then when you do have to make a choice, you can think about your list to make sure you don’t give up what you want *most* for something you want *now*. Setting goals also makes your choices deliberate and intentional instead of being haphazard, random, or based on circumstances.

How does this really work? Let’s say one of your goals is to serve a full-time mission. And every morning

you have the choice to get up for early-morning seminary or to sleep in an extra hour. Which of those choices will help you to reach your goal? Or maybe you have a goal to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the school year. Then, when you get home from school or before you go to bed, you have the choice of reading your scriptures or doing another activity, like watching your favorite TV show. Which do you choose? Choices like this are before you every day. Keeping your goals in mind will help you make the decisions that will lead you to the things you really want. ■

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 2.
2. *For the Strength of Youth*, 2; emphasis added.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 31.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 25.

