

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **Genesis 12:4**

The Decision Spectrum

Ben Smith

Store In My Heart

Acts 1:7-8

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Written to Theophilus about 30 years after the death of Jesus, Luke chronicles Christ's life in his gospel and the beginnings of Christ's Church in the Acts of The Apostles.

The verses above tell us how this story will unfold. Beginning with the Pentecost sermon in Jerusalem the Word was spread to the ends of the earth by the Apostles and those who believed on Jesus at their teaching. In this book we read what Jesus expects of those who believe and how to work together to accomplish His work for us.

The decision whether to follow God or not is the single most important decision one will ever make. The Bible gives us countless examples of people's decisions regarding obedience to God and what became of them because of their decisions. As with any other type of decision people make, there are a spectrum of answers to be had. Let's look at the ways that some Biblical examples have responded to God's call of obedience and how we continue to respond even today:

NO – Some people respond to God by simply refusing to trust Him or to believe Him. In the book of Exodus, Pharaoh was given many chances to obey God by allowing the Israelites to leave captivity. Time after time, he refused until the death of the firstborns changed his mind. That wasn't the end of it, though. When he let the people go, he didn't do it from a heart of obedience, but a heart of frustration. He later regretted the decision and chased after the multitude. This decision resulted in even more death, because the Egyptian soldiers were swallowed up by the Red Sea after the Israelites had crossed safely on dry land.

In the New Testament, we are told that even the demons believe and tremble, yet they refuse to obey (James 2:19). In Acts 7, when Stephen was preaching to those who opposed him, they hardened their hearts against the word of the Lord, and they stoned Stephen to death. Disobedience ALWAYS results in death, whether physical or spiritual. In James 1:15 we read, "*Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*" Clearly "no" is always the wrong answer.

YES, BUT MY WAY – While most people agree that no means no, there are a wide variety of "yes" answers. Each of us has our own will, and each of us desires to do things in our own way. Looking first at the Old Testament, "*Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.*" (Leviticus 10:1-2) As a result of their perverted obedience, God sent fire from heaven to take their lives. In 1 Samuel 13, Saul also offered a sacrifice in an unauthorized way,



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For Our Information

Joyce Venable has had chills, fever and coughing for the last few days.

Betty Ragsdale had test done last week. Doctors are still considering care options.

Vickie McNees continues to deal with back pain.

Ruben & Brenda Keisler and John & Phyllis Jackson will leave Tuesday for a trip to Europe. They will be gone a little over two weeks.

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

because he did not wait for Samuel the priest as he was instructed to do. Only priests could offer sacrifices to God. Because of this, the kingdom was ripped away from Saul and given to David. God requires obedience in His own way.

Looking at the churches of Asia in Revelation 3, Sardis was told in verse 1 that they looked alive to those who saw them, but God knew on the inside they were dead. In verse 16, Laodicea was rejected because they were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm. Neither of these churches fully obeyed by doing God's will with the right attitude. "My way" is the selfish way. God's way is the only way.

YES, BUT MAYBE LATER – "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." (Prov 27:1) "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34)

Our lives are filled with people, things, events, expectations, and worries that distract us from the will of God. If we allow procrastination to rule our thoughts, there will never be a "good" time to obey. The problem with procrastination is that we tend to forget to come back to whatever it was that we put aside. We forget about God!

Moses made excuses to God in Exodus 3 hoping God would ask someone else to do the task. The Athenians in Acts 17 said of the gospel, "We will hear you again about this," and Agrippa in Acts 26 said, "You almost persuade me to be a Christian." Each pushed aside the words which God wanted them to take to heart.

In the words of the song penned by Philip Bliss, "Almost cannot avail, Almost is but to fail! Sad, sad, that bitter wail, Almost, but lost!" We have no guarantee of tomorrow. God told the rich fool in Luke 12 that his life would be required of him on the very night that everything was going perfectly for him. He had seen so much success, and he saw nothing but more on the horizon. God had other plans.

YES! – God requires obedience immediately, and He also requires it to be done with the right attitude. When Abraham was told to leave his home in Genesis 12, he did. In Isaiah 6:8, God said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah replied, "Here I am! Send me." In Acts 2, as Peter and the others spoke to the multitudes who had gathered, some were "pricked in their hearts" and obeyed immediately. While Philip was teaching the Eunuch in Acts 8, the Eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" There was no hesitation. They stopped the chariot, and he was immediately baptized.

What was the result each time a "no" or "partial" yes was given? Ultimately, death and destruction. Look at the "yes" responses, though. They always led to blessings. We have been blessed with the opportunity to live eternally in an unimaginable paradise. Do you truly WANT to do ALL that the Lord requires you to do so that you can live there? It's your decision!

We seek only to serve God according to His Will!

