

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

1. List three big **life-changing** decisions that you must make in the future. When will you need to make these decisions?

2. Rank the following decisions from **easiest to make (1)** to **most difficult (15)**.

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doing homework or going to the mall | <input type="checkbox"/> What to do on Friday and Saturday nights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What video or movie to watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Who to go out with |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to spend your free time | <input type="checkbox"/> What to spend money on |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What kind of music to listen to | <input type="checkbox"/> What Internet sites you visit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to treat your parents when you're in trouble | <input type="checkbox"/> Where to draw the line with physical intimacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What statement you make with your clothes | <input type="checkbox"/> What to do after high school and in the future |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How often you do your personal devotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Who to hang out with |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> How to treat others |

3. How would you answer these? **Y (yes)**, **N (no)**, or **S (sometimes)**?

- Do you have difficulty making up your mind?
- Do you feel you have too many choices in your life?
- Do you consider the consequences of your decisions before making them?
- Do you often change your mind after you have made a decision?

4. What do you do—or who do you go to—when you need help making a big decision?

5. What do each of the following Bible verses say about **making decisions**?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Matthew 6:33

1 Peter 5:8



THE CHOICE IS YOURS [d e c i s i o n m a k i n g]

THIS WEEK

Young people are faced with making a multitude of decisions, but have very little decision-making experience. They need practice in making good decisions. This TalkSheet will give them an opportunity to learn about making decisions from a Christian point of view.

OPEN

Start by gift-wrapping some items in different paper. Include a variety of different items, such as something valuable (gift certificate or \$5 bill), invaluable (a rock or plastic cup), ugly or strange (like a white elephant gift), and so on. Announce that one package contains something that they'd like, another contains something worthless, and another has nothing in it at all. Divide them into groups to decide which they would like to have. They cannot touch the gifts before deciding. Once they've made up their minds, decide (by drawing straws, picking numbers, or flipping a coin) which group gets to choose first, second, third, and so on.

There will probably be disagreements within each group, but they have to make a decision. After the gifts have been taken, tell the group something like, "Since it was hard to pick the gift you wanted, this is a good time to talk about decision-making!"

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Ask what big decisions they anticipate making in the future and discuss them. What ones do they have in common?
2. Invite them to share their hardest decisions as well as their easiest ones. Ask why some were more difficult than others and encourage them to share the others they listed.
3. Oftentimes young people don't think about the consequences of their decisions. In a situation such as whether or not to accept drugs from a friend at a party, ask them to brainstorm the consequences as well as the benefits. Are the potential consequences worth it? Impulsive decisions that could be harmful can often be checked by remembering to ask yourself, "And then what?"
4. Who do your kids go to for help with decision making? Make a list of their suggestions, and discuss the practical how-tos of making decisions: (1) gather all the facts, (2) consider all the alternatives, (3) get some good advice, (4) pray, and (5) choose the best alternative.
5. Lead them into relating these Bible verses to practical situations. Encourage them to seek God's perspective when making decisions.

THE CLOSE

Big decisions are really a combination of little decisions. The choices they make today will set the foundation for their future. Encourage your group to start making wise decisions about little things—they'll be more confident when it is time to make important ones.

It's wise to seek good advice and think about the consequences of their decisions. How will this decision affect others around them? How will it affect their own lives? Point out that everyone makes wrong choices. That's normal and okay—the key is to learn from those mistakes. Sometimes there's no right or wrong decision. God may not have an answer for them—he'll force them to make the choice. Encourage your kids to bring their decisions before God and to ask for his wisdom. Then make a decision and move on, leaving poor decisions behind and becoming better decision makers.

Point out that God forgives—and forgets—bad choices and mistakes. That's the awesome part about God's grace and mercy. Encourage your kids to bring their past failures to God ask him to take care of their guilt and struggles in the future.

MORE

- Sometimes kids don't want to hear what adults have to say. They don't realize that parents and other adults have faced the same decisions that they do. You may want to include some other adults in this discussion, including some college, or post-college, or early adults. Present decisions (from the list above) to each one and have them share how they would decide. Give your kids the chance to ask questions about why they made the decision. Use this time to build respect for others ideas and opinions.
- How do others—non-Christian teens or adults—make decisions? Some go to horoscopes, some to Internet chat rooms, advice columns and talk shows. What other ways are there to make decisions? How would God want us to make our decisions? How can your kids rely on God for decisions—even when they can't hear his voice?