

## Lesson 21: Decisions (Part 2)

### Introduction

In the first part of the lesson on decisions we learned about 10 principles, which we absolutely have to heed if we want to encourage people to follow Jesus without making them feel manipulated. Please write down the 10 principles again.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

In this lesson we want to add 2 more principles to the list.

### Principle #11

#### **Pay attention to the working of the Holy Spirit.**

We have seen clearly that decisions are the work of the Holy Ghost. But He uses human tools to call people to make a decision.

### Quote #1

“It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince the soul of its need of Christ. Many are convicted of sin, and feel their need of a sin-pardoning Saviour; but they are merely dissatisfied with their pursuits and aims, and if there is not a decided application of the truth to their hearts, if words are not spoken at the right moment, calling for decision from the weight of evidence already presented, the convicted ones pass on without identifying themselves with Christ, the golden opportunity passes, and they have not yielded, and they go farther and farther away from the truth, farther away from Jesus and never take their stand on the Lord’s side.” (*Evangelism, p. 283*)

Please read the above quote carefully and take notes on how Ellen White describes the role of the human tool.



---

---

---

---

**There is a time when it is too late...**

As we can see, God wants us to call people to make a decision. At the same time there is the danger of hesitating too long and missing the golden opportunity. There is a time when it is “too late”. The conviction that the Holy Spirit arouses in people can disappear if a person doesn’t make a decision. Thereafter it is much more difficult for them to return to this point.

**... and too soon**

On the other hand, there is also the danger of hurrying and pushing a person to make a decision that he/she isn’t ready for. The fruit of decision has to ripen more.

**Quote #2**

“As an interest is about to close up, be careful not to ripen it off too suddenly, but keep the confidence of the people if possible, that souls who are in the valley of decision may find the true path, the way, and the life.” (*Evangelism, p. 295*)

**The Golden Opportunity**

If a decision can be made too soon and too late, how can we know when the golden opportunity has arrived? The answer is simple. The time is right when the Holy Spirit has awakened conviction in a person.

**Conviction – the most important element**

Conviction is always attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit. Without conviction no one can make a decision for Christ. God makes the sinner aware of his situation by convicting him/her of their sin. It is the invisible work of the Holy Spirit which moves people to action.



How does Jesus describe the work of the Holy Spirit?

**John 16:8-15**

---

---

---

---

---

**Wind = Holy Ghost**

When Nicodemus came to Jesus that night, Jesus spoke with him about the work of the Holy Spirit. In their talk He compared the work of the Holy Ghost with the wind. “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:7-8) Ellen White commented on this:

**Quote #3**

“Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 57*)

**Movement = Conviction**

This illustration is simple. I can’t see the wind. But I can see how it effects the environment. I can tell how strong the wind is blowing by looking at how much the leaves on the tree move. The work of the Holy Spirit is like the wind. The effect, which you can observe, is conviction. This conviction can always be traced back to the working of the Holy Spirit.

**Quote #4**

“We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ. Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth

and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 26)

**Quote #5** “Every fresh display of the conviction of the grace of God upon the souls of unbelievers, is divine.” (*Evangelism*, p. 284)

**Observe** In order to discern the working of the Holy Spirit it is important to keep your eyes open and observe. Jesus Himself continually looked to see if the Holy Spirit had moved something in His listeners. Please underline in the following quotes what visible signs Jesus watched for!

**Quote #6** “Even the crowd that so often thronged His steps was not to Christ an indiscriminate mass of human beings. He spoke directly to every mind and appealed to every heart. He watched the faces of His hearers, marked the lighting up of the countenance, the quick, responsive glance, which told that truth had reached the soul; and there vibrated in His heart the answering chord of sympathetic joy.” (*Evangelism*, p. 295)

**Quote #7** “Jesus watched with deep earnestness the changing countenances of His hearers. The faces that expressed interest and pleasure gave Him great satisfaction. As the arrows of truth pierced to the soul, breaking through the barriers of selfishness, and working contrition, and finally gratitude, the Saviour was made glad. When His eye swept over the throng of listeners, and He recognized among them the faces He had before seen, His countenance lighted up with joy. He saw in them hopeful subjects for His kingdom. When the truth, plainly spoken, touched some cherished idol, He marked the change of countenance, the cold, forbidding look, which told that the light was unwelcome. When He saw men refuse the message of peace, His heart was pierced to the very depths.” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 255)

**How does conviction express itself?** Conviction doesn’t always express itself in the same way. We also don’t always react the same way when the Holy Spirit appeals to us. Sometimes we are boisterous and joyful, other times we are pensive and sad or maybe even rebellious and angry. It is important to realize that there are positive and negative signs of conviction.

**Positive and Negative Signs** Some of the positive and negative signs of conviction are:

Positive Signs	Negative Signs
Nod of agreement	Sadness
Joy	Excuses
Sharing what they’ve learned with others	Rejection
Tears of joy	Avoidance
Personal application of what was learned	Cancelling appointments
Not missing any appointment	Irritation
Questions	Objections
Studying	Negative attitude
Making restitution	Testiness
Friendly glance	Anger
Silence	Silence

Obviously, this doesn't mean that every time a person reacts negatively it is divine conviction. But there are cases where people do react like this and it is important that we understand it as a sign of divine conviction.



Let's take a look at a few biblical examples of conviction. How did the conviction express itself?

John 4:29-30: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mark 10:17-22: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 22:61-62: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2:37-38: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 8:34-37: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Can you think of other biblical examples?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Think about yourself personally! How do you notice when the Holy Spirit is working on your heart and is convicting you about something?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

<b>Explain how the Holy Ghost works</b>	When we give Bible studies it is important that we explain to people how the Holy Spirit works and show them how they can recognize the Holy Ghost working on their hearts and how they can react to it.
<b>Quote #8</b>	“As men of spiritual understanding conduct Bible studies with them, telling them how to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, that they may be fully and firmly established in the truth, the power of God will be revealed.” ( <i>Evangelism, p. 284</i> )
<b>Back to the Golden Opportunity</b>	<p>When we see conviction in our friends it is a sign that they are ready to make a decision. The opposite is also true. If we see no conviction then we know that they aren’t ready to make a decision yet. However we know we have found the golden opportunity to make an appeal when we see conviction at work on their hearts. We can’t assume that it will happen by itself. No, right now they need human help.</p> <p>Underline in the following quotes from Ellen White how this thought is expressed.</p>
<b>Quote #9</b>	“The souls under conviction of the truth need to be visited and labored for. Sinners need a special work done for them, that they may be converted and baptized.” ( <i>Evangelism, p. 306</i> )
<b>Quote #10</b>	“When persons who are under conviction are not brought to make a decision at the earliest period possible, there is danger that the conviction will gradually wear away....” ( <i>Evangelism, p. 229</i> )
<b>Principle #12</b>	<b>Ask the right questions in order to find out where a person is.</b>
<b>Important Questions</b>	In order to be able to help a person to make a decision it is necessary to know where he/she is in the decision making process and if there are any obstacles or objections in the way.
<b>Quote #11</b>	“The sacred responsibility rests upon the minister to watch for souls as one that must give an account. He must interest himself in the souls for whom he labors, finding out all that perplexes and troubles them and hinders them from walking in the light of the truth.” ( <i>Review &amp; Herald, August 30, 1892</i> )
<b>Quote #12</b>	“Many a laborer fails in his work because he does not come close to those who most need his help. With the Bible in hand, he should seek in a courteous manner to learn the objections which exist in the minds of those who are beginning to inquire, “What is truth?” Carefully and tenderly should he lead and educate them, as pupils in a school. Many have to unlearn theories which they have long believed to be truth. As they become convinced that they have been in error concerning Bible subjects, they are thrown into perplexity and doubt. They need the tenderest sympathy and the most judicious help; they should be carefully instructed, and should be prayed for and prayed with, watched and guarded with the kindest solicitude.” ( <i>Gospel Workers, p. 190</i> )
<b>Obstacles</b>	<p>In the process of making a decision there can be a variety of obstacles and objections. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The topic wasn’t dealt with thoroughly enough. Information is missing.</li><li>• There is doubt and a lack of clarity concerning previous topics, which hinders further progression.</li><li>• There are theological objections.</li><li>• The person has intellectually understood a topic, but sees no need to put it into practice.</li></ul>

- The person is afraid of the consequences of making a decision (work, reaction of family or friends).
- The person is very attached to traditions.
- The person has a negative picture of the Adventist church.
- ...

### Well-directed Questions

As long as these obstacles and objections are there, a person can't make an intelligent decision. To urge a person to make a decision at this phase could prove fatal. It is important to find out where a person is and what obstacles and objections there are. This can be done by asking well-directed questions, which can be quite different depending on the situation. For example:

- Was the topic we studied today something new for you?
- Was the topic understandable and easy to follow?
- Are you aware that you are a sinner like every other person and that you need Jesus?
- Do you still have any questions on this topic?
- Can you see why this topic is so important to Jesus?
- Have you already thought about... (giving your life to Jesus, getting baptized, keeping the Sabbath...)
- Is there anything that could keep you from making this decision?
- If Jesus were standing here today and asked you... (to give Him your life, to keep the Sabbath, to get baptized), what would your answer be?
- Is there anything that could keep you from... (giving your life to Jesus, getting baptized, keeping the Sabbath)?
- Do you want to make a decision today and tell Jesus in prayer that...

### Reacting to Obstacles and Objections

If you discover obstacles and objections take them seriously, even when they seem inconsequential to you. Help your friend find a solution. Show them answers in God's Word. If appropriate, help them find practical help. When the objection has been answered or the obstacle eliminated, come back to the main point and ask if there is anything else standing in the way of making a decision. If the answer is no, then ask them to decide.

### Book Recommendation

For further study on this topic I highly recommend the books "Persuasion – How to Help People Decide for Jesus" by Mark Finley and "Gaining Decisions for Christ" by Louis Torres.

### At last

"You can be an effective soul winner. With your Bible open, supply men and women with clear and accurate information. Assist them by supplying answers to their questions. Read texts which will produce deepening conviction. Do not hesitate to show them what God wants them to do and tell them it is God's will for them to do. Reveal to them the benefits of right action, the consequences of wrong action, and invite them to make decisions. Blending information, conviction, and desire, prompt them to action." (Mark Finley, *Persuasion – How to Help People Decide for Jesus*, p. 23)

### Challenge

1. Continue to pray for the people on your prayer list and keep your eyes open for the opportunity to do something good for them and to give them spiritual direction. Make it your habit to do this!
2. Keep praying specifically for a person that you can give personal Bible studies to. Persevere until you have found for such a person!



**Bible Study**

Please study **Matthew 13:44-46** carefully and take notes on the content, meaning, and life applications of these verses. Be sure to write down good questions for each.

**What does the Bible text say?**  
(content, meaning, application)

**How can I ask questions about this?**  
(Questions on content, meaning, and application)

