

The Life Decisions Family Game Night

by Dawn Magee

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua 24:15 NIV

No matter how old we are, we make decisions every day. Before the age of twelve, most of our important life decisions are made by our parents. As we get older, the responsibility for those decisions starts to become our own and the consequences become a very real part of our lives. This is why it's very important to learn Godly decision-making skills early in life.

Speaking of *Life*, that's just the game we're going to play to learn some very valuable life lessons.

Step 1: Play the Game

Arrange a family game night to play *The Game of Life*. (Better yet, arrange to have a family game night on a regular basis! This is a great way to grow closer as a family and it's something we've lost in an age of video games.) For this game, you will be playing with one additional rule: *everybody must make decisions based on what they believe they would do in real life.* (Adults must choose the path they have actually taken in life.) Other than that, play the game as you normally would.



Don't turn the game into a lesson! Kids are quick to figure out when you're trying to teach lessons and not playing for fun. Now is not the time to give feedback on your kids' choices. If they want to choose a career instead of going to college, don't express how you feel about this or your opportunity to teach a life lesson is gone. Your chance to teach Godly decision-making skills will come *after* you have finished the game.

Step 2: Debrief

When the game is over, it is time to debrief. This is a time to talk *with* your kids, not *to* them. Include them in the conversation, ask for their opinions and listen without giving negative feedback.

First, pick one of your not-so-good life decisions (a real one) and share with your kids how the consequences have affected your life. Share the decision-making process you used and discuss what you could have done to make a better choice.

Next, refer back to the game and some of the choices your kids made. Discuss how those life scenarios might play out in real life.

Finally, help your kids pick a real-life decision that they are facing (or are likely to face in the near future). For older kids, a good example might be whether or not to date before they're ready to get married. For younger kids, pick something that they can relate to, like whether or not to eat more than one chocolate bar. Using the decision you've chosen, walk your kids through a Godly decision-making process. To guide you in this exercise, here's a modified version of a decision-making model I use in my coaching practice:

How to Make Good Decisions, God's Way

1. Begin with prayer. Ask God to help you see the problem clearly.
2. Ask questions about the decision that needs to be made. *Don't give opinions at this point.* Write down all of the relevant information, including your kids' perceptions of the problem. The more serious the problem, the more information you should gather.
3. Seeking God's will involves three things: finding out what the Bible says about an issue, spending time in prayer, and seeking wise council. Using all three, come up with a set of Godly alternatives (possible choices that God would approve of) for the decision that needs to be made. For many decisions, there will be more than one Godly alternative. The point is to filter out alternatives that God would definitely *not* approve of. (For example, stealing money is a possible solution to financial problems, but it's one we would *never* consider because God's Word forbids us to steal.)
4. Using a pros-and-cons approach, evaluate each Godly alternative, keeping in mind all of the people that the decision will affect.
5. Taking into account all of the information that you have gathered, help your kids choose the best alternative. (Sometimes, information overload can paralyze us at this step. Remember to leave God in control, trusting Him with the outcome.)
6. Once the decision is made, that's not the end of the process! As we learn and grow, we need to continually monitor our past decisions. Sometimes, as new information arises, it becomes necessary to revisit our decisions and adjust our actions.