

# Eating Problems for Lunch

by Jay Raines

---



Life180 Series

<http://life180.info>

Copyright 2008. All rights reserved.  
You have permission from the author to print or share this booklet electronically. You do not have permission to resell any portion of the booklet.

Original downloads available at <http://life180.info>

# Introduction

How do you make decisions? The Bible is concerned with your ability to make decisions. Throughout God's Word, the believer is challenged with the responsibility of making right decisions.

“...Every believer needs to have a plan about decision making...”

While many of life's dilemmas are specifically addressed in the Bible (i.e. “Thou shalt not kill” or “Thou shalt not lie”), there are many other decisions that aren't as specifically mentioned. For example, decisions about which career path to take, choosing a home to purchase, or whether to have pizza or spaghetti for dinner are not specifically spelled out in scripture.

So, every believer needs to have a plan about decision making that fits with all types of decisions.

# Between a Rock and a Hard Place

In Matthew 1:18-25, we find that Joseph was faced with the dilemma of his life: what to do about Mary's extra-marital pregnancy. She had promised herself to him. They were to be married. Now she was going to have a child and he knew that it wasn't his.

It is not hard to see from the passage that he was agonizing over this decision. Their "engagement" was much more official than in our society. Legally, they were already married.

There was a customary waiting period between betrothal and consummation.

It was in the midst of this waiting period that Joseph discovered the bad news. We don't know how he found out about the information, but we see from the passage that he was spending some time contemplating his decision (v. 20).

**“Joseph was faced with the delimma of his life...”**

Legally, he had two options. One was to divorce her publicly and cause disgrace upon Mary for her crime of breaking the marriage vows. The other option was to divorce her privately in a way that would appear that he had changed his mind. He was leaning toward the second option, although it meant possible public disgrace upon him for breaking his promise to marry her.

# Make Righteous Decisions

Big decisions in life are often made up of many smaller decisions. It's those "smaller" decisions that ultimately help an individual navigate the "larger" decision. In this first step through Joseph's dilemma, Joseph chose to make a righteous decision by choosing a standard – a guide. Joseph's guide was the Bible. Obviously, he could divorce Mary publicly for adultery and that would have been Biblical based upon the information he had. There was another provision that Joseph found in Deuteronomy 24:1 that allowed him to divorce her on the grounds that she had become displeasing to him. With what Joseph knew, he had two Biblical options. His first choice in this matter was to be Biblical.

*Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*  
(Matthew 1:19 NKJV)

Since Joseph was righteous man, he wanted to make a righteous choice. Righteous choices are made based

---

upon the teachings of scripture.

I heard of a carpenter that was building a garage. When it came time for him to measure for the opening of the garage door, he couldn't find his tape measure. He asked the woman of the house if she had a tape measure available and all she had was a cloth sewing tape which he borrowed.

Soon, the day came for the garage door to be delivered and he went to put it in place only to discover that the opening was too narrow. He measured the door with his carpenter's tape and it was the correct size. He measured the opening and it was one foot too narrow. Then he remembered the cloth tape. Upon investigation, he discovered that over the years, the woman had washed the tape. It had evidently shrunk in the wash. The standard of measurement had changed.

Making a righteous decision is different from making a decision that you think is right. Your natural unit of measurement is never exactly right. We must follow a process of finding out what God thinks is right and then making the decision based upon His righteousness. Good decision-making involves making righteous decisions.

“Big decisions in life are often made up of many smaller decisions.”

# Make Compassionate Decisions

There was another “smaller” decision in this big dilemma. Joseph not only chose to make a righteous decision, he also chose to be compassionate about how he would carry it out. His two options were: public or private divorce. The scriptures say that “he had in mind to divorce her quietly.” (v. 19) Joseph had decided to make the compassionate choice. Compassionate choices are filled with grace and mercy. Compassionate choices answer the question: “How would I want to be treated?”

It is difficult to be compassionate when you are a victim. Joseph may have seen himself as a victim. He had probably spent several years establishing himself as a carpenter so that he could seek out a wife. Then, he had pledged himself to Mary who had evidently trampled on their relationship. He was hurt. Yet, even in his hurt, he

“Joseph had decided to make the compassionate choice.”

chose to be compassionate, merciful, and full of grace. In fact, this second decision would make it appear to the public that this change in wedding plans was his fault.

Compassionate decisions are often painful. When choosing between being vengeful or compassionate, revenge often *feels* more appealing at the time. In the long run, the compassionate choice is much more satisfying. It is also more like Christ. In this story, Joseph foreshadows a picture of Christ. The very baby in question would one day take on the sins of the world. Jesus would have been fully justified in letting the world die in its sin and spend eternity in Hell separated from a relationship with God the Father.

*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1 Peter 3:18a)*

Like his earthly father, Joseph, Jesus made the compassionate, righteous choice.

# Make Obedient Decisions

Up to this point, Joseph is making solid biblical decisions. Unfortunately, he had the wrong information about the nature of the pregnancy. This baby is not the result of an adulterous affair. It is a result of a miracle from of God.

I find this situation to be particularly fascinating. Just like Joseph, every decision that I make is based upon a limited amount of information. I don't know all that God knows. This story about Joseph helps me to realize my need for God. If I am going to make good, godly decisions, I must have a personal relationship with Him. I believe that because Joseph was seeking to make the biblical and compassionate choice, this put him in the position to be obedient to God. Just when Joseph thought he had to choose between Door Number One and Door Number Two,

“...every decision that I make is based upon a limited amount of information.”

God pointed out Door Number Three. God knew about Door Number Three all along, but Joseph evidently needed to wrestle with his decision first. God was preparing him to be willing to accept Door Number Three. God said to Joseph through an angel in a dream:

*"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:20a-21)

God stepped in. God showed Joseph how this situation was all part of his plan. Since Joseph was being righteous and compassionate, he was able to also be obedient to the Spirit of God.

## Get a New Perspective

What circumstances changed for Joseph that helped him make up his mind? Nothing. Nothing changed about the circumstances: Mary was still pregnant and unwed, and the laws of the Bible were crystal clear on this matter. The only thing that changed was Joseph's view. He now had a new view about the situation and his role in it. Joseph was given a view of Christ. The angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and introduced him to the presence of Christ:

**“The only thing that changed was Joseph's view.”**

*...what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (v. 20a-21)*

This baby was the Messiah and for Joseph that made all the difference. Joseph responded by taking Mary into his home and showed his willingness to be a father

---

to the child by naming Him. Maybe the reason that we all struggle so much with the decisions of life is because we struggle to see Christ in the midst of the dilemma. If someone loses their job due to company budget cuts, it is difficult to see Christ at work. When faced with a tragic illness and the ensuing decisions, we ask, “Where is God in all of this?” Because Joseph was willing to be righteous and compassionate, he was given eyes to see beyond the problem. Once he was able to see Christ, he knew exactly what he was supposed to do. Joseph is possibly one of the least recognized heroes of the Bible. Yet, he lived a righteous life, he showed unselfish compassion, and lived unwavering in his obedience. Joseph made the right decision. You can make good decisions also as you faithfully search God’s Word for righteousness, God’s heart for compassion, and God’s will for obedience. Then, you too can eat problems for lunch.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What major decisions have you made this last year?
2. How do you make decisions? Is there a plan to your decision making?
3. How can you consider the person and character of Jesus more in your decision making?

## About the Author

Jay Raines is currently pastor of First Baptist Church of Cameron, Missouri where he has served for more than nine years. He has degrees from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He is currently working on his doctorate in preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. Jay enjoys spending time with his wonderful wife, Michele, and their two awesome children. He loves missions and networking with people around the world.



# Decision Making: Eating Problems for Lunch

Do you find yourself struggling to make decisions about everything from what to eat for dinner to who to marry or where to live? The Bible is a book that shows us how to make good decisions. Every story of the Bible illustrates the positive results of good decision making or the negative results of bad decisions. The Bible also teaches us how discover God's plan in our decisions.

In this study of Joseph of Nazareth, you will discover God's principles of decision-making.

Pastor Jay Raines, author

This booklet is provided by:

[Life180.info](http://Life180.info)

First Baptist Church

202 East Ford

Cameron Missouri 64429

