

Owning our Decisions

By Meagan Wilson

Many of us have been taught by parents, teachers, and pastors to make our decisions, at least major ones, prayerfully. We are told to seek God's will for our lives, and to base everything on that. This is great advice but no one is perfect, and sometimes we think we understand what God wants for us, only to realize later that we didn't quite get it right.



For instance, you might think that God wants you to study as a Divinity major, develop a career in healthcare, or even pursue (or not pursue) a relationship with the cute girl (or boy) in your Econ 101 class. Almost certainly, God does have opinions on these sorts of choices, and he understands their consequences. But as you are no doubt painfully aware, trying to understand what those opinions are can be difficult for us at times. And because we are human, we are bound to get it a little bit wrong once in a while. Maybe the internship you thought would launch your career turned out to be a huge waste of time, or you discovered halfway through law school that you were really meant to be a litigator, or the person you thought was your soul mate broke up with you and went to Africa as a missionary. Hey, it happens.

And that's sort of the point. These kinds of mistakes happen to both Christians and non-believers. But where realizing that she made a poor choice might lead my atheist counterpart to question her own judgment, I might insist that God led me to that choice, despite evidence to the contrary. This is probably a tempting line of reasoning for many Christians. It shields us from examining our listening skills and allows us to escape responsibility for our choices. It's also a very bad idea, for both of those reasons. Claiming that every move we make—even the clearly unwise ones—is divinely decreed may make us feel better, but it stunts our growth as Christian adults.

We all misinterpret God's will at times, but getting all Torquemada about it will harm us and those around us. When it becomes clear that we have misunderstood God's leading, we should admit it. Refusal to acknowledge when we're wrong is always a bad trait to nurture, but it is especially harmful if we blame God for mistakes that we made all on our own. This serves to alienate not only unbelievers, but also other Christians. Of course, admitting that we made a wrong choice requires a lot of humility, and can be very embarrassing. Eating crow is never pleasant, and adding the element of having misunderstood God's direction seems to make it worse.

This brings me to my last point about owning our decisions. As previously discussed, we should

trust that God has a plan for our lives, and do our best to live according to it. But more importantly, owning our decisions makes us more deeply invested in them, likelier to accept responsibility for them, and less stubborn when they don't turn out well. At least, this seems to be true in my case.