

USY Program Bank

#N057 - Choosing the Right Path

Age Brackets:

- USY (gr. 9 - 12)

Program Type:

- Religion/Education

Estimated Cost:

Free

Duration:

Less than 2 hours

Required attendance:

10-25 people

What's It All About?

Decisions that we make may affect our entire lives. How do we know which decisions are the right ones? Is it possible that a "wrong" or "unpopular" decision may turn out to be the correct one? This program examines classical sources regarding major decisions and encourages participants to think about decisions they have made or will have to make in the near future.

Goals:

1. To choose the right path or make the right decision through commitment to an ideal or overall purpose.
2. To strengthen individual decisions that may not be popular or understood, but which are based on principles and commitment.

Category of Activity:

Religion/Education

Age:

USY

Time:

Two hours

Methodology:

Presentation, discussion

Size of Group:

15-30

Keywords:

Choice; right path; alternatives; consequences

Background:

Three Biblical stories are to be studied as a basis for discussing the decisions made in each of them. The program leader and small group discussion leaders should be familiar with the texts to be read by the group, including their context as well as what comes before and after them in the Bible. Reference should also be made to contemporary decisions that may have to be made by the participants such as, whether to observe kashrut outside the home, the extent of Sabbath and holiday observance vs. popular activities at school or with friends (including sports), continuing Jewish education, cheating on tests, whom to date (Jewish or not), and deciding on a career path.

Place:

Chapter meeting room or classroom large enough to accommodate the group.

Supplies and Resource materials:

1. Copies of the poem by Robert Frost, "The Path Not Taken."
2. Biblical texts.
3. Refreshments for the conclusion of the program.

General Preparation:

Program and discussion leaders should review the texts to be read and discussed, as well as prepare their own questions relating to the issues of "decision" and "choice" that the USYers may be confronted with in current situations.

The Program in Detail:

1. The program leader or discussion leader should distribute copies of Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken" and ask a USYer to read it aloud to the group. (Attachment 1)
 2. The discussion leader should discuss the meaning of the poem touching on some of the following points:
 - o How are choices made?
 - o When we have the option of two choices, which do we select?
 - o How do we know we made the right choice?
 - o What significance do our choices have for our lives?
 3. The program leader should divide the group into three study groups, assigning each group a different Biblical story, found in Attachments 2 - 4.
 4. Each group and its leader should read and discuss its assigned Biblical story and answer the questions after each story.
 5. The USYers in the groups should rotate and meet with another discussion leader who will present a new story.
 6. When all three groups have reviewed all three stories, they should return to their original discussion circle to talk about the personal choices and decisions they will be facing in the near future.
 7. The program should conclude with refreshments.
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Attachments:

Attachment 1 - "The Road Not Taken" - Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Attachment 2 - First Study Group - Moses:

Moses goes out to his brothers.

Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their toil. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting, so he said to the offender, "Why do you strike your fellow?" He retorted, "Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses was frightened, and thought: Then the matter is known!

When Pharaoh learned of the matter, he sought to have Moses killed; but Moses fled from Pharaoh. He arrived in the land of Midian, and sat down beside a well. (Exodus 2: 11-15)

Questions for discussion:

1. Why did Moses decide to intervene in the case of the Egyptian beating a Hebrew?
2. Why did Moses turn "this way and that" before striking? Was his action open or secret?

3. Why did Moses decide to intervene in the case of two Hebrews fighting? How was this different from the first case?
4. What was the attitude of the Hebrew "offender" to Moses' intervention?
5. How did Moses feel about the choices he made in these two cases?
6. What implications did Moses' decisions have on his life?

Attachment 3 - Second Study Group - Phineahas

Phineahas steps forward.

While Israel was staying at Shittim*, the people began to commit harlotry with the Moabite women, who invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. The people partook of them and worshipped that god. Thus Israel attached itself to Baal-peor, and the Lord was incensed with Israel.

The Lord said to Moses, "Take all the ringleaders and have them publicly impaled before the Lord, so that the Lord's wrath may turn away from Israel." So Moses said to Israel's officials, "Let each of you slay those of his men who attached themselves to Baal-peor."

Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman over to his companions, in the sight of Moses and of the whole Israelite community who were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. When Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, saw this, he left the assembly and, taking a spear in his hand, he followed the Israelite into the chamber and stabbed both of them, the Israelite and the woman, through the belly. Then the plague against the Israelites was checked. (Numbers 25: 1-8)

**Shittim refers to the acacia trees that grew in the spot.*

Questions for discussion:

1. Why were the Israelites attracted to the Moabite women and the worship of Baal-peor? Remember that this incident is recorded after the great victories of the Israelites over Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan (see Numbers 21:21-35) and after Balaam, the prophet hired by King Balak of Moab to curse Israel, failed in his assignment and instead pronounced the blessing, "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!" (Numbers 24:5.)
2. Is there a correlation between running after the Moabite women, eating their sacrifices, and worshipping their god? How would you compare this scenario to today?
3. We learn later in this chapter of the Torah that the one who "brought a Midianite woman over to his companions" was named Zimri; the woman was named Cozbi (Numbers 25: 14-15.) What was so offensive about his action?
4. Why didn't anyone try to stop Zimri for doing what he did? Why was it left to Phinehas to act alone?
5. What was Phinehas' choice in a time of crisis? Did he act level-headedly? How would you react?
6. What were the consequences of Phinehas' action? (See Numbers 25: 10-13.)

Attachment 4 - Third Study Group - Elisha

Elisha is welcomed by the Shunammite woman.

One day Elisha visited Shunem. A wealthy woman lived there, and she urged him to have a meal; and whenever he passed by, he would stop there for a meal. Once she said to her husband, "I am sure it is a holy man of God who comes this way regularly. Let us make a small enclosed upper chamber and place a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp stand there for him, so that he can stop there whenever he comes to us."

One day he came there; he retired to the upper chamber and lay down there. He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call that Shunammite woman." He called her, and she stood before him. He said to him, "Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. What can we do for you? Can we speak in your behalf to the king or to the army commander?'" She replied, "I live among my own people." "What then can be done for her?" he asked. "The fact is," said Gehazi, "she has no son, and her husband is old." "Call her," he said. He called her, and she stood in the doorway. And Elisha said, "At this season next year, you will be embracing a son." She replied, "Please, my lord, man of God, do not delude your maidservant."

The woman conceived and bore a son at the same season the following year, as Elisha had assured her. The child grew up. One day, he went out to his father among the reapers. Suddenly he cried to his father, "Oh, my head, my head!" He said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother." He picked him up and brought him to his mother. And the child sat on her lap until noon; and he died. She took him up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and left him and closed the door. Then she called to her husband: "Please, send me one of the servants and one of the she-asses, so I can hurry to the man of God and back." But he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." She answered, "It's all right."

She had the ass saddled, and said to her servant, "Urge the beast on; see that I don't slow down unless I tell you." She went on until she came to the man of God on Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her from afar, he said to his servant Gehazi, "There is that Shunammite woman. Go, hurry toward her and ask her, 'How are you? How is your husband? How is the child?'" "We are well," she replied. But when she came up the man of God on the mountain, she clasped his feet. Gehazi stepped forward to push her away; but the man of God said, "Let her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me." Then she said, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn't I say: 'Don't mislead me?'"

He said to Gehazi, "Tie up your skirts, take my staff in your hand, and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him. And place my staff on the face of the boy. But the boy's mother said, "As the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you!" So he arose and followed her.

Gehazi had gone on before them and had placed the staff on the boy's face; but there was no sound or response. He turned back to meet him and told him, "The boy has not awakened." Elisha came into the house, and there was the boy, laid out dead on his couch. He went in, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord... (II Kings 4:8-33)

Questions for discussion:

1. Why did the Shunammite woman decide to build a chamber for Elisha? What did she expect to gain by it?
2. Why did Elisha choose to accept the woman's hospitality?
3. Why did the woman choose not to tell her husband that the child was dead?
4. Why does the woman clasp Elisha's feet? What is she signaling to him by this action?
5. Why does the woman say to Elisha, "I will not leave you!" when Gehazi starts off to save the child? What does she have in mind?
6. Why does Elisha choose to send Gehazi instead of going himself to save the child? What were the consequences of his decision?
7. Was the child "saved"? (See II Kings 4: 34-37.)
8. If time permits: What is significant about the husband's comment that "It is neither new moon nor Sabbath"? What does this say about religious convocations in the period of the Kings?

This program was written by SimRon Interactive Programming.