

**More Than Survivors: Week 1, Making Spiritual Life Choices**  
**09-14-14 Pastor Peter Smith, Exciting FCOG**

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward.”

-Hebrews 11:24–26

One of the most popular TV shows for several years has been CBS’s Survivor. How many of you, with millions of others, enjoy watching people take their challenges and seeing all but 1 get voted off the island?

It takes a lot to be on this show:

- They eat bugs
- Sleep in the rain
- pushing themselves to the limit physically & emotionally
- They build relationships & every few days vote someone off the island

Sounds a lot like real life, doesn’t it?! Life is hard, and we are constantly making choices (hopefully the right ones) but sometimes we get penalized for bad ones.

We are going to consider how we can thrive spiritually in life over the next few weeks. We will be looking at individuals in the Bible who rose above life’s challenges and thrived. People like:

- Joseph: his brothers sold him as a slave, & he was falsely accused of adultery;
- Esther, who risked death to save herself and her countrymen;
- Paul, who paid attention to others so he could share Jesus better and
- Daniel, who refused to compromise his belief in God

By applying lessons from their lives we will learn to rise above this world and thrive instead of simply surviving.

**We don’t always ‘feel’ like conquerors!**

Honestly, I don't, do you? But we are. So how can we learn to thrive spiritually while on this tough place called earth? **We need a teacher.** Today our teacher is very famous:

- He started out as a prince of Egypt.
- He moved to the desert and became a shepherd.
- He was called by God to deliver his people.
- His name is Moses!
- His life shows us we can live like we belong *here* or make better choices that affect our spiritual life forever

**If you look back in Exodus and Deuteronomy, you see that Moses was faced with many choices that had consequences for his spiritual life:**

- Whether to stand in his bare feet before the burning bush.
- Whether to use his stuttering as an excuse not to speak to king Pharaoh.
- Whether to trust God to open a path through the Red Sea.
- Whether to follow his father-in-law's advice dealing with delegation.
- Whether to veil his face or go natural after descending from the summit of Mt. Sinai.

But of all the choices Moses was confronted with, the most critical was the one mentioned in Hebrews:

***Whether to listen to the call of comfort and convenience, prestige and power—or hearken to the inner voice of God's spirit that reminded him of his true identity.***

Whose voice is guiding you in your choices today?

## **How to Make better Spiritual Life Choices**

### **1. Consider past choices (inventory):**

- Moses did: responding in anger and killing a man; Consequences of disobedience
- What happened before, what was the outcome, what would happen differently if I made a better choice?

### **2. Critique Present and Future Choices**

**When making purchases, committing to an activity, following your heart, ask yourself:**

Is this helpful physically, spiritually, or mentally?

Will it bring me under its power?

Will it hurt others?

Will it glorify God?

—Paul Borthwick, *101 Ways to Simplify Your Life*

- If the answer is 'Yes' or 'No' to one of these, clearly God is leading you to make a better choice! Learn to Critique!!

### **3. (Say: How do we make better spiritual life choices?)**

**Remember which 'Tribe' you belong to!**

**Moses kept going back to God, his life! We should too.**

We live on an island that is not our home. Peter reminds us of this. He writes,

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”

-1 Peter 2:11

The Apostle Paul agrees:

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ”

-Philippians 3:20

- To be more than a survivor in life our choices need to reflect our devotion to God which is for eternity and not to this world which is temporary
- Remember, allegiance takes awhile to develop—no shortcuts in our faith journey
- Be committed to Jesus and His 'tribe', his family  
How do your choices affect not only you but others who follow Jesus  
**(witness, purity)**

**Many choices affect our spirits. Here's a few:**

- To worship **(or not)**

- To pray (or not)
- To deny ourselves (or not)
- To sacrifice (or not)
- To give (or not)...all of these Jesus talks about in the Bible
- What is the greatest choice for us to consider? Following Jesus first!

## Jesus spoke two words that had major implications: “Follow Me”

1. **That we put him first** (here’s a crash course on becoming a Christian)
  - Realize the command to Love God and neighbor is not automatic in life—we must make that choice
  - It starts by admitting we are sinners, separate from God
  - We must believe in the Jesus story: He lived, He died, He arose!  
**(He came because we are all lost in sin and cannot escape it’s penalty:**  
 “All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory”  
 “The penalty for our sins is death”  
**He died to take God’s anger away from us:**  
 “The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus”  
**He arose to show His power over sin and death:**  
 “To all who receive him, who believe in his name he gave the right to be called children of God”)

Tribal Council Picture on Screen: hold up sheet of paper with name on it...On survivor people receive **Immunity** if they find an idol...have you found forgiveness / immunity through the cross from Jesus?

2. **Consider the cost of following him**
  - It means we become dependent on Him instead of us
  - It means we start to live by faith
  - It means we start saying “NO” to sin / make better choices
3. **Daily consider the choices we make**
  - Spiritual life choices
  - Choices with our words
  - Choices with our actions
  - Basically, choices for God

**A Challenge for All of us**

Will you make a spiritual choice today to follow Jesus?

**1. For the first time**

- You have never committed your life to Jesus before
- You are not sure if you would make it to heaven when you die.
- Today you can be sure...make that choice!

**2. For a re-commitment of life choices**

- If you admit you've been lazy about the spiritual choices you have been making
- If tiredness, bitterness, un-forgiveness, lack of money, a job, being hurt in a relationship....
- Maybe life has just gotten in the way

Jesus says,

“Come to me if you are weary and burdened and I will give you rest”

**Question is:** will you today? Make that choice to begin a new adventure of life with Jesus **today!**

**Will you choose the next step in your spiritual life today? In your notes mark right now, as God is leading your heart to make a good choice:**

- To accept Jesus as your Savior
- To get baptized
- Read your Bible before major decisions
- Pray before major decisions
- Attend a Bible study group with others