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FACING CRUCIAL CHOICES

One of the most common things we do and one of the most important things we do is to decide between alternatives. Many times the choice we should make is fairly obvious and we give little thought to what we should do. Often, we make choices based on habit and in most cases our choices are based on "what's in it for me". The problem with making choices based on what's in it for me is we may not know all the facts of the consequences of our decisions. Actually, if we did really know the consequences, both in this life and in all eternity, then choosing on the basis of "what's in it for me" would be OK. If we make choices that bring honor to Christ, then we will be winners in life and in eternal life. If we need a good example of making the right choice in times of crisis, then we can look to Jesus. He showed courage, honesty, boldness, and concern for others.

JOHN 18:1-3 Jesus had just completed praying for His disciple who were with Him and for those who would be His disciples in years to come. He and His disciples then went to the Garden of Gethsemane which was on the Mount of Olives. John does not mention the agonizing time in prayer Jesus spent in facing up to the crucial choices that were coming upon Him. We know from Luke's account it was a time of great emotion and stress, so much so His sweat was like great drops of blood. This time in prayer was where the choices were wrestled and the decisions were actually made. What remained was to carry out the action reflected by those decisions. If we wait until the action is required before we decide how we will act, then we may make the wrong choice in the heat and urgency of the moment. As we know, not all of the disciples were with Jesus in the Garden as He prayed. Judas was about the business of betraying Jesus to the Jewish leaders. Judas had made a crucial choice in striking a deal to deliver Jesus to the officials. Our choices set our destiny and Judas had made a poor choice. We may never know what his motives were in betraying Jesus. However, his actions should serve as a solemn warning to us, though we maybe in and around religious activities and experience the presence of Jesus, our motives need to be examined in light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The thoughts and intents of the heart need to be separated and only the word of God can provide the means to do that. Our actions will betray our motives.

Judas led the band of people who were going to arrest Jesus to the place where he knew they would be spending the night. They came with weapons and torches to arrest Jesus since they expected to have to hunt Him down in the darkness and have to defend themselves from harm in the process. They did not know Him.

JOHN 18:4-9 Jesus knew why they were there. He did not run and hide, but boldly met the challenge. So many times there are conflicts in life and we choose to just ignore the conflict (run and hide) and nothing gets resolved. If we were to address the conflict with openness, then healing of relationships might result.

Jesus asked them, "Whom seek ye?" This is a good question for us, today. Most of us tend to think in terms of "What are we looking for?" The more significant issue is **WHO** rather than **WHAT**. Even Joshua, thousands of years ago, gave the Children of Israel the correct issue to consider: "Choose you this day **whom** you will serve." These people were seeking the right Person in that they were looking for Jesus; however, they were seeking Him for the wrong reasons. They were not looking to serve Him but to destroy Him. They believed they had to destroy Jesus in order to protect themselves and their positions. Usually, we seek SELF in order to serve SELF and Jesus gets in the way of that.

When Jesus told them, "I am He" they apparently were so startled they jumped back and most

of them fell down. He asked them again to confirm what they wanted. It was Jesus and NOT his disciples. He interceded for His disciples, "If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way." This giving of Himself for us and in our place is representative of the substitutionary action He took on our behalf. The disciples needed protection at that time since they did not have the spiritual strength to undergo such testing. It would have caused great spiritual harm to them. Eventually, all of them did undergo suffering for the cause of Christ. There are other reasons people undergo suffering. We sometimes are attracted to the world too much and fall into difficulties resulting from such attraction. These difficulties can be used to bring us back to where we ought to be. So whether the suffering is for the cause of Christ or for our correction, we can take comfort in knowing God is in control and is working for our best.

JOHN 18:10-11 Simon was impulsive and many times that leads to ineffectiveness in that we can cause more harm than good. We must always be on guard against thinking that sudden flashes of zeal will compensate for disobedience and other failures in our lives. When the point of testing comes, we are likely to strike out against the agent of that testing rather and accept the test. Jesus would advise us as He did Peter: "Put up your sword!"

JOHN 18:12-14 Though Roman officers were there, the actions the group took against Jesus showed that the situation was directed by the Jewish religious leaders. First, they took Jesus to Annas who was really in control of the Jewish religious/political situation. He had been high priest, but was replaced by his son-in-law on orders of the Romans. He still called the shots of what was to be done. After Annas had his time with Jesus, then Jesus was sent to Caiaphas who was officially the high priest during that time. These men had already made their crucial choices in that they had decided Jesus should die. Caiaphas had said it would be better for (one man) Jesus to die rather than the people. This was prophetic in that Jesus did die for you and me as our substitution. Because he did die for us, then we should live for Him by making our choices in such a way they bring honor to Him.