



Choices – Sample Lesson

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Choices

Lesson: Choose to Serve

Bible: Joshua 24:14-15

Bottom Line: The choices that we make determine whether we will serve God or something else.

Notes:

This is a sample lesson from our Choices series. If you like this lesson, then be sure to check out the [Three Year Bundle](#) (the Choices series is included). Save 93% on three years of youth ministry lessons and games. Only available through Wednesday, May 24!

View the Three Year Bundle here: <https://ministrytoyouth.com/may-bundle>

OPENING GAME: Rock, Paper, Scissors Dodgeball

Have students gather into two teams and have the teams go to the opposite ends of the room.

In the center of the room place several dodgeballs (vary number according to the size of your group) and have one person from each team come to the middle of the room, facing the other.

The students in the middle will face off with “rock, paper, scissors” (a fist means rock, flat hand means paper, and a “peace sign” means scissors) and whoever wins (rock beats scissors, paper beats rock, and scissors beats paper) enables their team to run to the dodgeballs and throw them at the losing team.

Each person a team hits with the dodgeball is a point for the team that won the “rock, paper, scissors” round. Two more players are selected (one from each team) and players play another round starting again with “rock, paper, scissors.” Play until one team gets to a set number of points that that leader decides before the game began.

TEACH

How many choices do you think that you make on a daily basis?

The average person makes around 35,000 choices a day.

Do you think that some choices are harder than others?

In the game we just played, you had to make a choice as to which gesture you were going to make. Sometimes, your choice was a good choice and it was good for everyone on your team, and sometimes you made the wrong choice and it ended up being bad for the whole team.

For the next four weeks we are going to be talking about those 35,000 choices that you make everyday and how they affect you and your relationship with God.

Each week we are going to look at a different character in the Bible and how they choose God regardless of their circumstances and how we can do the same thing in our lives.

*Have a student read **Joshua 24:14-15**.*

Let's set the stage for what is going on here in these verses.

Joshua was Moses' second in command, and he had had the role of leading the Israelites for many years. In fact, he was getting on up in age and knew that his time was coming to an end.

So he gathered the people for a final "State of the Union" address to remind them to stick with God and not follow the traditions and religious practices of those around them. As the leader of the people, Joshua was used to giving orders, but he also knew that the people would have to make a choice.

Your everyday choices define who you serve. Your everyday choices determine who you worship – even if you don't think you are choosing, you still are making a choice to serve something or someone.

Let's look at verses 14 and 15 and see the four choices Joshua gave the people and is giving us.

1. The Family Gods (“...the gods your ancestors worshipped beyond the Euphrates River...” - verse 14)

Joshua’s first option is that the Israelites can just worship the gods of their ancestors, the gods that their parents worshipped.

As much as we try to not be like our parents, we do end up being a lot like them; the big science word for this is called “transference.”

We watch what our parents do and see what is important to them and like it or not, as we grow up those things become important to us.

What becomes important to us also affects our choices as to who we will serve. We have to remember that anything that comes before God can become a god which we serve.

So if, for example, your dad was obsessed with success at his job and was always working, you might tend to obsess with your schoolwork and spend all your time trying to get that perfect grade.

Or for example, your mom was obsessed with appearances and what people thought of her, so you serve the god of beauty and spend all your time trying to act and look perfect so people will like you.

But fortunately, just because your parents may or may not live that way does not mean that you do; cycles can be broken.

The Israelites did not have to serve the gods of their parents. Joshua was calling them to serve a God much better who had a much better life in store for them.

Breaking the cycle of not serving the “family gods” requires a choice to let God be God in your life and for you to be who He has called you to be.

2. The Baggage Gods (“...the gods your ancestors worshipped...in Egypt” - verse 14)

Joshua tells the Israelites that they have the option to serve the gods from Egypt, the land from which they came and in which they had been enslaved.

These were the gods that the Israelites spent all their energy building shrines and temples to, all their time crafting images of, and all their health being pushed to work hard for by the Egyptian overseers. Needless to say, these gods came with some baggage in the minds of the Israelites.

There used to be a dating show called “Baggage” where the player would have to choose to date one of three contestants who would each have three suitcases: a small, a medium, and a large one.

Each suitcase would contain a secret about the person the player was seeking to date and the player, after finding out what secret the suitcase contained, would have to choose to eliminate someone whose secret he or she could not deal with.

The bigger the suitcase the bigger the secret, and once the player had narrowed it down to one contestant, the player would have a suitcase with a secret of his or her own.

We all have baggage. Even after we become Christians the stuff from our pasts still seems to follow us, a lot of times because we allow it to.

Old habits and ways of living die hard, and we tend to travel down our lives as Christians who carry the old, sinful habits of our pasts with us because we chose to follow Jesus but we never chose to let the bad things we used to do go.

When we serve God, we give up the old, dirty, baggage that weighs us down and let Him make us into something wonderful!

3. The Gods of the Here and Now (“...or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living” - verse 15)

The third choice was to worship the gods on their home turf, the gods of the nations that the Israelites had fought so hard against. They had witnessed God help them win battles against these people time and time again.

The Amorite gods were dangerous gods for the Israelites because they were the hip, cool gods of the day. Gods such as Baal and Ashtoreth were like the “celebrity god couple” that people flocked to because of the sexuality of the temple worship.

The problem was that since the worship of these gods was so ingrained in the culture, the Israelites thought that they seemed harmless and natural.

Think about the world we live in and how easy it is to serve the gods of today without even thinking about it. Social media, TV, video games, and magazines can burn images, make statements, and change our opinions without us even thinking about it!

Joshua knew this, and that is why he told the Israelites to choose *this day* who they will serve.

In **Romans 12:2**, Paul says that do not “**conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**”

Putting the things of God first in your life and doing the opposite of the culture is what Paul means when he talks about being “transformed.”

Serving the gods of today is just a pattern that you fall into, a race around a track that only leads to the start line over and over, an endless cycle of dashed hopes and unfulfilled dreams. And when we conform to that pattern, no matter how harmless or natural it seems, that cyclical pattern is the end result.

Choosing to “go against the flow” is a *daily* choice that we have to make in order to serve Him.

4. The One True God (“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” - verse 15)

Joshua lays out this final option, but it has really been the only option all along.

If you read Joshua’s entire speech to the people, he spells out a history of how God has been actively involved with the people all along, being their source of strength, comfort, peace, and guidance.

So, in making your choice in who you will serve, you got to ask the question, “What have the other gods (choices 1-3) done for me?”

The answer is nothing; the other choices are not real.

All the other choices are gods that only mirror what we want out of our own lives, and they always turn up empty-handed because they are based on us.

Joshua had seen God move in the midst of the people, he had seen the walls of Jericho fall down, and he had experienced peace in knowing that God was going to win the

battle for the people. He knew that serving God was the only choice that would lead to true happiness and fulfillment.

But it all comes down to *choosing who you will serve*.

This is where those 35,000 choices come into play – each choice you make determines who you serve.

Do your choices “go against the flow” or do they serve the gods of our culture and end up short?

We are all wired to worship something. Even if you do not think you worship anything, you will end up serving one of the gods in these four choices.

So who will you choose to serve?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Which of the four choices that Joshua gave the people do you most identify with?
2. How close are your choices to those of your parents?
3. Do you sacrifice for the same things? Do you follow their patterns and flaws?
4. What gods of your parents do you follow without even realizing it?
5. If you are a Christian, how much of that decision was your parents and how much of it was your own?
6. What kind of baggage do you carry around with you?
7. How does it feel to have to serve something that so weighs you down, like being jealous over an old flame or carrying resentment against your friend for stabbing you in the back?
8. Do you think a person can ever be truly free from serving the gods of baggage?
9. How can you give up your baggage?
10. Think about the gods of the here and now. What are the true *American Idols*?
11. In today's music, what is talked about the most?
12. In your life, what does it mean to choose to "go against the flow" of culture?
13. How has choosing to serve God changed the choices that you make?
14. How hard is it to follow Jesus and still "be in the world and not of it"?
15. Can a Christian choose to serve God and still listen to secular music, go to parties, pay attention to looks, and other things that culture upholds?
16. What do you need to leave behind to follow Jesus more closely?