

“In The Beginning...”

**“The Consequences of
Your Choices”**

Gen. 4, 13, 19

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I. Introduction to: Consequences of Your Choices

1. A consequence is the concept of a resulting effect arising from another action (cause and effect). An effect is that which is produced, usually more or less, immediately and directly. A consequence is something that follows naturally or logically, as in a sequence of events, and is less intimately connected with its cause than is an effect. In general terms, consequence is the term used to indicate that all human actions, particularly crime and sin, have profound effects.
2. Unintended consequences are outcomes that are not (or not limited to) the results originally intended by a particular action.

Unintended consequences can be grouped into roughly three types:

- A positive unexpected *benefit* sometimes referred to as serendipity or a windfall.
- A negative unexpected *drawback*, occurring in addition to the desired effect of the policy.
- A *perverse* effect, which may be contrary to what was originally intended (i.e. when an intended solution to a problem only makes the problem worse).

II. All Choices Have Consequences

1. The consequences of our choices lie in the future.
2. Our character is the sum of thousands of choices made throughout our lives.
3. The world in which we live is the product of choices made in the past by our ancestors, historical figures, nature, and other influences known and unknown to us.
4. Choices made in the past that led to undesirable outcomes cannot be undone, but they are good learning experiences and enable us to make more sound future choices.
5. Understanding the past can help us start in the present to make choices that can change the future.

III. Bible Examples of Choices and Consequences

1. Cain was not happy that God didn't accept his offering. Gen 4:2-16
2. Lot is an example of how your whole family can be affected. Gen. 13:10-11; 19:26, 30-31.
3. Manasseh is an example showing that the consequences of sin cannot be erased, even after a genuine repentance. 2 Kings 21:1-16; 2 Chron. 33:10-19

IV. Every Action Has Consequences

1. Many people go through life ignoring the truth that every action has consequences. Read the following law.

2. Gal. 6:7-9: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. NIV
3. We can't sow our wild oats today and pray for a crop failure tomorrow.
4. If we spend more than we earn, we can count on being mired in debt.
5. If we save and invest our money, we can count on being prepared for financial emergencies and retirement.
6. Whether it's using drugs, behaving promiscuously, or breaking the law, people may seem to get away with it on occasion, but sooner or later the consequences show up.
7. The actions of obeying the gospel, reading the Bible regularly, attending church, praying, giving to God's work, and helping others will result in wisdom, confidence, and peace of mind.
8. A man may abuse his wife and then wonder why she is cold toward him.
9. An individual disobeys the health laws and wonders why he is sick all the time.
10. A teenager is rebellious and wonders why his parents don't trust him.
11. A student doesn't study and wonders why he failed the test.
12. An employee is slothful at his work and wonders why his boss doesn't give him a raise.
13. A person fills his mind with the garbage of the world and wonders why he has mental problems.
14. People don't realize that actions speak louder than words.

V. How Can We Learn To Make Good Choices? *Children need a framework for making choices that considers costs (not always financial) and benefits. This framework is best begun at as early an age as possible, NOT saved for adulthood.*

1. "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you," Matt. 7:12. Sadly, there may not be a more "least-practiced" verse than this one. Usually, selfishness gets in the way. How many personal relationships would be improved if this "rule" were practiced? How many problems in our society would be solved if this "rule" were practiced? If we, when we act, could put ourselves in the shoes of others and see how we might feel and respond, then we might temper our impulses and ensure that our contributions are much more considerate for the feelings and situations of others.
2. Read God's word to help us establish our value system. Having our own well-thought-out and well-considered system of values and principles can help enormously. These values can help ensure that what we do is good, sensible, practical and realistic, and that it feels good, too. For if it feels good and comfortable with us, it will probably sit well with others affected by our decisions.
3. Spare a thought for others. Can we just make our decisions for ourselves with no thought or care of the impact upon others? Any reasonable person with a caring thought in his head, and a caring and considerate manner in his heart would say, "No, I need to take responsibility for my actions. I need to stand and be counted. I

need to be aware of the things I do and try to ensure that they are good and productive, satisfying and successful, not only for me, but for the people around me and for the common good."

4. Follow our instincts. What would Jesus do? When we are uncertain about what to do, what do our instincts tell us? What does our gut feeling suggest that we do? While we should not let this feeling help us act on impulse, our being more in tune with ourselves (and hence with life itself) will help us to make more right decisions and help us make them be more sensitive, considerate, and responsible at the same time.
5. Think of the greater good. Do not just think of ourselves but how we can make a difference. How can we make a contribution to life as a whole?
6. Question what we are doing. Do not just go full steam ahead but question and think about what we are doing. Allow the situation to sink in. Don't do the first thing that enters into our head. Consider carefully. Look at the alternatives. Seek advice if necessary. Make the right decision at the right time for the right reasons - as often as we can.
7. Prioritize actions. While I might get lost in trying to tackle issue A, is there another issue that needs my attention and is more important. By not acting on the really important decision first, we are causing a consequence which may have gone beneath our radar.
8. Make a list of the priorities in your current life in the first column. Adjust it for several years down the road.

| <i>Now</i> | <i>After Marriage</i> |
|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 8. _____ |

VI. Question: How do you want to be remembered?

1. We never make decisions in a vacuum. Everything matters. Our words and actions will echo into eternity.

2. One moment of indiscretion will be remembered forever. It can wipe away a lifetime of good deeds; all of which will be forgotten.
3. We are all vulnerable to lapses in judgment. If we think we are not, we are setting ourselves up for failure.
4. We need to build a support system of family and friends who will care enough to challenge us when we veer off course.
5. What decisions do you need to make today to move yourself toward the outcome you want?
6. As humans, we have the privilege of determining our legacy.
7. We can decide how we want to be remembered.
8. But this is not a single choice; it is a series of choices.
9. It's never too late to change course and make your life count.