

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

Decisions . . . we all have to make them. They range from the mundane to the monumental. Many of our decisions are really rather minor, not really canting life one way or the other. What to have for dinner; what time to get up. Whether the room should remain off-white or maybe painted a light shade of tan. Should the sprinklers be set for fifteen or twenty minutes; should we plant annuals or perennials; should we renew that subscription and other such matters.

However, some decisions are huge; monstrous even. Sometimes we stand at a looming crossroads, realizing that the decision that we make right here and right now will impact our lives for the rest of our lives. Things precariously hang in the balance at those times as if this one decision tips the entire accumulated weight of our whole existence one way or the other. Sometimes it does exactly that.

We find ourselves standing at certain crossroads suddenly realizing that the accumulation of time, the intermixing chemistry of other decisions, the impact of events both in and out of our control, as well as the pressure of other forces often unidentified or unexpected . . . all of these things have rendered this place, this crossroads as a truly epic moment weighted beyond our understanding.

Deciding Not to Decide is a Decision

Sometimes the crossroads is so large and the impact of a decision is so profoundly monumental that we choose not to decide. In assuming such a posture we often feel that we have avoided the implications of the moment, somehow sidestepping this looming juncture and cutting a path around it. It's typically our hope that we can get back on the road that we were originally on before we were faced with this decision, somehow picking up where we left off.

When we arrive at these crossroads, there is no picking up the old road. Whatever's back there is gone. You can't go back to it, nor can you make it your future. The juncture itself means that whatever we've come from is concluded. Life is staking out a new phase birthed from the assorted events and circumstances and growth of the old phase. Clearly, we can choose not to choose. However, if we decide not to decide, the very crossroads that we stand before will decide for us. A juncture represents our opportunity to have a hand in whatever our future will be. If we default, life will make those decisions for us. And in the end, we may regret the choices life doles out.

Decisions Demand Bravery

Let's face it, change is hard. It's unsettling. It suggests more than simply movement. It suggests transformation; an altering of some, if not all of that which is familiar to us. It means things will be different. Things' being different involves grieving the loss of what was and embracing the uncertainty of what is to be. It's largely unknown territory. Sometimes it's totally unknown. Its life telling us that it doesn't stand still and that it won't allow us to do that either. It's both loss and gain . . . except we can't tell which of the two is greater. And so it takes bravery to stand at these crossroads and decide.

Decisions Demand Honesty

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Softening things, marginalizing issues, somehow minimizing events, being a bit tentative in embracing our responsibility, justifying actions, projecting blame, manufacturing excuses, writing things off as being human or "I'm not perfect," loosening our moral stance or compromising our ethical orientation . . . all of these things will result in poor and likely disastrous decisions. Decisions demand blatant honesty, as hard and as painful and as potentially risky as those decisions might be. Be honest with yourself; frankly honest.

Hard Decisions Often Make for an Easier Road

Often the crossroads in our lives are the most difficult right at the beginning. If we make the right decision despite the sometimes enormous cost of that decision, the road often tends to be smoother and easier later on. If we make poor or compromising decisions at the outset, the road this takes us down will typically be much harder than the decision we made to be on it. Not only will it be harder, it will ultimately be a terribly marginalized road drifting down ever descending lanes of mediocrity. We are then left asking why life is unfair or how we got here. The answers often rest on the types of decisions that we ourselves made when were faced with the opportunities presented at difficult crossroads.

Decisions are Natural

Decisions are as much a part of us and a part of life as anything else. Decisions give us a say in the writing of our life story. The pen is handed to us at critical places and life lets us write across the pages of our story. Decisions are a privilege. Rather than being puppets to something else, we are invited to participate in the adventure called life. Sometimes we'd prefer to decline the invitation. Other times we sense that the circumstances make the invitation unfair or even cruel. Yet, despite how life turns we are given a voice. We will use that voice or we won't. We will rise to the challenge at those moments, or we will default and let circumstances decide. The choice not to choose is ours as well. We should engage decision making, even at those monumental crossroads as both our privilege as well as our responsibility.

The Challenge

Decisions . . . we all make them. A large part our lives will rise and fall on our commitment to make the right decisions at the right times for the right reasons. Stand up. Seize the crossroads before you. Develop a vision that invites crossroads. It's at these crossroads that we are most frequently granted the greatest power because of the convergence of so many events at a single place in time. We can then use that power to immeasurably shape the course of our futures in ways sometimes unimagined.