

Decision Making

Faithful decision making is an important life skill. It is worth practicing with our Sunday school and CYC kids.

Every day we live and interact with lots of people: family, friends, and neighbors. In the process we make decisions that affect our relationships with them. They, in turn, make decisions that affect us. Sometimes a decision creates a new and unexpected problem, and we are suddenly faced with more challenges. New decisions are required, and new outcomes are likely to follow. This is a dynamic that we are all part of, and no one, except God, has full control of it. We have to do the best we can, being as faithful as possible at every step of the way.

"Falsely Accused!" is a decision paths activity that is designed to explore this dynamic. It simulates a real life situation and asks students to evaluate decisions and outcomes against the standards of the Bible. It asks them to wrestle with issues of conscience.

Falsely Accused! A Decision Paths Activity

Problem – A couple of your schoolmates have hit on a scheme to take advantage of an elderly lady who lives near you. They do odd jobs for her, and, in the process, they steal things from her home. You overhear them talking about this at school, and you feel awful about it. You want to put a stop to it.

Your decision – Summer vacation comes, and your schoolmates go away for a while. It is a perfect time to step in. You go to the lady and offer your services without saying anything about your schoolmates. She needs help, and she and your parents have been friends for years. She accepts your offer. She soon realizes that she is getting along very nicely without the services of your schoolmates. Problem solved, right?

Start-up Questions

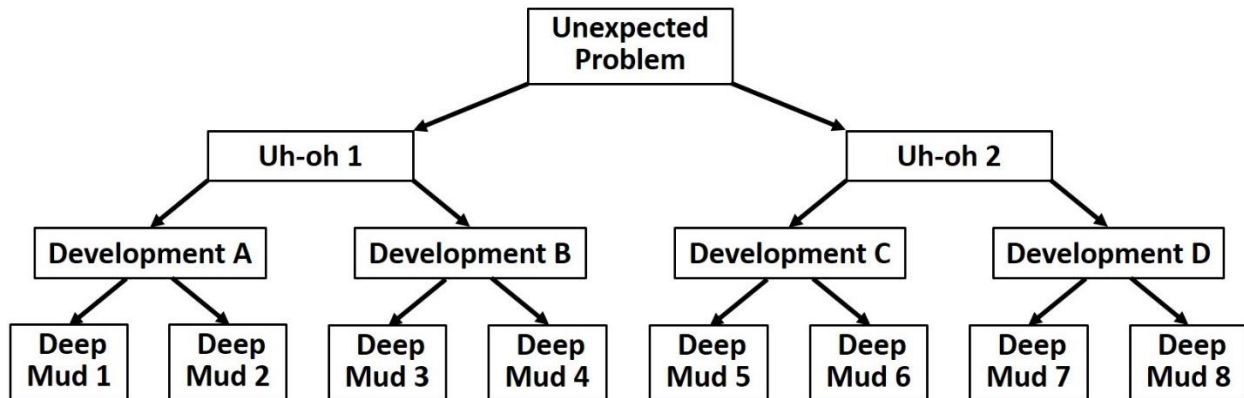
1 – What will your schoolmates think when they come back from vacation and find out what you are doing?

2 – What worries might they have?

3 – What might they do under the circumstances?

Let's find out.

DECISION PATHS



The diagram represents eight different paths that events could follow, starting with an **Unexpected Problem** that sets things off. Have your students follow any one of the paths from start to finish. At every point along each path events take a new turn. Two new directions present themselves. Follow one of the directions and keep going. True to life, the students will not know what is going to happen until it happens.

Decisions have to be made at every point along the path, and questions are raised that need to be discussed. This is where the ability to apply Bible principles in real life situations becomes a key part of the activity.

If time allows, students may want to follow more than one complete path to see what happens. At the end of the activity, consider the **Questions for Further Discussion**.

Unexpected Problem

One day while you are working for the lady your schoolmates show up. They ask you, "What did you do with the silver vase that you took from her?" (Something they had stolen and sold.) They make sure that the lady hears them, and she looks at you with immediate concern.

Question – What do you think the lady will do?

Go to **Uh-oh 1** or **Uh-oh 2** to see what happens.

Uh-oh 1 – Your schoolmates leave, and the lady goes to the place where the vase had been stored. Sure enough, it's gone! She gets very upset and questions you about it.

Question – How will you respond?

Go to **Development A** or **Development B**.

Development A – You deny that you took the vase, but she demands to know where it is. You tell her truthfully that you do not know. She does not believe you.

Question – Why didn't you tell her what you suspect about your schoolmates? What do you think she will do?

Go to **Deep Mud 1** or **Deep Mud 2**.

Deep Mud 1 – The next day a neighbor stops you on the street and confronts you about the missing vase. The lady has obviously been talking about you.

Question – You tried to help the lady, and now you are under suspicion in the neighborhood. Were your efforts worth it? What will you do?

Deep Mud 2 – She tells you to get off her property and says that she will call the police if you do not return the vase immediately.

Question – Are you responsible for returning something that you did not take? See Psalm 69:4. Since you voluntarily stepped in to help the lady, should you be ready to accept any responsibilities that go with her difficulty? What will you do?

Development B – You deny that you took the vase and tell her that you think your schoolmates took it.

Question – If you were the lady, what would you do?

Go to **Deep Mud 3** or **Deep Mud 4**.

Deep Mud 3 – The lady immediately contacts your schoolmates and questions them about the missing vase. Of course, they deny that they took it! They claim that they only heard about the missing vase *from you*.

Question – You have put yourself in jeopardy by getting involved in this situation. Will you be quick to do anything like this again if you get the chance? Explain.

Deep Mud 4 – The lady questions your schoolmates, and they tell her that they are “almost certain” you have been taking things from her. They produce a piece of jewelry (something else they had stolen) and ask if it is hers. It is, of course, and they tell her that they found it on your bike, adding “how happy they are” to get it back to her!

Question – Aren't your schoolmates clever! Can people save their necks by being clever like this? What are the outcomes of this kind of behavior?

Question – How will you feel when you find out what your schoolmates have done? At this point, do you want justice? Will justice solve the problem?

Uh-oh 2 – The lady tells all of you to come with her to the place where the vase had been stored. You follow her and, of course, the vase is gone. She demands that the thief return her vase or she will call the police.

Question – Now what?

Go to **Development C** or **Development D**.

Development C – You tell the lady in front of your schoolmates exactly what you heard them say at school about taking her things.

Question – How will your schoolmates react to this?

Go to **Deep Mud 5** or **Deep Mud 6**.

Deep Mud 5 – Your schoolmates accuse you of lying and challenge you to prove your charges against them. Then they tell the lady to go ahead and call the police. They're anxious to clear their names!

Question – Can people bluff their way out of difficulty? If they succeed, is it the end of the problem for them? What else needs to be done?

Question – What have you accomplished at this point? Did you expect things to turn out this way?

Question – Are there unpredictable risks involved when you try to help someone who has a problem? Is it worth getting involved?

Deep Mud 6 – Your schoolmates deny your charges and accuse you of lying and cheating "all the time." They even dig up some dirt about you that allegedly happened at school.

Question – Things are getting ugly, but, almost certainly, there will be no more stealing from the lady, and this is what you wanted to stop in the first place. What has it cost you?

Question – If the "dirt about you" is true, where does it leave you? What lesson should you take away from this?

Development D – Your schoolmates immediately tell the lady that they can prove who the thief is. They invite her to look at your bike which is in front of her house. They "think" they saw something. (Of course, they saw something! They planted one of her bracelets on your bicycle before coming into the house.)

Question – How low can people go? What will happen when she goes to your bike and finds her bracelet?

Go to **Deep Mud 7** or **Deep Mud 8**.

Deep Mud 7 – The lady goes to your bike and finds the bracelet. You strongly protest that you did not take it. You tell her that your schoolmates must have put it there. They counter by saying that they haven't been in her house "for ages," so there is no way they could have taken the bracelet. And how dare you slander them!

Question – Where does this leave you? Have you accomplished anything? And if you have accomplished something, has it been worth all the grief you've gotten?

Question – What will you do at this point?

Deep Mud 8 – The bracelet is discovered on your bicycle, and you tell the lady that your schoolmates must have set you up. She throws all of you off her property with a renewed threat to call the police.

Question – How do you feel about this development? Is there anything you can do at this point to regain credibility with the lady? Should you try to achieve reconciliation with her? If so, how?

Questions for Further Discussion

1 – Is there a different way that you could have handled this problem right from the beginning? If so, what could you have done?

2 – How many Bible characters can you think of who were falsely accused in spite of doing the right thing?

Here is a partial list:

Genesis 39:11-20 – Joseph by Potiphar's wife.

1 Kings 21:1-16 – Naboth by Jezebel.

Jeremiah 38:1-6 – Jeremiah by the officials of Judah.

Matthew 26:59-66 – Jesus by the Jewish council.

Acts 6:8-15 – Stephen by synagogue members in Jerusalem.

Acts 16:16-24 – Paul by the Philippian slave owners.

In each case:

- Why did the faithful person get involved in the situation?
- What motivated their enemy or enemies to make false accusations against them?
- What happened to them as a result of being falsely accused?
- How did the person handle themselves in the face of unfair treatment? Did it stop them from doing the right thing?