

Decision Making

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

The process begins with a problem. The problem demands a decision, whether we like it or not. And decisions have outcomes. In many cases, the outcomes are beyond our ability to control; they can even introduce new problems. Faith has to steer a steady course through this labyrinth of unpredictable events.

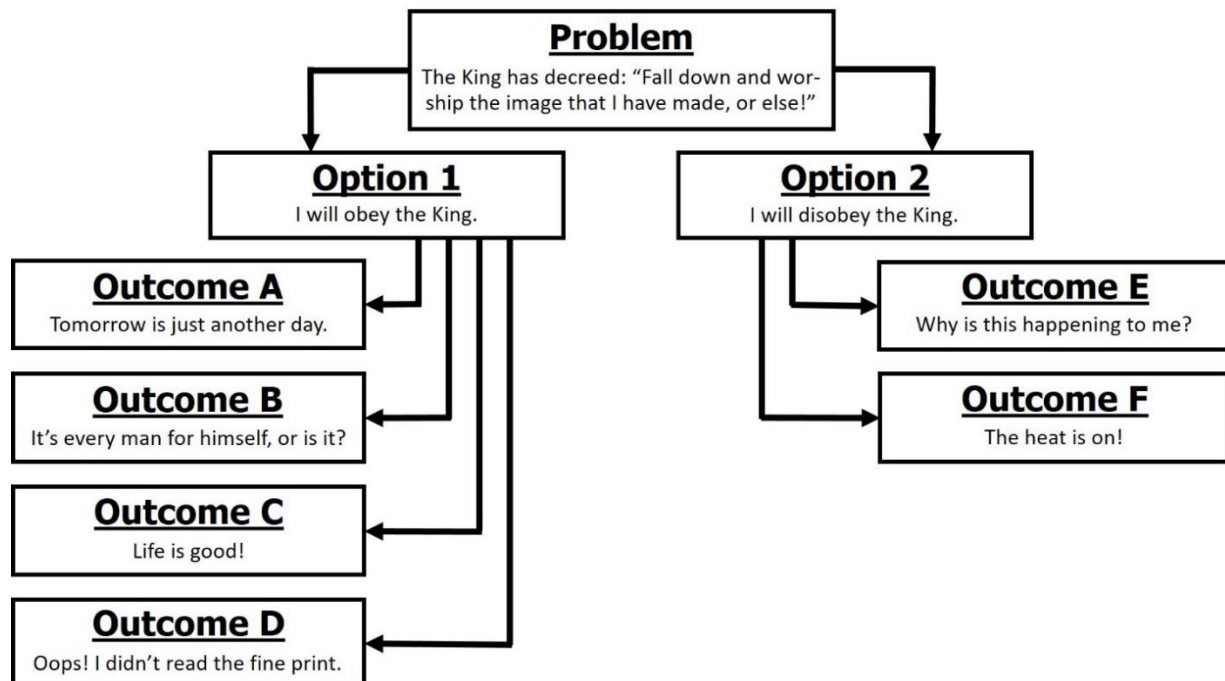
In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego make an incredibly faithful decision when faced with the prospect of a fiery death. It is easy to take their decision for granted when we read the story. But faithful decisions don't just happen. They are deliberately made, often under difficult circumstances, knowing that an unfaithful decision might be much easier to make in the short term.

The story of Daniel's friends – and a little imagination – gives us a good opportunity to explore the demands of faithful decision making with our young people.

Have the kids read Daniel 3:14-18. Then look at the diagram together and talk about these questions:

- Why is the king's decree a problem?
- You're Shadrach. How many options (decisions) do you have without running away from the problem?
- Which decision is faithful? Which one is not faithful? Why?
- Do decisions have just one possible outcome? Do they always have predictable outcomes? Please explain.

You're Shadrach. What will you do? Daniel 3



Explore the possibilities represented in the diagram, including some things that could have happened *but didn't*. Let your students choose their own journey:

- Have them select one of the two options to take.
- Then have them select one of its outcomes to explore. True to life, they will not know the exact nature of the outcome until it is revealed to them.

Repeat the process for other option - outcome combinations, and discuss the question or questions that go with each outcome.

Option 1 – I will obey the king.

Outcome A – Tomorrow is just another day. I did what the king required and nothing changed. Life went on as it always has. It is no better and no worse than before.

Question – If you compromise the principles of godly obedience and nothing happens to you – i.e., life goes on as it always has, no better and no worse – how will this affect your ability to make faithful decisions in the future?

Outcome B – It's every man for himself, or is it? I did what the king required, but my friends, Meshach and Abednego, did not. They got into trouble with the king, who told them to follow my example or else!

Question – If, as a Christadelphian, you openly compromise the principles of godly obedience, how might your actions affect other Christadelphians and other young people?

Outcome C – Life is good! I did what the king required and good things happened. The king honored everyone who obeyed him. Life is suddenly better for me.

Question – Does God let good things happen to us, even when we are unfaithful? Why?

Question – If you compromise the principles of godly obedience and gain immediate benefits as a result, how will this affect your decision making in the future?

Outcome D – Oops! I didn't read the fine print. I did what the king required and my conscience suddenly bothered me. To make matters worse, the king now requires me to give the same allegiance to all of his demands every day.

Question – If you openly compromise the principles of godly obedience – e.g., at school, at work, with your friends and neighbors, or with the government – and are then expected to do it all the time, how do you get out of this trap?

Option 2 – I will disobey the king.

Outcome E – Why is this happening to me? I disobeyed the king and was arrested. I told him that I will only bow down to the God of Israel. The king gave me no second chance. I was immediately sentenced to death.

Question – *Does God let bad things happen to us, even when we are faithful? Why?*

Question – *Since you know that "an idol is nothing," wouldn't it be better to bow down and keep everybody happy?*

Question – *If you suffer for doing the right thing, how will it affect your resolve to make faithful decisions in the future?*

Question – *How might it affect others around you?*

Outcome F – The heat is on! I disobeyed the king, but my friends, Meshach and Abednego, did not. The king called the three of us together and demanded that I obey him as well, or he would put *all* of us to death.

Question – *How easy is it to do the right thing when those around you give in to the pressures of the world?*

Question – *How easy is it to be faithful when you know that your obedience may cause problems for someone else?*

Question – *If you take a stand for what is right, and your loved ones – e.g., family and ecclesial members – suffer or are endangered as a result, what can you do about it?*