

The Top 5 Decisions Of Life

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James Bronner: The quality of your decisions will determine the quality of your life.

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(Music Playing: 00:00:18- 00:00:47)

Automated Voice: And now for 8241, The Top 5 Decisions of Life.

James Bronner: Welcome to Brothers of the Word because brother you need the word. Well, the Bible says in James 1:5 that, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Let me see just by a show of hands, how many of you have prayed that prayer and asked God for wisdom before in your lives? All right, well, that's most of the people here and I imagine it is probably most of our television and internet ordinance as well. So, I can tell you today that at least part of that is being asset today as He sent me to give you some wisdom today. And even though it's coming from the Book of James, I'm also a James. Amen.

And this will be a message of wisdom. Not any of it is really new wisdom but it is all tested through the generations and vistas of time. So, just turn to your neighbor and just tell them, "We're going to get some old-fashioned wisdom today." So, I might be a young man but I'm going to give you some old wisdom today.

The Bible says that, "In all your getting, get understanding." The current generation, the millennials, they, a lot of times, seek things and status instead of wisdom and understanding. And I speak to you today from the subject of the Top 5 Decisions of Life. The Top 5 Decisions of Life. And maybe the Lord, sometimes in the future, will lead pastor to do a series on this subject one day as I truly believe that each one of these decisions need a full message. But since I don't preach every Sunday. I'm just going to have to give you and all of you today and let him finish the detail work at a later time.

The early church -- they started in homes and much of ministry is still to be done in homes today. When we grew up, our

brother bishop Dale, he taught a home bible class every Thursday night for 13 long years before he ever set foot in a church to pastor. And even from the three Brothers of The Word, our children, our personal children, they get more teaching and wisdom from us at home with our teaching than they do from the Ark of Salvation. So, that just tells you your home should be your first ministry place for your children. And not even just for your children, but even yourself. It ought to be the place where you're getting more from your own study and more from your own prayer and your own worship than you get at church.

So, that is the first lesson of it -- it's the church. And that's how the early church started. They didn't go to a temple. They started going from home to home. And this message today comes out of my home ministry to my own family. And it was impressed upon my spirit that some of the things that I was teaching my own seven children to teach God's children as a body. My church family.

And we have a home mission statement that can be found in its entirety at JamesBronner.com. And we go over it with examples every single month with the family so that it becomes engrained in all of the family members. How many of you know -- if you don't go over and review something that you'll lose it? And I'm included with that myself. I have to go over for my own self. Still have to remind myself to live by the principles that I'm teaching in the home and that's the reason I believe so many pastors have issues at home nowadays because they are preaching and teach one thing but it's not demonstrated and lived out at home in their own lives. But my wife will tell you that I do live what I preach. So, this is coming out of the home.

And I remember there was an African minister and he was teaching on the subject of fornication. And he was telling the people about what all of the Bible said about it and doing just an in-depth study on the biblical principles of fornication and going through the Hebrew and Greek and really going in-depth.

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And when he got to the end of his message, he said that, "I want to have total transparency with you." And he said that, "This is truly what I believe that the word of God says about this

subject.” And then he said, “It’s what I really believe in my heart.” But he got to the end and he said, “I don’t want to be a (00:05:15). This is what I truly believe. But it don’t mean I do that.”

So, I don’t want to just preach it to you today. I want this to be something that I actually do in my life. And my parents, they taught us three main principles which you’ve heard many times. God first, family second, and business third. They were given from their parents three main principles. And we had it in our generation, three additional principles. All of which are found in that home mission statement. This message will be about that first principle of our generation that was added. And that principle is that of wisdom -- to make wise decisions.

The quality of your decisions will determine the quality of your life. So, if you look at your life, it will tell you something about your decisions. The quality of your life will be determined by the quality of your decisions. So, in our mission statement, I went one step further realizing that there were certain decisions that really affected their life greatly and I listed on their five top decisions that impact your life the most.

That’s what we’ll be talking about today and I put the five decisions on there because I wanted them to have weight and importance to the children so that as they go through life and they are confronted with one of these decisions, I want from us going over in month after month after month after month, that when they hit one of these decisions, that they are recognizing, “This is one of those things that daddy has been teaching me month after month. I need to take my time on it. This is a weighty matter. I need to pray about it. I need to study on this. I need to seek wise counsel on this. I don’t need to make a mistake. This is one of those top five decisions.”

So, that’s why I listed them out and we’ll be going over them today. And Pastor Nathaniel, he even has the same five areas as a core that he teaches his family every week in the study. A little different form but they are the exact same areas. Bishop Dale says this, he says, “You are born looking like your parents but you die looking like your decisions.” You’re born looking like your parents but you die looking like your decisions. When you look back over your life, most of the things that really mess you up and you really regret and would have gone back and then

when you really think about it, the majority of those things, you got into them because of a bad decision somewhere.

There are some things that just haphazardly happen but that's one percent of stuff. Most of the stuff that people deal with, you can trace it back. It was some decision. You made a decision to hook up with this person. You made a decision to do this with your money. You made a decision to take a job here. You made a decision to put this in your body. There were some decisions that affected most of the things in your life and even though I don't believe in luck, I believe in blessings.

There are some things that just happen by -- research has found that the better decisions, you make the better luck you seem to have in life. 90% plus of all the counseling that I've ever done, it was a result of the violation of one of the five decisions that I'm teaching on today. And it could be seen in the person's life. Over 90% of the counseling that I've done. And I placed the five top decisions in order of importance but the degree and to which one is out of whack can make it have a greater impact on your life than one above it.

So, let's run through them right quick. Decision number one is to serve the right God. Serve the right God. And the wording here is intentional. Didn't just say choose the right God. It said to serve the right God. There's a big difference. In the last chapter of Ecclesiastes and next to the last verse, the wisest man that ever lived, Solomon, said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter." After everything that he taught(ph), after everything that he'd been through, he said, "This is the conclusion of the whole matter. All of my wisdom, the gift of wisdom that God has blessed me with. Here are the conclusions." In the last chapter next to the last verse. "Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of men."

Next lesson, listen to what Jesus said about this. And Jesus was God incarnate. So, His wisdom was even greater than Solomon because God was the source of Solomon's wisdom so this was wisdom made manifest in Jesus.

He said in Matthew 22:36-40, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Jesus made it plain throughout the Gospel that to love God is not just to say it but you have to live it. You’ve got to serve him and show your love. And this decision is placed first in the list because it has the greatest consequence of time. Everything else we do is only good for that length of time we’re on the earth. Very little of it goes beyond it but that’s what you do and this first one goes beyond the grave.

The Bible says, “What prophet is a man that gained the whole world but to lose his own soul.” When you get to the end of this life, on that judgment day and have to stand before your creator, there’s only two things that’s going to matter. They’re not going to ask you how much money you made, what kind of position you hailed, what neighborhood or school you went to, who your friends were. He’s going to ask number one, “What did you believe about my son Jesus that I sent to save you?” Number two, he’s going to ask you, “What did you do with the gifts and the talent and the mission that I gave you to do upon that earth?”

You’re going to have to answer those two things. I don’t care who you are. I don’t care if you’re the President of the United States. I don’t care if you’re Donald Trump and you got billions. You can talk your way out of the media or something but when you stand before the one who created you, I don’t care how sleek your talk is, you’re going to have to answer those two things and he’s going to know whether you’re telling the truth or not. So, that first thing is choose to serve the right God.

Decision number two is to value your health through proper diet, exercise and lifestyle and lifestyle includes rest, stress, weight, and addictions. Health is placed number two because you can’t fully enjoy a lot of the other things of life like relationships and even your money. It will even limit some of the ways you can serve God if you’re in too bad of a shape and in the hospital. You can’t even do your full mission. So, health is

very important and it's a foundational thing to everything else so health is number two and health crisis is the number one reason for bankruptcy in this country. So, this area will mess up your money and your job as well.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." We make announcements every Sunday after program telling you to keep the temple of the Lord clean. What about the temple of the Holy Ghost? How much more should you keep that clean, the temple where his living spirit resides?

3 John 2:2 says, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." And we focus a lot of time on that first part of a prosper and then forget about the be in health part which is actually more important than your money prospering. And I'm fully aware that the Bible has the scripture talking about exercise, profit is little. Let me put that in context for you and give you the revelation about that. You have to look at the context of when it was written and to whom it was written.

The apostles, first of all, was trying to get you ready for the afterlife and they were looking from an eternal perspective and in the short span of years, there is a little bit importance. But the number two thing with it, you have to look at the day they were living in. In that day, you had to walk just about everywhere you went. You had to go out in the field and get your food. You can't just call somebody on the phone. You had to walk a mile and go knock on their door so you had to go down and get your water. You had to wash your clothes. So, exercise didn't really extend their life in it because they got the health benefits of exercise just in their day to day living.

But that's no longer true in these days of automobiles and stores and Amazon and washing machines and cellphones and desk-based jobs. We do need an additional amount of exercise to extend our life. And I'm guilty myself. I order stuff off the Internet every week. I had a package come in just last week and I get excited sometimes when I ordered something that I'm waiting on and I got an alert on my phone and I looked at it and it said, "Your package has been delivered 15 minutes ago."

I said, "What?" I went out and got off my chair and I said, "Who got my package in this house?" I said, "Don't you know I have been waiting on this thing?" I got this thing sitting on the counter and I asked the doorman and he said, "Nothing." I said, "Look what my email said on that package? Is that your face?"

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Really, the convenience can have us wrapped up. So, I'm guilty myself but research shows that every hour you spend exercising increases your life expectancy by 7 hours and the remaining hours are spent feeling better. So, that's the benefit. You can look at seven times benefit that you get back in your time so you can't use an excuse, "I don't have time to exercise." You're going to get seven times return back that time.

I got to move on. Decision number three is to marry the right spouse. Marry the right spouse. I got some amen's on this. Somebody can relate to that one. Proverbs 21:10 says, "Who can find a virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies." And I tell you, a virtuous man is worth more than gold too, I tell you.

So, that spouse is very important. Research shows that marriage increases your life expectancy but difficult and strained relationships were bad for mental health and being single was better than being in a strained relationship. Committed, loving relationships reduce premature death by as much as 50%. Everybody won't get married and if marriage isn't for you, then research also shows that good close friends and even pets also increase life expectancy and happiness and it's not just marriage now but it's positive loving marriage. So, understand the context of that.

Negative relationships can have negative health consequences; hence, this decision wasn't just said to marry but to marry the right spouse and that's the difference. And if you are already married, hearing this and you're not in a good relationship at all, I want you to be like Pastor Dave. You can scratch that one off the list. I already messed that one. I didn't blow that one. What you got next? No, you can still improve the quality of your relationship by focus, by energy and time and willingness to change and forgive.

I'm not even going to give you a book or tell you to go to counseling. I will give you something real quick, real simple that won't cost you a dime. What I found with people, most couples already know what they need to do to be honest with you. Most of them already know so the two of you can sit down at a table after hearing this message and the first one to ask the other one, "What one or two things could I do that will help improve the quality of this relationship? The second question is what one or two things could I stop doing or do less of that will improve the quality of this relationship. And then the other person asks those same two questions. If you write that down and do that stuff, that will improve your relationship more than going to any counseling.

So, it's very simple but people don't want to change. They don't want to do the thing they already know. Really, people already know the things that's causing them the problem. You just got to do it. Like Nike said, "Just do it." So that's a freebie for you today. If you will do those things on both sides, you will have great improvement in your quality of marriage. Also, your spouse determines half of your children in progeny from the looks to talents to personality to diseases to culture. All of these things pass down from both parents.

I posted a video on Facebook about a week ago of my son, Joseph, and daughter, Jamie, dancing and of that post, one of my high school classmates responded on that and he said, "James, how in the world can your children sing and dance? And he said, "In school, I remember you. You can't sing or dance." And I replied to the post and I said, "I'm going to be honest with you. You're right. But I married somebody who can sing and dance and now I got children that can sing and dance."

So, be careful who you hook up with because that stuff is going to come down through the line. So, if you got some teenager that's doing some crazy stuff right now and you're trying to figure out where did this craziness come from, look at your spouse and think back through it. "Are there any streaks of craziness here?" If that answer comes back no, then, I'm not even going to finish that. I don't want anybody going home saying, "Pastor James was talking about me today."

And even at this past teen night is, we were talking with the teens and we had a question and answer where they could write

down questions on a card and ask them anonymously. One of the teens asked, “How do I deal with annoying or mean people?” And after I answered the question, I said, “Now, this is the answer for the short-term.” But I said, “You need to take the lesson from this answer and apply it to relationships in your life.”

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That’s where you will really have the problem. I said, “You feel they are annoying that this person in school is giving, you’re just part of the day. Imagine if you’re hooked up and married to this person?” And I went on to explain that how some friends, they can say the same thing that another person can say but it irritates you more from this other person. So I said, “You have to be sure that you hook up with somebody that’s not irritating and not annoying you. You have to look past the looks and sexuality and all of these things that people look for and they ignore the way that they communicate together. That will cause problems later.”

So, I used it as a life lesson with them even talking about relationships and even we taught a seminar that’s at the lovescreener.com teaching you how to hook up with that compatible and right person. God is love and he created us in his image to love others. And even the top commandment he gave us was to love. Love and relationships are what we were created to have and we were not created to be in isolation.

The first thing that anybody tell you who studied psychology is that when people get into depression, they want to be by themselves in the dark. They want to pull away and be by themselves. On the flipside of that, if somebody come in to some money or something happened at work or something happened positive in your life, the first thing you want to do is go tell somebody that you love, to share it with them. So, loving relationships help increase that quality of life.

Decision number four is to spend less money that you earn. Romans 13:8 from the NIV says, “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.”

If you spend more money than you earn, sooner or later you will end up having debt that you cannot pay and it will add excess stress to your life and tarnish your character in the eyes of that person or that institution. It will also throw you out of line with your tithes and offerings which will in return limit your blessings from God which compounds the problem of you're in debt already and now the rest of your money is not blessed. So this is a very important principle. We ought to be good financial stewards over that which God has given us especially if we want them to bless us with more.

Just as Jesus demonstrated in the Parable of the Talents and when I was doing research on that parable, I had no idea how much those talents were worth and I thought the talent was a little coin that he gave them. But as I researched it, talent actually was a unit of weight and the value of it was equal to 6,000 denarii, when a denarii was about a day's wage for the average worker back then.

So if you took a day's wage and even took minimum wage now it's \$7.25 and you multiplied it times 8 hours a day times 6,000 days, one talent was equal to \$348,000. That was the approximate relative value to today's time in that Parable of the Talent where one was given one, another two, and another five. So the smallest was given \$348,000 and the greatest was given over \$1.7 million. Now you can understand why that master was so mad when he came back and he barely hadn't done anything with all them hundreds of thousands of dollars. That was a lot more money than I realized was in the parable.

My father used to have two main statements about money. Real deep and number one, he said, "If your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep will be your downfall." If your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep will be your downfall. The second statement that I heard him repeatedly say about money was romance without finance is a nuisance. It sounds funny but it has a lot of truth to it and some of you need to write that one down. I mean, it shouldn't be, but money is the number one reason for divorce in this country. So that statement holds true today.

Research has shown that happiness doesn't increase much after \$75,000 a year, but on the flipside, high debt correlates with anxiety, stress and depression. Especially non-mortgage debt

like credit cards or other loans and it's been shown that stress comes from debt that it even may eliminate all of the happiness that comes from spending the money. So you don't even get to happen is that the debt actually cancels it out and just making more money as most people think, is not the key because you can spend any amount of money, you all can look at the news every month and see athletes and entertainers that made millions of dollars, they research lottery winners and they found that the majority of lottery winners were broke five years after they won all of those millions.

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So just making more is not the main thing because you can spend any amount of money.

Let's move on to decision number five, the final one. It's to work in the right field. Solomon in Ecclesiastes 2:24 talks about finding satisfaction in your work. He looked at all of life and realized that you spend most of your waking hours at work. So he basically came to the wisdom that if this is where you're going to spend the majority of your time, then you might as well be at a place that you can enjoy.

Now think about it, you probably spend over 95% of your waking hours in two things, either at work or with that loved one that we talked about in -- so that's over 95% of your time. So that shows you right there that those are two big decisions of life because that's going to be where over 95% of the rest of your life waking hours will be spent. So here are some qualities of those that have more happiness in their work.

Number one is being able to find meaning or purpose in your work. So you're not just looking at this, I'm just pushing papers all day long. If you can find some meaning in your work, that helps. Good relationships with colleagues and your boss. When you've got mean bosses on you, it takes away happiness at work, research has shown. Good work-life balance, which does not require you to just work all of the time. So many jobs, you get home, you still got to get on the computer and keep working.

The fourth one is security and appreciation. If they have those two things on the job, it helps. And then fifth one is a shorter commute. If you've got to drive an hour and 20 minutes every

morning in traffic, rush hour and then drive an hour and 20 home, they found that that increased stress takes away some happiness from the job.

So those are some simple things to look forward to get more happiness out of your work. Again, these are the top five decisions of life. Serve the right God. Value your health through proper diet, exercise and lifestyle. Marry the right spouse. Spend less money than you earn. Work in the right field. The quality of your life will be determined by the quality of your decisions. Decide today what type of life that you want.

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