

Decision making

Kierkegaard, a Danish Philosopher who lived in the 19th century, indicated that he found decision making very painful. His melancholic temperament probably did not help. Let us face it, we all can struggle at times. For example, when we go to the supermarket to buy bread do we buy good healthy bread with coarse fibre, or do we buy the white bread which is on special? Sometimes there are so many racks it is even hard to find any that we want.

Decision making in the church is essential if the church is to make headway. Even doing nothing is a decision made.

Many pastors find decision making challenging, even with experience, and may lose sleep over it. The process can be hindered by temperament, fear of failure, or concerns about commitment, especially when major projects are being planned.

How to make decisions

1. *Pray for godly wisdom.* James 1 makes it abundantly clear that it will be given to those who ask. The successful businessman in the church is not always the wisest person. Some people make decisions through a logical process of thinking, while others do it intuitively. Whatever way you do it, always listen to the quiet voice of the Spirit for insight.

2. *Learn to look at the problem from different angles.* For example, if it is to do with constructing a church building ask:

- Is this the right locality to build in?
- Would this style of building meet the needs of the community and the church family?
- Would the size of the building suit the congregation in 3 or 5 years time?
- How will the money be raised?
- Is the church congregation happy with the concept?

Do your homework well. It can be useful to ask for outside advice.

3. *List different possible solutions.* People can help you do that. To stand with people you need to understand them. People think the way they do because of their experience of life. This is not a bad thing and we should be keen to get a wider perspective on the situation.

'Victory is won through many advisors' Proverbs 24:6.

4. *Do not rush into making a major decision.* Seldom is there the need to do that. Although some people can mentally assent, emotionally they may lag well behind. Give them time to catch up.
5. *Never make a major decision on your own.* There is safety in numbers. If things go wrong, others will support you.
6. *Exercise faith.* This often involves taking a risk. Throughout the Bible, men and women followed God without knowing what would happen. Churches were planted, the sick

were healed, and the gospel was preached. If you do nothing, you will accomplish nothing. *Make the decision.* Take the step!

Implementing the decision

1. *Choose the right timing.* For example, there is no point adding a person to your staff if there is not the necessary ongoing financial support available. Sharing the vision with the church in the right way should in time provide the necessary finance.
2. *Have the right person take the lead in sharing the decision reached.* The pastor is not always the right one for that. For example, if you have a feeling a particular influential person is going to object to the church holding an outdoor service, then have someone else they respect announce the coming event.
3. *Be open to other suggestions.* It is all too easy for pastors to have projects wrapped up neatly in their mind. After all, much of their time is spent in thinking, planning and praying about it. Others though, do not have that advantage. For example, if you want to appoint an elder to the leadership team, find out first what the church thinks about it. Do not make the matter so heavy that people are afraid to approach you with their thoughts. Genuinely listen to what they have to say. If they are uninformed about the situation, it then gives you a splendid opportunity to clarify issues.

Evaluate the decision

Once you have decided to go ahead, the temptation is to stop asking questions. Do not. It is more important than ever to pose hard questions like;

- Is it really working out?
- Is this really the best solution?
- Should we reconsider and try another idea even at this point?
- Can we continue to live with the consequences?

When decisions go wrong

They will at times, simply because we are human and because we are in an intense spiritual battle.

1. *Admit the mistake and apologise for it.* Make sure that you mean it. It is when we cover up a mistake or blame others that people find it hard to forgive.
2. *Learn from the mistake made.* It can be a valuable experience. A stumbling stone can then become a stepping stone taking you to the next stage.