



Leader Tip: A fun icebreaker game where students need to make the right choice is “Useless Trivia.” You can find it at DYM here:

<https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/p/useless-trivia/trivia-8325.html>

[Slide] We’ve probably all been told or said, the phrase, “make good choices,” right? The standard response is an eye roll. Why? Because none of us want to admit we regularly make bad choices. Some of you are getting tense right now; “speak for yourself, [use your own name!] Some of you are thinking, the person next to me really needs to hear this sermon. Go ahead and elbow them and say, “[use your own name!] talking to you today.” Did all of you that just do that? Not a good choice! Have fun trying to hang out later.

Here's how I know we all make bad choices: raise your hand if you have ever looked back on something and thought to yourself, “what was I thinking?” We’ve all made choices that we look back on and wonder how we could have been so off. [Leader tip: use your own story of a funny bad choice.] Twenty years ago, I decided to try snowboarding on a winter retreat. There were some middle school dudes that wanted to learn and needed an adult to be with them. I was like, I can do this, it will be easy. But it turned out, I could NOT do this. I hurt myself in so many different ways I literally could hardly walk or move for days after. The worst part was, I thought I would be okay because I was really, really good at the SSX Tricky snowboarding video game. I was like, “I understand how it works.”

Bad choices. Sometimes we can laugh about them. Sometimes, they cause pain and disruption for days, months, years, or even lifetimes. In the Old Testament we read about Rehoboam, King Solomon’s son, who modeled a type of choice that’s danger to be bad at.

[Slide] *1 Kings 12:1-19 (NLT) ¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king. ² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of this, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. ³ The leaders of Israel summoned him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel went to speak with Rehoboam.*

Rehoboam may have been a bit nervous when he went to Shechem; the transition between kings was a time of instability and vulnerability.¹ Each of the previous Israelite successions of kings had significant conflict and bloodshed; from Saul to David saw a civil war, and from David to Solomon saw a number of rivals that were killed. The transition of kings was a dangerous time.

Further complicating this tension was the arrival of Jeroboam. Cue the ominous music. He had been Solomon's labor administrator but ultimately became a leader of a rebellion. 1 Kings 11 introduced him, his rebellion, and the shocking news that the prophet Ahijah told him he would become king over ten of Israel's twelve tribes. Solomon tried to have him killed so he fled to Egypt to escape. And now he was back, with the leaders of the nation, coming to talk to Rehoboam.

[Slide] ***4 "Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects." 5 Rehoboam replied, "Give me three days to think this over. Then come back for my answer." So the people went away.***

Solomon had essentially enslaved many of his own people, requiring forced labor for his many projects.² He really did not finish well. Jeroboam's offer was a good one, especially given the prophecy he had received.

[Slide] ***6 Then King Rehoboam discussed the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?" 7 The older counselors replied, "If you are willing to be a servant to these people today and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects."***

Man, that was some solid advice right there. And it made sense to listen to the counselors. It was a standard thing in ancient empires for a king to have elders; elders played an important role for each king in Israel over the generations because of their experience, combined wisdom, and expected leadership.

¹ David T. Lamb, *1-2 Kings (The Story of God Bible Commentary)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 167.

² *Ibid*, 168.

[Slide] ⁸ But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and were now his advisers. ⁹ "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

[Slide] ¹⁰ The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers who want a lighter burden: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! ¹¹ Yes, my father laid heavy burdens on you, but I'm going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!'"

The scorpions mentioned here weren't the stinging arachnids we may think about. These scorpions were nail barbed whips.³ The author called these advisors young, but they were probably around the same age as Rehoboam who was 41 years old.⁴ Their age didn't match their advice, though, did it? It was juvenile. How should I put this? The Hebrew word translated "waist" here actually means "loins." Their "little finger" comment? It's a euphemism.⁵ Classy.

[Slide] ¹² Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to hear Rehoboam's decision, just as the king had ordered. ¹³ But Rehoboam spoke harshly to the people, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors ¹⁴ and followed the counsel of his younger advisers.

[Slide] He told the people, "My father laid heavy burdens on you, but I'm going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!" ¹⁵ So the king paid no attention to the people. This turn of events was the will of the Lord, for it fulfilled the Lord's message to Jeroboam son of Nebat through the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.

[Slide] ¹⁶ When all Israel realized that the king had refused to listen to them, they responded, "Down with the dynasty of David! We have no interest in the son of Jesse. Back to your homes, O Israel! Look out for your own house, O David!" So the people of Israel returned home. ¹⁷ But Rehoboam continued to rule over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do we learn about Rehoboam in these verses? What stands out to you?
- Have you made the mistake of looking for someone to give you the answer you wanted to hear instead of needed to hear? What happened?
- Why is it so important to make good decisions?
- Who is someone in your life that makes wise decisions? What can you learn from their example?
- Read James 1:5 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Why is it so important to go to God about decisions?
- What kinds of decisions should we bring to God?
- Read Proverbs 12:15 and 19:20. What do we learn about God from these verses? Who are people that you know that are wise?
- Read 2 Timothy 4:3 and Proverbs 27:6. What does it mean to accept wise advice? Why can that be hard?
- What is a decision you need wisdom for this week? How can we help pray for you?



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