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For Grandparents, Parents and Seniors

By Rick Shrader

The Junctions in the Road

One of the things that is often overlooked in literature on the family is the wisdom we need when we make big decisions in life. I call these junctions in the road. When we come to an intersection that only has two alternatives, we can only take one of them. That decision will change everything in our lives. Job responded to Zophar, “Have you not asked those who travel the road? And do you not know their signs?” (Job 21:29).

Birth. We came into the world by someone else’s decision. It is a junction for which we had no choice. This junction results in many circumstances that we will live with the rest of our lives: our parents, our looks, our country of origin, the inflection of our voice, our ancestors.

Salvation. The first big junction in the road we all come to is the decision to ask Jesus to be our Savior. Even to refuse Him is to take a different road in life. Where would you be now if you hadn’t taken the “right” turn? For those who consequently have sought to know God’s will, almost everything has changed. “All things have become new.”

Marriage. Next to salvation, the decision to marry is the next largest decision you will make in your life. If you are faithful to your wedding covenant, you will live with this person the rest of your life. Her family is your family. Her inherited problems are your problems and her inherited blessings are your blessings. The children you produce will be a unique blend between the two of you which no other two people could possibly produce. The wedding vows promised that you will go down this path together until death parts you.

Children. Children are produced by a sexual union whether in marriage or out of marriage. The

child that is produced by that action (junction) is your responsibility for the rest of your life and theirs. In proper marriage, the decision to have children is a momentary junction with life-long responsibility. You will work the rest of your life to support, clothe and feed, teach, counsel, and bandage this person all your days. A husband and wife team is the God-ordained way to do this. A father and mother is the ordained means to produce godly children that worship God and eventually choose this same junction in their lives.

Daily decisions. Life is a list of daily decisions, common junctions in the road. There are wrong and sinful turns. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov 16:25). There are decisions that are neither moral or immoral but change one’s life. “For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh” (Prov 4:22). There are those decisions that keep you in the will of God. “He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psa 23:3). “He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

Death. The last junction in the road is to depart from this life. God should be the one to make this turn at His own time. Some usurp God’s will and exit this life prematurely and sinfully by suicide or assisted death. Jesus met with Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration and “spoke of His decease [Gr. “exodus]” which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk 9:31). It was as though Jesus was planning for the exit. Peter, one of the witnesses of this event, therefore said, “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease [exodus]” (2 Pet. 1:14-15).

Observations on Junctions in the Road

Louis L'Amour: "How often it is that a whim may alter the course of our existences! How often the simple decision whether to go right or left when one leaves a doorway can change so much! A man may turn to the right and walk straightaway into all manner of evil, and to the left, all manner of good." *Fair Blows the Wind*, 235.

C.S. Lewis: "But in friendship, being free of all that, we think we have chosen our peers. In reality, a few years' difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another, posting to different regiments, the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting—any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of the Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, Who said to the disciples, 'Ye have not chosen me but, I have chosen you,' can truly say to every group of Christian friends, 'You have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another.'" *The Four Loves*, p. 126.

Robert Alden: "The precepts of Proverbs are like signposts at critical junctions in life where we might stray from the road. Carefully mapping out our journey, making intersections which might be confusing, and noting dangers to be avoided along the way are the best ways to guarantee a safe trip." *Proverbs*, p. 48.

Ken Mondschein: [on Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken"] "Frost uses the metaphor of a traveler journeying through a forest to represent the journey of life. The traveler comes upon a fork in the road and must decide which path to take. The two paths represent the different choices we make in life, and the traveler's decision to take the less traveled path symbolizes the choice to take a risk and follow one's own unique path." *A Collection of Poems by Robert Frost*, Introduction.

Jeremiah Burroughs: "A contented heart looks to God's disposal. That is, he sees the wisdom of God in everything. . . The Lord knows how to order things better than I. The Lord sees further ahead than I do. I see only the present but the Lord sees a great while from now." Quoted by Jim Newheiser, *The Journal of Modern Ministry*, Fall, 2004, p. 72.

The decision to leave church

The decision to leave or continue going to church is one of the most life-changing junctions in the road. In the book, *The Disciple-Making Parent*, 2016, Chap Bettis relates statistics that show the road marked "Leaving" is a broad road.

"In twenty-five separate surveys of more than 22,000 adults and 2,000 teenagers, George Barna found that only 20 percent of the respondents had maintained a level of spiritual activity consistent with their high school experience. In another study, he found that 58 percent of young adults who attended church every week when they were teens did not attend church at all by the time they were 29. Dr. Kara Powell of the Fuller Youth Institute at Fuller Seminary took a more conservative approach and only counted those who were a part of a church or youth group when they graduated from high school. Her estimate, based on multiple surveys, was that up to 50 percent of young people did not stick with their faith once they were in college.

"Britt Beemer of the America's Research Group studied only those who said they attended church every week when they were growing up but never or seldom attend today. After more than 20,000 phone calls, he came to a shocking revelation: Of those who reported they no longer believed the Bible true, 40 percent first had doubts in middle school, 44 percent first had their doubts in high school, and about 11 percent had their first doubts in college. In other words, we are losing many of the hearts of our children in junior high, even though we don't lose their bodies until later." pp. 9-10

Justice Clarence Thomas remembers the junction that changed his life. Clarence and his brother were raised by their grandparents when his mother could no longer raise them. Of his swearing in on October 23, 1991, he wrote,

"I thought back to another sunny day in 1955, the day my brother and I had walked to the white house at 542 E. 32nd St. to live with our grandparents, all of our belongings stuffed into a pair of grocery bags. So began the journey that had led me at last to these steps. It was there Daddy and Aunt Tina [his names for his grandparents] taught me all they knew and gave me all they had." *My Grandfather's Son*, p. 289.