

## The Easy Path Vs The Hard Path

### by Chris Famisaran

Good morning, everybody. Sorry, my mic came out. All right. Well, got a good crowd today. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank You, Lord for the opportunity to gather once again to be able to study your word. Be with us, as we open the scriptures, in Jesus name, amen.

I'm told of a story. I don't know if it's true, but if it is pretty cool, good story lesson. Ronald Reagan. When he was a young lad. His aunt took him to a cobbler. And I'm not gonna lie. When I first heard the term cobbler. I thought it meant peach cobbler, apple cobbler. Anybody have that same experience? Okay, it's just me. All right. feel worse about myself... Cobbler for those of you who don't know, what's another word for cobbler? Shoemaker. Right. So his aunt takes into this shoe maker, cobbler, and he asks them, do you want round toes? Or do you want square toes? And little Ronald Reagan couldn't decide. Ah, round toes, square toes. So the cobbler said, Tell you what, come back in a couple days, and let me know. All right. So there are actually the cobbler runs into Ron Reagan out on the street a couple days later says hey, I still haven't finished your shoes. Do you want round toes? Or do you want square toes? and Ronald He just seems very indecisive. He's like i don't know. So the cobbler said, Okay, fine. Tell you what, your shoes will be ready in a couple days just come by then. Okay. So Ronald goes to the cobblers shop. He sees his shoes. One shoe had round toes, and the other shoe has square toes. To which the cobbler gave him some wise advice. Never let people make decisions for you. Right then in there, if you don't make decisions, somebody will make decisions for you. And they may not be in the best. To your best advantage. Amen. Because parlo Ronald Reagan had to wear square toes and round toes. Such as life.

Decisions. We all make decisions. And how we respond to those decisions reflects who we are. In fact, Jesus, many times he ran to conflict. From the very beginning of his ministry to the end of his ministry, Jesus was constantly at odds with the Jewish leadership and even the devil himself. There was even conflict amongst the disciples. They also had to make decisions. And as you look through the Gospels, you can find many examples of how they probably should have chosen better. One person I can think of especially as Peter. So, as we go, let's go to Matthew 4. Let's open up with Matthew 4.

Gonna go to a story. Don't always look to ..... But we find that this is just before Jesus begins his ministry. It's he's basically been prepared. He's just been baptized. And after he's been baptized, in verse one, it says, Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting, 40 days and 40 nights, he was what? He was hungry after 40 days, I'm pretty sure I'd be hungry too. Amen. And the tempter came to him and he said, if you are the Son of God, tell those stones to become bread. Jesus answered, it's written every man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took them to the holy city, and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered, It is also written, don't put Lord God to the test. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all of the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you He said, if you will, what? bow down and worship me. And Jesus said to

him, away from me, Satan for it is written worship the Lord your God, and serve him only. And then the devil left him and the angels came and attended him.

So interesting story. There's a couple lessons we can take from this. What's consistent about this story? The devil knows scripture, okay, the devil knows scriptures. Okay, good point. What else? It's what? Okay, temptation. How does Jesus respond? with Scripture, right. And not only that, so the devil is smart. He preys on Jesus physical needs of after 40 days, I would probably be starving, right? Because it doesn't say that he has eaten before. It's only eats taken care of after this experience. And if you ever been hangry, before, you can ask my wife, she can validate that I get hangry every once in a while. If we get hungry, we sometimes get cranky. Ever made a bad decision when you're hangry? I have unfortunately, but yet, Has Jesus ever? So I'm sorry. Jesus Himself, experienced this us? devil was trying to tempt him, He says no. In fact, it says it is written Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. And then he tries to tempt him again. And and I think was it, Gustavo, you pointed out that the devil knows scripture. In fact, he's quoting Psalm 91, one of my favorite Psalms, I didn't even realize this until the last time I studied this. But the devil, he twists it a little right tries to make it his point. Now, look, Jesus could have thrown himself off, he could have made stones into bread. could have. But that wasn't the point here. And so one of the things that we have to be mindful of sometimes, we try maybe also to try to justify our decision making sometimes we want to make it to our benefit yet, stuff a God wants us to do. Right. And then the third time where Oh, sorry, the second time they also they they're, they're probably they're most likely they're in Jerusalem. And they're standing on a temple, the pinnacle, right? And then the third time they go on to a mountain. And all the devil says, Hey, all you have to do is just worship me. All you got to do, just kneel down, and everything is yours. And what I don't get, especially in the devil's mind, is that God is the God of what? Everything, right, including Earth, God already owns earth. And yet the devil thinks that he could trick Jesus. Jesus response away, it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only three times Jesus says it is written, it is written. It is written.

Also playing out here too, there's a there's a fundamental belief that we have here in the Adventist Church is that of the Great Controversy, somebody could easily sum up the great controversy. What is it? Okay, the battle or the war between good and evil, Now, let's be honest, have you ever had bad thoughts? We have, right. I'm sure we also we have plenty of good thoughts. Is it easier to think of good thoughts or bad thoughts? Or actually, let's just say is it easier to remember good thoughts or bad thoughts? Bad thoughts, right? Especially if maybe we've experienced something hard. Or maybe we've been wronged, it's easy to think and focus on the bad parts. So, the devil manipulates scripture. And the devil tries to stoke, Jesus is pride, and ego. But the thing is, Jesus is probably the most humble person ever. Ego was not at play.

And just like Jesus as well, we also times were tempted, we have to deal with challenges. We all have to make decisions. In fact, decisions are a key theme in the book of Matthew.

Another area that we could talk about decisions, is let's go to Matthew 7. Matthew 7 is a very famous passage that we've all read for them, I'm sure are many of us at least.

Matthew 7, verse 13. All right, are we there? Okay, enter through the what? A narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow road, the road that leads to life, and only a few find him.

Now, we're based we're in Los Angeles County, and basically Southern California, we have freeways. Some of them usually on average, three to four lanes on each side. Yet there are other freeways that sometimes have six. In fact, what's the widest freeway that you can think of? 405? How wide is it? Is it eight lanes each side. And the 405 is known for traffic, and speeding, okay. And people in Southern California are trying to get to places. Now, last month, I was driving in Arizona, and I went to go visit a friend. And so from the 10 freeway, I went through Wickenburg. And I had to take the small highway, I don't remember the name of it up to the 40. And it was two lanes one side each. And, you know, you could you could get by pretty quick, unless there was what? A truck. And then all of a sudden, instead of going 65 you're going 45 and I was driving in a fast car. And I wanted to go 65 not 45. And yet, even though it was slow, eventually the truck would pull over, I wouldn't be able to go on. I didn't have as many options. But I knew that if I drove well, I could be safe. The 405 unfortunately. In fact, whenever you listen to traffic reports, usually the 405 is usually in there somewhere, right?

And in life, we all have decisions to make. Thing that we sometimes don't realize, and I didn't realize this until later in life is that whether you follow the the wide path or the small path, they can both at times be difficult, and sometimes they can be painful. We don't like to admit that we think oh yeah, if we just smart follow the small path, you know, everything's gonna be gravy, it's gonna be fine. The wide path, as it says leads to destruction. Are there ways we can find destructive patterns and ways to ruin our life? Today? Absolutely. There's so many options that are out there, right. And you have to follow the country road, that small path to do the right thing to live with integrity to live with love and empathy, especially when people are not loving. They're prickly. Or you have to make decisions that you know are going to maybe have to cut your budget. When we have to scale things back or maybe we realize we've made bad decisions and now we want to make a new start in life. Requires that we we give up certain things about us that we recognize that are destructive. And sometimes those things don't just go away. Amen? They just they want to hang around. Sometimes it means letting go of certain people in your life, because if you're around them, they could cause you to go down that bad road. These are just some examples. Okay, I'm trying to be general here. But both paths at times can be difficult and painful. The one good thing about following the small path goes when, when you do what's right to live an honorable life to live with love and empathy. You can at least sleep on your bed at night with a clean conscience. Yeah, wide is the gate. Broad is its destruction. comfortable

Making decisions. Brian San. Anybody know who Brian San is? Most of you probably don't. He was a New York firefighter. On 911. They got the call. I don't remember which engine company he was on. But they got the call. And they started heading towards the buildings. And when they were coming up, they were amazed at everything people were trying to run away. And they entered initially the first building in they realized, hey, you need to go to the other one. And as they were heading towards the other building, trying to find a different way he saw a man with a phone. He's please can I use your phone real quick. He took his phone. He calls his wife. And he says she asks, Are you there? And he says yes, I'm here. Can you imagine telling your spouse? I don't know if I don't we're probably not going to make it. And yet still making that decision to go. Anyways. That's love. That's commitment. And afterwards, he hung up. And he still went. what's notable about Brian is he was buried twice. And yet, he's still here today. What amazing story. But not all of his friends made it out. In fact, over 400 in addition to the 1000s of those who innocently lost their lives to over 400 1st responders, lost their lives, firefighters, police officers, paramedics, and even a chaplain. Different units. It wasn't just New York fire wasn't just New York PD, it was a harbor, harbor fire different people. And not only that, what I didn't realize, I

didn't find out until later was there was I forget the name of the association but good people, captains, people who were on boats, hundreds of boats who came in and literally evacuated the many, many 1000s if not millions of people on that island to safety. There was no huge command structure. They just did it and they got it done because they felt this was the right thing to do. Sometimes our decisions have strong consequences. How we live. 911 in many ways was for me, I think a loss of innocence, vulnerability. And like you said, Gustavo, man, I can't think of a time where we were more united. And I'm challenged and troubled 20 years later to the day where we are so divided. Yet it is possible. If we can have compassion, if we can love and especially, we can listen.

There is other aspects here in the Gospel of Matthew, where we talks about decisions, in fact, Matthew 7, Matthew 7 it says therefore everyone who hears these words and puts them into practice is like a man who built his house on a what? A rock. And the rain came down the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house yet it did not fall because it had its foundations on the rock. But everyone who hears the words mine does not put them into practice is like the foolish man who built his house on sand and the rain came down the streams rose And the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell with a crash. The decisions we make, sets the foundation for life. In fact, I may have told the story if I did, sorry, but it's actually a good story there. There was a home builder. One of his guys was about to retire in a few months. And he said, Hey, I want you to take on this project. And the guy really didn't want to do it. But he thought, Okay, I got a couple of months, I can help oversee this build. And so they, they started the build, they laid the foundation. And before they were going to put the frame up, you realize that concrete with just a little bit off, thought to himself know what I'm retiring, it won't matter. The frame goes up, I am sure you can guess where this is going. He started to cut corners, here and there. In fact, it wasn't just the foundation, the concrete foundation, even even the structure itself. You know, he he kind of was not as he didn't do his job, like he should have he cut corners. And so after, I don't know, like, it was like four to six months. He had to extend it a couple of couple of months where he you know, to retire. And I said, Look, the house is basically done. I want to go off, I want to retire. And so the home, the home, the CEO says great, wonderful. And he hands him a key and said what's this key for? it was the house that you just built, it's for you for many years of service you've done for me, I want to give you this house. And in this guy's heart, he's like he realized every step he could have done better. And he realized he's gonna have to deal with those issues. Right. So foundation You know, when it comes to building a strong foundation influence make good decisions. On a strong foundation we make poor decisions. House is going to fall apart ever tried to build a sandcastle at the beach. It is inevitable that that sand castle, especially if you build it near the water is gonna fall apart. Right? Or somebody else is just gonna come over ruin it for you.

Change. Making change in our lives, sometimes it starts small. In fact, when we want to make changes in our lives, sometimes we maybe we try to build up we try to bite off and eat the apple all at once and realize you got to eat it bit by bit. So if we continue on in Matthew 13, sorry, the choices and decisions we make build a solid or shaky foundation. Matthew 13 Jesus talks in parables and parables are great because he uses parables. He actually in Matthew 13, there's kind of a departure where he realizes that he's not going to make sense to the leadership of the Jewish nation at this point, right? Pharisees and scribes, they're just giving him too much grief. So now he's gonna start ministering especially intentionally everybody, and he starts to use these parables. The kingdom of heaven is like this. It's like that. And in one particular he says the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed and is a mustard seed like really smaller, is it really big? It's really small, right? Most of us know this parable and that this small

little mustard seed can create this huge, huge tree. Right so the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man can plant in his field. And though it is a smallest of all seeds, it when it grows, it's the largest of garden plants in becomes a tree so that birds can go and rest and sit on it. Right. He also goes on the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed about 60 pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough. And what does yeast do? helps to expand and fluff up right? Without it your dough is not going to turn out the way that you want it to. It's not going to be good bread. And Jesus spoke all of these things to the crowd and parables He did not say anything to them without a parable. So was fulfilled spoken to the Prophet was actually predicted that Jesus would use parables it says, I will open my mouth in parables, and I will other things hidden since the creation of the world. So Jesus, he had to switch how he was going to minister to his people. So he uses parables. And, and so parables are great, because obviously, they're good ways to be able to relate things to the people, and they could use it easily. And he used examples that everybody could relate to. But it also caused them to ask questions to seek truth. And sometimes even these individuals, they didn't even realize what Jesus is doing. And sometimes even for the disciples, it may take a couple months, or maybe even a couple of years before ding, they finally got it. In fact, sometimes they would just say, Jesus, we don't get what you're trying to say here. Please explain it to us.

Now, what are these parables mean? When you look at Jesus life, when Jesus was on the cross, in the minds of the disciples, and the people standing there was Jesus ministry here on Earth, success or failure? According to them, it would be failure. Jesus is supposed to be the Messiah, he's supposed to be the king of the world supposed to overthrow the Romans. He's on a cross. in the minds of the disciples. In fact, the disciples were were they majority of them, they ran away, Mary, and even John, I think John was probably the only one who was close to the disciples everywhere off, if they were looking, they were looking from afar, because they didn't want to be known and associated with somebody who was hanging on a cross. In their eyes, Jesus failed. Yet it was the catalyst to rebirth to conquer death, salvation, something so small, has huge consequences for assault. Amen. Just like the little mustard seed and like the little yeast, and you look at the example where after Jesus left the gospel spreads like wildfire all around the world to now where there are billions of Christians around the world. something so small, could be so big.

Decisions. The final the final passage I would like to look at when it talks about decisions. Is that a Matthew 26. Let's go to Matthew 26. Another famous story. Matthew 26, verse 26. I'm sorry, 36. That's a typo, my bad. Verse 36. That'd be a lot of Scripture read. Matthew, Matthew 26, verse 36. All right, are we all there? Okay. Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called were get seminary and he said to them sit here while I go over there and pray. He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. All right, here again, you know, we talked about discipleship last week, Jesus, he's continuing his mentoring. And then he said to them, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. stay here and keep watch with me. Going a little further, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed my father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will, but as you will. And then he returned to his disciples and He found them what sleeping? Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour, just one hour. He asked Peter, watch him pray so that you will not fall into temptation the spirit is willing but the flesh is what week he went away a second time and he prayed my father if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I struggle, unless until unless I drink it may Your will be done. When he came back, he found them sleeping because their eyes were heavy heat. So he left them and went away once more, and he prayed a third time saying the same

thing. Then he returns to the disciples and said to them, are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hours come and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise? Let us go. Here comes my betrayer.

You know what's interesting here is there's three times that Jesus prays. When there's something important in your life, do you just pray once? Or do you sometimes pray multiple times? pray a lot, right? And even Jesus on the night that he's going to be taken in. Can you imagine the struggle that's going through his heart and his mind, even he was challenged. And yet, it wasn't about him. Because as it says, Not my will, but yours, be done. Not what I want, but help me God, to be faithful, until the end. This is lesson than I think that we all can learn from Jesus, not my will, but yours be done. And it doesn't exempt us from hardship. But yet, God is with us. And that's the thing that we sometimes forget, especially when we're in the shadow in the valley where it's dark, and we can't always see things, we sometimes think we're by ourselves. The truth is, God is with us. So what are some things that we can take from these passages? Well, that are not in every major decision that you make. Pray about it. Pray about every major decision you make. And as well don't make bad decisions. Don't make decisions. When you're feeling very upset. Amen. To make bad decisions, when you're feeling vulnerable, and you're feeling upset, sometimes you just maybe you just have to pray. Just wait, wait until you're feeling a little bit better. And then you can think more clearly. And just as Jesus did, in the very beginning, remember a new scripture as a guiding light. You know, when Jesus quotes scripture, he's quoting Deuteronomy, chapters 8, and I think, chapters 6, as well. It's why it's important kids, we should know scripture. And that when we come with challenges, we can remember and what Scripture says we should do. So remembering use scriptures as a guiding light.

But look at your options. And if you can, if this is an option, get wisdom, get guidance, seek wisdom. Because there are other people who've been in the journey, sometimes we think that I'm the only person in the situation. And the truth of the matter is, there are many other people I'm sure that have struggled, who have experience, and can be able to relate and look at the different options. When when you look at your options, decide what path to take. And when you've made your decision, take action. Don't wait, go do. And throughout life, you're going to make good decisions. And you're probably also going to make decisions that you're going to look back and reflect. I probably could have chosen better. And with those areas that you think you may be could improve, learn from your achievements, but also learn from your failures. The most successful people were probably had more opportunities to learn more than they had achievements. And it was it Edison who said I've I haven't failed 10,000 times, I've just learned 10,000 ways to not do it this way. Right. But learn from your achievements and learn from your failures.

In fact, I think it's a well, I don't want to misquote at all. I'll use it another time. May you look to the example of Jesus, where he used scripture, he prayed. And he had people around him he surrounded him, even though they fell asleep. Can you imagine being Jesus and Gethsemane feeling tired and alone in the weight of the world, literally, on your shoulders? Yet, that's why we have church. It's why we have community here. And not just your church but find other people. Maybe you have a specific you work in a specific field, find a mentor, whatever it may be, and learn and grow from them and find and find ways to be able to ask and say hey, I don't quite understand this, or I'm having an issue. Sometimes even just talking about expressing it helps you find the answers. And we when we can admit sometimes you know what, I don't know everything. That's okay. In fact the best leaders don't know everything, but they find people who do.

So, my friends, brothers and sisters, may you go forth and make great decisions. Follow the example of Jesus, know that you're not alone. And may God be with you. Father in heaven, Lord, every day today, when we leave this church, we're going to make decisions on how to get home. We're going to make decisions on what we're going to eat. We're going to make decisions about our future Lord, we pray that you will give us wisdom and guidance. And may we follow your example of to know scripture, Lord, and apply where we can when we make decisions, and and God as well help us to be faithful. As we read through Matthew, Lord make these things these themes come alive to us, that we may understand the the big picture of what you want us to learn, and that as well, Lord, help us to be faithful, helps us to be loving kind, just as you were, and to fulfill the calling of being ambassadors for you, and Downey and wherever we live, wherever we work wherever we go in Jesus name, amen.

Grace and peace, everybody.