

Wheel of Decision

Message for Sunday, April 21, 2013
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Philippians 4:6-13; Hebrews 12:15

Children's Message: Take a piece of wax on a fork, a piece wood on a fork, a piece of bread on a fork, some water in a spoon, put them over a candle flame and see how they react.

The same thing happens to each one – they get hot in the flame – yet each one responds differently. The wax melts, the wood burns, the bread turns into toast, and the water boils.

People are like that. Different people can go through the same situation, and react very differently. Let's say something hard happens in their life – say they are in accidents and lose both legs. That would be pretty awful, wouldn't it?

But then see what happens to them. One person may become bitter and miserable, and goes through the rest of life feeling sorry for him or herself. Another person may be thankful for so many good things he or she still has in life, learns to walk with artificial limbs, and has a wonderful life.

Philippians 4:11-13, New International Version:

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Message: "Wheel of Decision"

Props needed:

- Game wheel (a bicycle wheel works well)
- "Applause" signs for the audience

[As people entered the building today, they were given the opportunity to put their names in a draw to be part of the game show "Wheel of Decision."]

Welcome to the Wheel of Decision, the game show where people face situations in life and find ways to deal with them! We've got lots of action for today's show and it's going to be exciting. Today's winners are going to leave with some really big prizes!

Today's first contestant is... *pull name out of the bucket and announce name.* Come on down! [*Excited applause from contestants and audience.*]

Contestant 1, come on over to the Wheel of Decision, and I'll explain how the game works. I'm going to describe a situation, and you imagine that this is happening in your life right now. Then you spin the wheel to find out how you respond to that situation. Ready? OK, here we go! [*Applause*]

Here's the situation: Life is going smoothly for you. In fact, when you saw your doctor last week, she said you were the healthiest person of your age she's ever seen. A few years ago you invested \$10,000 in a small new company called "eBay Internet Auctions." Your investment is now worth 100 times what you started with; you're a millionaire. You have enough money to retire and do whatever you'd like to do.

So, how do you respond to your situation? Let's spin the wheel to find out what your decision is.

Spin the wheel, and as it slows down but before it stops, grab it. Wait a moment! This isn't "Wheel of Fortune," where your future is determined by luck, and you have no say over what happens. This is "Wheel of Decision." You get to choose how you respond to your situation.

So instead of dozens of choices on the wheel, let's make it simpler: here are three chairs:

- Chair # 1: Anger. This is where you might say, "It's not fair!"
- Chair # 2: Trust. This is where you might say, "No matter what happens, Lord, I put my faith in you."
- Chair # 3: Doubt. This is where you might say, "Why is this happening? I don't understand."

Well, Contestant, which chair do you choose to sit in? *Contestant picks a chair and sits in it.*

Now that's very interesting. Would you please tell us why you chose that particular chair? *Let contestant speak.*

Now let's bring up Contestant # 2. *Pull name out of the bucket and announce name.* Come on down! [*Excited applause from contestants and audience.*]

You've seen how the game works. Are you ready to hear your situation? *Yes.*

OK, here's the situation: Life *was* going smoothly for you. When you saw your doctor last week, she said you used to be one of the healthiest people she knew. But the

blood sample you gave shows that you have antiplastic cardioscolitis. It's an extremely rare condition where the heart loses its flexibility and it stiffens up. It's like arthritis of the heart. Every week the heart can pump less and less blood, and you become weaker and weaker. A month from now you'll be in a wheelchair. A week after that, it will take all your energy and concentration just to take each breath. Then yesterday, your home burned down. Sitting on the kitchen table was a reminder letter from your insurance company, a second reminder that your home insurance premium was overdue. You had been meaning to send the cheque, but never got around to it. You'll be gone soon, and your family will be left with nothing.

Remember the three chairs are:

- Chair # 1: "Anger: It's not fair!"
- Chair # 2: "Trust: no matter what happens, Lord, I put my faith in you."
- Chair # 3: "Doubt: Why did this happen to me? I don't understand."

But Contestant # 1 is already in Chair # *n*. So which chair will you take?

[Note: I never said you can't take the same chair as # 1. I *implied* it, but I didn't say it! In this game, more than one person can sit in the same chair.]

Now that's very interesting. Would you please tell us why you chose that particular chair? *Let contestant speak.*

Buzzer sounds. Uh oh, there's our time alarm. We're just about out of time for today's show. Let's see what prizes you've won.

Lift up the cushions on the chairs to read what's underneath.

If you sat on Chair # 1, Anger, then your prize is self-pity. You will go through life miserable and feeling sorry for yourself. You will blame other people or God for all your problems, and never learn to take responsibility for how you respond to situations. That doesn't sound very good. But wait: here's a Bible passage with a different way of looking at problems.

Philippians 4:11-13, New International Version:
I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the

secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

If you sat on Chair # 2, Trust, then your prize is hope. Nothing will ever happen to you which can defeat you. That isn't because you are invincible, because you aren't; you're only human. It is because the One inside you is greater than any situation you'll ever face.

Here's a Bible verse which tells about our source of hope.

Philippians 4:6-7, New Living Translation:
Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

If you sat on Chair # 3, Doubt ("Why did this happen to me?"), then your prize is despair. You will spend your life searching for answers to questions which only God can answer. Where there is no faith, there is no hope.

Again, that's not very positive. Here's a Bible verse which talks about trusting God, and what happens when we don't do it.

Hebrews 12:15, Today's English Version:
Guard against turning back from the grace of God. Let no one become like a bitter plant that grows up and causes many troubles with its poison.

Thank-you for being part of today's show of Wheel of Decision. You get to keep those prizes. [Contestants return to seats.]

All of these Bible passages have a common theme: choose your attitude. You cannot do anything about what has happened to you. Many things happen over which we have no control. Even if you could have done something differently, it's too late now to go back and change things.

The only thing you can change now is your attitude. You can choose the attitude of anger, doubt, bitterness, fear, hatred, self-centredness, pride, jealousy and so on. Whatever you choose, that is what will rule your life.

Or you can choose God's way of trust, faith, love, peace, forgiveness, obedience. Again, if you choose God's way, then it is God who will rule your life.

It's up to you. It's not the Wheel of Fortune; it's the Wheel of Decision.

One more thing: don't wait until you're in a crisis to choose which way you will follow. When you're all stressed out, that is not the time to make choices which will affect the rest of your life. Choose now who or what will govern your life.