

4 Young Men's Decisions

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Gut, wir gehen heute Nachmittag zu vier Versuchen aus der Bibel.

Der erste aus dem Buch von Joshua, äh, vom Buch von Juden, Kapitel 13.

Juden 13, Vers 24. [00:01:07] Und er kam her und sagte seinem Vater und seiner Mutter, Ich habe eine Frau in Timnath gesehen, der Tochter der Philistinen. Nimm sie daher für mich als Frau. Und sein Vater und seine Mutter sagten ihm, Ist es nie eine Frau unter den Töchtern deines Bruders, oder unter all meinen Menschen, dass du sie als Frau der ungezwungenen Philistinen nimmst? Und Samson sagte seinem Vater, Nimm sie für mich, denn sie bittet mich gut. Der zweite Vers aus 2 Chronikals, Kapitel 34. 2 Chronikals, Kapitel 34, Vers 1.

Jesaja war acht Jahre alt, als er begann zu regnen, und er regnete in Jerusalem einunddreißig Jahre. [00:02:05] Und er tat das, was richtig war, in der Sicht des Herrn und ging in die Wege des Vaters David, und er kam weder zu der rechten Hand noch zur linken. Doch in dem achten Jahr seiner Regierung, während er noch jung war, begann er nach dem Gott David, seinem Vater, zu suchen, und in dem zwölften Jahr begann er Judäen und Jerusalem aus den hohen Orten und den Gräben und die gezerzten Bilder und die feuchten Bilder zu zerbrechen. Und sie zerstörten die Orte von Baalim in seiner Präsenz, und die Bilder, die hoch oben waren, zerstörte er, und die Gräben und die zerzerzten Bilder und die feuchten Bilder zerstörte er in Teile und machte aus ihnen Staub und streutete es auf die Gräben von denen, die an sie gefeuert wurden. Und ein weiterer Vers, zwei weitere Vers aus dem Neuen Testament, einer aus 2. Timotheus 3. [00:03:10] 2. Timotheus 3, Vers 14. 2. Timotheus 3, Vers 14. Und ein letzter Vers aus Hebräisch, Vers 11. 2. Timotheus 3, Vers 11. 2. Timotheus 3, Vers 11. [00:04:27] 2. Timotheus 3, Vers 11. 2. Timotheus 3, Vers 11. 2. Timotheus 3, Vers 11.

I have the impression that I should address particularly the message to them, but I am [00:05:01] sure even if we are not that young, the challenge of what we will hear will also be of use for each and every one of us. We would like to look at four young men in the Bible, Samson, young King Josiah, Timothy and Moses, and the decisions they took in their young lives.

In our opening hymn we sang, Jesus, our only joy be thou, as thou our price wilt be. In thee be all our glory now and through eternity.

The Lord will be the center of all our thoughts and affections in eternity, and he will be our reward, but he wants that even today, while we are still living down here, he should be the center of all our lives

and our affections, and that the fact that we will be with him, that we will see him, might influence our lives.

[00:06:04] We would like to take a short look at these four young men, trying to find out what God wants to teach us in their lives.

The first in the book of Judges who is brought before us is Samson.

He had godly parents, and God had told his parents that they were getting a son, and this son should be a Nazirite, someone who was completely devoted in his life to the Lord. Under the law the book of Numbers tells us that the Nazirite had to have particular features that characterized him as one devoted to his Lord. He shouldn't cut his hair, he should not drink any wine, and he should keep himself from any defilement by dead bodies.

[00:07:03] And so they prayed for this son, and God had promised them this son. And at the end of chapter 13 we find that God's promise came true. The woman, the wife of Manoah, bear a son, and they called his name Samson, and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.

We have one verse, verse 24, about the childhood of Samson, and it is a very wonderful verse God tells us about the childhood of Samson. It says that the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.

Here we have the child of godly parents growing up under the blessing of the Lord. It's a very wonderful thing if a child is growing in a house of godly parents under [00:08:01] the blessing of the Lord.

I hope those of us who were brought up in Christian homes are grateful to the Lord for the blessing that means being brought up in a home where the parents pray for you, where the parents pray with you, where they read the Bible with you, where they bring the person of the Lord Jesus to you in early age, and where, if the Lord gives grace, you may, in young years, trust him as your Savior. It's a particular blessing to be brought up in a Christian home under the guidance of godly parents, and Samson was such a child that experienced the Lord's blessings in his home while he grew up.

And this story of Samson that started so well, the next step was, as well, a wonderful [00:09:03] thing.

We have another verse about him that speaks not so much about his childhood but about his youth, and it says in verse 25, and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Ashtel.

As a young man, Samson was guided by the Spirit of the Lord, and he used him in the region where he lived, the tribe to which he belonged.

So it's a wonderful thing if young people who've got saved live their lives with the Lord, guided by his Spirit, that he could use them in his service, first of all in the place where they are, starting to be a witness for the Lord, to perhaps distributing tracts, doing some work in Sunday school, or whatever the Lord may show them, and as young brothers, [00:10:07] taking part in the prayer meetings and other things under the guidance of the Lord. Well that's how it happened with Samson, what a good thing that he started being guided by the Lord in the camp in the tribe of Dan.

But unfortunately, Samson's life did not continue like that.

Very few times in the following chapters it is said that Samson did something because the Spirit of the Lord guided him to do it. There are one or two occasions where it is said that the Lord guided him to do something, but very often Samson acted because out of his own nature, his own will, because he, even when he was fighting the Philistines, it was mostly and very often because he wanted to avenge himself for something that had happened to him, and not because the Lord [00:11:05] guided him. And this all started the moment when he decided to have his own way.

It says the Lord began to move him, began to move him. It's a good thing if the Spirit of God begins to move you, but it has to continue. It's not something that just starts at the beginning. How sad to see, and we all have maybe examples of that, that the Lord started in the life of a young brother or sister something. We saw the Lord guiding him, beginning to move him, but suddenly it stops. We get the impression something is wrong. It's no longer as it used to be with him. And it says about Samson, he went down to Timnath.

Of course this was geographically a way down, but I'm sure God tells us something in this sentence.

He went down. The first step on his way down, a way down which ended in his death.

[00:12:07] Which ended that the enemies took him away his eyes, no longer any spiritual insight.

The Lord left him in the end, and Samson didn't even realize that the Lord had left him. It's one of the most serious things that is said about Samson in the following chapters. It says later about him in chapter 16 verse 20 at the end, and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

Serious thing. He still went on his way and didn't realize the Lord was no longer with him, because he in the first place had left the Lord, and he could no longer be with him on his way. He went down into this place, Timnath, and there he saw a woman of the daughters of the [00:13:05] Philistines. He came up and told his father and mother about it.

The life of Samson is marked or divided, if we want to use this word, by his experiences he had with three women.

The first is this daughter of the Philistines. The second one is in the prostitute in chapter 16, and the third one is Delilah from the Philistines.

And always in all these relationships he lost more and more the features of the Nazarite.

Tilet lost them all.

In the first example we've got here, what he loses is the character of a Nazarite should be the long hair, which is a symbol of the place of subjection under the authority of [00:14:09] God. But he says, this woman is the one I want.

His parents, godly parents, told him, this is not right what you're doing. She is not a woman of the people of Israel. Are there no women among the people of Israel? Why are you going to take a woman from the Philistines? And the answer of Samson is, get her for me, for she pleases me well.

It was no question for him if she pleased the Lord. If it was something that pleased the Lord, it pleased him. That is the characteristic of the people of Israel in the book of Judges, that everybody did what was right in his own eyes. And that's what Samson is saying here. She is right in my eyes.

That's the reason why I want her. His own self-will was the only thing that drove him, no longer the spirit of God.

[00:15:05] And so he went on, step by step. The second woman, in that connection with her, he was defiled, something the Nazarite should not do. He should not be defiled by anything impure. And in the third example, Delilah, he met her in the Valley of Grapes, not a good place for a Nazarite who shouldn't have nothing to do with wine. And in that encounter he had with Delilah, he nearly lost his Nazariteship.

And in the end, he lost his life. What a poor path that is. It started so well. It started with a young man who was brought up as a child under the blessing of God, who was moved by the Lord, but then suddenly his own will decided his further path. He said, I'm going to do what I want to do, what's right in my eyes. [00:16:01] And that was a way downwards, a way down. And that's how it ended.

Of course, he was working some victories for the Lord in his life.

And even in his death, he had a great victory over the Philistines, but that had nothing to do with the fact that he was a faithful man or judge in Israel.

It had to do with a great mistake the Philistines had made. The Philistines had said when they took Samson captive, our God is stronger than the God of Israel.

And so God said, I'm going to show you who is the real living God. They had made it no longer a question between the Philistines and Samson, but a question between the God of the Philistines and the God of Israel. And then God heard the prayer of Samson and said, well, I'm going to show who is the living God. And so Samson had a last victory, but he died in that last battle himself. [00:17:06] What a poor end after such a wonderful beginning. May we learn from that that it is not enough to start with the Lord, but to go on with him and particularly to be aware that our own self-will is nothing that will guide us on a way the Lord can bless us. And the question is not if something is right in my own eyes, but the question is if something is right in the eyes of God.

We shortly turn to 2 Chronicles to take a look at this young king. 2 Chronicles, chapter 34.

It says, Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, a child, eight years old.

[00:18:03] Maybe somebody here is here with eight years or nearly eight years old and just imagine you were king or queen, quite a responsible task for this young Josiah. He got king when he was eight years old and reigned for 31 years. And it is said about this young child Josiah, he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

Just the opposite of Samson. He did what was right in his own eyes, but here is a young man who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

He asked, what does the Lord want me to do? What is right in his eyes? And that's what he did.

And he walked in the ways of David, his father. Well David was not actually his father, it was one of his forefathers, but he had this example of David to follow.

[00:19:02] In the time of the kings, very often, the parents were not very godly. So it was not always such a positive start as in the life of Samson. Very often they had very ungodly men as fathers.

But there was David's example, one of the forefathers, and so he walked in this way. He was looking at those that had been before him and that had walked in the ways of the Lord, did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. God said that he was pleased in David in everything he did, except in the thing with Uriah's wife. And here we find a young man doing what is right in the ways, in the sight of the Lord, walking in the ways of David, his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.

Interesting feature. God said to Joshua when he gave him the task to bring the people of Israel into Canaan, [00:20:04] he said to him, you should do according to the word of God and you should not go away from this word, neither to the right hand nor to the left.

There's always the tendency of our hearts to turn away from the word of God, either to the one direction or to the other. Either to take away something from the word of God in saying, well, that's not for me, this passage, or putting our own ideas, our own thoughts and regulations, adding them to the word of God. Both is wrong. He said, this is the word of God, turn not away from it, neither to the right hand nor to the left hand.

And as far as I found out, Josiah is the only person in the Bible of whom it is said that he did exactly that. He, this young man, he was one of whom it could be said that he did not decline from [00:21:06] this way, neither to the right hand nor to the left, with decision following the Lord, even as a very young of eight years.

So we may think, being younger, well, when I get older, I will start to live my life in devotion for the Lord. But the Bible and church history tells us just the opposite.

Those that the Lord could really use in his work were those that started at a young age to devote their lives to the Lord, not those that lived for themselves for 40, 50 years and then decided, well, it might be good to follow the Lord, no, those that decided to follow the Lord at a young age were those he could use in his service. King Josiah was one of those who did these things.

[00:22:01] Then it says, in the eighth year of his reign, he was eight years when he became king, he reigned eight years, so how old was he now, 16, and at the age of 16, at the age of a teenage, as we would say, he started, as it is said here, he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father.

Yet already, lived according to the word of God, in obedience to the word, following David's path, but now as he gets a bit older, the time when young people start to ask questions about how life is going to be, what is the sense of life, he starts to inquire, to search, to seek after the God of David, his father. A new phase in his life when he starts again to devote his young life for the truth of [00:23:04] God, to seek after the God of David, his father.

Now he starts with a very personal relationship with his God.

We may perhaps start to do what is right, because we are told that it is right, and we follow what the Bible says, because we were brought up under the teaching of the Bible, but we may not have a personal relationship with God.

Josiah did what was right, but now, at 16 years of age, he starts to seek God himself, not only doing that which is right, doing that what God says, but having a personal relationship with God, getting more to know about God.

That's what he wants from us, not only following his word, which is a necessary step, of course, [00:24:06] and which protects us from evil, but really searching for God, for the Lord, to get to know him, to have fellowship and communion with him, and when he starts to do that, he more and more realizes there were things in Israel that were not right, that had to be corrected, all these graven images, all these idolatrous things they had in Israel, and we read that Josiah, some years later, he starts to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, the groves, carved images, and all these kind of things.

When you start to search for the Lord, to get him to know better, and his word, you will perhaps realize there are things in your life that have to be corrected, things in [00:25:04] your life that have to be purged, things in your life, perhaps, you have to throw out which have occupied a lot of time in your life, but you see they are perhaps evil, and if not that, they are a hindrance for you in a way of devotion to the Lord. Somebody who really seeks the Lord, as Josiah did, is not satisfied with asking the question is this thing right or wrong, but his question will be is it a thing that helps me on my way with the Lord, is it something that will help me grow in the knowledge of the Lord in communion with him, or is it something that is a hindrance for me, and if it is that, he will be ready to purge it out of his life so he can follow the Lord with more devotedness. [00:26:01] So we see in Josiah a very young king whom God gave in a time of darkness when the kings of Israel normally were very bad, we have the shining example of young king Josiah as an example we should follow the Lord, search for him, try to follow him in devotedness, even if we are young, even if we are children or teenagers or young people, there is no hindrance for following the Lord, there is no minimum age that God has set and said well you have to be so and so many years old and then you can start devoting your life to the Lord. He wants us to do it as soon as he puts his finger on our conscience.

Let me turn to the New Testament shortly, 2nd Timothy. We know something about this man from different passages in the scriptures. Timothy did not have a godly parents, father and mother as Samson had, and he did not have ungodly [00:27:17] parents as the kings, many kings in Israel had, but he had a believing mother and grandmother but obviously an unbelieving father, so that's how he was brought up, his father a Greek, an unbeliever obviously, his mother and his grandmother were Jews, and we know that they had taught him the scriptures from his childhood years. Now we see the influence, the great influence a godly mother has on the children, teaching them from an early age the scriptures. Timothy knew them even before he was converted as a Jewish family, they had the Old Testament [00:28:05] and he was brought up in these scriptures. Later he got saved and like Samson, we could say there's a parallel between Samson and Timothy in the beginning, he was also a child that was blessed with a godly mother and grandmother and he also, the spirit began to move him because when Paul took him with him on a missionary journey, it said already about Timothy that he had a good testimony from the brothers in Iconium and Lystra in the assemblies where he was at their places he had already started serving the Lord, he had a good testimony for the brethren and so Paul took him with him on his missionary journey. And now in his last letter, 2nd Timothy, Paul writes to him in prison, obviously his last letter to him, 2nd Timothy is a letter which is [00:29:04] very moving

to read, Paul in this letter more than in all the others opens his heart to Timothy, he once said about this man, I have nobody like-minded as him, this old servant of the Lord and his young fellow worker were of the same mind, there was no generation gap between these two, they were united even if they both were from of different origin, Timothy was from a mixed marriage while Paul was a Hebrew from the Hebrews, he had a pure Jewish heritage and Paul was a very courageous man, Timothy was a bit timid obviously and there were differences between them but in spiritual things they were like-minded and now in this last letter he says to him in chapter 3 of 2nd Timothy verse 14, but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, he said Timothy, [00:30:09] you have learned the truth, that's the first thing we learn from Timothy, it is a good thing and a necessary thing to learn, to learn the truth of God, this shows us how necessary it is to study the Bible personally, systematically, to go to meetings where the Word of God is expanded, so we can learn these things because the exhortation continue in these things would have no use if he hadn't learned anything because he didn't know what to continue in, he had learned these things, I hope we all have the interest to learn the truth of God, to learn these things, to study them personally in our lives and get the blessing and the benefit of meetings and [00:31:03] conferences where the Word of God is taught, but it's not enough, but continue thou in the things which thou has learned and has been assured of, convinced, fully persuaded, learning alone is not enough, we can learn things and it is nothing else but had knowledge, would be of not much use, it has to be something we are convinced of, we are persuaded this is the truth of God because the exhortation continue in these things, keep them, stay on the track, we will only answer this exhortation if we are persuaded that what we have learned is the truth. So, how good it is if we, younger or older, when we have learned the things concerning the truth of God in the Bible, we are really convinced this is the truth of God, because then we can do what Paul tells us, continue in these things. He describes in 2nd [00:32:05] Timothy a situation which was in the days of Paul still future, but today it no longer is future, where he says there will be a time when everybody will turn away his ears from the truth. On Timothy, he says to him, preach the Word, you are convinced this is the truth, go on with your ministry, preach the truth, even if nobody's going to listen, go on teaching the truth, stay, continue in these things which thou has learned, has been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them. He knew, he learned them from the apostles who had them directly from God. We today have them written down in the inspired Word of God. That's where we learn these things, and therefore we know they are the truth. God has given them to us in his Word, and so we could remind Timothy [00:33:02] and say, you know, Timothy, that from a child thou has known the holy scriptures. From a child you've known the holy scriptures. Again, one of these blessings of his home. I know some people who've got converted later in their life, and one of them, a brother, once said to me, I'm so sad that I got converted so late in my life. My mind is no longer able to get all these things in from the Bible. When I was young, I spent my time and energy in my mind, I filled with all kinds of things that were of no use, and I couldn't now any longer get into these things and learn them by heart. A good thing it is, if you know the scriptures from a child, to fill your mind and your heart with them, to learn them by heart, so that the scriptures are really something [00:34:04] that saturates your mind, your thinking. There may be times when you will not have a Bible. We are blessed in our countries that we freely could have Bibles and read them, but there may be times in the life where you don't have a Bible. Then you have to live on that which is in your mind. I know a brother who, in the war, when he was prisoner of war, he got converted because of that what he had learned as a child in Sunday school with his grandparents, what they had told him. Some Bible verses, some Sunday school hymns were all he had. There was no Bible, but all this came back to his mind when he was in that situation that brought him to trust the Savior, Jesus Christ. We could be thankful for that blessing as well, if we had the privilege of knowing the scriptures from a child. And he says all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for [00:35:08] doctrine. That's the first thing. God always starts with the doctrine, because that is the basis on which

all our practical Christian life is based. How can we live a Christian life of godliness if we don't know the doctrine, if we don't know what God wants us, expects from us? And so, that's what the Bible is for. Doctrine, for teaching, for reproof. If we turn away from his word, if we are not walking according to the doctrine he's taught us, God will not let us go. There is the word to reproof us. We have heard that Josiah didn't turn to the right or to the left from his word. And there's a wonderful verse in the prophet Isaiah, which says, if you turn to the right or to the left, you will hear a voice behind you [00:36:04] saying, this is the way, walk ye therein. The voice is behind us because we've turned away, but the voice is still there calling us, this is the way, walk ye in it. It reproves us. And for correction. Not only does the word of God reprove us and tell us what you've done is wrong. This would be sad. The only thing we knew then would be, well, I've done something wrong. But the word is also there to correct us, to bring us back to the way we have left. And then for instruction in righteousness. The circle closes, again the word starts to instruct us. Doctrine. It starts with doctrine. It ends with instruction. And in between, we find that the word is there to reproof us, to correct us, so we have everything that we need. For that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, so that we all can be those men of God. [00:37:04] The Greek word here, man of God, is not the word for man, actually, but for humans. It's not only something for man. Women can also be men of God, in the sense Paul is speaking here about. All mankind could be men of God, in the way it is described here. And then we have a few moments for Hebrews 11, for Moses, to look at this young man. It says in Hebrews 11, 24, by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Moses, when he was come to years, when he was grown. Three times in the life of Moses it is [00:38:05] said that he was grown, come to years. First time it was when he was, after he had been back with his mother, he was given to the Pharaoh's daughter to be raised up in Egypt's universities, so to say. This was the time when Egypt, when the world thought, now he's grown, he's old enough to be brought into our influence. The second time it says that Moses was grown was when he thought it himself, and then he started to deliver the people, kill the Egyptian, and had to realize that this was not the way God wanted him to deliver the people. But here we find him really grown up, spiritually mature, because he now takes spiritual decisions in a right way. It says that Moses, when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. [00:39:12] Everything in Egypt, his whole career was open to him. He should be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, which seems to be a title they were trying to give him, but Moses said no. Probably all his colleagues at the university wouldn't understand why he was taking this decision. He was offered something nobody else was offered, and he said no. Maybe even his countrymen, people of Israel, wouldn't understand his decision and say, well, you could be of great use for us in such a position. No, he said, he refused that, and instead he choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, to take his place with this despised people of Israel, the people of God. [00:40:04] Why that? Well, we see that he, Moses, had a very clear discernment of what was going on at Pharaoh's court where he lived. It says he choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He said what's going on here in the world is principally sin. Sin is marked on everything that's going on there, and secondly Moses realized very clearly that sin could be, could have a very attractive side. He speaks about the pleasures of sin. There is, of course, the terror of sin and the horrible side of it, crime and violence. Even unbelievers might find these things horrible, but sin also has a [00:41:01] side which is attractive to the flesh, the pleasures of sin, but he speaks about to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Moses knew all this was only timely and only for a time, nothing for eternity, and the result would be disastrous afterwards for those that have gone into this way, and Moses said, no, I'm not going to go this way to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, but I would like to put myself to the people of God and suffer the reproach of Christ rather than the riches and treasures of Egypt.

One thing was that Moses had a clear judgment, a clear discernment what was going on down here, but the second reason was he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. We've sung in our hymn that he, the Lord Jesus, our reward, and Moses [00:42:02] was looking to the reward for such a path. If you join yourself to the Lord Jesus who is rejected today in this world, if you take the place with him and with this company of believers down here which are despised in this world, have no place of honor in this world, then you may be sure that there is a reward, that the Lord is going to reward faithfulness in taking such a place. That was what Moses was looking for, and so he had the energy to forsake Egypt and not fearing not fearing the wrath of the king. In Hebrews 11, in the first part of the chapter, Abraham, who is the prominent figure there, he tells us about the endurance of faith in expectation of a [00:43:03] future city. Abraham was looking to the future and in that he endured, waiting for the coming world, and in Moses, the prominent figure in the second half of Hebrews 11, in Moses we see the energy of faith in overcoming the present world. These are the two sides of our Christian path down here. There is something we are looking for, we are waiting for, but we're also living in this present world and we have to overcome it with the energy of faith, and that's what Moses did. He rejected these things and he left Egypt and it says, seeing him who is invisible.

He knew there was something with him, somebody with him who couldn't be seen. The Lord Jesus is not seen by the world. They couldn't see him, but we know there is this invisible who is going to help us on the way, who is going to help us to overcome this present world.

[00:44:07] So, may the Lord help us, even as younger ones, to devote our life to the Lord, living with him, and not only beginning with him like Samson, but going on with him. Maybe, as King Josiah did, correcting things in our life and pulling them out of our lives which hinder us on the way of devotion to him. Trying to seek for the God and the Lord, getting to know him in communion with him, and then being convinced, being persuaded of the things we have learned to continue in them, and like Moses, refuse anything the world has to offer, and going on looking for the reward and the sustenance of him who is invisible to this world. But we, by the eyes of faith, may see the invisible and have communion with him on the path of faith. Amen.