

## How To Make Great Choices

**Caru Das:** Thanks to everyone for coming out to Spanish Fork this Sunday evening at five o'clock. Thanks to those who download these talks as podcasts from iTunes.

I invite your comments, correspondence and feedback by emailing us [utahkrishnas@Gmail.com](mailto:utahkrishnas@Gmail.com). We also have a membership class at our website [utahkrishnas.org](http://utahkrishnas.org). I'd like to thank those who've become members. We couldn't do what we do without your help and support.

Whenever we find something humorous and it relates to the topic, we share it with you. Although I have to say, this is a bit of a stretch. It's cowboy wisdom. Few items here listed.

- 1) Letting the cat out of the bag is a whole lot easier than putting it back in.
- 2) If you're riding ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.
- 3) If you get to thinking you are a person of some influence, try ordering somebody else's dog around.
- 4) Never a kick a cow chip on a hot day.
- 5) There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one of them works.
- 6) If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing you do is stop digging. Never slap a man who's chewing tobacco.
- 7) This is the last one and the one I like the best. The quickest way to double your money is to fold it over and put it back in your pocket.

[laughter]

**Caru:** Today, we'd like to talk about making good choices in life. Life is a series of choices that we make every day. Some choices we like to make and some choices we are forced to make. We'd rather not make them but we're forced to make them.

We're dating a girl that we like but our mother is saying, "You better look for someone else. I don't approve of her." We've got a job in a certain city that we're comfortable with, but we get another job offer in another city far across the country where we don't even know anybody.

We have to evaluate constantly, draw conclusions, estimate, decide. Frank Boreham said, "We make our decisions and then our decisions make us." The quality of our lives will be determined by the decisions that we make. Some of you will be making difficult decisions this very week.

Some of you don't know it yet, but you have a major decision to make in the next few days. Life is full of choices. Some of our most important decisions, interestingly enough, at the time that we made them, we had no idea how important they were.

You look back and you think of some past decisions that you made off the cuff, peremptorily. They charted the course for an entire season of your life.

Traffic studies have showed that we're most vulnerable during intersections so when we reach those intersections of our lives. We would like to have definite cues, definite directions as to whether we keep on doing what we're doing and go straight through the intersection or make a change and go to the left or right. Those cues don't always seem to be forthcoming. We don't have the direction we'd like when we're getting to those dangerous intersections of our life where we're most vulnerable.

As a matter of trivia, the most dangerous intersection according to State Farm insurance in the United States of America is at the corner of Belt Line Road and Midway Road in Addison, Texas. In a recent year, there were 263 reported crashes at that intersection, the Dallas suburb. That's about five wrecks a week, not counting the unreported fender benders.

A lot of those accidents occurred because a driver was undecided. A driver was double-minded and therefore unstable in their patterns. I'm looking here at a little cartoon. A fellow's being interviewed for a job and the interviewer says, "Brian, how are you at decision making?" Brian says, "Do you need the answer right away?" An unstable, indecisive person is pulled in many, many different direction at one time. They have divided loyalties. They have divided priorities.

Double-mindedness is debilitating. It makes us unstable and it can be devastating. I'm sure you've been driving behind an indecisive driver, who at the last minute decides he's going to take the exit and swerves violently across three lanes of traffic. Or alternatively, he's well down the exit ramp, but he decides, all of a sudden, he wants to swerve back and get into traffic. It can be deadly. It can be devastating...indecisiveness.

Another little cartoon on this topic, a psychiatrist asks his patient, "Are you indecisive?" The patient says, "I used to be but now, I'm not so sure."

Confused people are invariably unhappy people. They cannot commit in a relationship. They cannot commit to a career. They cannot commit to a financial plan. They behave inconsistently with their children - say one thing one day and they say something else the next day. For such people, it often takes more energy to make a decision than it does to carry it out. Indecision keeps them from God's greatness.

Such a person might complain, "Well, I pray for direction. I pray for guidance, but God doesn't seem to answer my prayers." Here's a thought. Maybe you're too ambivalent in what you want. Maybe you've never decided what you want nor established for yourself a clear cut goal.

Maybe, one day, you're Mister Hyde and another day, you're Doctor Jekyll. Maybe, one day, you want to do God's work and then, the next day, you want to do your work. One day you know what's right, but you go ahead and do what's wrong anyway.

On Sunday, you come to the church, in the temple, the mosque and you sing hymns and you sing mantras, but on Monday, you're AWOL.

I want to give three tips for overcoming indecisiveness, first one is to admit your need. Second one is to ask for wisdom. The third one is to anticipate help from the Almighty.

Abraham Lincoln admitted his need in this famous quote, "I've been driven many times to my needs by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My wisdom and that all about me seem insufficient for the day."

The world is impressed by knowledge. God is impressed by wisdom. Let me quote you from one worldly script of this day and age. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of Google." The world is impressed with knowledge. God is impressed with wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge put into practice.

Wisdom is making decisions the way that Krishna or that God would make them. He is humility. In His form as Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Lord Krishna advises those who are seekers after wisdom, who want to make good choices, and have the best quality of lives they can.

He said, "Recite this verse and wear it always as a garland around your neck. *Trnad api Sunicena*. Think of yourself as lower than a blade of grass, more humble and more tolerant than the tree, ready to offer all respects to others, to avoid of false prestige. In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy names of the Lord constantly." On the other hand, when pride comes, disgrace follows. How can a prideful person learn anything if they think they already know it anyway.

If you don't face your need for wisdom, then you're never going to ask for it in a humble state of mind. Have I told the story about Vienna? Vienna is a music instructional capital of the world. When the music teacher gets a new student, the first question he asks is, "Have you studied this instrument before?" If the student says, "Yes," then the fees double. Because the teacher has to unlearn all the things that the student, thinks he or she knows before they can start out fresh.

Maharaj Parikshit, the famous king from the Srimad Bhagavatam, who lived thousands of years ago, one of many, many great, noble kings in the ancient world. He believed that wisdom consisted in getting good counsel and being open to the advice of saintly people. He was always surrounded by what we call Brahmins. Brahmins were pure in character. They didn't take intoxicants eat meat, didn't have illicit sex, and didn't gamble. They were dispassionate and objective observers. Parikshit asked their advice in all of his affairs of state.

Then, when he came to the end of his life, he'd been cursed to die within seven days by the bite of a snake. Maharaj Parikshit thought, "If I availed myself of the advice of saintly people for running affairs of state, certainly when I come to the edge of that chasm known as death, how much more should I lean on them."

How many of you know what awaits you after death? How many know where you're going after death? Maharaj Parikshit said, "Of course, at this point of my life, I especially need to invoke the council of Brahmans."

He called all the Brahmans and he asked this question, "What is the duty of all men in all circumstances especially those who are about to die?" The answer was, "in essence, chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare"

The Lord is not different from His name. All of His Shakti, all of His Potency, is embedded within His Name. When you associate with the Lord through His bona-fide Names, you're associating with strength. You're associating with stamina. You're associating with wisdom. You're associating with prosperity. You're associating with peace and purpose form this and satisfaction. There's no better decision that you can make than to simply associate with the Lord through the mechanism that He's established of chanting these Holy Names.

Maharaj Parikshit took that advice and he left his body in full God consciousness hearing the Names of the Lord. He got the desired result.

It is said that if a woman wants to have a child, she needs to admit her need for a man. The woman who says, "I'll do it myself," will never bear fruit. There has to be the initial recognition, acknowledgement that, "Without a man, I will not have a child."

Without admitting that we can't do it ourselves, we can't make great decisions, because we don't have the capacity, the intellect, the vision, like God does. God is Alpha and Omega. He created everything. He's past, present, and future. He's within the heart of every living being. He's within the atom. Until we admit that without His help, His counsel, we simply cannot make good decisions, and cannot build a good life, either for ourselves or for our family, or for our countrymen, we'll not produce the fruits that we're supposed to produce...the fruits of peace, the fruits of kindness, the fruits of compassion, the fruits of wisdom and knowledge will not be forthcoming without our admitting the need in humility. First point.

Second point is ask for wisdom. Prabhupada spiritual master says, "Krishna is the ocean of wisdom. He's so pleased when you ask him for wisdom." What father is perturbed when a little child comes up with a question? Far from being perturbed or upset, he's probably going to say, "Why did you wait so long? That's what I'm here for. Your querying me, your little 'why's' are music to my ears. It's my greatest pleasure."

God is so pleased when we ask Him for wisdom, that not only does He gives us wisdom, but He gives us influence, He gives us property, He gives us long life.

How do we get wisdom? Not by asking Phil Donohue, or David Letterman. Not by reading Cosmopolitan Magazine. We don't get wisdom by watching TV. We get wisdom because we ask for it. What's the best inquiry that we could put out there?

We recognize that everything comes from God. Earth, air, fire, water, mind, intelligence, false ego, as well as our spiritual selves all are emanations from the Supreme Lord. Aham Sarvasya Prabhavo. From me, Krishna says, “everything exudes. From me, everything emanates.” That makes Him as the creator also the proprietor, the owner of the phenomenal and noumenal world.

The best question we can ask, the best wisdom that we can exert is: “Lord, what do you want me to do with your property? This body that I call mine, it is yours. This mind is yours. These whom I call my wife and my children are yours. My country is yours. You created it, you own it. What do you want me to do, how do you want me to steward your property?”

We should ask this question at every juncture of our lives. We need to ask this question on the job. Before we go into that meeting at the office. We should ask this question in terms of parenting our children. We need to ask this question in terms of our marital relationships. We need to ask this question, how can we minister? How can we be a light? How can we be a benefit to others and make a difference in our generation? We need to learn to ask. Second point.

Third point is, we need to expect the answer, because God is not stingy, God is not a Scrooge, God is open-handedly giving. He's known for being a giver. No one who petitions Him with the right questions, and the right sincerity is ever going to be left hanging in the wind.

It will do you no good to ask, expecting that you won't get the answer. When you don't get the answer, saying “I knew I wouldn't get the answer.” No, if you don't believe it, you're not going to get it. Don't waste your time asking.

The reason why we don't have wisdom in our lives is because we're too focused on the problem and not focused enough on the Lord. There's no problem, no stumbling block, no enemy, no challenge that can come against you who is greater than that Lord of millions of universes who resides within you.

Don't get caught up in the problem. "Oh, it's so bad. This legal situation is so convoluted I'll never get out of it. This health problem is never going to turn around. My marriage is on the rocks. It's impossible. This is all she wrote. This is going to finish me."

Thinking like that makes of you a victim of circumstances. You have to believe in advance that if you're asking the all-giving, all-generous Supreme Lord for help it's already given to you. All you need to get the answer is to ask and then it's already given to you.

I heard about race car drivers driving in the rain. When there is a downpour and the track is very treacherous and very slippery, the last thing the race car driver does is focus on the track right in front of him. If he does that it's a recipe for disaster. He'll go into a spin and get into a crash. The race car driver focuses on the straightaway after the turn. Focusing on the straightaway automatically your senses, your reflexes, your mind they know what to do. They know the balance, how to moderate the speed, whether to push

the throttle, touch the brake, they know what to do instinctually to get you to where you're looking. If you take your eye off the goal and get distracted by the track in front of you, you'll spin out of control.

It is said, "Seek first, set your sight on the kingdom of God." That's why we are here. We're not here to make a permanent solution in this impermanent world. This is the practice run around the track. This is the dress rehearsal. Depending on what choices we make here, we will go to live eternally a life of bliss and knowledge.

Don't lose that focus. Our goal is to go to live with the Lord who is the model of forgiving. Who gives not grudgingly, but joyfully, openhandedly, continuously and cheerfully. Our God is a giving God. He doesn't mind, in fact, He relishes our asking Him.

But not asking Him for blessings with a period after the blessings. Not "give me this and give me this, give me this, give me this" Then a period. We should ask "Give me prosperity, give me wealth, give me peace, give me satisfaction, so that I can pass those blessings onto others." God doesn't like it when you ask Him for blessings and put a period on the end of the sentence. He loves it when you ask for blessings with a comma at the end of the sentence, knowing that you are going to pass them on. When you have that attitude, the vaults of heaven open and pour down blessings beyond what you could ever think or even ever imagine.

Someone says, "Chru, why did God give us free will in the first place?" It's caused so many problems. "Why did He give the decision-making ability in the first place?" Our having free will means there's depression, there's crime, there's drug addiction.

Probably in America we can exercise free will to a relatively greater degree than most other countries in the world. Certainly more so than dictatorships, and yet because there's more option to exercise free will in America, there's more drug abuse, there's more crime, there's more suicides, and there's more depression.

Wouldn't it have been easier if God made all the decisions for us? Why did He have to do this? He made us in His image. The decision-making faculty can be the greatest blessing. It's meant as a blessing, but it's two-sided. You have to use it properly. It's like a razor blade. If you use it properly, you get a nice shave and you look good, but if you are inattentive you get nipped five or six times, and then you show to work and these bandages will be awful, you'll look ghastly.

God made us to be godlike. Of all His creation we stand at the top. We have the greatest potential. Because that power of decision making is invested in us, we can do the greatest good or by misusing free will, create the greatest havoc. Does anyone doubt that?

He invested us with a great responsibility when He gave us the freedom to choose, and He didn't give us the freedom to choose, to take it back again. Don't think that God hasn't noticed all the times that we've misused that freedom and He's not saying "OK, you blew it, I'm taking it back again. I'm making all your decisions for you from now on." No, He allows us to continue to try, to fail. He wants us to make wise decisions. He wants us to

do it but He wants it to be based on His wisdom. Why? He wants us to be the men and women of character that can go and live with Him in the eternal spiritual world. He's training us up for life of eternity.

Where do we get our wisdom right now? What's the big decision looming in your life? Has it to do with marriage? Has it to do with teenage kids? Has it to do with an investment? Whatever it is, there's wisdom in His word whether it be the Bhagavad Gita, the Bible, or the Quran. You put His word inside you and it'll give you power to face the future. He's not going to make the right decisions for you, because He wants you to grow up.

Maturity is defined as making decisions the way that God would. It doesn't help that because things are not going your way, or you are confused or you don't feel like you are getting direction, you have a pity party. The attitude of blaming God for your own indecision will not be helpful in the least bit.

Some people would say, "I don't know which way to turn, I don't know what to do, therefore, I am not going to do anything and whatever happens as a result of my omission, I'll take that as God's will." That maybe God's will but it's not His best will for us. Whatever happens as a result of a good choice, as the result of a bad choice, both are certainly within God's sovereignty, but He wants for us the life that comes about as a result of good choices. Therefore, it's not true to say that everything that happens is God's best for us.

As it says in the Lord's prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What do we learn from this? Heaven, or the kingdom of God, is that place where everybody does God's will and earth is that place where almost nobody does God's will. That's, in fact, why we're here.

In ancient times, in night time, when it was pitch dark, there were no street lamps. People used to light their ways with little foot lamps.

They would fit them on their big toe and there would be a little flame which would light their way only a foot or so ahead. It wasn't like high beams that illuminated two or three hundred yards ahead. You could only see two or three feet ahead. But there was enough light to ensure that you didn't get tripped up, that you didn't step on a snake that you didn't fall over a cliff. It gave you as much guidance as you needed.

Don't expect a big dramatic flash of light as a result of this afternoon session together. God will give us decisions in subtle ways. He'll give us what we need to make each decision subsequently and consequently to get us to where we need to go. Don't worry about tomorrow, worry about today. God will give you whatever you need today, today and will give you whatever you need tomorrow, tomorrow. He's not going to reveal to you where you're going to be 20 or 30 years from now because where will be the exercise of your faith? How would you mature and how would you grow up? He lights the path one step at a time. In fact, it's a huge decision to say, "What am I going to do in the next five minutes?"

It's a huge decision to chant "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare." That's a decision. That's a decision how to spend your time, how to spend your energy. And that's a decision to give God the message that you want His help in making your next step. Do you want to live your life by choice, or do you want to live your life by chance? Do you want to be a victim of circumstances, or do you want victory in your life?

The quality of our lives is determined by the decisions and the choices that we make and the wisdom that is behind those choices. It's not ultimately our indecision over our job, or our career, over our marriage, over our kids, over our health, which causes frustration in our lives. These are important considerations, but there's a deeper issue here, and that's our inability to trust God and lay all in His hands, and ask for wisdom. Where are you double minded?

Where have you been wavering and trying to live in two different ways? Trying to live for the Lord on Sunday, and then downplay it during the week? The greatest decision that we've got to make is who's going to be number one in our life. I saw a little graphic. It said "if God is your co-pilot, switch seats."

Are you going to be number one? Is your job going to be number one? Is your truck going to be number one? Is your gun collection going to be number one? Is your family going to be number one? Is money going to be number one? These things are all temporary. These things are all idols. If you worship idols you're setting yourself up for misery and suffering.

There's only one thing that will produce stability in your life. It's putting the Lord not just as a RESIDENT of your heart, but establishing Him as the PRESIDENT of your heart. "Take my heart. It's thine all. It should be thy royal throne." The poet said. Let's install the Lord in the heart of our hearts. Let's ask that Lord, "Lord you call the shots, you be the CEO, you be the chairman of the board. I am going to check in with you on a regular basis.

Momentarily, either audibly, or mentally I'm going to be asking your help. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare." Those who adapt the chanting, it becomes part of their breathing. There is never a move they make that they're not in touch with the Lord through the chanting, "Lord you guide my life. I want to find the purpose for which I was created." The smartest decision that you'll ever make is to put Krishna or God number one in our life, and get into tune with His plan.

Unfortunately, most often we choose to do what we want to do rather than checking with the Lord. As a result, we are separated from Him. We push God away to the edge of our consciousness, and He feels that. That pains Him, because He wants to move closer. He wants intimate, meaningful, relishable, loving relationship with each one of us. He tries to close that gap with Scripture, with the guru, and most importantly, with His Holy name.



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare Hare.

Some of you don't even know yet, but you've got decisions coming up about your future. But the most important decision is not about your marriage, or your business. The most important decision is where are you going to get your wisdom from? Where are you going to get your instructions for life?

We challenge you today to get your wisdom from your Heavenly Father, the Creator of millions and millions of universes. He doesn't want to be pushed away from you. Bring Him back by praying, "Krishna, I need your wisdom. I admit that I have made choices without consulting you. I have made bad decisions. I have strayed, I want you to call the shots. I want you to give me guidance. Help me to fulfill the purpose for which you made me. I want to live for you, and be the person that you want me to be in this life and in the next life I want to go back home, back to God..."