

In life we have many choices and options. Whether it be clothing, style, food, college or career it is almost entirely up to us to make choices. In today's study we will see how certain things in life, according to the scripture, cannot be an option.

1. Divorce is not an Option Mark 10: 1-12

As crowds started following Jesus, some Pharisees tested him by asking if it was lawful to divorce. Jesus pointed them to the Old Testament. (Point people to the Bible when people have questions about God). Jesus explains that the plan of God was always one woman for one man (Solomon having 700 wives was not God's plan. It was Solomon's plan. In the end, his wives made him go back to idol worship and fall away from God. It's important to choose our life partner more by the beauty of the heart than by countenance)

Jesus also talks about a man leaving his father and mother and being united to his wife. (Jesus is saying if a man is planning to get married, then he needs to leave his father and mother. Interestingly, the Bible never says a woman should leave her father and mother. Women understand that after marriage the place of her parents need to be replaced by her husband. Conversely some men do not replace their parents with their wife. This causes many tensions in marriage)

According to Jesus once a man and woman are joined together they should not be separated. Divorce is a sin. In our church, we strive hard and do our best to avoid a divorce. Here are some spiritual glue to have an awesome marriage:

- a) Pray together everyday - short prayer of about 10mins. Works best in the mornings or nights.
- b) Stop finding faults in your spouse – have a separate time during the week for corrections
- c) Be quick to forgive and do not keep records of the past – this is the best bonding medicine
- d) Have hangout times – at least once a week

2. Ignoring is not an Option Mark 10: 13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus. The disciples were not happy about this. Jesus was upset and correcting the disciples he said, 'The Kingdom of God belonged to such as these'. Children are a blessing from God. Many couples yearn to have kids. At times when the couples do not have kids they pray and wish to have kids. Tragically some when they do have kids, wish otherwise. Parents should understand that children are from God. A few tips regarding children:

- a) Love them equally – no favoritism
- b) Spouse before kids – this is the order of God
- c) Give the children room to grow – be patient with them
- d) Let them grow with boundaries - discipline them when needed

3. Giving is not an Option Mark 10: 17-31

There was a rich man who approached Jesus, wanting to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus names the commandments and it seemed that the rich man had kept them all. Then Jesus asked him to go sell everything he had, give to the poor, and then follow him. At this the man's face fell. Jesus explains how it is hard (not impossible) for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. When asked, who then can be saved, Jesus replied that man cannot save himself, nor can riches save a man. Only God can save men. Jesus promises that whoever has left his home, mother or father, brother or sister or fields, will not fail to receive a hundred times in this present age.

It was the year 2008 when I had resigned from the ICoC (former fellowship). During those beginning days we did not have much money but the expenses had to be taken care of. Johnson forfeited his job in New Delhi to settle in Chennai. Vandana sacrificed her high paying lucrative job at CISCO, to build a strong base here in Chennai. Thomas and Shirley stepped forward to sell their house and help the church out. None of them saw a big church or Mission Teams. All they understood was unless they sacrificed, the people cannot be saved. Today because of that many interns (Full time workers) are being supported. We have a thriving church in Bangalore and a very strong base in New Delhi. We must also understand that sacrificing is not only for a church to grow spiritually and numerically, but also for our own soul's sake. What have you sacrificed for the Kingdom of God? Make a decision to do so this year.

4. Heaven should not be an Option Mark 10: 32-34

This is the third time Jesus is talking about his death. One may ask why? It's because death is the only constant for a person who is born in this world that will never change. All of us who are born must realize that we will die. Jesus was the greatest risk taker. Knowing that he had three short years to do what he had come to do, never got his eyes off his target. Jesus never had another plan of saving the world. His only plan was, that he would die a sinless death for a sinful world. What's interesting to note is that he assures us that he will rise again. If he will rise again, and if we follow him, we would also rise. So there is a better life for all who follow Jesus. When we get many options in life, many chances to move up in our career, opportunities to make more money or even offers to choose a life partner from the world, it is then we must remember that going to heaven, our permanent home as a faithful disciple is worth a billion times more than all of these put together. We may miss having our own house here on earth, but let us never become weary and miss our real home in heaven!

5. Leadership is not an Option Mark 10: 35-45

James and John wanted to sit on the left and right of Jesus in heaven. Jesus challenged them to drink the cup (which means suffering - sharing Jesus' fate) and be baptized (which means death - following Jesus till the end might result in losing ones life). Jesus then makes them think about who a real leader is. He tells them that leadership is not exercising authority over people. Many times when we are appointed as a leader or get our first disciple we tend to order them around. This is wrong. Jesus explains that a true leader will be a servant. Every disciple should seek to be a leader. Sometimes we mix up leadership and management. If you want to be a leader then be an example. If you want to manage, don't manage people, but manage yourself. Also remember we manage things. People don't like to be managed but like to be lead. That is why being an example is so important. A few qualities of leaders are discipline, self-control and character. Let's work towards becoming an excellent leader like our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Jesus is not an Option Mark 10: 46-52

When they came to Jericho they came across a blind man who was begging by the roadside. When he started to call out on in a loud voice to Jesus many rebuked him and asked him to be quiet. The blind man shouted all the more asking Jesus to have mercy on him. Of course Jesus cures and restores the blind man's sight. I believe, though the man was blind he must have heard several stories of Jesus curing people. He probably thought this was his only chance. He did not want to lose this golden opportunity. He was blind, but he was paying attention. He was blind, but he knew the developments happening in Jericho. He was blind, but he learnt to see with his ears. He knew in his heart that Jesus can and will surely cure. So, for this blind man Bartimaeus, Jesus was not an option. He was not trying to reach Jesus, but knew that Jesus is the only answer to his blindness. Many times we have Jesus as one of the options in life. Sadly for some he is the last option. We have forgotten that he has rescued us, cared for us, saved us from accidents and cured us. Our approach to Jesus should be like Bartimaeus' call. Our prayer should be, 'God grant me success', 'God please bring about victory'. In fact in our speech, work, labour, faith we should believe that Jesus is the only way. May be some of us have to become blind, in order to see, that Jesus is not an option.