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Do This To Make Good Decisions

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Values aren't practices. A practice is an activity or action. A practice that works in one situation may not work in another. Why? because practices apply to specific situations. Since my second son, David, loved hanging out with friends, sending him to his room when he misbehaved was an effective form of discipline. If I restricted my third son, Paul, like that, he would have been indifferent. Why? Because Paul enjoyed playing computer games. That example demonstrates the importance of adapting our practices to different situation.

A DEEPER LOOK

But let's look deeper. Values aren't principles. A principle is an external truth that is as reliable as a physical law. A value is a principle we've internalized and made our own. For instance, a principle of life might say, "Exercise and healthy eating produce strong bodies." Everyone would say that principle is true.

But those who watch what they eat and exercise regularly have made that principle a value. When we internalize a principle we demonstrate that we "value" the principle. Ultimately, we want to base our behavior and decisions on values, not circumstances or feelings. We want to internalize God's word and so value its principles that they drive our decisions and actions.

KING DAVID SHOWS THE WAY

King David demonstrated value driven behavior in Psalm 15. If you take a few minutes and read the psalm you'll notice that king said the person who enjoys the presence of God and lives a blameless life is the one who "speaks the truth from his heart" (vv. 1-2). Because he values truth in his heart, his words express truth. Because he values kindness, "he does his neighbor no wrong" (v. 3). Because he values honesty he "keeps his oath even when it hurts" (v. 4). Because he values justice he "does not accept a bribe against the innocent" (v. 5).

Value driven people reap a great benefit from God. David said they "will never be shaken." The more we allow biblical values to drive our decisions and practices, regardless of what may happen around us, the more confident we can be that our choices and actions reflect godly wisdom. That confidence provides emotional and spiritual stability. And it will help us to lead others in a way that honors God and strengthens our kingdom influence.