

# The Ship Is Yours

Learning to Become Decision Makers

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There is a book entitled, *It's Your Ship*, and it was written by Michael Abrashoff. It is being used by many corporations, companies, self help groups, and individuals, to learn valuable lessons in management techniques and leadership skills.

Michael Abrashoff was an officer in the United States Navy, and his first sea command was as captain of the guided missile destroyer, USS Benfold. The ship was one of the most technologically advanced and sophisticated combat vessels in the US pacific fleet, having been built and then commissioned in 1996. He came on as the second captain of the ship in June of 1997.

The morale on this ship, one of the most advanced pieces of equipment in the whole Navy, was so bad that when the formal change of command ceremony was ended on board the ship and the former commander left the ship, with his family present, the crew cheered!

Captain Abrashoff decided at this point that something had to change in the way that things were being done. There needed to be not just 'business as usual,' but there needed to be a new trust developed between captain and crew. No matter how spectacular a piece of equipment this ship was, without a team working together to operate it, it would be useless.

So he set out to develop a different style of management and leadership that would instill trust and motivate a group of individuals to be part of a team that could constantly excel and handle any and all problems along the way together.

There were a number of things that he did to instill a sense of engagement and trust into the whole crew, but the one thing that he decided he needed to do to really get the team all headed in the right direction was that he needed to create a team of decision makers and not order takers! The chain of command would still remain intact ,but he needed to create an atmosphere in which all the crew together would learn to make the right decisions that would affect the morale and the effectiveness of the ship as a whole.

Brethren, this is exactly what God has done within His creation! He is not creating a family of order takers but well informed decision makers!

Turn with me back to the very beginning of the Book.

**Genesis 1:26-31** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

The words translated "to have dominion over" is Strong's 7287 "*radah* (raw-daw'" and it can mean, have dominion, prevail against, reign, bear, make to rule over, take.

This command God has given to man, to rule over what God has created, is all part of the creation process that God identifies in verse 31, as "very good!" It is part of the whole process to make man to learn to grow in the image of God, in which He created Him. It was part of man's creation to be a decision maker, in ruling over the rest of the creation into which God had placed Him. So from the beginning, God's intent was to create decision makers, and not order takers, because it is all part of the process of being created in the image of God.

But we will see in a minute that this decision making process must be based on the true revealed knowledge from the mind of God and not on independent thinking that has been reasoned outside of the bounds of God's law of love. There must be decisions made from choices only as God made them available to be chosen! This then began the process designed by God to create a family to think and decide as He does, in order to make decisions that would bring forth the same fruit that would create true peace, joy, and cooperation for eternity. But that could not happen overnight.

**Genesis 2:15-17** Then the LOORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LOORD God commanded the man,

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saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

One of the commentaries I read about these verses, *The Teacher's Commentary*, said:

God knew man's need for freedom to choose, so He placed a forbidden tree in the Garden and commanded man not to eat fruit from it. This action once for all set man apart from programmed robots and demanded that he use his capacity to value and to choose.

God also made very clear, through this act, that as men made the decisions necessary to rule over and maintain God's "very good creation," it was necessary to learn the decision making process, based, not on their own knowledge of what they saw to be good and evil, but upon the way that God would show them.

Then into this creation that must ultimately result in a God family, who must truly have learned to make proper decisions, thinking just as God does by the end of the process, God placed another decision making being who had been given a direct relationship with the God family, but had stepped outside the bounds of right thinking.

**Ezekiel 28:12-19** Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured

you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever.""

**Isaiah 14:12-14** "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

One of the most spectacular beings created by God, was created perfect to learn and think and make decisions, having direct contact with God, as one that saw the mind of God in action. But, instead of making decisions based on the beauty of the mind of God, he began making decisions based on the delusion of his own created beauty, and he blinded himself to the truth and he, as the creation, became wrapped up in himself thinking that he knew more than the One who created him. Then beauty, love, and creation turned into ugliness, hatred, and destruction.

**Genesis 3:1-6** Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

God had now allowed the decision maker, who had himself stepped outside the bounds of the love of God, and brought down calamity to influence men to think the same way he did. Not looking to what God revealed to them to be the truth, but rather making decisions based on the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life!

We all know what the results were; men had given themselves over to making decisions based on what their senses told them, instead of following the gift of the revealed Word

of God to make their decisions in ruling over God's creation. That has created pain, death, and destruction, instead of the beauty that decisions based on the revealed truth of God would bring.

Brethren, I am not telling you anything here that you did not already know. But what I want to drive home in this sermon is this: A major portion and perhaps the most important part of the creation process that we have the privilege to be directly involved in today is God's creation of His Family that will be making creative decisions throughout eternity through the exact same thought process as the Father and the Firstborn! We have the opportunity now, to learn to think as God does! We put our faith in action by carefully making decisions every day of our lives based not on what we see or feel, but on what God has revealed to us in His Word as the right way to make a decision.

When I was preparing for this sermon, I was thinking a lot about the choices that God constantly gives us in this life to see if we are really following His thinking process or our own. In the course of preparation I looked up "to choose," and I would like to read to you what *Vines Expository* has to say about it.

"Bachar" is the word for "to choose." This verb is found 170 times the Old Testament. "Bachar" first occurs in the Bible in Genesis 6:2: "...they took them wives of all which they chose." It is often used with a man as the subject: "Lot chose [for himself] all the plain of Jordan..." Genesis 13:11. In more than half of the occurrences, God is the subject of "bachar," as in Numbers 16:5: "...the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy;... even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him."

Nehemiah 9:7-8, describes God's "choosing" (election) of persons as far back as Abram: "You are the Lord God, who chose Abram... and you made a covenant with him." "Bachar" is used 30 times in Deuteronomy, all but twice referring to God's "choice" of Israel, or something in Israel's life. "Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them..." Deuteronomy 4:37. Being "chosen" by God brings people into an intimate relationship with Him: "...the children of the Lord your God:... the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" Deuteronomy 14:1-2.

God's "choices" shaped the history of Israel; His "choice" led to their redemption from Egypt. Deuteronomy 7:7-8, sent Moses and Aaron to work miracles in Egypt, Psalms 105:26-27, and gave them the Levites "to bless in the name of the Lord" Deuteronomy 21:5. He "chose" their inheritance

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Psalms 47:4, including Jerusalem, where He dwelt among them, Deuteronomy 12:5; II Chronicles 6:5,21. But "they have chosen their own ways, and... I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them..." Isaiah 66:3-4. The covenant called men to respond to God's election: "...I have set before you life and death...: therefore choose life..." Deuteronomy 30:19;

The Greek Septuagint version translated "bachar" chiefly by eklegein, and through this word the important theological concept of God's "choosing" came into the New Testament. The verb is used of God's or Christ's "choice" of men for service, as in Luke 6:13, "of them he chose twelve..." or of the objects of His grace, "...he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world..." Ephesians 1:4. John 15:16, expresses the central truth of election in both Testaments: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,... that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...."

What we can see, through this expository by Vines, on this word "choose" in relation to the topic of this sermon, is that God is constantly making decisions that is driving forward His chosen from among men, driving forward the creation process of His Family, those with whom He would be working with to "choose" as well. Without God's decision to call you in the first place during any particular stage of the creation process, decisions made by those outside the selection are going to be corrupted by human nature. But once God has separated some out of the world's corruption, those chosen now have the opportunity and the responsibility to make decisions driven by God's Spirit, and to step out in faith and make decisions based on the revealed Word of God!

**Deuteronomy 30:1-20** Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today. The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this

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Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LOORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LOORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LOORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LOORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LOORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

This is the wrap up, and God tells them that He had set before them the revealed ability to make proper decisions and choose the path to life in order that they may cleave unto Him.

But without God's Holy Spirit driving them they only were able to see everything that God had laid out as commands and orders to be taken. They could not see the big picture, that these books were the boundaries of the thinking of the mind of God, through which decisions could be made that would produce life and dwelling in the very presence of God.

Without the Holy Spirit, they became order takers and not decision makers. But we have now been given the awesome opportunity to understand how to live, not according to the letter of the law as order takers, but according to the spirit of the law as decision makers! To make decisions within the parameters of the law which is the mind of God—an outgoing concern for Him and our neighbors.

For the short time remaining in this sermon, I would like us to examine a little more closely the major decision making process that God has given us the opportunity to be part of, during this end time part of the process of creating a family that thinks as God thinks.

John Ritenbaugh focused on this, a few weeks ago, in the afternoon sermon on the last day of Unleavened Bread.

**I Corinthians 10:16-17, 24** The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. . . . Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

**I Corinthians 11:27-32** Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Do we really believe these words brethren? Are we really making decisions in our lives based on our responsibility to the Body of Christ, both in the awesome debt that we owe the Father and the Son that can never be repaid, and in our care to make decisions based on our part within the Body of Christ!

**I Corinthians 12:4-18** There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one



individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

If we really have a proper relationship with God, then the elect will be showing the fruits of that relationship in our relationships within the Body, as it pleases God.

**Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . . And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

God has given us the perfect environment to become decision makers within the boundaries of the spiritual gifts that have been given to each within the Body of Christ, in where He has placed us! Do we really believe that brethren, and are we faithfully

making our decisions with the rest of the Body of Christ in mind?

The Body of Christ is not just in the Church of the Great God, but the Church of the Great God is part of the Body of Christ, and we each have a responsibility to remain in the place within the Body where God has chosen to place us, and to serve the rest of the Body from that position.

We are to submit ourselves to God within the positions that He has placed us, and we are to understand that it is our duty to seek to make decisions, according to God's Word in love toward Him and the rest of the Body that continue to unify the Body.

Fallible humans, under guidance from God's Holy Spirit, trying to better serve the rest of the Body from that place where God has chosen to place us, is our faith in action and will bring glory to God and the perfecting of the saints in love.

**Hebrews 2:9-11** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Brethren, it is God's ship, it is the Body of the Christ, with Jesus Christ as the captain of our salvation. This ship is the lifeline in a hostile enemy sea, and we have been chosen to faithfully operate it together with the Father and the Son, and to learn to make decisions in love for God and each other.

We have been given an opportunity to be part of the first fruits that will rule with Christ, upon His return, in the next stage of God's plan for all mankind! But we must be faithfully learning to make decisions in the spirit of the law within our place in the Body of Christ, under the direction of a Captain who does not make mistakes!

Because we faithfully do this together, with the Father and the Son, and each other, He is not ashamed to call us brethren, and we should not be ashamed to call one another brethren.