

Security Briefs Episode 13

Stay or Go? Part 2 – Decision Points and Tripwires

Introduction

Last time we introduced the topic of staying or going and the high level of stress and harm it can cause to an individual, family, team, field, or even an entire organization. It is important we approach this from a Scripturally sound framework, but also from a practical perspective.

Making a Plan

Nothing can help reduce the stress of deciding in a moment of risk better than examining potential threats and risks in advance. Jesus himself talked about this type of strategic planning in Luke 14:25-33. When we are talking about staying or going, one of the key parts of helping us to decide is by setting what I like to call “decision points” but some other people call them “tripwires” or “thresholds”.

Decision Points

Decision Points are those things which, when crossed, force us to decide about staying or going in a place. For instance, I spoke to a family a few years ago who was in a country that was facing the threat of potential war. Seeing this, they carefully thought, prayed, strategized, and consulted about the best way to decide when or if to stay or to go.

This meant deciding on their goals and values. They had young children, so they knew that protecting them was a high priority. They also had a strong sense of obligation to the ministry to which the Lord had called them and did not want to do undue damage by leaving unnecessarily. They also valued their relationship with the local church and believers and did not want to discourage them by leaving too soon, nor endanger them by staying too long. With this, plus their commitment and loyalty to their colleagues and leadership, they made some decisions.

As a family they wrote down a series of “tripwires” based on recent geopolitical history that would force them to take notice and evaluate their stay-go decision. They vowed to hold each other accountable and not ignore these facts as they happened. When each decision point was reached, they had to decide if it was time to leave or not. Each decision point also required them, at a minimum, to do something concrete – for some these concrete actions could be something like packing a “go bag”, purchasing open-ended airline tickets, storing food or water, or getting extra cash out of your local bank.

They also decided that there would be a point at which, when they had passed a certain number of thresholds, or when a tipping point was reached, that there would be no discussion. They would simply leave.

Of course, that tipping point finally came, yet even then they hesitated. They were, after all, pulling up roots from a place they and their children had called home for many years. But, once again, they held each other accountable to their earlier decision and made preparations for an orderly, well-planned withdrawal.

It was only a short time later that war broke out and other colleagues and friends, as well as no small number of locals made hasty, stressful, and imperfect withdrawals – though the same signs were there for them. Other field colleagues chose to stay. Still others who withdrew, later came back in some other manner of ministry.

The point is that there wasn't a right or wrong answer, but with prayer and planning, the results might be far less devastating if you are forced to suddenly leave your area of ministry.

Now you know.

Next episode we will talk more about staying and going.