

Life Compass Pt3- *Constant Change or Steady Course* (1-22-20)

Two weeks ago we talked about the troubles of making life decisions based on emotions which are temporary & easily played upon. Last week we talked about how making life decisions based on temptations always leads to trouble, hurt, pain, disaster, even death. This week we are going to talk about making decisions on things that change vs. things that never change. In the *Pirates of the Caribbean (POTC)* film series, Capt. Jack Sparrow had a 'magic compass' that always pointed in the direction of object of his greatest desire. It guided him in where he should go to find that desire. Through the movies, various characters also took possession of the compass & it pointed in the direction their most desired thing. But this odd compass changed direction when the object of their greatest desires changed. Even though the compass changed, they followed it, over & over again. The compass led Jack & the *POTC* characters on all sorts of insane escapes.

So what about us? Do we follow an ever-changing compass? Do we let things that constantly change determine our life's direction? You may say, "No way! I wouldn't do that!" Well, let's take a look at things that change and yet people make life decisions on them all the time.

Trends, Friends & "It Depends" People make decisions on **Trends** all the time. By trends I mean things like fads, styles & popular new things. A big one is styles & fashion. Now fashion clothes & hairstyles change all the time, but this is not a permanent life change because you can change your clothes & hair grows back. But tattoos & piercings have permanent effects. In 1940s, the only people who got tattoos were sailors. They looked cool in WWII, but late in life these old tattoos just looked like blue ink blobs. Ear-piercing became a thing among ladies in the 1970s. By the late 80s, some guys were getting their left ears pierced. Tattoos took off in the 90s among males. Body piercing & tattoos among men & women took off on the 2000s. Do you think anyone regrets extreme tattoos or piercings later in life? Believe me, they do... **Trends** could ever be changing & attitudes, beliefs & morals. Right now, normalization of transsexual identity is through the roof. This is something that nobody thought was good or normal even 10 years ago. But people are having life-altering sex-change operations because they've been influenced by a society that says you need to cut off your genitals to feel good about yourself... Regrets are high among transsexuals because you can't go back from that operation; studies say that 40% of transsexuals attempt suicide... So allowing the ever-changing **trends**, fads, styles, popularity & societal attitudes be your life's compass in decision-making is by no means the best.

We make a lot of decisions even life-changing decisions on **Friends**. Friends can be a huge influence on life, but sadly this influence often goes to the lowest common denominator – meaning friends groups usually sink the values & standards of the 'friend' with the lowest morals in the group. And I bet you believe that the friends you have now will be your friends for life, right? That's not the case. About 95% of the friends you have now won't even be in your life in 15 years due to all sorts of factors! The fact is that people (particularly young people) make life-altering decisions based on their friends all the time, friends that more-than-likely won't even be in their life in a few years anyway. **Friends** aren't the best compass in life decisions either?

The third thing in life that changes all the time are circumstances or the **"It Depends"** or situational ethics. With this, we find that "situational ethics" or morals often come into play. Everyone knows it's wrong to cheat & if you get caught, it's an instant zero. But what if you get involved in a 10-hour *Fortnight* session. You get to bed at 4:30am. By some miracle, you get to school in time but because you played *Fortnight* all night... you forgot about the BIG TEST that day. Now because of your extreme tiredness & lack of studying, the **"It Depends"** situational ethics start come into your head & you're more willing to cheat on the test. The **"It Depends"** kicks in & overrides your right & wrong morals. You do it, you cheat, but you get caught. You get a zero, you don't get into National Honor Society, you don't get that letter of recommendation from the teacher for your college application, you don't win the big college scholarship. See making decisions based on changing ethics & morals of the **"It Depends"** situations is another terrible way of decision-making.

Folks, life is tough & things are changing at lightning speeds. We can't deny that, but do you want to base your life on things that are constantly changing? Who can even keep up with it all? And every adult in this room can tell you about big mistakes they've made in making decisions based on **Trends, Friends or "It Depends"**. What we need is something -or 'someone'- that is constant & stable, that never changes, never lies, never is foolish, or never leads us astray. We need someone who always is totally truthful, wise, caring, faithful & loving. Only one person fits that bill: Jesus Christ. He's the same yesterday, today & forever (**Heb 13:8**). His wisdom is perfect (**1Cor 1:30**) & His wisdom never changes with circumstances. Jesus is The Truth & His word never change (**Jn 14:6, 1Pt 1:24-25**). He is the faithful friend who will never leave you (**Heb 13:5b**) & no one can separate you from His love (**Rom 8:39b**). Jesus is the guiding light (**Jn 8:12**) & the Rock (**Lk 6:47-49; Eph 2:20**) - not the ever-shifting compass of this world. The love of Jesus is the ultimate love, love that frees us from sin & gives us eternal life in Him (**1Jn 3:16**).

So we all have to ask ourselves, should we be making life-altering decisions on changing **Trends, Friends & "It Depends"**? We all know the answer is "NO!" We need to trust in the one solid thing in this world: Jesus & His Truth, Word, Wisdom, Faithfulness, Spirit & Love. He alone will never let you down or lead you astray.

BIBLE VERSES Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

1 Pt 1:24-25 As the Scriptures say, "People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. But the word of the Lord remains forever."

Mt 24:35 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do and He will show you which path to take.

Rom 12:2 (NLT) Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 1. Any *Pirates of the Caribbean (POTC)* fans here tonight? If so, what's your favorite part or character?

2a. The *POTC* characters always followed the changing compass, which led them into many perilous situations. Give some examples of how people today do the same thing by making decisions based on changing Trends, Friends & 'It Depends'.

2b. How can making decisions based on changing Trends, Friends & 'It Depends' have a major impact on someone's life?

3. Let's get personal. How has following constantly changing Trends, Friends or It Depends/Situational ethics personally affected your decisions & your life?

4. Read Heb 13:8, 1 Pt 1:24-25 & Mt 24:35. Jesus & His Word are the only unchanging foundations in this world that we can reliably count on. How has placing your trust in Jesus & His Word changed your decision-making for the positive?

5a. Read Prov 3:5-6 & Rom 12:2. Do you still struggle with letting the constantly changing pressures of Trends, Friends or "It Depends"/Situational ethics influence or control your decision-making? If so, where are your biggest challenges?

5b. What can we as friends & fellow believers in Christ do to help our brothers & sisters who are struggling with following the constantly changing influences of Trends, Friends or "It Depends"?

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, we love You & thank You. You never change & Your love for us never changes. Thank you for being our Rock in this constantly changing world. Help us to recognize the power & impact of changing influences. Lord, guide us and our life's decisions by eternal Your Word, Your Wisdom, Your Spirit & Your Love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.