CHOICE AND CONSEQUENCE
Week 1: Sensible Decisions at School

This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW
Every decision we make has a consequence. Teenagers spend many hours of the week at school and make hundreds of decisions that impact their lives. In this lesson, your students will discover how making sensible decisions at school honors God and helps them grow closer to him. Wise choices are also a demonstration of their love for God, and making good decisions at school makes life better.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. WHAT: Students have the opportunity to make sensible, wise choices at school, whether they are doing homework, sitting in a classroom, or finding a place to sit at lunch.
2. WHY: Making sensible, wise decisions is a way to honor God, and it opens the door to a better life.
3. HOW: Students will examine the value of choosing to do the right thing at school, and they’ll discover how doing what God loves makes life better.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
Romans 7:21-25

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES
1 Corinthians 10:31 and James 1:5

TEACHING PREP
The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your lesson.

Read Romans 7:21-25.

Each day, we make numerous decisions and choices—some small, some big. While we often strive to do what is best and to make the best choice possible, we often make mistakes.

In this passage, the Apostle Paul told Christians in Rome that he knew the struggle of wanting to do the right thing but choosing instead to do the wrong thing. Paul faced a constant battle, as he desired to do the right thing, but continually fell short and did the exact opposite. This probably sounds familiar, doesn’t it?

God gives us the ability to make good, wise choices. God gives the Holy Spirit as the “wise voice” that helps and encourages us to make good, wise decisions. By doing this, teenagers can honor God and show him that they love him. Making sensible, wise choices—including choices at school—can make life better for your students.
THE BEFORE & AFTER [optional]

Text Message Questions
We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- What’s the hardest decision you’ve had to make at school recently? Let’s talk about it tonight at small group.

- Why is it sometimes so tough to make the right decisions at school? Come to small group tonight to dig deeper and find answers.

Parent Email
We’ve provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

Our small groups have begun a two-week series titled “Choice and Consequence.” Each day, we make numerous decisions and choices—some small, some big. While we often strive to do what is best and to make the best choices possible, we often make mistakes.

In this first lesson, our students discussed the importance of making sensible, wise decisions at school. We examined Romans 7:21-25, where the Apostle Paul told Christians in Rome that he felt as if he were enslaved to sin. Paul faced a constant battle, as he desired to do the right thing, but continually fell short and did the exact opposite. This is a familiar struggle for most junior high students.

We told our teenagers that God gives them the ability to make good, wise choices, and God gives the Holy Spirit as the “wise voice” that helps them and encourages them to make good, wise decisions. Making sensible, wise choices—including choices at school—can make life better.

I’d encourage you to find time this week to talk with your teenager about our lesson. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- If someone continually makes bad or unwise choices at school, what are the typical or likely consequences that person will face?
- What are some examples of specific situations at school where it isn’t always easy to do what’s right—or where doing what’s right may upset friends or classmates?
- What are some God-honoring ways you can handle those specific situations you just identified?
- Why does God love when we make right, good, wise choices?

I pray that this is a blessed, awesome week for you and your family!
CHOICE AND CONSEQUENCE
Week 1: Sensible Decisions at School

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [optional]
Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then
ASK:

- What’s the hardest decision you’ve had to make at school recently?
- Were you pleased with the results of your decision? Why or why not?
- If a teenager continually makes bad or unwise choices at school, what are the typical or likely consequences that person will face?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: I think most people would agree that life would be a lot easier if we always made the right choices. Making a few right, wise decisions can lead to a lifestyle and pattern of making right, wise decisions. The same idea is true if we make bad, unwise choices. The students in your school who make bad choices suffer consequences that eventually shape their lives, and these patterns of decisions can change their lives in a negative way.

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you’d like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS
The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Doing the right thing at school is a choice, and (2) Doing what God loves makes life better.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Romans 7:21-25 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: It’s frustrating to feel like you want to make a good choice but then to end up making a bad choice. Let’s spend a few minutes talking about the value of making good decisions at school.

1. Doing the right thing at school is a choice

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: In this series, we’re talking about “sensible decisions.” Basically, these are the good, wise, smart decisions you and I can make each day. You have the power to make a choice, and we’re responsible for our decisions. When you study the Bible, you learn how to make better choices. God desires that you ask him for wisdom in making good decisions.
ASK:
- Do you find it easier or harder to do the right thing in school compared to other areas of your life?
- The Apostle Paul wrote these verses in Romans 7. How often do you feel like him—even when you want to do the right thing, you find yourself being drawn toward doing things that are wrong?
- In your opinion, what are some of the reasons teenagers make bad decisions?
- What are some examples of specific situations at school where it isn’t always easy to do what’s right—or where doing what’s right may upset friends or classmates?
- What are some God-honoring ways you can handle those specific situations you just identified?
- Why is it difficult to do what Jesus would do and wants you to do?

2. Doing what God loves makes life better

ASK:
- How can making the right choices and doing what God loves make your life better?
- Why does God love when we make right, good, wise choices?
- If our sin separates us from God, how does making a good, wise choice draw us closer to him?
- If Jesus is the answer to making wise choices, how can you find help from him in the middle of the school day?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: When you take the time to consider the benefits of making good choices, the consequences of good choices, and the fact that you honor God when you make good choices, you can find encouragement to do the right thing. Being obedient to God is a choice, and making a choice to obey God strengthens your friendship with him and helps you grow as a follower of Jesus.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [optional]

ASK:
- How might being a follower of Jesus make it easier to make good, wise choices?
- Do you think pastors and people who work at the church are better decision-makers? Why or why not?
- What is your best defense against making poor, unwise choices?
- Think of someone at school who seems to always make the right decision. What do you think is that person’s motivation?
- When you make a wrong, unwise choice, which consequences are the hardest to accept?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: God knew that you would need a Savior, and that’s why he sent down Jesus as a sacrifice for your mess-ups and mistakes and sins. God willingly offers forgiveness for the times we make poor, unwise decisions.

ASK:
- Read James 1:5. What’s the connection between wisdom and the way we make decisions?
• How can the Bible help you make the best choice?
• Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. How might your life look different if you tried—with God’s help—to do everything in ways that would honor God?

APPLICATION
Ask each student to find a partner for these questions.

ASK:
• What is the best decision that you can make this week regarding school?
• If you decide today to spend the next week asking God to empower you to make good choices, what do you think might happen as a result?
• How might you encourage a friend who seems to consistently make bad, unwise choices at school?
• Make a list of three decisions you have to make at school daily. What can you do differently with those decisions this week based on what we’ve discussed in today’s lesson?

Encourage the partners to pray for each other, asking God to give them courage and strength to make good, wise choices at school this week. Challenge the students to make this a daily prayer for the next week.

SUMMARY
End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]
Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking (James 1:5).