

Balance or Compromise?

Pastor Nick Harris

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You may have heard my testimony in 2008. I was in the Navy back in the early 60's. If you wanted to be an officer when you joined, you went to a military college or academy. If you weren't going to be an officer when you joined you were called an "enlisted man" and you were like a "blue-collar worker".

There's an exception: if you'd been an enlisted man long enough, you had could become what was called a "Warrant Officer". That was based on your time in the service, your service record, and some recommendations.

Warrant officers were usually senior in age to most of the other officers. When you had the opportunity to talk with one, it was kind of like talking with your grandfather.

Maybe they couldn't quote the military code of conduct on how to wear a uniform, but they could sure tell you about the pride of wearing one. Most of their wisdom came from their life experiences, and you could tell they had lived what they were preachin'.

Now, if you want to become a pastor you can go to seminary; most pastors have, but not me. As a matter of fact, I had trouble even spelling the word ... I got it confused with *cemetery*. I saw a card once that said "Congratulations for graduating from *seminary*" ... And I wondered, "How in the world do you do that?!" I thought only *Jesus* could do *that!*

But, I respect those people that have had the blessing of going to seminary to become a pastor. For years they get to flood their minds and hearts with the teaching of God's Word. So, being that I didn't go to *seminary*, but have had a LOT of life experiences with Jesus, I like to consider myself a humble "*warrant pastor*".

So let's talk about life experiences, some of them mine and some of them from our brothers and sisters in the Bible. In particular, I want to talk about how we as believers fit into this world of ours.

You might say "Well, Pastor Nick, that's easy. The scriptures say we are to live in the world but not be *of* the world." Let's see, live in the world but not be *of* the world, hmm, what does that mean? It means that we have choices to make. Some choices are pretty easy; others are as hard as an elephant trying to balance on a beach ball!

Some are balanced, and fit not only our faith but the culture and time in which we live.



Some are compromised. They may fit the culture and time we live in, but they hinder our relationship with the Lord, our growth, and our witness to the lost.

- Balance helps our calling.
- Compromise hinders our calling.

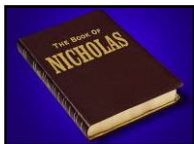
We can all look back into the past, and if we're honest, we can see some of those choices and how they might NOT have been the best ones.

It might have seemed like a good choice at the moment, but somewhere inside (maybe later) you knew that it compromised His Word and His will. But, you went ahead and did what *you* wanted. You might have even thought it was "no brainer". Let's face it; a compromising decision is usually just a lack of obedience (because in your heart you usually know what you should do).

When I'm in a hurry I can usually justify leaving off the seatbelt and stepping on the gas! Let's face it; a compromising decision is usually just a lack of obedience!

When I first got saved, I wanted to read as much as I could about God's people. Being that they were in the Bible, I figured God must have approved of everything they did. But I soon learned that was far from the truth! Gods' people were *ordinary* people just like you and me! And they made a lot of poor decisions!

And if that Bible was being written today, it would be about *you and me!* That's a sobering thought. Just imagine people reading Gods Word about *us* (our choices and decisions the way we live our lives).



Would the "Book of Nicholas" read as a testimony of the goodness of God? Of course it would, for "He is the same yesterday, today and forever". But, what would it say about my *obedience*? And what would *your* book say about *yours*?

Would those reading about *us* say that our decisions are balanced or compromised? Would they see us as being *of* the world or *not of* the world?

Lately, I've been studying about Abraham. He's the *father* of the Jewish nation, and yet we see him making several faith-compromising decisions. He started out on the wrong foot with one of the first things that God told him to do.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. - Genesis 12:1 NIV

But then in Gen 12:4 it says:

So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. - Genesis 12:4a NIV

See what it says there: "Lot went with him" ... but, didn't God say to "leave" "your father's household"? Lot wasn't supposed to go! And nephew Lot created some big ol' problems for Uncle Abraham. You know how many problems? A *lot*! Not the least of which included a couple little towns named Sodom and Gomorrah.

I'll let you in on a little secret: *Whatever* you allow to tag along with you from your old worldly ways into your new relationship with the Lord, is going to cause you problems. You know how many problems? A *lot*!

Another time, while they were traveling, Abraham asked his wife, Sarah to tell a lie.

As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." -
Genesis 12:11-13 NIV

It seemed like a good choice at the moment, but somewhere inside he knew that it compromised God's Word and His will. And just like Abraham, whenever we compromise, we turn from trusting to scheming.

But now, let's remember that Abraham made a lot of *balanced* decisions. He's known as the "Father of Faith". And all the peoples on earth would be blessed through him; for through the Jewish nation would come the savior of the world. So, before we throw Abraham under the bus because of his compromised decisions, let's make sure it's a *very big bus* - so we'll *all* fit!

I've got this neighbor that, over the years, we have gotten along great. Well, not long ago there was this problem that happened on his property. He came over to my house and accused me and my property as being a big part of the problem. Without going in to details, common sense told me that the problem was the extreme weather conditions and not my property. Regardless of who was right or wrong, I as a Christian (not to mention, a pastor!) didn't handle it the way the Lord wanted me to.

As the accusations kept coming, and because I "knew" I was right, I let my temper get the best of me. And I said some things that were definitely *not* in the book of John, but they *were* in the book of Nicholas!

He stomped off, I steamed off and God just shook His head. The Lord said, "It's easy to witness when everything's going good; but the powerful witness comes in the midst of the storm." And that's when He's most glorified. And that's when we really grow.

I asked God what I should do. And He said, "Do I really need to answer that ... *Pastor Nick?!?*" "NO, NO, NO, God! I know what You *want* me to do; but, his accusations are *false!*" And then He said, "So were theirs when they hung My Son on the cross. He didn't have to go, but He preferred to do My will."

I tried to think of other ways to get out of it. But He said, "Time to trust ... not to scheme." Then He said, "Tell you what; I'll go with you." So I went, God showed up, and everything is healing ... even my damaged witness.

There are a lot of examples I could give of balance becoming compromise in our culture. But, without any doubt, the most vulnerable area is with our sexuality. So, I want to paint a picture, *especially* for you young people, because I think you're up against a whole lot more these days than I was in mine.

Guys, you've arrived at your date's house. You've known her for some time but you have never met her father. She greets you at the door and guess who's standing next to her? Her dad. And with a gentle voice he says, "Young man, I really love my daughter and I'm so happy she's going out with a nice Christian boy like *you*. Will you respect her, take care of her and keep your thoughts pure towards her? He says, "I would greatly appreciate it." and then he shakes your hand.

And women, you're waiting for your date to arrive and there's the knock at the door. You have known your date for sometime and in he walks with an older man. And he says that his father wanted to meet you. His dad says to you, "Young lady, I really love my son and I'm so happy that he's going out with a nice Christian girl like you. Will you do all you can to help him to keep his thoughts pure so that he may respect you as you deserve? He says, "I'd really appreciate it." and he shakes your hand.

Would that change the way you dress or behave?



Would that help you to be a little more balanced and a little less compromised? What if dad rode in the seat between you on the date? Oh, you know what? I wanted to paint a picture, but I left out *one* part. Men when you shook her dad's hand, and ladies when you shook his dad's hand, this is the hand you held. I think that completes the picture!

Now, men are your thoughts and desires pure and appropriate for Jesus' daughter or could they lead you astray?

And ladies are you dressed appropriately for Jesus' son or are you dressed in a way that would make him, and other men stumble?



Our faith is made up of our decisions.

The bar has been set, but not by our culture; the bar has been set by Christ *in* our culture. Balanced decisions, not only fit in the culture and time in which we live, but they glorify God and make for a powerful witness.