

5 Fool-Proof Ways to Overcome Sound Decision Barriers

“Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.” – Proverbs 4:26 NIV

Moses. The hero of Israel. Deliverer of the Hebrew people. Visionary, prophet, wise leader. A man of great judgment and character. A significant historical figure. Moses' name is found some 750 times in the Old Testament and approximately eighty times in the New Testament.^[1] The Bible even says that he was God's friend, “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend” (Exodus 33:11 NIV). What an incredible privilege.

Moses was also very human and made some bad decisions.

In Numbers 20, the Bible tells us that the Hebrew people were still wandering in the desert before arriving in the Promised Land. They set up camp in the Desert of Zin, “a terrible place” according to the Hebrews. There was no water to quench their thirst, let alone for their livestock.

The people became angry and gathered in protest. They argued with Moses and said, “Really? You brought us all the way out here and there's no water. Are you trying to kill us?”

So, Moses goes to God, his friend, and asks what to do.

God tells Moses to speak to a rock and water will flow from it. Easy enough.

Moses gathers the people around the rock. But he is frustrated, even angry with the people. He becomes irrational and doesn't carefully think about potential consequences. Standing with his staff in hand, Moses cries, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” (Numbers

20:10 NIV).

The Bible tells us that Moses struck the rock twice with his staff and water immediately flowed from the rock. Did you get that?

He *struck* the rock. Twice.

He didn't speak to the rock as God had directed. Moses acted out of anger and frustration and made a bad decision. The consequence?

God told Moses that he wouldn't enter the Promised Land with the Hebrews. That's hard news.

Moses' frustration and anger were barriers to his ability to make a sound decision. Like Moses, you'll face many barriers to making quality, sound, wise decisions, including:

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- **Emotions:** In addition to frustration and anger, feelings like anxiety, depression, despair, envy, fear, jealousy, and resentment can compromise your rationality. It's best to step away from your emotions and examine the situation. Consider what's triggering your feelings and think about potential consequences of emotionally driven decisions. Exercise self-control. The Bible says, "Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city" (Proverbs 16:32 NLT).
 - **Knee-jerk reactions:** Ever had your knee tapped by a rubber mallet? What happens? Your leg automatically kicks out. Similarly, automatically reacting to a problem, issue, or circumstance without thinking it through may lead to making a bad decision. When you're hit with something, don't react so quickly.

- **Personal bias:** The way you see the world and your preferences and prejudices are often a barrier to sound decision-making. You lose objectivity and lean toward your own assumptions. To overcome bias, seek facts, evidence, diverse advice, and define reality. TV journalist and author Tom Brokaw said, “Bias like beauty, is often in the eye of the beholder. Facts are your firewall against bias.”^[2]
- **Analysis paralysis:** Overanalyzing or overthinking can be an obstacle to sound decision-making. It will stall momentum; no decision will be made, and no course of action will be taken. Recognize that you’ll never have all of the facts and take a risk. Someone once said, “It doesn’t matter in which direction you choose to move when under a mortar attack, just as long as you move.”^[3]
- **Time pressures:** The amount of time you have to decide will greatly impact its quality. If you’re under the gun, how you consider and choose between options may be distorted. You’ll make mental shortcuts and not think deeply about significant decisions. You’ll lose objectivity and be more influenced by intuition. And, you won’t have the appropriate time to gather all of the necessary information. When you can, slow down to speed up.

When thinking about decision barriers, ask

- What barriers do you face when deciding?
- How do the obstacles affect you?
- What will you do to avoid or overcome the impediments you face?

Decision barriers impact your ability to make sound choices. Don’t be like Moses when he struck the rock out of frustration and anger. Exercise self-control, temper reactions, mitigate

personal bias, don't get stuck in analysis, and slow down. If you do, you'll overcome the impediments and make sound decisions.

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Cheers,

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1 Wayne Jackson, "A Character Portrait of Moses," *Christian Courier*, last accessed July 5, 2020, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/253-character-portrait-of-moses-a>.

2 Tom Brokaw, "Lesson from a Life in Journalism," *NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams*, last modified October 8, 2004, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/6207274/ns/nbc_nightly_news_with_brian_williams/t/lessons-life-journalism/#.XwG8VpNKjUI.

3 Jeff Boss, "How To Overcome The 'Analysis Paralysis' Of Decision-Making," *Forbes*, last modified March 20, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffboss/2015/03/20/how-to-overcome-the-analysis-paralysis-of-decision-making/#6b9822031be5>.