

Decision Making and the Will of God

based on material by Greg Koukl and Garry Friesen

Preparation for Unit 1: Analysis of Sign Reading

No matter what you already believe about decision making and the will of God, I can assure you of one thing: this study will challenge you. For many of you, this will involve making a prayerful and critical examination of many strongly-held beliefs about God's will. Ultimately, though, I am confident that you will arrive at the end of the study thankful and more confident in the decisions you make. You will see decision making in a new light and experience a new sense of liberty in the decisions you make.

To get the most of out of this study you should plan on attending all of the sessions, if at all possible. Each week lays the foundation for the following weeks, so if you miss a week you may need to devote more time during the week to catch up.

Regardless, you should plan on spending time each week preparing for the upcoming lesson. Each week you will be given specific passages to study. Take the time to read these verses in context and draw well-founded conclusions. The more time you are able to devote to study and preparation, the more you will get out of each week's lesson.

"Young Adult Bible Study"...As the name implies, we will be drawing our *strongest* conclusions from the Bible and not from conviction, personal experience, or observation. In addition, we will endeavor to use biblical terms according to their intended biblical meaning.

There are several popular methods within the church today for determining God's will in order to make decisions. In preparation for the first lesson, please read and study the following verses related to each of these techniques. Remember to read the verses in context to determine their intended meaning.

Internal Signs:

- 1) Leading
 - 1 Kings 19:13
 - Romans 8:14
 - Galatians 5:18
 - Matthew 4:1
 - Mark 1:12
 - Luke 4:1
- 2) Inner peace
 - Colossians 3:15
 - Philippians 4:7

External Signs:

- 3) Open and closed doors
 - Colossians 4:3
 - 1 Corinthians 16:8-9
 - 2 Corinthians 2:12-13
 - Acts 16:26-28
- 4) Fleeces
 - Judges 6:36-40
 - Genesis 24:12-14
 - Acts 1:26
- 5) Confirmations
 - Deuteronomy 17:6
 - Deuteronomy 19:15
 - Matthew 18:15-16
 - 2 Corinthians 13:1-2
 - 1 Timothy 5:19-20
 - Hebrews 10:28

If you know of other key verses that relate to any of the above decision making methods, please send the references to me and/or bring them with you on Wednesday night.

As always, you are welcome to contact me anytime during the week if you have any questions or comments.

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Unit 1: Analysis of Sign Reading

As always, I want to encourage plenty of discussion during this study, but we have a lot of material to cover. I suspect that many of your questions will be answered as you study the verses I give you. In addition, I may ask to table certain questions and deal with them via group e-mail or during later lessons.

Overview of the 4 units:

- Raise some questions/issues with the prevailing view and suggest some refinements based on what we see in the Bible
- Go through all of the major texts used to support the prevailing view.
- Examine a more biblically-sound model of decision making.
- Look at decisions made by the apostles and others in the New Testament church.
- Attempt to apply this model to relevant situations.

So let's start with some common ground that I think everyone here will agree on.

- If God wants us to do something, and we don't do it, that's sin.
- And this sin can even be done in ignorance because we failed to seek what God wanted us to do.
- (Examples of sinning in ignorance: Leviticus 4; Numbers 15; Hebrews 9:7; Luke 23:34)

What are some of the things Christians say when they are doing something they believe to be God's will?

- "I feel led..."
- "I think God is telling me..."
- "God has really been speaking to me."
- "God wants me to..."
- "I feel God is calling me..."
- "I believe it's God's will that I..."
- "I have a peace about..."

The prevailing view today for decision making as it relates to God's will can best be described as the *personal guidance model*, and it goes something like this...

- God has a perfect, personal will for my life
- AND I must discover what that will is
- BEFORE making any (significant) decision.

In other words, God decides what I should do, and my job is to obey.

In preparation for today's lesson, I gave you some verses related to five popular methods for determining God's will in order to make a decision.

Internal

- leading
- inner peace

External

- open and closed doors
- fleeces
- confirmations

Tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

- All spiritual disciplines and doctrines that are essential for productive Christian living are taught clearly in the Bible.*
- In other words, can you think of any essential discipline or doctrine that is not presented in a clear manner?

Leading/Feelings

Does the Bible teach that we get direction from God through feelings?

1 Kings 19:12-13

"After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

The "still small voice" was *still* an audible voice, not a feeling!

What does the Bible mean by the phrase "led by the Spirit"?

Romans 8:14

"...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

Being led by the Spirit does not refer to individual guidance but to empowerment to live holy lives. It refers to the Spirit's role in convicting the believer of sin and "leading" him to live righteously.

Galatians 5:18

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law."

Once again, being led by the Spirit has to do with righteous living not personal guidance for decision making.

Notice that Paul contrasts being led by the Spirit with being under the law. If Paul was talking about receiving personal guidance, then he would be saying that because God is talking to you directly, you don't have to keep the commandments.

Jerry Bridges sums up the biblical notion in *The Practice of Godliness*:

"The apostle Paul describes Christians as people who are led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18). Both of these passages refer to His leading, not in some decision we must make, but in the conduct and character issues of our lives. If we are led by the Spirit, we will put to death the misdeeds of the body, and we will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

"The Holy Spirit leads us objectively through the general teaching of His word. There is where we learn His will for all Christians. But the Holy Spirit also leads us subjectively as He impresses certain Scriptures on our minds, applying them to specific situations in our lives. This is His way of showing us what He wants us to give attention to at a particular time; this is the way He leads us to establish a priority of applications."

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life?

- Convict
- Comfort
- Lead (to live righteously)
- Teach, etc.

Teaching does not involve creating and giving new information but working with what's already in existence and passing it along in an effective manner.

There is a critical difference between claiming *revelation* versus just *inspiration*.

If you say "God gave me this song" or "God gave me this message," then you cannot edit, change, or rewrite a single word or note because (1) it's not yours to change and (2) God is perfect and doesn't need any correction. In addition, the audience should be able to expect an exceptionally well-written song or message.

Claiming inspiration (little *i*), however, rightly gives God the glory for the good without blaming Him for the not so good.

In what sense was Jesus led by the Spirit?

Matthew 4:1

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."

Mark 1:12

"At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert..."

Luke 4:1

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert..."

The leading of the Spirit that Jesus experienced to go into the wilderness may be more properly understood as being moved or brought to a destination, as both of the Greek words (*anago* and *ago*) used by Matthew and Luke to describe how the Spirit “led” Jesus into the wilderness were also used by Luke to describe how the devil “led” Jesus to the high place and Jerusalem. In addition, these terms are most often translated as “brought,” and every other use in the gospels involved physical movement, not internal prompting. The Greek term Mark used (*ekballo*) makes this case even more strongly, as it was most often used to describe the casting out of demons. If based on this text we are to be led by the Spirit in the sense of an internal prompting, then it also follows that based on this text we are to be led by Satan in the sense of an internal prompting. This demonstrates why we shouldn’t try to make Scripture say something that is not intended. Even if you could make the case that the Spirit simply prompted Jesus through internal feelings to go into the wilderness, the case would remain that this was an experience unique to Jesus in his role as the incarnate Son of God. This is the only mention of this sort of occurrence in the New Testament, and there is no teaching or even suggestion that we should follow this pattern.

In addition to the lack of any scriptural support, what are some of the problems with trusting feelings and impressions as a source of guidance from God?

- It makes God appear capricious, changing His mind from moment to moment as the believer is led in different directions.
- Christians engage in seemingly bizarre behavior and attribute it to God’s direction.
- Feelings and impulses are given divine authority, and you cannot argue with commands from God.
- The believer spends more time trying to gauge the strength and direction of his feelings and less time studying God’s word for clear direction.
- “I think God is leading me, but it may just be my own desires, not God’s.”
- “Is this God or last night’s pizza?” (actual quote from a pastor/preacher on the radio)

Inner Peace

Does the Bible teach that believers should always have an inner peace when they make decisions in accordance with God’s will?

Philippians 4:7

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

What does this verse have to do with making a decision? Nothing that I can tell.

Colossians 3:15

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

We’ve discussed this passage previously in this class...

What is a trunk? tree, elephant, locker/chest, torso

What if I say “He slammed into the trunk”?

We need more than just this sentence to determine the usage and understand the meaning.

Rule = function as an umpire or judge

Peace = internal harmony OR lack of external conflict between two parties

Is there any place in the Bible that teaches us to make decisions based on whether we have a peace about it?

What is the problem with waiting until you have a sense of peace before taking action?

How many times have you had a total peace about witnessing to someone?

Is it possible to have a *lack of peace* even though you may be doing the *right* thing?

Is it possible to have a *peace* even though you may be doing the *wrong* thing?

Open and Closed Doors

Does the Bible teach that believers receive direction from God through the presence of open and closed doors?

Colossians 4:3

“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”

Here Paul asks them to pray for an open door.

1 Corinthians 16:8-9

"But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me."

Here Paul takes advantage of an open door.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13

"Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia."

But here Paul does not take advantage of the open door.

Acts 16:26-28

"Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!'"

This is the clearest example of Paul not taking advantage of a literal open door that was undoubtedly from God.

Paul treated open doors as opportunities that could be taken or ignored depending on other factors.

What is the problem with reading open or closed doors as directives from God?

- The door is closed...but is it really closed? Maybe it's an obstacle from Satan. Or maybe it's God saying "no."
- I have an open door, but maybe this is Satan's second best, not God's best.
- If an open door, or opportunity, is really a directive from God, then I don't have a choice. I have to take *every* opportunity that seems to be from God.

Fleeces

Does the Bible teach that believers should use fleeces or providential signs to make decisions?

Judges 6:36-40

"Gideon said to God, 'If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised – look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.' And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew – a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, 'Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew.' That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew."

Gideon's fleece:

- Confirmed God's direction that had *already* been *supernaturally* given to Gideon
- Was an expression of doubt and disbelief that God chose to tolerate [The fact that God chose to honor Gideon's faithless request does not make it a model practice for others.]
- Was itself clearly supernatural – an undeniable miracle of God

Genesis 24:12-14

"Then he prayed, 'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too' – let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.'"

Acts 1:26

"Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles."

Once again, the fact these instances took place, does not make them normative for believers or even advisable. This passage in Acts is also the last mention for casting lots in the Bible.

Let me use *The Simpsons* to demonstrate the problem with how fleeces are used. In this episode from 1995, Homer is in deep prayer over the news that his wife, Marge, is pregnant with their third child:

"Dear Lord, the gods have been good to me and I am thankful. For the first time in my life everything is absolutely perfect the way it is. So here's the deal: You freeze everything as it is and I won't ask for anything more. If that is okay, please give me absolutely no sign. [pause] Okay, deal. In gratitude, I present to you this offering of cookies and milk. If you want me to eat them for you, please give me no sign. [pause] Thy will be done."

A "legitimate" fleece must involve two things, at the very least:

1. A supernatural sign by which God can indicate "yes" (e.g., levitate these chairs)
2. A supernatural sign by which God can indicate "no" (e.g., levitate the piano)

Anything else shows just how unwilling we are to take seriously God's sovereignty over all of life's details.

Please do not misunderstand me here. I am not encouraging or even condoning the use of fleeces or providential signs. This is not something that we see taught in the Bible as a means for believers to determine God's will or make decisions.

Confirmations

Does the Bible teach that believers get direction from confirmations?

Deuteronomy 17:6

"On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness."

Deuteronomy 19:15

"One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Matthew 18:15-16

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' "

2 Corinthians 13:1-2

"This will be my third visit to you. 'Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others..."

1 Timothy 5:19-20

"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning."

Hebrews 10:28

"Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses."

The basic principle is "on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter (or every fact) shall be confirmed." This principle is taught in Deuteronomy and these are about the only places in the New Testament where it is mentioned (the other being Jesus speaking of the Trinity, I believe).

In every case, the confirmations by multiple witnesses have a judicial function, either related to Old Testament law or New Testament church discipline.

Furthermore, these verses speak directly and exclusively about the use of *oral* testimony by two or three *human beings* to convict someone of a crime or wrong doing – not the use of multiple hints, circumstances, or apparent coincidences that seem to all be pointing in the same direction to confirm God's will.

We must relieve ourselves of the notion that God drops little hints or clues that we might miss if we're not paying close attention.

Special Revelation

Over a 30-year period in the book of Acts, we see 14 examples of special revelation (versus over 70 decisions, some of which were very significant, that were *not* supernaturally directed).

- Involved only 17 different persons, at the most
- Half of the revelations were to Paul
- Only the first of Paul's three missionary journeys was specifically directed
- Typically addressed the spread of the gospel, never the ordinary decisions of life

Characteristics of personalized guidance as found in Scripture:

- *Rare/Exceptional* – a handful of incidences (especially over such a long period of time) does not constitute a model; don't make the exception into the rule
- *Intrusive and Unsolicited* – no one was "waiting on the Lord" for a sign
- *Supernatural* – for example, the Damascus Road
- *Explicit/Clear* – Afterwards Paul didn't say, "I think God might be trying to tell me something." He knew!
- *Contrary to Wisdom* (or current direction/plans) – otherwise there would be no need to intervene
- *Morally Binding* – this direction becomes the *only* option. There's nothing else to "pray" about.

Do you see any evidence that we, as believers, should *expect* special revelation from God in order to receive personalized guidance?

Of course God is *free* to do so, but He is not *obligated*, and we are not to *seek* this form of guidance from Him.

Preparation for Unit 2: Examination of God's Wills

Review Questions for Unit 1

If you can answer these questions correctly, then you've got a good understanding of the material covered in Unit 1.

Are there any spiritual disciplines or doctrines that are essential for productive Christian living that are not taught clearly in the Bible?

Was the "still, small voice" that God spoke to Elijah through an inner feeling or an audible voice?

What does Paul mean when he uses the phrase "led by the Spirit"?

What are the different meanings for the word "peace" in the New Testament?

What does Paul mean when he uses the phrase "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts"?

How did Paul respond to "open doors"?

What were the defining characteristics of Gideon's fleece?

For what purpose were confirmations (i.e., multiple witnesses) used in the Bible?

What are the defining characteristics of God's guidance through special revelation recorded in the Bible?

Are there any places in the Bible where God attempted to speak and was not heard by His intended audience?

Verses for Unit 2

When speaking of God’s will, Christians typically have one of three concepts in mind: God’s sovereign will, God’s individual will, or God’s moral will. These concepts can be defined as follows:

- Sovereign will – God’s (for the most part) secret plan that determines everything that happens in the universe.
- Individual will – God’s ideal, detailed life-plan that is uniquely designed for each person.
- Moral will – God’s revealed commands in the Bible that teach how people ought to believe and live.

Read as many of the following verses as you can (or at least pick a few key ones) and try to determine which of God’s wills is mentioned in the passage, then check the appropriate box to indicate your response. Bring this sheet with you on Wednesday.

| | Sovereign Will | Individual Will | Moral Will |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Deuteronomy 5:29 | | | |
| Deuteronomy 29:29 | | | |
| Psalms 32:8 | | | |
| Psalms 40:8 | | | |
| Psalms 115:3 | | | |
| Psalms 119:9-16 | | | |
| Psalms 143:10 | | | |
| Proverbs 16:4 | | | |
| Proverbs 16:9 | | | |
| Proverbs 21:1 | | | |
| Jeremiah 29:11 | | | |
| Lamentations 3:37-38 | | | |
| Matthew 6:10 | | | |
| Matthew 12:50 | | | |
| Matthew 18:14 | | | |
| Matthew 26: 34, 74-75 | | | |
| Matthew 26: 39, 42 | | | |
| Matthew 28:19-20 | | | |
| Luke 7:30 | | | |
| John 6:40 | | | |
| Acts 2:23 | | | |
| Acts 18:21 | | | |
| Acts 17:26 | | | |
| Acts 20:27 | | | |
| Acts 21:14 | | | |
| Romans 2:18 | | | |
| Romans 8:28 | | | |
| Romans 9:19 | | | |
| Romans 12:2 | | | |
| 1 Corinthians 4:19 | | | |
| 1 Corinthians 12:11 | | | |
| 1 Corinthians 16:7 | | | |
| Ephesians 1:11 | | | |
| Ephesians 5:17 | | | |
| Ephesians 6:6 | | | |
| Colossians 1:9 | | | |
| Colossians 4:12 | | | |
| 1 Thessalonians 4:3 | | | |
| 1 Thessalonians 5:18 | | | |
| Hebrews 6:3 | | | |
| Hebrews 13:21 | | | |
| James 1:22 | | | |
| James 4:13-15 | | | |
| 1 Peter 2:15 | | | |
| 2 Peter 3:9 | | | |
| 1 John 2:17 | | | |
| 1 John 5:14 | | | |

Unit 2: Examination of God's Wills

God's Sovereign Will (His Plan)

Someone explain to me what is meant by the term "God's sovereign will." [God's designs; what He causes]
 God's (for the most part) secret plan that determines everything that happens in the universe

What are some of the characteristics of God's sovereign will?

- Exhaustive/Comprehensive
 Includes every detail
 Matthew 10:29-30
 Includes both good things and seemingly bad things
 1 Peter 3:17
 "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."
 Amos 3:6
 "If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?"
- Certain and Unchangeable
 Daniel 4:35
 "But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?' "
 Romans 9:19
 "For who resists His will?"
 Proverbs 21:1
 "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."
 Proverbs 16:33
 "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."
- Perfect (leads to God's greatest glory)
 Ephesians 1:11-12
 "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory."
- Secret (hidden until it happens or is foretold)
 How has God's sovereign will been revealed?
 - Prophecy
 - Scripture
 Deuteronomy 29:29
 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."
 - Hindsight ("Oh, now I see.")
 Can we figure out God's sovereign will in any other way?
 Romans 11:33-34
 "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?"
 The point here is that we do not have access to His sovereign will to inform our everyday decisions or even consider when we make these decisions.

Let's look at the greatest example of God's sovereign will...

Acts 1:16

"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus."

Acts 2:22-24

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”

Acts 4:27-28

“For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

God's Moral Will (His Rules)

What is God's moral will? [God's desires; what He commands]

God's revealed commands in the Bible that teach how people ought to believe and live

Here's the million-dollar question:

Is *all* of God's moral will contained within the Bible?

Or is just *most* of His moral will found in the Bible?

God's moral will is *completely* revealed in the Bible.

Psalms 119:9-10

“How can a young man keep his way *pure*? By keeping it according to Your *word*. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments.”

2 Timothy 3:16

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for *every* good work.”

The Bible reveals that it is God's moral will for *all* of us to be:

Saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9)

Spirit-filled (Ephesians 5:17-18)

Sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7)

Submissive (1 Peter 2:13-17)

Suffering (Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12)

Rejoicing, Prayerful, Thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

God's moral will does not involve individualized guidance but is broad and applies to every Christian equally.

God's Individual (Perfect) Will

What do you think of when you hear “God's individual will for your life”?

God's ideal, detailed life-plan that is uniquely designed for each person

Bull's-eye metaphor

Imagine God's moral will as a target.

Anything on the target is good and moral, but only the center (the bull's eye) is the best – the perfect will of God.

If this is the case, which decisions has God already made for us?

Spouse? Vocation? Hometown? How many kids to have?

What about where you should park at the mall?

What you should eat for breakfast?

Exactly which pair of blue socks you should wear today?

One of the reasons people believe in this precise plan is that God already knows what we should/will do. If one of the major premises for believing in a perfect, personal will for each person is that God is (1) omniscient and (2) detail-oriented, then *no* decision could ever be too small. The only reason that people who follow the personal guidance model don't take this view to its logical extreme is that it is not only impractical, it's impossible. Regardless, you cannot say with confidence that you only have to seek God's will for the significant decisions because you have no way of knowing whether what you eat for breakfast or where you park will have greater significance in God's plan for you.

J.I. Packer:

"What shall we say of [the personal guidance model]? The first thing to say is that this idea of guidance is actually a novelty among orthodox evangelicals. It does not go back further than the last century. Second, it has led people to so much foolish action on the one hand, and so much foolish inaction on the other, as well as puzzlement and heartbreak when the 'hotline' to God seems to go silent, that it has to be seen as discredited. Third, it must be said that Scripture gives us no more warrant constantly to expect personal 'hotline,' 'voice from the control-tower' guidance than to expect new authoritative revelations for the guidance of the whole church."

Does God have a specific person that He wants you to marry?

What happens, then, if you marry someone else?

Now both of you have married the wrong person.

But beyond that, each of your intended spouses will also marry the wrong person.

And so it continues exponentially until mankind is incapable of being in God's will!

Even apart from the overstated doomsday scenario, what are some of the other problems with believing God has chosen one spouse for you?

What happens if you begin to think you married the wrong person, and later in life you come across someone you believe to be God's original choice for you – your so-called "soulmate"? What do you do?

Look at 1 Corinthians 7.

Here Paul devotes 40 verses to a single topic – choosing a spouse.

We see God's sovereign will mentioned in verse 16.

We see God's moral will stated explicitly, for example, in verses 10 and 11.

And we see certain decisions left to the individual's own desires, for example, in verse 39.

(1) If all of the essentials for righteous Christian living are clearly taught, or at least mentioned, in Scripture, and (2) if God has selected your spouse for you, is it not reasonable to expect that somewhere in this lengthy treatment of the issue Paul would have at least *hinted* at such a notion? You know, "And, oh by the way, don't forget to ask God whether you should marry or whom you should marry." But he doesn't; it's not there.

Based on the verses we've read, I believe God is much less concerned about what you do than who you are.

If God's greatest concern was that you made all of the "right" choices, then He'd tell you everything (as He's capable of doing), and thereby shelter you from any difficulties or adverse consequences.

If, on the other hand, God's greatest concern is about building your character, then He'd give you clear guidelines and let you choose, and then see how you deal with the consequences, both positive and negative.

James 1:2-4

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Romans 5:3-5

"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Do you want to know what God's "perfect" will for you is?

Romans 8:28-30

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become conformed to the image of His Son*, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

God's "perfect" will is that you become like Jesus Christ.

God's will is not:

- Which woman you marry, but what kind of husband you are.
- Which job you take, but what kind of worker you are.
- Where you live, but what kind of neighbor you are.
- What ministry you're in, but that you serve faithfully.

God seems to be more focused on adverbs than verbs. The Bible places more emphasis on how you do something (i.e., attitude, character) than what it is that you are actually doing (i.e., activity).

Conclusion

We’ve examined God’s will and found that Scripture only mentions two types of will for God.

God’s Will

| Sovereign Will | Moral Will |
|--|---|
| God’s secret plan that determines everything that happens in the universe. | God’s revealed commands in the Bible that teach how we ought to believe and live. |
| Mostly hidden. | Totally revealed. |
| Cannot be learned in advance. | Should be learned for guidance. |
| Cannot be “missed”; should be humbly accepted. | Can be “missed” through ignorance or disobedience. |
| Indirectly ideal plan: Though it includes evil acts and foolish decisions, it will ultimately lead to God’s glory. | Directly ideal pattern: Includes only those behavior and attitudes that conform to God’s character, thereby glorifying Him. |

There is no teaching in the Bible that supports the idea that God has a perfect, personal plan for your life that you must discern in order to make the right decisions.

Any mention of God’s will in Scripture can be correctly understood as either God’s sovereign will or His moral will.

So does God have a plan for you?

Yes, but it’s part of His sovereign will and is, therefore, a *secret!* It’s none of your business.

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans that I have for you...”

[Note: As we’ve discussed, when studied in context, God is clearly speaking to the exiles here, not you and me today.]

Everything God wants to tell you in order to make right decisions He’s already given you: the Bible.

The only thing you may be lacking is wisdom, which we are told to then ask for.

James 1:5

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

Like any good father, God wants you to make your own decisions.

He establishes basic principles or rules and then allows freedom within those boundaries.

Four Ways God Guides

| | Nature | Means | Sphere |
|--------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Special Guidance | God has <i>supernaturally</i> guided believers... | by divine voice, angel, dream, or miracle... | in unique cases. |
| Moral Guidance* | God <i>directly</i> guides believers... | by revealed commands and principles... | in moral conduct. |
| Wisdom Guidance* | God <i>mediately</i> guides believers... | by acquired wisdom... | in noncommanded decisions. |
| Sovereign Guidance | God <i>secretly</i> guides believers... | by sovereign control over all events... | in all things. |

* The only two means in which the believer has an active role. In all others, the believer’s role is passive.

Preparation for Unit 3: Introduction to the Wisdom Model

Review Questions for Unit 2

If you can answer these questions correctly, then you've got a good understanding of the material covered in Unit 2.

What are the defining characteristics of God's guidance through special revelation recorded in the Bible?

What does the term "God's sovereign will" mean?

What are the characteristics of God's sovereign will?

How can we know or discover what God's sovereign will is?

What does the term "God's moral will" mean?

What are the characteristics of God's moral will?

How can we know or discover what God's moral will is?

Does the Bible teach that God has a specific will for each believer that he or she must discover before making any decision?

What are the four ways God guides believers?

Verses for Unit 3

In preparation for this Wednesday, look at the following verses and pay close attention to how decisions were (to be) made in each passage.

Jerusalem Council

Acts 15:1-31

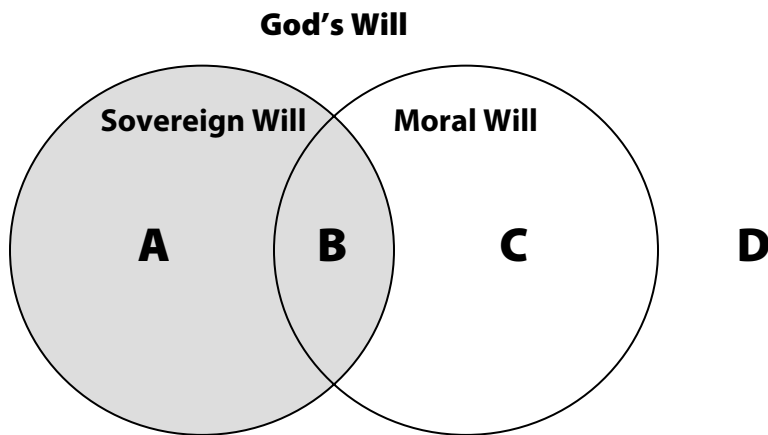
Paul's guidelines for selecting a leader

1 Timothy 3:1-13

Titus 1:5-9

Unit 3: Introduction to the Wisdom Model

Review Unit 2



A: Outside of God's moral will, but fulfills His sovereign will.

Examples: sin, the crucifixion, lost going to hell

B: In accordance with both His sovereign and moral will.

Examples: obedience of God's commands, salvation of the elect

C: Outside of God's sovereign will, but would be in accordance with His moral will.

Examples: salvation of the lost, repentance of Tyre and Sidon (see Matthew 11:20-24)

D: Outside of both His sovereign and moral will.

Examples: sinful acts that do not come to pass, Abimelech with Sarah (see Genesis 20:1-7)

Review *Four Ways God Guides*.

Wisdom Model for Decision Making

1. Acknowledge God's sovereignty.

James 4:15

"Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'"

Even though God's sovereign will is not a direct consideration when making a decision (because it is a secret), you must still acknowledge that no matter what you decide, whatever happens will be according to God's sovereign will.

2. Check your attitude/motivation.

What are you hoping to accomplish and why?

You can do the "right" thing for the wrong reason and still disobey God's moral will.

2 Corinthians 5:9

"Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

Colossians 3:23

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men..."

Philippians 2:3-5

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus..."

3. Seek God's moral will.

Consider commands and principles found in Scripture, including both prohibitions and obligations. Beyond direct prohibitions, if one of the options in your choice causes you to neglect something God specifically commands you to do, you are required to make the choice that will allow you to fulfill your biblical obligation.

Questions to ask:

What is moral? What is God's moral will? What does the Bible say about this?
Is there anything wrong with this activity? Is it lawful?

Psalm 119:9-11, 30

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You...I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances before me."

1 John 5:3

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

I think sometimes we mistakenly regard endeavors that "failed" as having been against God's will and sinful and see activities that "succeed" as being in accordance with God's will and pleasing to Him. However, God measures success simply by our obedience and our motivation, not the results, which are under His control regardless.

Philippians 4:8-9

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

1 Peter 2:13-17

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

God's moral will also includes submitting to the government and obeying the laws of the land, unless, of course they conflict with His moral will.

J.C. Ryle, *Walking with God*:

"The Bible must be our standard. Whenever we are confronted with a question about Christian practice, we must apply the teaching of the Bible. Sometimes the Bible will deal with it directly, and we must go by its direct teaching. Often the Bible will not deal with it directly, and then we must look for general principles to guide us. It does not matter what other people think. Their behavior is not a standard for us. But the Bible is a standard for us, and it is by the Bible that we must live".

Other questions you might consider:

Is it self-serving at the expense of someone else's benefit?

Romans 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:33; Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:3-4

Is this something I can thank God for?

Romans 14:6; 1 Corinthians 10:30; Colossians 3:17

Is this something that will glorify God?

1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9

Is this worth imitating?

1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9

Is this following the example of Christ?

1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 John 2:3-6

If the Bible says anything, obey that. If it says nothing, you have freedom and do not need to fear missing God's will or sinning against Him.

4. Apply wisdom.

What is wisdom? The application or right use of knowledge; discernment, judgment.

To make wise decisions, you need to gather necessary information, consider all of the remaining options carefully and the consequences of each, seek godly counsel, and then choose the option that seems the best rationally.

Wisdom allows for differing views on what is most sensible or appropriate when morality is not an issue.

Questions to ask:

What is wise? Is it beneficial? Does it promote my spiritual life?

Is this worthwhile and meaningful? Cost-benefit analysis: will the outcome be worth the effort?

Am I any good at this? What relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities (gifts and talents) do I possess?

Will this tempt me to be consumed by it?

Is it a practice that, over time, will tend to master me? Will it stimulate a desire that will be difficult to control?

Where do we get wisdom?

From God through counsel, instruction, research, knowledge, and experience...and, at times, divine inspiration.

James 1:5

"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

Pray for wisdom, not guidance.

Proverbs 2:1-11

"My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones. *Then you will discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course.* For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; Discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you..."

2 Chronicles 1:7-12

"In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, 'Ask what I shall give you.' Solomon said to God, 'You have dealt with my father David with great lovingkindness, and have made me king in his place. Now, O Lord God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?' God said to Solomon, 'Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you.'"

James 3:17

"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy."

Colossians 1:9-10

"For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..."

Ephesians 5:15-17

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Colossians 4:5

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.”

Constrained optimization: Do the best you can with what you’ve got.

1 Corinthians 6:1-6

“Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?”

Proverbs 3:13

“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.”

Proverbs 19:2

“Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and he who hurries his footsteps errs.”

5. Consider personal convictions and desires.

If the Bible is silent about your decision, and if one choice is not clearly wiser than the other, then do what you want. You have the freedom to do so, and God will sovereignly work out His plan through your desires.

Questions to ask:

What are my convictions/preferences?

Even though the Bible does not forbid it and it may not seem unwise, do I still feel or think it’s wrong?

Will my choice affect others around me? If so, in what way?

Will it promote the spiritual well-being of other believers if they engage in this practice that is permissible for me?

Will I enjoy this? Will it be fulfilling? Does it fit the character God has given me?

Romans 14:5, 14, 22-23

“One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind...I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean...The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.”

Principles of conscience

2 Corinthians 9:7

“Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

The New Testament principle of giving

Romans 14:21

“It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.”

1 Corinthians 6:12

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

“But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 33

"All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor...just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved."

1 Corinthians 2:16

"...But we have the mind of Christ."

Galatians 5:16, 22-24

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

1 Corinthians 7:36-40

"But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry. But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well. So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

"A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God."

Paul's thoughts on marriage

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

"But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while – in person, not in spirit – were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you – I, Paul, more than once – and yet Satan hindered us."

1 Corinthians 16:12

"But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity."

See also Romans 15:26-27, 2 Corinthians 8:16-17, and 1 Thessalonians 3:1.

Psalms 37:3-5

"Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it."

Jeremiah 40:4

"But now, behold, I am freeing you today from the chains which are on your hands. If you would prefer to come with me to Babylon, come along, and I will look after you; but if you would prefer not to come with me to Babylon, never mind. Look, the whole land is before you; go wherever it seems good and right for you to go."

6. Trust God's sovereignty for the results.

You are free to make decisions so long as they don't violate God's revealed, moral will. You shouldn't be concerned that your decisions will somehow derail God's sovereign will for your life, because He routinely works through your decisions to accomplish what He purposes.

If we make a decision based solely on biblical commands and principles, we can fully trust that we are pleasing God in our decision and fully trust that He will providentially, by circumstances out of our control, change our choice if it is not within His sovereign will.

Proverbs 16:9

"The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord *directs* his steps."

Directs = kuwn ("koon"), which can mean to establish, to determine, to arrange, to prepare

Philippians 2:13

"...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Romans 8:28

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Ruth 2:3

"So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech."

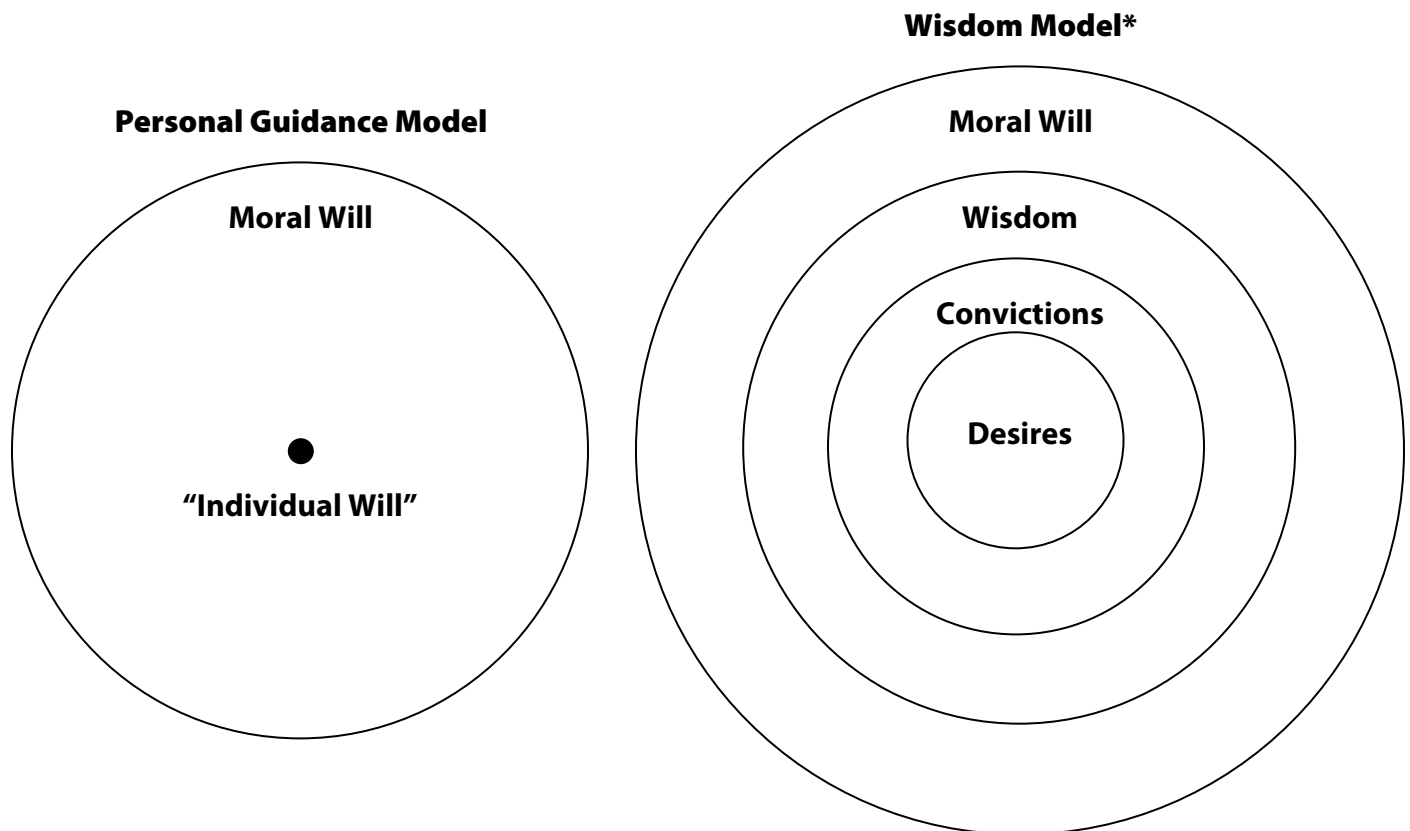
What is significant about Ruth meeting Boaz? Ruth and Boaz will be King David's great-grandparents and a part of the messianic line.

But notice that Ruth just *happened* onto the field of Boaz. Once again, God is in control.

J.I. Packer:

"The basic fault here is disregard of a principle that is writ large in Scripture – too large perhaps for some to see. The principle is that the right course is always to choose the wisest means to the noblest end. Namely, the advancing of God's kingdom and glory. Moral law delimits the area within which the choice must be made...God given wisdom..., then leads us within these limits to the best option...God enables us to discern this by prayerfully using our minds, thinking how Scripture applies, comparing alternatives, weighing advice, taking account of our heart's desire, estimating our capabilities. Some call this common sense. The Bible calls it wisdom. It is one of God's most precious gifts."

Personal Guidance Model vs. Wisdom Model



**This is one way to represent how the wisdom model might look for a given decision. However, for example, you may have a decision for which you have no desire to do any of the options that are considered moral and wise, so you may have to choose something that is in conflict with your personal desires; in this case, the circle representing your desires would lie outside of the circles representing God's moral will and wisdom.*

Which do you think requires more faith: the personal guidance model (PGM) or the wisdom model (WM)?

Using the PGM requires that every decision be clearly and precisely directed from God, leaving little to no room for faith.

Without explicit direction, the PGM obligates you to *inaction*, rather than stepping out in faith and trust.

The WM, on the other hand, requires you to make the best decision you can based on the information you have and trust a sovereign God for the results.

Preparation for Unit 4: Application of the Wisdom Model

Review Questions for Unit 3

If you can answer these questions correctly, then you've got a good understanding of the material covered in Unit 3.

List the six steps of the wisdom model as presented in Unit 3.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Why is it important to check your attitude and motivation before making a (significant) decision?

What part should God's sovereign will play in your decision making?

What part should God's moral will play in your decision making?

What are some questions that you might consider to determine whether an option is morally acceptable?

How can you acquire wisdom?

What are some questions that you might consider to determine whether an option is wise?

What part should personal convictions play in your decision making?

What part should personal desires play in your decision making?

List three advantages of the wisdom model of decision making over the personal guidance model.

Verses for Unit 4

Read the following verses related to Paul's visit to Rome and answer the questions that follow.

Romans 1:8-15

Romans 15:20-33

In what ways was Paul's decision making process an example of the wisdom model?

Where did the idea for Paul's visit to Rome come from?

What was Paul's prayer in this regard?

What were Paul's reasons for wanting to visit Rome?

What prevented Paul from going to Rome sooner?

Where did Rome rank on Paul's list of priorities?

Unit 4: Application of the Wisdom Model

Review Unit 3

Wisdom model of decision making

1. Acknowledge God's sovereignty.
2. Check your attitude/motivation.
3. Seek God's moral will.
4. Apply wisdom.
5. Consider personal convictions and desires.
6. Trust God's sovereignty for the results.

Remaining Questions

Offer to answer any questions from the previous three lessons.

Example of the Wisdom Model

Discuss the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 as an example of the wisdom model.

Application of the Wisdom Model

Use the wisdom model as a framework for making a decision, such as vocation.

Additional Resources

Resources Used for This Study

Decision Making and the Will of God

by Garry Friesen with J. Robin Maxson

Multnomah Publishers, 1980 (Revised in 2004)

Over 500 pages and by far the most comprehensive treatment of this subject: thorough critique of the personal guidance model, careful analysis of relevant Scripture (i.e., exegesis), and exhaustive discussion of the wisdom model.

Dr. Garry Friesen's website

<http://www.gfriesen.net/>

Decision Making and the Will of God

by Gregory Koukl

Stand to Reason, 2000

Audio presentation (available in CD or cassette) with attention given to all of the major points in an easy to understand style. Includes study notes and recording of a radio show with Koukl interviewing Friesen on this topic.

Articles by Gregory Koukl at Stand to Reason (<http://www.str.org>)

A Private Hotline to God? (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5114>)

Acts and the Voice of God (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5090>)

Divine Direction and Decision Making in the Book of Acts (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5203>)

Hearing from God (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5912>)

Hearing God's Voice (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5291>)

Just Do It (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5385>)

Revelation or "Inspiration"? (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5546>)

What's Wrong with *Experiencing God*? (<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5955>)

Other Resources for Further Study

Found: God's Will

by John MacArthur

Victor Books, 1978

Hot Tub Religion

by J.I. Packer

Tyndale House, 1987

Feedback for *Decision Making and the Will of God* Bible Study

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. If God wants us to do something, and we don't do it, then that is sin. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. God has a perfect, personal will for my life, and I must discover what that will is before making any significant decision. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. All spiritual disciplines and doctrines that are essential for productive Christian living are taught clearly in the Bible. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Open doors are opportunities from God. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Using a "fleece" or asking God for a providential sign is a legitimate means for seeking God's will. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. If God wants to say something to us, He will. And we will hear it | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. God is able to use special revelation, even today, to communicate His will. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Asking God for guidance is like cheating on a test. It's asking God for the answer rather than studying. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. God's sovereign will is a secret unless it is foretold and until it happens. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I should consider God's sovereignty to inform or direct my decisions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. God's moral will is completely contained within the Bible. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. God's moral will does not involve individualized guidance but is broad and applies to every Christian equally. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. God has chosen a specific person for me to marry. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. God has chosen a specific profession or vocation for me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Any mention of God's will in Scripture can be correctly understood as either God's sovereign will or His moral will. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Some things can be against God's moral will but still fulfill His sovereign will. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Wisdom should take precedent over feelings in my decisions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Certain actions can be a sin for me but not for someone else. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Which of the following statements better reflects your thoughts or feelings? Check only one for each pair.

- 19. Being led by the Holy Spirit may involve internal feelings about a decision.
 Being led by the Holy Spirit involves guidance for righteous living.
- 20. Having an inner peace is the result of being in God's will.
 Having an inner peace is the result of trusting God's sovereignty.
- 21. God has a plan for my life, and I want to know what it is.
 God has a plan for my life, but I should not be concerned with what it is.
- 22. Jeremiah 29:11 applies to all believers.
 Jeremiah 29:11 applies only to the exiles.

23. When faced with a difficult decision, I am more likely to pray for guidance.
 When faced with a difficult decision, I am more likely to pray for wisdom.
24. Personal desires should play a legitimate part in my decisions.
 Personal desires are not appropriate to consider when making an important decision.
25. If I obey God's stated moral will, then I can trust Him for the results.
 Even though I may obey God's moral will, I am still responsible for the results.
26. I think the personal guidance model of decision making requires more faith.
 I think the wisdom model of decision making requires more faith.
27. As a result of this study, I am more confident in my ability to make decisions.
 As a result of this study, I am more uncertain about how to make decisions.
28. As a result of this study, I feel more freedom when making decisions.
 As a result of this study, I feel more constrained when making decisions.

Overall

29. List the three most significant things you've learned during this study or felt challenged to do.

30. What changes or improvements would you suggest for this study?

31. What about this study should remain the same?

32. What was your overall impression of this study?

33. Please provide any additional comments. Use the back of this page if necessary.