

Making Wise Decisions
Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
(October 2012)

Introduction:

The purpose of this study will be to examining the process of making wise decisions. This will include both the subject of discerning the will of God as well as the Biblical pattern of making wise decisions.

I. How can we know the will of God?

A. There is a distinction between God's sovereign will and His revealed will.

1. God's sovereign will is determined by His eternal decree. It is fixed and unchanging. No man can change God's sovereign will, nor is it possible for a person to go outside of God's sovereign will or break it.

Isaiah 46:9-11 NAU - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; ¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it, surely* I will do it."

Ephesians 1:11 NAU - "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,"

LBC 3:1 – "God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass . . ."

- a. God's sovereign will cannot absolutely be known.

Romans 11:33-36 NAS - "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? ³⁵ Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? ³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen."

- b. Providence can be interpreted to mean anything we want it to mean

For example, lightening strikes the steeple of a church

- "God is telling us it's time to relocate our church"
- "No, God is saying no to our expansion plans"
- God is telling us we need more insurance
- God is telling us we had better trust Him instead of insurance
- "God is warning us of sin in the church"

- c. We must be cautious about interpreting so called “open doors”
- “God opened the door for us to buy a new car.”
Meaning: Because the price was right and the financing was favorable it must surely be God's will.
 - “I didn’t know if this was the right decision but God just opened all the doors.”
 - Sometimes we just hear expressions like, “The Lord led me to do this or that.”
Meaning: Because all of the details went smoothly God's hand must surely have been in it.
- Christians must be very careful in looking at God’s acts of Providence as clear signs for a particular course of action
- d. “Open doors” should be seen as opportunities and nothing more. Just because something is possible or available does not mean it is wise for us to pursue it.
- e. We must resist the temptation to use various signs for discerning God’s will. Although there are Biblical examples they should be seen as extraordinary, not normative means of knowing God’s will
- (1) The Old Covenant priests used the Urim and Thummim
Exodus 28:30 NAU - "You shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually."
 - (2) God allowed Gideon to use a fleece
Judges 6:37 NAU - " behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken.""
 - (3) We find the casting of lots to determine God’s will
Even the Apostles used this to determine the replacement for Judas
Acts 1:26 NAU - " And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles."
- f. The Christian must guard against shortcuts in seeking God’s will in decisions. Seeking some sign is spiritual laziness
Not taking the time to seriously seek God’s wisdom
Not being willing to wait upon the Lord
2. God has given us His revealed will. His revealed will is His perfect revelation of truth contained in the Bible. His revealed will is also permanent and unchanging. But, unlike God’s sovereign will, it is possible for a person to live in a manner that is opposed to God’s revealed will.
- a. God’s Word is our guide, our standard for living
Psalms 119:105 KJV – "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Psalm 40:8 KJV – "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart."

- b. The Word of God is the means God uses to teach us, grow us
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
 - c. A man may choose to obey or disobey God's revealed will. To obey is righteousness. To disobey is sin.
- B. God has clearly revealed His will in His Word
- 1. There are some things we don't have to pray about – only obey
 - 2. The Word of God is our primary source for knowing the will of God. It is the chief means of making wise decisions
Psalm 119:9 – "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word."
Psalm 119:11 – "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
Psalm 119:133 – "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."
 - 3. If you want your life conformed to God's will obey His Word
Psalm 119:1-6 – "Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. ² Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart. ³ They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. ⁴ Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently. ⁵ O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! ⁶ Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."
 - 4. Paul spoke of the necessity of having our minds transformed so that we might be able to discern the will of God. This can take place only as the Holy Spirit applies God's Word to our hearts.
Romans 12:2 NAU - "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

II. Making wise decisions

- A. We must have the right motive
 - 1. Our motive in all things must be God's glory—that we might reflect His righteousness in this world.
 - 2. Why are you considering this decision? What are your goals and purposes in it? Some decisions should not even be up for consideration.
James wrote concerning prayer:
James 4:3 NAU - "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures."
 - 3. Our confession speaks to the matter of the acceptability of our good works
LBC 16:7 – "Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified

by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the Word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, nor make a man meet to receive grace from God, and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.”

B. We must walk with God

1. When we walk with God, when He is at the center of our lives in all things He directs our ways. He gives us sound judgment and spiritual wisdom.
Proverbs 1:7 NAU - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."
Romans 12:1-2 NAU - "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
Proverbs 3:5-8 KJV - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. ⁷ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. ⁸ It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."
2. On the other hand, sin dulls the heart and clouds the understanding. The person in sin lacks sound judgment. God gives him over to the foolishness of his heart.
Romans 1:21-22 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools,"

C. We must exercise sound judgment

1. Through much prayer
Proverbs 2:2-3 NAU - "Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; ³ For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding;"
2. Through careful examination and wisdom
 - a. In seeking to reach a decision have you examined carefully all of the options? Making wise decisions demands exercising sound judgment.
 - b. Example: a young person seeking direction for a career. What are your gifts; your particular aptitudes? What things interest you; do you have a great interest in how things work mechanically, etc? Which subjects do you excel at?
3. We must seek counsel
Proverbs 1:5 NAU - "A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,"
Proverbs 11:14 NAS - "Where there is no guidance, the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory."
Proverbs 12:15 NAU - "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel."

Proverbs 13:10 NAU - "Through insolence comes nothing but strife, But wisdom is with those who receive counsel."

Proverbs 15:22 NAS - "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed."

Proverbs 19:20 NAU - "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days."

III. Basic Questions to Ask in Making Wise Decisions

1. Is the decision in agreement with the Word of God? God's Word is the ultimate measure of God's will. Again, this is called His revealed will. If your course of action is contrary to God's Word you need to change direction immediately. There are some things you do not need to pray about. You only need to obey.
 - We need to steer away from feelings. "I felt led . . ."
2. Do you have the proper motive in the decision? The high motive in all that we do is the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 NAU - "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

 - Motive is important. Are you sincerely seeking to know God's will or have you already made the decision and are now seeking to justify it?
 - Are you willing to step back and wait upon God?
3. Will this decision be spiritually beneficial to you and your family?

Job related decisions:

 - A promotion that brings you to a town without a solid church is a bad decision
 - A job that requires you to miss both services every Sunday is not wise
 - Mother working outside the home when the children are young
 - An activity that consumes great amounts of time may not be the best decision. (Building a home, coaching a ball team, hobbies (golf))
4. What effect will this decision have upon your Christian witness?
 - Lost people are watching everything you do
 - Will this decision demonstrate a life of holiness and consecration to God?
 - This will effect countless details in your life
 - Smoking, drinking, tattoos, piercings, choice of music . . .even the kind of car you drive
5. Is the decision consistent with the Christian principle of love?

Ephesians 5:2 NAU - "and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

Romans 13:8 NAU - "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law."

 - This will help you to keep your priorities right. Often decisions are contemplated without any consideration as to how it will affect the body of Christ.
 - Will you cancel plans to help a brother in need?

IV. God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

1. God requires that we walk in His ways and trust Him in all things.
2. God requires that we live sober lives with serious contemplation of the decisions we make. We use every means He has placed before us in order to make wise decisions.
 - We carefully examine our decision in light of God's Word
 - We spend much time in prayer seeking God's direction
 - We carefully examine our heart and motive
 - We seek Godly counsel for wisdom in the decision. Godly counsel can help us examine our heart
3. As we walk with God we can have confidence in His Divine direction. We trust all things into His sovereign hand. When we make our decision we trust that God will bless our life as we seek to honor Him in it.

Romans 8:28 NAU - "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."
4. This gives us great peace, comfort and assurance as we live our lives. We need not be frozen in indecision fearful that we will make the wrong choice. We give great attention to making wise decisions and then we trust God.