

Sunday Night Equipping – God’s Will (part 10)

Defending and Enriching the Way of Wisdom:

Overriding Principles:

1. In those areas specifically addressed in the Bible, the revealed commands of God (His moral will) are to be obeyed.
2. In those areas not specifically addressed in the Bible, the Christian is free to choose, but must remember that he/she is responsible for the decision that is made and ought to make a decision with spiritual expediency in mind.
3. In all decisions, the believer should humbly submit, in advance, to the outworking of God’s sovereign will as it touches each decision.

Introduction...

- Our study over the past few months has caused us to analyze how we come to decisions and the language we use to describe those decisions. We have looked extensively at how the Bible describes the will of God and how we can be sure that we are truly doing God’s will.
- What is the purpose of all of this? That we might know what pleases the Lord, and thus by knowing we might act in accordance with what God desires, thereby glorifying Him!
- But as we wrap up this general section on Guidance, one of two natural reactions will result:
 - (1) Some will overreact to the Traditional View and throw out all forms of “wisdom” as wrong
 - (2) Some will reject the Wisdom View because they just feel it is impersonal, like God is no longer involved with me as a person... besides, “I know in my heart that it’s real.”
- This evening let’s correct both of these misunderstandings!

First, let’s see how our view of Guidance is enriched by the “way of wisdom”...

In all probability many think in terms of the traditional view, but act more in accordance with the wisdom view!

- The matter involves interpreting the “road signs” differently! One as finding the “perfect will of God” and the other as sources to be consulted and evaluated in the acquisition of wisdom.
 - (1) Bible – Traditional view places a great emphasis on understanding the Bible, for a great deal of God’s will for the individual has already been spelled out. The Wisdom view goes further to say that 100% of what God requires of us to please Him has been revealed (Moral Will – what we are accountable for).
 - (2) Common Sense – We can confidently apply “common sense” to every single decision. Obviously if something is considered “common sense” but is against the Bible, then it is no longer sensible! Church elders are called to be “sensible” (**Titus 1:8**). Much of the wisdom in proverbs is just common sense! In other words, a mechanic or consumer magazine can be helpful (add common sense).
 - (3) Counselors – viewed as a source of wisdom. They can supply facts and insight not otherwise available to the decision maker (but they are not omniscient or determinative). Ask not only for their opinion but the reasons behind their viewpoint. Ask “Do you know any biblical principles that apply to this decision? Have you gained any practical insight through your experience of making a similar decision that would be of value to me?” ***Real value in uncovering blind spots often overlooked!***
 - (4) Impressions/Desires – no desire is authoritative in itself. All desires must be judged by God’s moral will and wisdom. If options are genuinely equal, wisdom chooses that one that would be most enjoyable to carry out. Impressions that are Godly (Biblical) should be followed as a wise way to serve the Lord!
 - (5) Circumstances – “open/closed doors” do not give us God’s individual will. They can be interpreted any which way. They must be evaluated, not to determine some clue from God, but to help decide the advisability of a given course of action. Every option carries “advantages and disadvantages.”
 - (6) Results – human success is not an automatic proof of success. Many of God’s servants have been faithful in their ministries and have encountered nothing but difficulties and obstacles. We can gain wisdom from results of previous decisions (our own and others), but they must be viewed from the context of God’s Sovereignty!

The Improvements that the “Way of Wisdom” makes to the “Traditional View”

Scriptural Improvement:

The Traditional view must dilute the Biblical examples to give them an “inward leading” method (versus the very clear direct revelation that occurred through vision, angel, miracle, audible voice, or prophetic declaration), and must “add spice” to the promises of God’s guidance in the general statements made about God’s will which don’t specifically explain how that leading takes place. The Wisdom view neither adds water to the narratives, nor spice to the general instructions.

Applicational Improvement:

1. Ordinary Decisions: The decision-making process must be abandoned in the “minor” decisions of life.
 - Simply don’t have enough time to seek “God’s individual will” in every decision. So, they reserve the prescribed decision-making process for “significant” matters (resulting in a good-sense decision making scenario)... this is a contradiction though of their viewpoint.
 - Meanwhile, the Wisdom view does not deny that some decisions are more important than others. It recognizes that the more important a decision is, the more time and energy should be devoted to it!
2. Equal Options: Insistence upon only one “correct” choice generates anxiety over “missing the dot” rather than gratitude for more than one fine opportunity.
 - Anxiety over picking the wrong thing when options look equal...
 - Meanwhile, the Wisdom view explains we should be grateful when God, in His sovereign grace, opens two or more doors of opportunity. Choice may not be easier, but you don’t have to worry about “missing the dot.” It is a “no lose” situation. Pick one!
3. Immaturity: In some instances, the logic of the traditional view tends to promote immature approaches to decision making.
 - The Traditional View maintains that God’s individual will is perfect and fully available to each Christian regardless of his level of growth (spiritual maturity)
 - Wisdom View better corresponds to reality... Wisdom is gained progressively! The church is to have people who lead be “full of... wisdom” (**Acts 6:3**) who are “prudent” (**I Tim 3:2**) and “discerning/wise” (**I Cor 6:5**).
 - The Wisdom view requires the believer to “defend” his decisions w/ sound reasons, not permitting one to hide behind “the Lord led me or told me.”
 - Working through a problem, identifying good reasoning grows others up by them seeing the model!
 - Ill) A pastor or member leaving a church because “I feel the Lord has called me somewhere else” – everyone can’t help wondering what the reasons are! Good occasion to really offer help to the church and explain good decision making!
 - Some of the traditional view chooses something “less desirable” to themselves thinking that way they can’t be accused of being “selfish” but this is false thinking. All things being equal, choose the decision that you prefer – you’ll carry it out w/ eagerness and gratitude! An attitude God loves!
 - Also, remember “putting out a fleece” is not an acceptable way of determining God’s will (it was bad example w/ Gideon in the first place and we are not called to follow that example)
4. Subjectivity: Certainty that one has found God’s individual will is impossible apart from an objective source of knowledge.
 - While the Traditional view requires the believer to know God’s Individual Will it gives no OBJECTIVE source of truth to discover it... always in a process of hoping you found it...
 - The Wisdom View explains that decisions must be grounded in the objective truth of God’s Moral Will. The Moral Will is objective, complete, and adequate (all we need) (**II Tim 3:16-17, II Pet 1:3**).
 - The Wisdom view acknowledges growth in the process... Studying the Word of God grows our ability to make wise and God-honoring decisions (**II Tim 2:15**) – develop spiritual convictions!

Now to the matter of the 2nd objection that the “wisdom view” is impersonal...

OT evidence shows quite a bit of specific guidance. Who were to be their spiritual leaders, where to camp, how far to travel each day, when to go to Jerusalem, which foods to eat, when to go to battle, exact building requirements for the tabernacle and temple, when and how to celebrate the feasts, even the way clothing was to be made... Much of this which composed the “moral will” for Israel has now been moved to the area of freedom for Christians. Being “less specific” does not mean God is “less personal.”

Also, the OT leading of God was much more empirical (immediately perceptible to the senses) [i.e. thunder and lightning from Mt Sinai, pillar of cloud and fire, daily provision of manna, etc] whereas for Christians we are given the Word of God for guidance!

In the OT God saw fit to guide the OT saints as “immature children” who had a limited understanding of God’s nature and will, whereas we who have received the benefit of the revelation of Jesus Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit are treated as “grown-up children” with the freedom and responsibility commensurate with that status. Just because the guidance is less specific does not mean that the guidance is less personal...

- Ill) Parents guidance of children – at first very specific, w/ time more advisory...

But still many feel that “wisdom guidance” is impersonal... What we are talking about are FEELINGS!

- “I feel that we should stay right where we are for the time being.”
- “I have a feeling this is the best deal we will get...”
- But let’s look at a couple things about emotions:
 - (1) They are greatly influenced by a host of things: our health, our upbringing, fatigue, medication, the weather, our diet, our hormonal balance, a news report, the feelings of others – everything that influences our perception of reality...
 - (2) Emotions affect us either as INITIATORS or RESPONDERS
 - They can be a way in which we determine reality (therefore only as reliable as emotional state)
 - OR they can be a means whereby we respond to truth (reliable for it’s resting on objective truth)
 - The problem w/ the Traditional view is that it puts the emotional cart before the intellectual horse!
 - What is the authority for your actions?? What grounds something as being right?
 - There are times when we “feel” out of fellowship w/ God or that He is far away for no valid reason, and other times when things “feel good” and meanwhile we are living in disobedience. Both of these false feelings must be corrected with correct understanding from Scripture!
 - This is a common problem today... “not feeling close to God”
 - Emotions must be brought under control.... 3 STEPS (cultivating intimate relationship w/ God)
 - **II Cor 5:7** “we walk by faith, not by sight” (Faith – trust involves mind, heart, will)
 1. Intellectually – learn what God has declared to be true and real!
 2. Volitionally – take God at His word and accept His word as being true and obey!
 3. Emotionally – respond with appropriate feelings/emotions! We should express emotions in accordance w/ biblically mandated responses to divinely revealed truth!
 - *Trust is actualized by thinking, feeling, and acting as though everything God says is true!*

As we work through the process of making a decision, God is continually present and working within us. The words of Paul remind us that “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Phil 2:13). Specifically it is by His grace that we are saved (**Eph 2:8-10**). And it is by His empowering that believers are enabled to keep the Lord’s commands. So every single act of obedience is proof of God’s personal involvement in our lives (**Rom 8:1-17**). And He receives all the glory and honor for that obedience!

So we are to respond to each of God's methods of guidance in the appropriate fashion. Confidence that God exercises control over all things (Sovereign Guidance) leads me to pray for "open doors" and expect that He will work all things together for good. God's Moral Guidance is responded to by obeying the Scriptures. Those things commanded or prohibited are to be obeyed with an attitude of thankfulness. Those things left open to a believer's preference are to be decided in accordance with wisdom. Trust in the Lord's Wisdom Guidance is demonstrated in prayerfulness and diligence to acquire wisdom from rightful sources and evaluate that information appropriately. A believer is also to trust God that if anything more is needed for guidance – such as an audible voice, angelic messenger, or some other form of supernatural revelation – He will supply it just as He has when it was necessary in the past. This is how I respond to Special Guidance.