

Sunday Night Equipping – God's Will (part 11)

Making Practical Applications:

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...

***Comment on Answers to Pop Quiz Scenario Questions...*

Tonight, I'd just like to apply the principles we've established together over these past several weeks to a few specific scenarios – most of which you were asked about at the very beginning of our course. I present these few situational decisions for the purpose of demonstrating the “wisdom view” in action. I see these scenarios as merely illustrative of how to approach decision making in general. I hope this discussion will also help you understand what has been gained from our study together... You'll see that the decision is not made “easy” but that you will be freed from wrongful approaches and should be able to approach these decisions with confidence, humility, and joy!

Men and women of days ago had many of their decisions chosen for them... Not only were marriages arranged, but so were most professions. In general, a man would learn his father's trade and take it up himself (being apprenticed/trained by his dad). A woman became a wife and mom. In today's culture these decisions now lie in each individual's hands. And therefore, usually the big three questions involve marriage, vocation/job, and education.

Let's first look at MARRIAGE from the Wisdom Perspective... Really 2 part question:

- (1) Should I Marry or Remain Single?
- (2) If I am to Marry, Whom Shall I Marry?

A Brief Glance at the Traditional View:

- (1) In all the world, there is either no person or only one person eligible to be your spouse
- (2) If God wants you to remain single, and you marry, you are out of God's will
- (3) If God has a spouse selected, and you choose the wrong one, you are out of God's will
- (4) If the spouse God has selected for you marries someone else, you are out of God's will no matter what you do.
- (5) If either person chooses wrong, they will permanently be stranded out of God's best/will...
 - Settling for God's 2nd/3rd best
 - Getting to the ‘sure thing’ is the problem!
 - Stress – trying to find the one and only acceptable candidate among a large field!

2 MAIN TEXTS:

1. Jesus' Teaching – **Matthew 19:1-12**

- Shammai – sexual immorality only grounds for divorce
- Hillel – man could divorce wife for any reason at all
- Jesus reaffirmed God's original purpose
- Many couldn't take the high standard Jesus taught... including disciple's response:
 - Conceivable for a man to unwittingly marry a contentious woman who could make life miserable for him... **Prov 21:9, 19**
 - Blessing of marriage and children... **Gen 2:18, Ps 127:3-5**
- **3 Categories of men who in fact do not marry:**
 - (1) Those born eunuchs
 - (2) Those made eunuchs by others
 - (3) Those who remain single to more effectively serve the kingdom of heaven – **Matt 19:11-12**
- **Celibacy and Marriage are BOTH acceptable to God – within the "MORAL WILL"**

2. Paul's Teaching – **I Corinthians 7**

- Obviously Missing from this discussion: An appeal to the "individual will of God"
- Pro's and Con's are Addressed: **v8-24** problems of married, **v25-40** problems of unmarried
- Paul expresses his preference for the celibate state "given the present distress," but single people are especially vulnerable to sexual sin... marriage provides the surest protection from sexual sin for most people (although it does not do away with it!)
- **v7** Each man has to choose what is best for himself, according to how God has gifted him!
- With marriage come obligations (MORAL WILL regulates marriage, doesn't determine your status – see freedom **v25,28,36,39**)
 - Prohibition of sexual relations outside of the marriage covenant (**v2**)
 - Prohibition of sexual fraud within marriage (**v3-5**)
 - Prohibition for divorce of 2 married believers (**v10-11**)
 - Prohibition of remarriage, if separated, to anyone but spouse (**v11**)
 - Prohibition of divorce by believer of unbeliever willing to continue the marriage (**v13-15**)
 - Prohibition of sexual relations outside of marriage (chastity for singles) (**v2,9**)
- Value of Singleness:
 - Avoid unnecessary worry (**v20-21**)
 - Avoid needless troubles (**v28**)
 - Make better use of limited time (**v29-31**)
 - Be free from concern (**v32**)
 - Be able to give undistracted attention to "the things of the Lord" (**v32**)
 - Promote personal happiness (**v40**)
 - Summary (**v35**)
- Value of Marriage:
 - Temptation to sexual sin greatly reduced if proper relations maintained (**v2-5**)
 - Distraction from barrage of sensuous enticements (**v9**)
 - **I Tim 5:11-15** – Paul instructs young widows to remarry!
 - Marriage offers opportunities for ministry (**v14-16**) – *if for unbeliever, surely for believer as well*
 - Reflecting Christ in the Family (**Eph 5:22-6:4**)
 - A Godly wife is a good thing! (**Prov 5:18, 12:4, 19:14, 31:10 Eccl 9:9, Song of Solomon**)
 - Children are a blessing from the Lord (**Ps 127:3-5**)

Develop an Appreciation for both sides:

- BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED!
- Make the goal of your life not to change your status, but to serve God as effectively and energetically as possible in whatever state you are! **Main Point:** people tend to focus on the wrong thing! Pour your life into honoring the Lord in the state you are in!

Indicators that this is a WISDOM discussion:

- (1) Good, not contrasted to “evil” but “unprofitable” (v1,8,26)
- (2) Better (v9,38)
- (3) Best helps one keep God’s commands (v19)
- (4) Causes least trouble (v28)
- (5) Makes best use of time (v29)
- (6) Most free of external concerns (v33)
- (7) Beneficial (v35)
- (8) Promotes what is appropriate (v35)
- (9) Leads to undistracted devotion to the Lord (v35)
- (10) Promotes personal happiness (v40)

Either Way – Married or Single – You are in the MORAL WILL OF GOD!

If I am to Marry, Whom Shall I Marry?

2 Beautiful Stories in Genesis (both cases, God chose the bride):

1. **Adam and Eve** – God prepared one woman who was perfectly suited to be Adam’s wife and brought her to him. (**Gen 1-3**)
 - **2:24** “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” – this is a **NORMATIVE** statement!
 - But, the actual mate selection process isn’t called normative by OT or NT!
 - This whole scenario was a extraordinary one time event never again repeated in biblical history!
 - There could only be one first man and one first woman (started human race)
 - *Safest deduction:* If you are the only surviving representative of your sex in the world and you come across your one existing counterpart, the two of you should consider marriage! ☺
2. **Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 24)**
 - Seems like 3 supporting facts:
 - (1) Granting of detailed guidance beyond moral will of God
 - (2) Validity of using a circumstantial fleece to discover God’s will in important decision
 - (3) Notion that God’s individual will includes the specific person a believer is to marry
 - Problem: Nowhere is this story described as normative! Shouldn’t be seen this way!
 - (1) The Bible does not promise that every believer will have a mate. But Isaac had to have one (fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham about his seed) (**Gen 24:7,14,27**)
 - (2) God promised special guidance by an angel to make sure goal was accomplished (**24:7, 40**). Guarantee of angelic assistance goes beyond normal provision of guidance described.

God’s Will for Believers who Marry:

- Must marry a believer – I Cor 7:36-39 – applies to widows because it applies to all Christians!
- II Cor 6:14-16 – mental image of donkey and ox harnessed together w/ a double yoke
- If this passage does not apply to marriage it doesn’t apply to anything – one flesh union!

- Apart from this single command, Scripture gives no other commands directly related to the selection of a marriage partner – but speaks of mate selection in terms of WISDOM...
- Wisdom Tips:
 - Ask Questions: What are the purposes of marriage? What instructions has God given so that Christian husbands and wives can fulfill God's purposes in their marriages? What are the responsibilities of the husband/wife?
 - A man/woman, observing what Scripture requires for the marriage relationship will take those commands seriously and wisely marry someone for whom love/submission *is less difficult!*
 - Prov 31:10ff – “An excellent wife, who can find?”
 - Ask Counselors: You can learn about marriage before getting there! **3rd party perspective**
 - Common Sense: Beware of the pull of emotions!
 - Ask Good questions of each other: life pursuits/goals, financial perspective, employment, education, personality traits, birth control, principles of childrearing, hobbies, family background, socioeconomic background, attitude towards possessions, expectations...
 - Check desires/wants with each other – ill) Fred Football Watcher & Sally Shakespeare

Conclusion:

1. Christian thinking about marriage has 2 decisions; whether to get married and whom to marry!
2. Scripture teaches that both of these decisions fall into the area of freedom
3. I Cor 7 gives pros and cons of singleness/marriage
4. Primary objective is to honor the Lord where we are (be content)
5. One's decision about marriage is not determined by God's moral will, but it is regulated by it
6. Moral will – must only marry a believer, and those who marry must obey the Lord's regulation
7. There are several areas where wisdom can be gained in helping your decision!

Next, let's look at **WORK** and **EDUCATION** from the Wisdom Perspective...

Work:

- Factors that the Moral Will of God speaks to regarding employment:
 - Christian man is to find gainful employment, setting a good example, avoiding being a burden to others (2 Thess 3:8-11)
 - Obligation to provide for one's household (1 Tim 5:8)
 - Earn enough to meet own needs and have left over to contribute to the needs of others (Eph 4:28)
 - Christian's vocation must be lawful (Eph 4:28)
 - Christian's work characterized by:
 - Integrity, Enthusiasm, Diligence, Devotion to Christ (Eph 6:5-6, Col 3:22-23)
 - Discipline and Quietness (2 Thess 3:11-12)
 - Cooperation and Honesty, Adorning the Gospel of God (Titus 2:9-10)
 - Efficiency (Eph 5:16), Gratitude (Col 3:17), Generosity (Eph 4:28)
 - Employees should be respectful, submissive and obedient to their employers as unto the Lord (Eph 6:5, Col 3:22, Titus 2:9, I Pet 2:18) & work hard regardless of whether supervised (Eph 6:6),
 - Employers must treat their employees with justice and fairness, remembering that employers are ultimately accountable to God, the Master of all, for their treatment of workers (Eph 6:9, Col 4:1).
- The decision of job should be made on the basis of WISDOM and SPIRITUAL EXPEDIENCY
- Another factor in this discussion is the use of spiritual gifts – how can my gift be most effectively used to serve the Lord? This is not to neglect other areas of ministry, but to just make sure that we use our gifts to the most effective ends possible. See **I Pet 4:10, I Cor 12, Rom 12**
- Write a PRO and CON list – list all possible factors that influence the decision!

- Remember, we ask for wisdom, God does not grant us omniscience! God has given us whatever is sufficient for making a wise decision!
- What factors would be important in deciding upon a career/job?

School:

- How can I best prepare to serve the Lord through my life and my vocation as an adult?
 - (1) The ultimate goal is to serve the Lord in the most effective way possible
 - (2) The intermediate objective is appropriate preparation
 - (3) That preparation should develop the Christian as a person as well as train him for a vocation
- The actual possibilities of schools are limited by a number of factors: academic aptitude, grades and test scores, openings, financial resources, family circumstances, personal inclinations, individual initiative, and world conditions (peace and war). Weigh possibilities of some formal Bible training...
- Remember, education and training does not in itself qualify a person for spiritual ministry or specific vocation. In the end, the individual himself is the most determinative factor in the success of the preparation

Next, let's discuss the issue of **MINISTERIAL CALLING** – Pastoral and Mission Work...

We live in a day and age that not only assumes a “special calling” of God upon each person into some sort of vocation, but EXPECTS this in the case of those who decide to enter pastoral or mission work. But where did this expectation arise from?

The term “calling” is certainly used in the Scriptures (148x in the NT), with the following meanings:

1. To summon or invite sinners to repentance, faith, salvation, and obedience (Matt 22:2-14, Lk 14:16-24). This call can be accepted or rejected by the individual – **OUTWARD CALL**
2. God's gracious work within a sinner whereby He effectually grants him repentance and faith, bringing him to salvation – (Rom 8:28-30) God secures this response to his summons – **INWARD CALL** which brings about salvation!
3. The call to specific function or office – Three instances in NT
 - (1) Paul to be an apostle – Rom 1:1, I Cor 1:1, Acts 9
 - (2) Barnabas and Saul to be the Church's 1st Missionaries (Acts 13:2)
 - (3) God's call to Paul and his companions to take the gospel to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10)
 - In none of these cases, nor any other in the NT, was such a call communicated through any sort of inward impression... all are “supernatural revelation”
 - God very specially superintended the opening stages of the Church's growth through divine interventions for specific purposes at specific times. This is consistent with God's working in the OT as well – There were only certain individuals who at specific times were given special commissions by God, while the rest were to obey the Lord's moral will and make use of wisdom.
 - Also, remember the special call of God was unsought and unexpected – God could give a vocational call to each believer, but there is no instruction directing Christians to seek out such leading... while vocational call happens a couple times in the NT, it is not spoken of as pertaining to all believers.

How does the NT describe “elder qualifications?” – An elder must be a spiritually mature Christian man who desires the position of leadership in the church, and is able to shepherd God's people and teach God's word!

So our examination should take into account these qualifications, giving scrutiny to what is required by the Lord, not an emphasis upon things that the Lord does not require... And of these, the element of “calling” does not appear in the qualification passages (I Tim 3, Titus 1, I Pet 5:2). Some have posited that without a sense of calling a pastor will drop out within a couple weeks... but is this the means of perseverance? An inward sense

of calling? Or is it instead that strength that comes from depending upon the Lord and knowing that you are working for His Kingdom? Also, another problem with “calling” is what happens if an individual discovers that they really do not have a desire for the office of overseer and would prefer going back to “secular” vocation instead... they feel that they can’t “leave the ministry” because they were called... But if “calling” is removed, then the individual believer sees that service to God happens in a multitude of arenas and without desire for the work of the office of overseer, he cannot be one.

Well, if this issue has arisen for “ministry service in general” – it surely arises when “mission work” is contemplated. Partly because of that 1st sending out (seen as example for further missionary endeavors) and partly because of the practical difficulties associated with mission work, many believe apart from a special calling, one cannot hope to engage in mission work.

But we must recognize that Barnabas and Saul’s sending was unique in that they were the 1st missionaries! We ought not expect this everytime a missionary is sent out, but this is not to say we cannot learn something from that occasion. (1) Ensure that the ones we send are qualified for the work (evangelism, discipleship, church planting), (2) Have the ability to work together well (3) Desire for working with the target people group...

John Mark might be interesting to examine... John, the cousin of Barnabas, travels with Paul and Barnabas on the 1st missionary journey but deserts them as they began to travel from Perga to Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13). When Paul later proposes to go visit the brethren again (which is not attributed specifically to the H.S. by the way), an intense discussion ensues regarding bringing John Mark along with. They decide to make two teams, because Paul doesn’t think John Mark to be qualified (Paul placed a premium upon loyalty and commitment). Paul chose Silas, and Barnabas took John Mark. Later we read that John Mark does show himself to be loyal in the end, and Paul mentions his usefulness to him (2 Tim 4:11).

So how do we go about identifying qualifications for mission work?

1. Spiritual qualifications
2. Doctrinal qualifications
3. Academic qualifications
4. Physical qualifications
5. Personality qualifications
6. Social qualifications

Good Principle: *Rather than waiting for some kind of mystical call from God, every believer should respond to the revealed will of God by giving serious consideration to becoming a cross-cultural missionary.*

The Basis: (1) The Command of the Great Commission (2) The Need (3) The Provision

Practical Steps to Take: (1) Commitment to Christ (2) Investigation into Missions (3) Involvement (4) Self-Evaluation (5) Consultation (6) Preparation (7) Prayer

***HOMEWORK:** *Read ch22 (p355-375) and be prepared to discuss next week!*

Finally, let’s discuss the issue of **TITHING**

1. Motive behind giving... How important do you think this is? Pressure-feeling...
2. OT understanding
 - a. **Mal 3:8-10**
 - b. “tithe” – one tenth
 - c. p357 – maybe over and above 22% of income

3. NT understanding
 - a. Does NT continue the practice of OT tithing?
 - b. Is the Church given new guidelines?
 - c. **II Cor 9:7, Heb 7:1-10**
 - d. Temple to NT church?? Correlations? **I Cor 3:16-17**
 - e. Tithing replaced by “grace-giving?”
4. Being set free from the “burden of tithing” or released from giving a “mere tenth”
5. Doing away with the “faith promise”
 - a. Def’n p361
 - b. Harmonizes well w/ individual will of God approach, also “works” – pragmatism!
 - c. Greatly encourages prayer and great generosity in giving – good things!
 - d. But method lacks scriptural basis – problem of subjectivity!
 - e. Instead, give on basis of specific guidelines and established priorities!
 - f. **PROBLEM:** p364 encourages believers to trust God for something that He has not said He will do – God is not obligated to come up with the amount that we decide to pledge! This is not “faith” its presumption! – can lead to “questioning your faith”
6. Biblical Principles:
 - a. **II Cor 8-9**
 - b. **Acts 11:27-29**
 - c. See *Overview on p370-371*
 - i. God Himself is the Model, Motivator, and Equipper of all Christian Giving (2 Cor 8:9, 9:8-10,15)
 - ii. The donation of a portion of one’s wealth is made with the recognition that everything the believer has belongs to God (including his own life) – Rom 12:1-2, I Cor 4:7, 6:19-20
 - iii. The ability and motivation to give to the Lord is a function of grace (2 Cor 8:1,3,6,7) – both desire and ability is given by the work of God’s grace!
 - iv. In God’s eyes, the *attitude* of the giver is more important than the *amount* given (2 Cor 9:7)... so grace giving is characterized by joy, cheerfulness, liberality, sacrifice, eagerness, willingness, perseverance, integrity (2 Cor 8, 9)
 - v. All believers participate in giving regardless of wealth (Lk 21:1-4) and the value of the gift is not determined by its amount but by how much it cost – not “how much can I spare” but “how much can I sacrifice?”
 - vi. A believer is not expected to give more than he is able. Often, however, Christians find that they can give more than they thought they could afford (2 Cor 8:3,12)
 - vii. The opportunity to give should be viewed as a privilege, not a compulsive obligation (2 Cor 8:4,9:7)
 - viii. The greatest threat to generous giving is not poverty, but covetousness (2 Cor 9:5, Lk 12:13-34, Acts 5:1-10).
 - ix. The Christian’s habitual practice of giving is to be regular, individual, systematic, proportionate (I Cor 16:1-2)
7. Biblical Priorities:
 - a. Immediate family
 - b. Extended family
 - c. Work of the Local Church – pastors
 - d. Missionaries – work of gospel proclamation
 - e. Relief of needy believers
 - f. Relief of unbelievers

8. Scripture Passages to study: **Matt 6:19-24, Luke 6:38, 12:13-34, 16:1-13, 19:11-27, 21:1-4, Rom 12:8, I Cor 16:1-2, II Cor 8-9, Gal 6:6-10, Phil 4:14-19, I Tim 5:8, 17-18, 6:6-19, II Tim 3:1-2, Titus 1:7, Heb 13:16, Ja 1:11, 5:1-6, I John 3:17-18**