

Sunday Night Equipping – God’s Will (part 2)

Introduction: My Journey...

First of all, I appreciate everyone’s participation last week on the little “pop-quiz” I distributed. You all did just fine... My motivation for putting that task before you was two-fold: (1) to get you warmed up to the discussion at hand and (2) to get a quick indicator of how you understand and interact with God’s Will and Decision Making. Since I requested transparency from each of you, I feel it’s only right that I begin my discussion of this topic with a brief autobiographical sketch.

Some of you know me really well, and are aware of my history, but hopefully no matter how well you know me, I’ll present you tonight with some new insight into myself... My goal in doing this is to (1) provide us with some “common ground” from which to speak to one another – hopefully you will identify with some of the scenarios of my life and (2) provide reasons as to why I believe this subject is so important in our lives as Christians.

Until just a few years ago, I had struggled over the matter of God’s Will quite extensively. Much of my confusion was linked to wrongful explanations by well-meaning Christians. Have you met any of these? Have you been one of these? Amen or Oh Me! ☺ Now don’t get me wrong, I bear the responsibility for my beliefs and behaviors before the Lord, but the situation is not helped when those who you look to for counsel and spiritual instruction fail to present the right perspective. What makes this especially difficult is when you hear the same explanations from multiple sources. And it’s not as if everything they explained was wrong; there was a good deal of truth in it all. The major difficulty rested in some faulty distinctions and spiritually sounding phrases, which added more confusion than assistance in the matter. Remember, a wrong answer can arise from multiple sources: (1) a person can just be plain ignorant of an issue (2) a person can be trusting an incorrect source (3) a person can be irrationally convinced of a particular persuasion based upon faulty logic or false premises. All of these reasons combine to provide a general perspective/atmosphere regarding God’s will that in reality does not do justice to the biblical exhortation nor does it help us practically in making good decisions.

I had a few very significant decisions that had to be made in rapid succession around 10 years ago that were exceedingly difficult for me. They were “significant” because they would carry with them consequences that would have lasting impacts on my life.

1. Choice of College. I would consider this the first of my “adult” decisions. The decision would carry with it both educational as well as financial ramifications. There were so many factors that would go into this decision, and the choice would have many ramifications. When all was said and done, I decided to go to Texas A&M because it was close to home, was inexpensive compared to many other schools, and because it was the only college I filled out an application for. ☺ I didn’t want to deal with multiple choices (because that would be difficult to choose between then), so I decided to just pick A&M and if accepted (which I was fairly sure I would be) just go there.
2. Call to Ministry. I really enjoyed the youth group I became a part of in High School and found it so rewarding to be involved in other people’s lives spiritually. As I entered college, and began doing some co-op work for GE I became all the more excited about

Wednesday nights and helping with the youth group back at my home church. I was afforded the opportunity to teach a few times, and I enjoyed the responsibility so much. But I struggled with the whole “calling” thing. I hadn’t experienced some mystical voice from God that some pastors testified to. With this thought in the back of my mind, it wasn’t until I went away on a youth camp trip as a counselor that I had an experience that I decided was an authentic “calling” from God. After an evening worship meeting at Camp Tejas, I stayed back in the room and played the piano singing unto the Lord. I then opened my bible to where I had been reading in my quiet times and my eyes fell upon II Tim 4:2 “preach the word, be ready in season and out of season...” At that moment I felt the Lord speak to me directly that I was to pursue pastoral ministry. I spoke with a few loved ones, told GE I wouldn’t be coming back, and changed majors from Mechanical Engineering to Sociology. I never looked back. Is this what is necessary to be a pastor? Was this even a rightful way to interpret II Tim 4:2? A direct message from God to my heart? Does this mean that anyone that feels impressed by this verse should become a pastor?

3. This led to a further decision. Where would I begin serving? How would I find a church to serve at? How would I know which church was the one God wanted me at? Through a connection back at my home church I heard of a small country church in Kosse, TX that was looking for a youth pastor. I interviewed with the pastor and deacons, and while feeling tremendously inadequate to the task, I just felt indecisive. I talked with an older gentleman and asked him what I should do... how would I know if it was God’s will? His response – either way, it will be God’s will... This answer perplexed me as well as comforted me... I couldn’t really understand what he meant, but in the end I decided to take the job and see what came of it. I served there for the summer, and then returned to A&M to focus on school.
4. The following summer I came to hear of Oak Ridge Christian Fellowship through a man I was meeting with at A&M named Mark Day. He was the campus missionary for The Navigators organization. He had received a notice from a Pastor Frank Moore that a church in the woodlands was looking for a youth pastor. Mark knew that I was praying about a youth ministry position and so he told me of this church. Before calling Pastor Frank I prayed that God would provide me with some indication whether this would be where I should be. It came in the form of a pastor who was well acquainted with the spiritual status of the youth group (which really impressed me). I visited, but had virtually made up my mind on the basis of that first conversation (first impression). It seemed to fit other matters (located between home and A&M) as well.
5. I went to SWBTS for seminary – a decision made mainly on the basis of similarity in theology, location, and money (which made it slightly easy, for I just regarded other factors as less important).
6. Throughout this time I struggled with the question of marriage as well... The thought of finding “the one” bugged me... Was there really some sense in which I was to locate this “one,” hope she waited for me, woo her and marry her? How was I to go about this? How would I be sure which girl it was to be?
7. It was a couple years before getting married that my thoughts on the will of God began to change and mature. And as I came to realize my love for Leah and desire to marry her, the decision was able to be made with confidence and assurance. I also was praying regarding housing and my job, which also were met with confidence. Decisions since a

few years ago have been such a different type of thing for me, and I love the freedom provided in the Lord. I just hope to be able to pass on what I've learned!

What I have discovered over the past few years is a new perspective on "decision making" and "the will of God." And this new understanding has brought with it such a peace and security, where before I was super laden with anxiety and worry. Indecisiveness and Impulsiveness are both dangerous tendencies in us, and a thorough-going biblical view of decision making is the cure to both. We must pursue wisdom and take responsibility for the decisions we make.

So many Christians find knowledge of God's will hard to come by... Many feel they have followed the steps and still are left perplexed. They are convinced that God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their lives, but for some reason He is not telling them what it is. So many people w/ great sincerity and diligence have desired to do the right thing in decisions, but wonder why it is so hard to find God's will. This is only a concern for the Christian, because every Christian has a God-given desire to honor and please and glorify the Lord. The non-Christian makes decisions with his own best interests in mind – what makes him the most happy...

Our lack of success in discovering God's will can be attributed to one of the following:

1. God is unable to reveal it – WRONG... God does what He wants!
2. My sinfulness or insincerity in finding it – This is not always the case!
3. My knowledge of the nature of God's will is insufficient – IGNORANCE
 - a. We should search the scriptures (**Acts 17:11**)
 - b. Studying the Bible is always profitable work (**II Tim 3:16**)

I'd like to go over some of the answers you provided me with to the "general questions" on God's will from last week. I've selected a few answers from each question for you to contemplate:

1. Define "God's Will."
 - What God intends for us to do. Whatever Happens is God's will.
 - What God has decreed will come to pass.
 - God's perfect standard that He lays out in the law and various commands
 - God's determined purpose
 - What God wants from you.
 - A plan to give the glory alone to God.
 - Any event that has, does, or ever will occur must ultimately fit into God's will since He is totally Sovereign. However, in this context it refers to that which is pleasing to Him.
 - What God wants from His Creation. What God causes to happen.
 - The plan God has in store for you.
 - What God has decided will happen, and whatever goes along with what the Bible says.
 - Doing right, obeying God's Word, that which pleases God.
 - God's plan/purpose for your life on earth.
 - God bringing about or making known His wants throughout eternity.
 - Secret Will: That which God has declared shall come to pass regarding all things; including all the most minute details of his creation, future events, current events, of which we could not possibly know due to the nature and power of their scope. Revealed

will: that which God has revealed to us by his spoken and written word which allows us to identify certain characteristics and unique attributes of God that we may know good from evil, light from darkness, and the True God.

- What God wants – this can be in the sense of what He is pleased by in and of itself, as well as things He allows, but all things fit into His “meta-will” in that He has planned all things from the beginning and He does what He pleases.
- God’s will is what He desires (and, sometimes, does)
- 2 Wills in God: Sovereign (whatever happens) and Moral (what God desires).

2. Can God’s Will be known? If so, how do you discover/know it? How does God reveal it?

- Yes. Read His Word. Through studying and knowing the Scriptures.
- Yes. Take up the book and read prayerfully.
- A portion of God’s will has been revealed to us through Scripture. Methods of revelation: scripture, prophets, incarnation of Christ.
- God’s will can be known to at least some extent. We can that something is God’s will if it is in line with His character as revealed to us in Scripture. Thus, His will is primarily revealed to us through Scripture and the Spirit’s illumination.
- Yes. The Bible reveals God’s moral will. I don’t like the idea that you can’t know God’s Sovereign will until it happens.
- I believe that God’s Word speaks to how He would have us to live. The Holy Spirit also is continually working in me to do what is acceptable and right in God’s sight.
- To an extent. He has told us a lot about His will through His Word.
- God’s will can be 100% known on issues that are specifically stated in His Word
- Yes. You can discover His will by spending time in God’s Word and in prayer, worship, and fellowship with other believers.
- Yes. God’s revealed will is unraveled in the Scriptures. The Word and its teaching are brought to light by God and He applies that teaching to our lives.
- God’s revealed will can be known. We know it because it is recorded in His Word, the Bible. God’s will has been revealed and recorded over time in the construction of the scriptures inspired by the spirit of God, written by men.
- He told us what He is morally pleased with, but we don’t know what the future will be like. God has revealed things in the bible about morality. There are plenty of instances in the bible where God has revealed instructions to people in different ways.
- Yes. To discover and know God’s will one must read the Bible. God reveals His will through the inspiration of Holy scripture.
- Yes. God’s will is clearly described in His Word – the Bible. Discovering it occurs through genuine communion with God through His Word. This is the means through which God reveals His will to us. Inspiration → Illumination.

3. How would you describe the way that the Holy Spirit “leads/guides” you? In other words, how do you know what to do in a particular situation? How confident (give a percentage) are you that you are doing God’s Will?

- I’m not quite sure, but if what I think lines up with Scripture then I know it was from the Holy Spirit. Measuring is hard, definitely not 100%... maybe 80%

- Through the Word of God – the sword of the Spirit. 100%. If a situation is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, then derive principles from the Scriptures. Obey the revealed will of God and do what you want.
- Leadings/guidance of the Holy Spirit usually comes to me through explicitly obvious circumstances – where there is no denial that this is what should be occurring and there is an unexplainable peace when there otherwise wouldn't be. 50% assurance – some things are obvious, others I'm still fervently seeking.
- You think about what someone would do and/or determine the outcome of your few solutions. I'm not very confident.
- Through convictions. I'm 70% confident.
- I think that we should be guided by a desire to be well-pleasing to God and to bring Him glory. Whatever will bring Him the most glory is what is most in line with His will. Admittedly, it is sometimes difficult to discern His will. I would say that I know His will 75-80% of the time.
- Doing things from faith with a clear conscience. Praying, reading the Bible, seeking godly counsel – then making a decision with a clear conscience.
- Impressions in my mind, thoughts in my prayer life, wisdom and discernment, plans, etc. I believe that God is pleased when we exhibit a Christlike behavior and the closer you keep your prayer life, study time of God's word the more "confident" one is. Because you know the expectations.
- By spending time with God in prayer and in His Word, you know what He wants. You can know what to do by seeing how you can bring God glory the most. 95% sure.
- While I certainly don't believe in signs and wonders, I do believe that God opens doors and makes provisions for things out of our control. There are times when I think I am certain of God's will, but I think that's mostly human emotion.
- 85% certain. Pray for wisdom. Ask: Does it agree w/ God's Word? Does it glorify Him?
- Pray. Read the Word. Seek advice from Pastor. Ultimately we are never outside the will of God. He might allow sin to happen, but we are never outside His plan/will.
- As Christians we know what to do in our lives because we know God's Word. We search the scriptures and define our convictions and views based on the insight and truth revealed to us in the Bible. The convictions and views direct us in the way we live our lives and how we react in particular situations. I'm always 100% I am doing God's will. The % of how accurate I am in doing it is my concern – how well I abide by His revealed will.
- I struggle to understand that leading/guiding. I'm doing what I know now, and I'm not concerned.
- The Holy Spirit guides the me through enlightenment and application of God's Word. In a given situation the correct course of action will be in keeping with Biblical instruction. In terms of God's moral will, if my actions are sinful (and I'm aware of it) then 0%, however, according to God's sovereign will, 100% in every situation ☺
- True, genuine confidence stems from actions that are most undeniably applications of God's commands/principles... There are situations where many choices might be acceptable (area of freedom) and a discussion of good, better, best might come into play. It is of supreme importance that we not contradict scripture... but if permissible and profitable we can full (100%) confidence regarding the decision.

4. What is the general way that you go about making a decision (list steps & indicate how much influence you give to each source of guidance)?
- Pray and Ask God. Go to others for godly advice.
 - Study the Word, pray, consult godly people to receive counsel.
 - Most time should be invested in prayer. The scriptures should be consulted for what is actually stated (not just what I want to hear). Godly counsel should be used to confirm I wasn't completely off base.
 - Think over the situation, determining consequences of each decision. Go with the decision that brings the best outcome. Hope and pray for the best.
 - Pray (40%), Talk to Family (30%), Think/Contemplate (30%)
 - I spend time in prayer and follow convictions derived from biblical teaching. I often consult fellow Christians for advice as well. Ideally, my final authority is Scripture.
 - God's word (obviously if the Bible is clearly for or against something in the decision – the decision is easy), thinking, praying, godly counsel.
 - Often I will list the problem/concern/decision in order to state it concisely. I describe on paper or in my mind the pros and cons of what will happen with each decision. I plan a strategy and ask for godly advice from those I believe are wise. I then take the information I have into my prayer closet and ask God to help me sort through the situation and act in a holy way.
 - First, see if what I am doing is sinful (if it is, don't do it). Second, think about how I can best glorify God in that situation and how I can use what He has given me to further His Kingdom.
 - Ask if the decision is in line with Scripture. Wait and be patient. Pray. Consider own insight from experience (gut feelings, 1st impressions). Consult with wife. Construct pro/con list. Ask other believers for counsel.
 - Pray. Consult Scriptures. Ask other Christians you respect for guidance. Ask will this glorify God. Ultimately, no matter what your decision is, God will use this situation for some good, even if it doesn't turn out to what you had hoped for.
 - I believe we get a good picture of God's will for our lives through prayer and looking to God's Word. After looking to these things I believe we are given peace about our decisions.
 - Clearly layout and identify the decision. Pray for wisdom and knowledge beyond my years. Determine how decision is impacted by Christian Worldview. Seek guidance in the Scriptures and the counsel of Godly men. Make decision, develop defense of decision for helping others in the future. Pray for peace.
 - 1. Assess the situation in light of Biblical principle. 70%
 - 2. Seek godly council (usually my wife and you) 25%
 - 3. Conscience 5%
 - Life saturated in the Word of God and prayer – developing Biblical Worldview. Contemplate given situation – weighing the pros and cons of a particular decision. Ensure God's Word encourages decision – praying for wisdom and discernment. Seek wisdom from a multitude of counselors – particularly godly, biblical people. Ask the right questions – analyzing not only the what but the how, when, where, and why!