

**THE WILL OF GOD**

**WEEK 6: What Steps Can I Put in Place for Biblical Decision Making?**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

* The goal of this six-week class is to discuss the will of God. We want to take on the subject from as many different angles as possible and discuss what is being taught in the church world today.
* We want you to have a Biblical, theological and personal understanding of how to know and then pursue the will of God in your own life.
* So, for the next six weeks, we want to explore with you all what the Bible says about the will of God and how we can apply that to our decision-making processes.
* Our schedule will look like this:
  + Week 1: What is the will of God?
  + Week 2: What are the wrong methods of interpreting God’s will?

### Week 3: What is the Holy Spirit’s role in interpreting God’s will?

* + Week 4: How do we reconcile evil in the world when God’s in control?
  + Week 5: What can we do to know God’s revealed will to us?
  + **Week 6: What steps can I put into place for proper Biblical decision making?**

# INTRODUCTION

* So far in this class, we have worked to lay the Biblical foundation for understanding the various aspects of God’s will (sovereign & moral/revealed will)
* We have looked at the *wrong* ways to interpret God’s will
* We have sought to understand the Holy Spirit’s role in interpreting God’s will
* For our final two weeks, we have transitioned into the practical application of these Biblical principles regarding God’s will
  + Last time we met, we asked: How we can know and live according to God’s revealed will?
* In asking that question, we saw that it is not a mystery
  + If you want to know God’s will for your life, look to His revealed will in Scripture!
  + Use proper hermeneutics to understand the intended meaning of the text, understanding if it is descriptive or prescriptive, and seek to live within the bounds of what Scripture prescribes
* For our final week, we are going to examine areas of life that Scripture doesn’t address directly
  + Who do I marry?
  + What house should I buy?
  + What career should I pursue?
* How can we be making Biblically informed decisions in these areas?
  + As believers, living within God’s revealed will, we will address the question: What steps can we put into place for proper Biblical decision making?

# REVIEW: LIVING ACCORDING TO GOD’S REVEALED WILL

* As we learned last time, living within God’s revealed will is not about searching for or discovering God’s “individual will” for a believer
* Rather, we are given biblical principles that provide the guardrails that we are to remain within when making decisions

Center of God’s Will

Biblical Principles Narrowing Down Options

Decision that Misses God’s Best

Biblically Legitimate Options

Non-Biblical Options

* So, what does this mean for us as we strive for biblical decision making in areas that Scripture doesn’t address directly?
* Ultimately, we see that there is freedom to do what we want, **as long as** we remain within the bounds of God’s revealed will in Scripture
* Certainly, we must hold these with an open hand, knowing that God may change things according to His plan and purposes.
  + **James 4:13-17** – *Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*
* However, we can make choices based on our preferences (clothes to wear, car to buy, who to marry, etc.)
  + We will see often that a decision may not be between “right and wrong”, but rather it is between two legitimate options.
* However, as we are weighing options and seeking to make decisions that are honoring to God, there are principles that we can employ to aid us.

# PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL DECISION MAKING

**1. Examine the Word for Direct Commands**

* The place to start when making decisions is with the Word of God
  + Scripture has bearing on every area of your life
  + There is not an issue in your life that the Bible does not address either directly or indirectly
* God has provided everything we need to know in order to do what He wants us to do
  + **2 Peter 1:3** - *Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*
* You have every spiritual resource necessary for being a believer and to make God-honoring decisions
* The Bible is sufficient for every area of your life
  + **2 Tim 3:16-17** - *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.*
  + We have everything we need to know in the Word so that we can make any decision in a way that honors Him
* It may not speak **directly** to every single issue that we face, but it is sufficient to tell us everything we need to know in order to live a life that pleases God
* Remember, it’s God’s revealed will in Scripture that establishes the guardrails that we are to live within
  + **Psalm 119:105** - *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*
* God’s word is the light that keeps you walking on the right path and keeps you from going off
  + Because of that, Scripture should be brought to bear on all decisions
  + You want to be making your decision on the basis of solid biblical commands and principles, because the Bible is sufficient and authoritative
* The first question you should ask yourself when faced with a decision is: What does the Bible say about it?
  + Specifically, does a passage speak **directly** to this issue?
  + Is there a passage that contains a direct command that relates to this issue?
* If there is a direct statement in Scripture pertaining to your decision that tells you to either do it or not do it, your decision is done
* However, for many of the decisions you will be making, there won’t be direct commands
  + As we’ve mentioned, the Bible is not going to tell you what house to buy, who to marry, whether to change jobs, home school vs. public school
* So, what do you do then?

**2. Study the Word for Indirect Principles**

* If the Bible doesn’t speak directly to an issue, it doesn’t mean that your work in studying the Word is done
  + Unfortunately, that’s what many people assume
  + They assume that because the Bible doesn’t say what to do in that specific situation it doesn’t have anything to say at all
  + They think that the Bible does not speak to every issue and so they too quickly assume that it does not have anything to say
* Bible is not going to tell you what to do in every particular situation
* The Bible is not a catalog of do’s and don’ts on all matters of life topically arranged in alphabetical form
  + It doesn’t speak **directly** to every life situation
* However, the Bible should be brought to bear on every decision
  + Even if it doesn’t say what to do specifically, it can frame those decisions within principles that inform that decision
  + There are Scriptural principles and practices to cover all circumstances of life
* We need to remember, though, that this will require us to study to the Word thoroughly
  + If we don’t take the time to carefully study the Scriptures, we may just assume it doesn’t say anything regarding a particular decision
  + This can lead us to end up looking for signs, putting out the fleece, trusting their feelings when they should be doing the hard work of studying the Word
* But those who diligently study the Word for indirect principles will often find them
* **2 Timothy 2:15** - *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*
  + Our goal is to handle the word of truth accurately
  + When we do, it will yield principles that will help us make decisions biblically
  + These principles begin to provide the guardrails to give us a limited number of equally legitimate options
  + This is what the Word does...it begins to frame up our decisions helping us to discern which are non-biblical options and which are biblically legitimate options
* One way that it does this is in helping us assess our motives and priorities
  + Are my financial priorities biblical or am I thinking only my comfort?
  + Is pride driving my motive or humility?
  + Is this following the example of Christ?
  + Is it beneficial?
  + Will it bring glory to God?
  + Does it promote my spiritual life?
  + Could it master or enslave me over time?
  + Will it feed my selfish desires?
* Biblical principles like these enable us to make decisions that honor Christ
* Example: Thinking through changing jobs – Some questions to consider based on Scripture:
  + How much time away from family? (Eph 6; Titus 2)
  + How much time away from church? (Heb 10:25)
  + Will job change take me to a city without a good church?
    - Often, our first thoughts involve salary, hours, benefits, schools, where to live, but rarely do they think about if a good church is there
  + Am I pursuing money? (1 Tim 6:10)
  + Am I seeking to build a name for myself? (James 4:6)

**3. Pray for Wisdom**

* “Other than Scripture, no word or concept is more important in decision making than wisdom. You need wisdom, more than anything else, if you want to make good choices.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
  + Wisdom is a knowledge of Scripture **and** the ability to apply that knowledge in your life
  + Wisdom helps us discern God’s perspective of a given decision
* Ultimately, if we want to make wise decisions, we need to be praying for wisdom
* When facing a decision, we should be asking for help to understand God’s Word better and apply its truths to a decision
* God promises to give us the wisdom we need to understand and apply His truth to our decisions
  + But we need to be praying and asking the Lord for it and searching for it in His Word
  + **Proverbs 2:1-7** - *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,*
* The idea here is that the wise believer is the one who is diligently seeking wisdom
  + And the Lord will give wisdom, but He only gives it to those who seek it
* The wisdom of God is available to believers if they, in faith, ask for it
  + **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.*
* When facing a decision and wanting to make that decision wisely, our immediate reaction should be to ask God for wisdom
  + We see the outcome: God gives to all generously and without reproach
  + You ask God, in faith, for wisdom, and He will give it to you
* So, after you search the Scriptures for direct commands and indirect principles, you should prayerfully ask the Lord: What is the wisest choice?
* When you are asking that question, you are not asking the Lord to mystically reveal what He wants you to do... you should not be looking for some sign from heaven
  + Wisdom is found in Scripture...God has spoken in His Word
* So, you are praying that the Lord will help you to understand the Scriptures and apply them to your situation
* But you are also asking for wisdom to think rightly about the decision, to gather all the data, to talk to the right people
* Thinking again of the example of choosing a job:
  + You are not praying for God to tell you what to do
  + Pray for wisdom as you interview
  + Pray for wisdom in getting a sense of your responsibilities
  + Pray that your heart would be right
  + Pray that you would make a decision with right motives

**4. Get Wise Counsel**

* After searching the Scriptures and praying for wisdom, another means of making wise decisions is getting godly counsel
* But when the decision is one that is not clearly spelled out in Scripture, it’s wise to listen to other believers
* The Scripture encourages believers to seek the counsel of wise and godly people:
  + **Prov 1:5** - *A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel*
  + **Prov 12:15** - *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.*
  + **Prov 13:10** - *Through insolence comes nothing but strife, But wisdom is with those who receive counsel.*
  + **Prov 15:22** - *Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.*
  + **Prov 19:20** - *Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days.*
  + **Prov 20:18** - *Prepare plans by consultation, and make war by wise guidance.*
* Counsel from others is important at every step in the process of making decisions
  + Wise counsel helps us understand Scripture
  + It helps us apply Scripture rightly
  + It helps us grow in wisdom
  + It helps us evaluate our desires and motives more accurately[[2]](#footnote-2)
* The counsel of wise, godly, and Biblically discerning people is important in decision making
* You want to get input from other believers, specifically those who know the Word well and are able to help you bring the Word to bear on that situation
* Go to those people and ask their counsel
  + God has not designed you to be an island
  + You are not to be a Lone Ranger Christian
  + He has placed you in relationships with godly believers, partly so you can get their input in your life
* This should be part of natural body life in the church
  + **Colossians 3:16 -** *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*
  + **Hebrews 10:24** - *let’s consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds*
* However, some things to consider when receiving counsel from other believers
  + We must understand that their counsel is not infallible
    - We must make sure that we are discerning, knowing what Scripture says directly or indirectly on a decision and evaluating any counsel based on the truth of God’s word
    - **Acts 17:11** - *Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*
  + If they are giving wise, biblically informed counsel, we must be humble and teachable

**5. Consider your Desires**

* Personal desires do play an important role in decision making
  + God often works through our desires
* Though our desires should never be given authority over Scripture, they are significant
  + After examining Scripture, praying for wisdom, and getting counsel, a decision may still be unclear
  + So, when everything else is equal, it is appropriate to ask the question: What do I *want* to do?
* God accomplishes His sovereign will through our desires
* At times, it is appropriate to make a decision based on what you desire to do
  + Remember, we discussed the guardrails that are put in place through biblical commands and principles, but as long as our decisions fall within those bounds, we are free to make decisions we want
* There are a number of passages that refer to this:
  + **Psalm 37:4** - *Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.*
    - This does not mean that he will give us a new car or a bigger house if we love Jesus
    - Doesn’t mean that if you love God enough He’ll give that to you
    - It does mean that when we delight ourselves in the Lord, His desires become our desires, and ultimately, we end up wanting what He wants
    - Our desires become more like the Lord as we delight ourselves in Him
  + **Phil 2:12-13** - *So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*
    - God works in you through your will/desires
  + **1 Cor 7:39** - *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.*
    - Her desires are a factor in her decision
* As long as the options you face do not involve issues directly forbidden or commanded in Scripture, you can exercise your freedom and consider your desires in making decisions
  + Our heart should be to please Christ, seeking to and desire to live within the bounds of God’s revealed will
    - think of what we reviewed last time – be saved from sin, be filled with Holy Spirit, be submissive to authority, be thankful in your praying, be content in your suffering
  + **Ecclesiastes 11:9** - *Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.*

**6. Make a Decision and Trust God’s Sovereignty**

* After considering commands and principles in Scripture, praying for wisdom, seeking godly counsel, and considering your desires, finally comes the part that most people struggle with:
  + YOU NEED TO MAKE A DECISION!
* Make your decision and move ahead, trusting God’s sovereignty
* Many people are tempted to be passive in this area
  + They want to simply wait on the Lord...let go and let God
  + They think they are spiritual by sitting still – “be still and know I am God”
  + Too many people don’t get around to making a decision
* At some point you need to get around to making a decision
  + Remember, it will not always be between good and bad, but rather multiple viable options
  + If so, you need to make a decision, doing what seems best
* Another stumbling block in making decisions is trying to anticipate every potential outcome, getting stuck on the “what if’s”, which can lead to analysis paralysis
  + **Phil 4:6-9** - ***Do not be anxious about anything****, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,* ***think about these things.*** *As for 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.*
* Remember, if you are walking with the Lord, reading and studying His Word, praying about it, asking others for counsel, seeking to honor the Lord, etc., you are free to make decisions
  + Within these parameters, God gives us the freedom and ability to make wise choices that honor Him
* Those with an understanding of God’s “individual will” may be uncomfortable with this freedom, particularly if they have been taught that you need to discover God’s will through some extra biblical means
  + If you are a student of the Word and truly desire to honor Christ, then you’ll likely be making God honoring decisions
* If you make a decision based on biblical commands and principles alone, you can trust that you are pleasing God and that He will providentially change your choice if it is not within His decreed will
  + Ultimately, we need to trust God’s sovereignty!
    - **Prov 16:9** - *The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*
    - **James 4:13-16** - *Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*
    - **Rom 8:28-29** - *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.*
* Remember, you are never outside of God’s decreed plan
* So, make the best decision possible and trust that you cannot miss the decreed, sovereign will of God because it is God who is sovereign
  + God is in charge of every detail of your life
  + He is never caught by surprise
  + God is always on His throne, and we can have the confidence that He is always working
  + Be confident that He is going to use your decision for His glory and your good
  + Rest in His sovereign purposes being worked out in your life
* We don’t need to be wondering if our decision caused us to miss God’s will
* This is not to say that we will not make mistakes, or that we will never make unwise decisions
  + We may make an unwise decision, however we can learn from them
  + Make a wiser decision next time
* But you will never make a decision that is outside of God’s sovereign will!

# CONCLUSION

* The goal of this six-week class was to discuss the will of God, and to have a Biblical, theological and personal understanding of how to know and then pursue the will of God in your own life.
* In having a proper view of God’s will, both sovereign and revealed will, we will grow stronger in our walk with the Lord
  + We grow in our dependence of Him as we seek wisdom through the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and prayer
  + We grow in our fellowship with other believers as we seek wise counsel
  + We grow in our trust in God’s sovereignty, understanding that everything that is done for our good, for His purposes, and His glory – which inevitably fuels our worship!
  + Because of that, even though we don’t know what will happen in the future, we are given what we need to make wise, God-honoring decisions.

Additional Resources:

* *Decisions, Decisions: How (And How Not) To Make Them* by Dave Swavely
* *Decision Making God’s Way: A New Model for Knowing God’s Will* by Gary T. Meadors
* *Decision Making & the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View* by Garry Friesen
* *Guidance and the Voice of God* by Phillip D Jensen and Tony Payne

1. Dave Swavely, *Decisions, Decisions: How (and How Not) to Make Them* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 125-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Swavely, *Decisions, Decisions: How (and How Not) to Make Them*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)