

# Decisions, Decisions

## PART ONE

Introduction

### I. Behind the Scenes:

A. The importance of knowing and doing God's Will (Deut 29:29; Ps 19:7-14; 119:105; 143:10; Isa 46:9-10; Mat 12:50; Eph 1:11; 5:17ff; Col 1:9-14; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 10:36; 13:20-21; 2 Pt 1:3ff; 1 Jn 5:14-15)

B. Beliefs about it (all kinds of issues including conscience issues)

C. Practices related to it (examples)

## PART TWO

Introduction

- "all truth is God's truth" (if really truth), yet not all truth comes on the same level of certainty and authority

## II. Study & Prayer: Accurately Interpreting God's Revealed Will

A. Principles:<sup>1</sup> (With a Redemptive Christo-telic Story Line for God's glory)

1. Literal Principle
2. Historical Principle
3. Grammatical Principle
4. Synthesis Principle
5. Practical Principle



B. Key Definitions (two aspects of God's Will)

1. God's Will
  - a. God's Decretive (Sovereign) Will
  
  - b. God's Preceptive (Revealed) Will

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *How to Get the Most from God's Word*.



C. Other Terms

1. Wisdom
2. Mysticism
3. Experience

## PART THREE

Introduction

Colossians 1:9-11

1. The Continual Petition for it (:9)
  - a. *“To be filled“* with the full knowledge of His Will”
    - Under the dominating control of (Rom 15:14; Eph 5:18 cf. Col 3:16) – to be so under the influence of something that there is no room for anything else to control you
  - b. *“With the full knowledge of His Will”*
    1. Two words make up the “full knowledge of His will”
    2. Not man’s knowledge and will (early Gnosticism) but God’s Truth (God’s revealed Will)
  - c. *in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”*
    - “Let’s begin with a simple assumption. Since God has a will for us, He must want us to know it. If so, then we could expect Him to communicate it to us in the most obvious way. How would that be? Through the Bible, His revelation. Therefore, I believe that what one needs to know about the will of God is clearly revealed in the pages of the Word of God.”  
John MacArthur, Found God’s Will
2. The Central Purpose of it (:10a)
3. The Christlike Portrait (fruit) from it in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (:10b-14)
  - a. Consistent growth in the service of good deeds (:10b)
  - b. Consistent growth in our study and understanding of God Himself (:10c)
  - c. Consistent growth in our spiritual strength (:11)
  - d. Consistent growth in our attitude of thanksgiving (:12-14)

## PART FOUR

### III. Examining Popular Ways to Know and Do God's Will (Methods and Motives to be cautious of or avoid using)

- A. Misusing the Bible
- B. Personal Advice (without checking it out)
- C. Circumstances / Results
- D. Setting Up Conditions (Fleeces)
- E. Opened and Closed Doors
- F. Ideas, Inner Feelings, Desires, and Impressions
- G. "Led by the Spirit"
- H. An Audible Voice
- I. Misusing Prayer
- J. Inner Peace
- K. Devices
- L. Signs
- M. Isolation
- N. Dreams
- O. "Waiting" on the Lord
- P. Conscience
- Q. Reason (relying on)
- R. Pseudo Faith
- S. Fasting
- T. The "Call" (all experienced based)

- U. Small Group (“...where two or three are gathered...”)
- V. “Prophecy” (modern day)
- W. Over analysis (on unimportant)
- X. Etc.

## **PART FIVE**

### Introduction

#### **IV. Examining a Biblical Way to Know and Do God’s Will: The Biblical Principles and a Suggested Method**

##### A. Prerequisites for Biblical Decision-Making

1. Be rightly related to Christ by responding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in context (2 Cor. 5:14-21)
2. Pursue a life of worshipping and glorifying God (John 4:23-24; 2 Cor. 5:9; Phil. 1:21; 3:10-14; Col 1:9-12; 1 Cor 10:31)
3. Recognize God’s sovereignty over all (Ps. 115:3,8; Eph. 1:11; Eph. 5:17; James 4:13-16; Prov. 16:9; Rom. 8:28-29). God’s sovereignty works in sync with (never apart from) all His other attributes (e.g. Goodness, Wisdom, etc.).
4. Take responsibility for your choices (Ezk 18). God will not obey for you. He will hold you responsible (2 Cor 5:9-10).

##### B. Methodology and Process (these all interrelate).

1. SUBMIT... Humbly pray for wisdom as you gather data.
  - a. Continually have a humble, yielded, and dependent will before God (Rom. 12:1-2). This would be reflected in the prayer request “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done....” (Mt.6:10, Luke 22:42).

- Remember that knowing and doing God's Will is "so that we might walk worthily as unto the Lord..." Col 1:9-14
- b. Continually pray for wisdom – for the Spirit to assist you in bringing Scripture to apply to the situation (Jas. 1:5).
  - c. Gather as much of the factual data as you can to make a wise decision (Prov.18:13). The amount of time spent on this process often depends on the weight of the decision (e.g. Jesus choosing the twelve -Luke 6:12).
2. COMMANDS... Study any direct commands in Scripture concerning this particular issue (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15-17). This may take on the form of positive commands or the form of prohibitions. (Make use of a Bible concordance, Topical Bible (with caution), and other Bible reference books.)
  3. PRINCIPLES... Study the applicable principles in Scripture concerning this issue (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15-17). Wisdom is at its purest in Scripture and then starts to rely more on human reasoning, advice and experience after that (obviously less reliable). This is one of the most neglected areas of decision making. (many of these questions below are from *The Discipline of Grace*, Jerry Bridges, 213)
    - a. WALK WITH CHRIST
      - Is this something I can thank God for? (Rom. 14:6; 1 Cor. 10:30; Col. 3:17)
      - Is this something that will glorify God? (1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:9)
      - Is this following the example of Christ? (Rom. 15:7-8; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 John 2:6)
      - Is this beneficial? Does it promote my spiritual life?
      - Is this a practice that over time will tend to master me? Will it stimulate a desire that will be difficult to control?
      - Is this an occasion where my "flesh" (sinfulness) is seeking to indulge itself? (Gal. 5:13)
    - b. INFLUENCE ON OTHERS
      - Is this worth imitating? (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9)
      - Are you not seeking outside counsel due to wanting what you want? (Prov 18:1-2; 24:6)
      - Is it self-serving at the expense of someone else's benefit? (Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:33; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:1-4)
      - Will my choice affect others around me? If so, in what way?

- Is it constructive? Will it promote the spiritual well-being of other believers if they engage in this practice that is permissible for me?”
- c. NEED
  - Is there a God-given need for me to do this? (1 Jn.3:17-18, Acts 6:1-6, 2 Cor.2:12-13)
- d. OPPORTUNITY
  - Is there an opportunity to do this? Does God appear to be orchestrating circumstances (Providence) to provide you with the opportunity to do this? (2 Cor.2:12-13, Gal.6:10)
- 4. DESIRES... Affirm that your desires are God-honoring (Ps. 37:4; John 15:7).
  - What do I want (“wish”) to do? Will it bring glory to God? (1 Cor. 7:36,39, 10:24,31)
- 5. If you still can’t decide, then HOLD:
  - a. Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:25 (“holding principle” = if it involves the troubled conscience - you might possibly sin in moving ahead)
  - b. Possibly go back and gather more data – both in the initial data gathering or in the commands and principles of Scripture.
- 6. DECIDE... Humbly and dependently make your decision and trust God (Prov.16:9, Acts 16:7)

## **Key Issues within Life and Marriage**

- Choosing Friends
- Further Education
- Choosing a church
- Choosing where to serve at church
- Vocation Choices
- Schooling Choices
- Singleness or Marriage
- Renting vs buying
- Living with family, alone or with roommates (if an adult)
- When to have children
- Have more children
- Adopt/Foster Care
- Supporting an Adult Child
- Dealing with a special needs child



- Relocation (Job, Church, Family)
- Birth Control (if married)
- Finances (spending, saving and giving)
- Wife working (when children are in home)
- Buying a new car
- Stay at home Dad (mom works outside of home)
- Caring for Parent(s) – the how to
- Dealing with In-laws
- Transitioning to being an in-law
- Transitioning to “empty nest”
- Transitioning to adult children coming back home
- Parenting adult children
- Wayward children
- Dealing with chronic illness
- Sexual intimacy issues (what’s allowed, how often, etc.)
- Emotional friendships with the same or opposite sex
- Dealing with sexual sin
- Being faithful with the right priorities in daily tasks
- Ministry issues (where to serve, separate, together, etc.)
- Getting a Pet(s)
- Etc.

## **Decision Making Principles (sample)**

- Stewardship
  - Finances (2 Cor 8-9; avoiding debt – Ps 37:21; Prv 22:7)
  - Time (Ps 90:12; Eph 5:16)
  - Priorities (Martha and Mary, Luke 10:38-42; Jer 2:13; Rev 2:5)
  - Rest and Margin (Ex 20:8-11; Prv 21:20; 22:3; Paul in Acts – weeks to months in between the verses)
  - Exercise (Self-control like an athlete – 1 Cor 9:27)
  - Eating (Eccl 10:16-17; Col 2:16; 2 Thess 3:6-15; 1 Tim 4:3-5)
  - etc.
- Working
  - Created for (Ex 20:8-11)
  - Attitude while working (Col 3:17, 23-24)
  - Provision (1 Tim 5:8; Eph 5:29)
  - to give to others (Generosity – Eph 4:25; 1 Jn 3:17)
  - to save (Prov 6:6; 30:25)
- Relationship principles
  - Communication (Proverbs, Eph 4:25-32)
  - Conflict resolution (Rom 12:18; Eph 4:25-32)

- Loving and serving (putting other's interests before self – Phil 2:1-11)
- Who to marry (as a Christian) – 1 Cor 7:29; 2 Cor 6:14
- Put off and put on principles (Eph 4:22-31; Col 3)
- Hospitality (commands and principles) – Heb 13:2; 1 Pt 4:9
- Self-control (1 Cor 9:27; Titus 2:11-14)
- Seek godly counsel (Prv 15:22)
- Being humble and teachable (Ps 32:8-9; Ps 99; Phil 2:1-11)
- Honor and respecting others (Rom 12:10)
- Contentment (Ex 20:17; Mat 6:25; Phil 4:11-12; Heb 13:5)
- Walk on earth with eternal focus (Matt 6:33; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Heb 12:1-3)
- Etc.

### Further Resources

Jay Adams

7. *A Call to Discernment* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1987)
8. *What to do on Thursday* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1995)
9. *A Christian's Guide to Guidance* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1998)

Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009).

Gary Friesen, *Decision-Making and the Will of God* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980, 2004) Revised and Updated Version

Gary Gilley, *Is That You Lord?* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2007).

Arthur Johnson, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).

R.B. Kuiper, "Pitfalls in Finding God's Will for Your Life," *New Horizons*, (January, 2004).

John MacArthur

- a. *Ashamed of the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993)
- b. *Found: God's Will* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1978)
- c. *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991)
- d. *Reckless Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994)

Gary Meadors, *Decision Making God's Way: A New Model for Knowing God's Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003).

Jim Petty, *Step by Step: Divine Guidance for Ordinary Christians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1999).

Stuart Scott, *Biblical Manhood* (Focus Publishers, 2010)

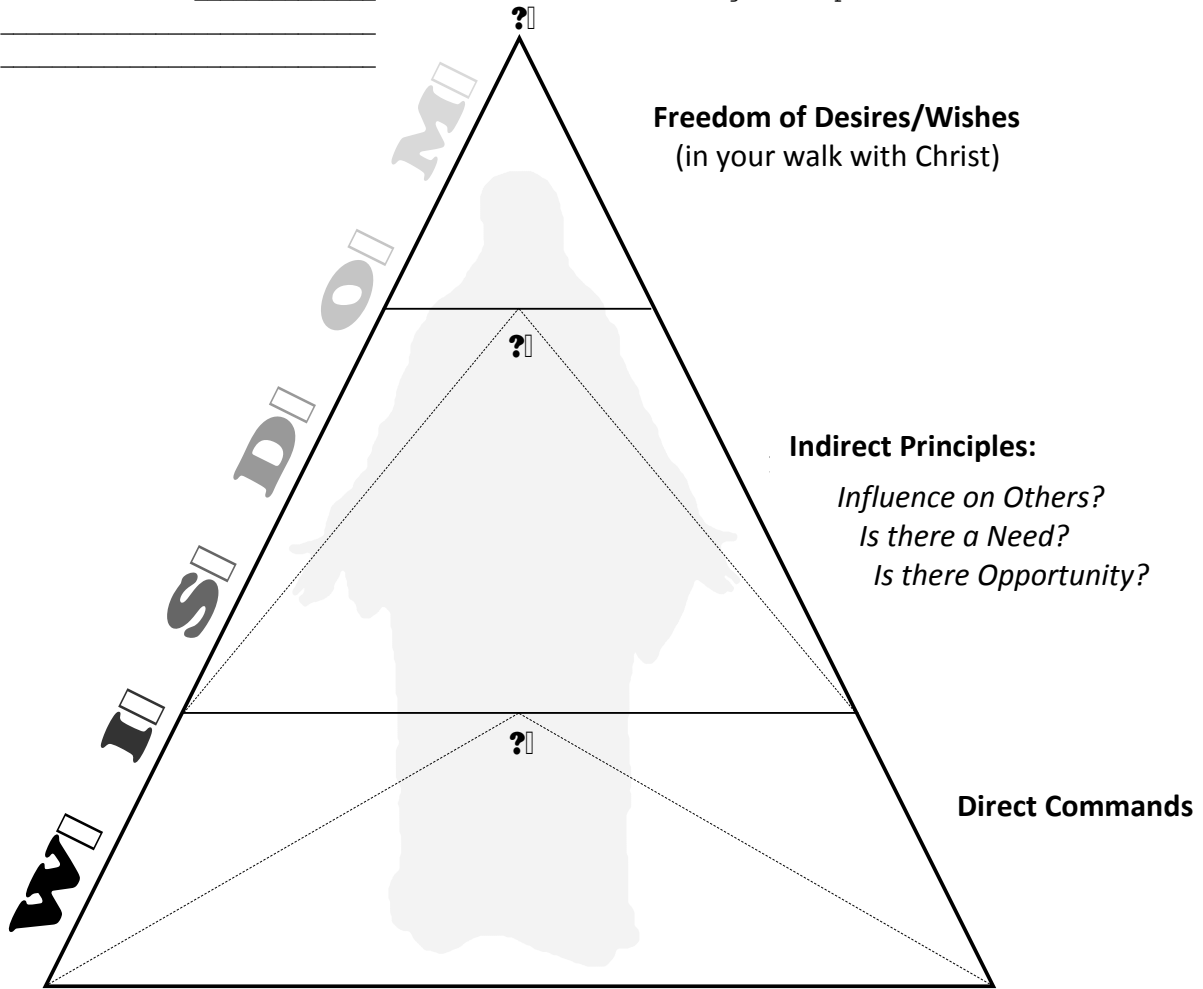
*A Study of Decision Making God's Way* (unpublished D.Min project for Covenant Theological Seminary, 1996).

David Swavely, *Decisions, Decisions: How (and How Not) to Make Them* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003)

# Biblical Decision Making

**The Decision:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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"Holding Principle" Rom. 14:23



**Attitude:** Prayerfully, humbly, to please Christ

**Any Factual Data (Prov 18:13):** \_\_\_\_\_  
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