

Discerning God's Will

Week 1: What Is "God's Will"?

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
What Is "God's Will"?	What Is Our Motivation?	Typical Mindsets	Potentially Misleading Methods	Wisdom	Decision-Making

? How would you define the word "will"?

? How have you heard the phrase "God's will" used amongst other Christians?

Three Subdivisions of God's Will

1. God's Will: Eternal Plan— God Always Gets His Way

Ephesians 1:5-12 (NIV)

In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. ¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Isaiah 46:9-10 (NIV)

⁹ Remember the former things, those of long ago;

I am God, and there is no other;

I am God, and there is none like me.

¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning,

from ancient times, what is still to come.

I say, 'My purpose will stand,

and I will do all that I please.'

? What do these verses seem to be describing about God's will?

? In what ways have you experienced this aspect of God's will (eternal plan) in your life?

2. God's Will: Gospel-Living– God Shows Us How He Wants Us To Live

Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-20 (NIV)

¹Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ...

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-18 (NIV)

¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

¹²Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 13:20-21 (NIV)

²⁰ Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

? How are these passages describing Gospel-living?

? What things other than Scripture do we allow to inform our understanding of right and wrong?

? Why is it tempting for followers of Christ to turn Gospel-living into moralism or legalism?

? How can we fight against this slippery slope?

3. God's Will: Direction – Does God Have a Specific Plan For My Life?

We often ask questions such as: Where does God want me to go to college? Does God want me to take that job? Should I marry that person? Christians often think that because God is sovereign over everything and has desires for us that He shares in the Bible, then He naturally must have a path set out that He wants us to walk down. This leads us to ask: Can I miss God's will for my life? Can I make a wrong decision that will put me on the wrong path?

? What thoughts do these questions above bring to your mind when considering God's will?

God is not a Magic 8-Ball we shake up and peer into whenever we have a decision to make. He is a good God who gives us brains, shows us the way of obedience, and invites us to take risks for Him.¹

Our Assertion:
God does have a specific plan for our lives, but it is not one that He expects us to figure out before we make a decision.

¹ DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will or How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleeces, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* Moody Publishers. Page 24.

? Why is it tempting to focus on God's will of direction rather than God's eternal purpose or Gospel-living when we make decisions?

For Discussion and Accountability

? How are you resting in God's eternal plan, the fact that an all-knowing, all-powerful God has everything in control?

? How are you living by biblical commands through the Gospel?

Discerning God's Will
Week 2: What Is Our Motivation For Knowing God's Will?

	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
What Is "God's Will"?	What Is Our Motivation?	Typical Mindsets	Potentially Misleading Methods	Wisdom	Decision-Making

Three Subdivisions of God's Will:

1. God's Will: Eternal Plan
2. God's Will: Gospel-Living
3. God's Will: Direction

Our Assertion:
 God does have a specific plan for our lives, but it is not one that He expects us to figure out before we make a decision.

? Can anyone summarize the meaning of each of these three categories?

I Want To Know God's Will For My Life! Why?

Why Do Christians Want To Know?	What's Positive About This Reason?	What's Harmful About This Reason?

1 Samuel 12:21 (NIV)

²¹ Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless.

Colossians 3:5 (NIV)

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

? What idols in our lives keep us from a right understanding of God's will? How do they do that?

? How can good things (e.g. relationships, work) become idols in our lives?

? How can knowing God's will for our lives also become an idol?

Luke 18:18-27 (NIV)

¹⁸ A certain ruler asked him [Jesus], "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁹ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."²⁰ You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"

²¹ "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.

²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. ²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶ Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁷ Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

? What do you think was the rich young man's motivation for asking Christ what he needed to do?

? In what ways can you relate to the rich man's motivation?

? What does Jesus really want from the young man?

? How does understanding the Gospel impact our motivation for pursuing God's will?

For Discussion and Accountability

? In what ways do you need to rethink your motivation for pursuing God's will, and how can our small group come alongside you in that process?

Discerning God's Will

Week 3: Typical Mindsets

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
What Is "God's Will"?	What Is Our Motivation?	Typical Mindsets	Potentially Misleading Methods	Wisdom	Decision-Making

Three Subdivisions of God's Will:

1. God's Will: Eternal Plan
2. God's Will: Gospel-Living
3. God's Will: Direction

Our Assertion:

God does have a specific plan for our lives, but it is not one that He expects us to figure out before we make a decision.

? Can anyone summarize the meaning of each of these three categories?

Pretend You're A Mentor

Scenarios

1. Carrie is overwhelmed by the decision about if she should date this guy or not. It has consumed her prayer life, her time with the Lord, and is always the conversation topic with her friends. Her friends are beginning to grow concerned with how it's taking over her life. She's interpreting God's silence as distance from Him, and as such is weary and feeling unloved by God.

? What advice would you give the person/people in this situation?

2. Frank is trying to discern if he's supposed to take this new job that he's been offered. He was given three weeks to decide, and thought that would be a great amount of time to pray about it and seek God with the decision. He has to make the decision tomorrow, and is angry with God because he hasn't received any response. He says his friends constantly get words and impressions from God with decisions they make, so he feels abandoned, unloved, and uncared for by God.

? What advice would you give the person/people in this situation?

3. Owen is trying to figure out some things about college. What college should he attend? What major should he declare when he gets there? Should he plan on trying to get an internship

during his sophomore year or junior year? What if he finds out that he hates the college after a couple of years? Can he transfer? Would that set him behind? How would he pay for college if he decided to go to Grad School? These are the questions plaguing his mind.

? What advice would you give the person/people in this situation?

4. You're friends with Susan and Matt. Matt has had feelings for Susan for a long time. Susan... well...not so much. To her they're just friends. Matt finally decided to approach Susan and ask her out. He told her he had prayed about the decision a lot, and really felt that God told him that they were supposed to be together. Susan, still not interested in Matt at all, is really confused about the situation.

? What advice would you give the person/people in this situation?

5. Walter is really stressed out. His brother is having a hard time in school and has gotten into a bad crowd. He's not a believer, and so it makes conversations over the phone difficult. Walter is trying to figure out if he should move back home to be near him during this season. Last night he was so overwhelmed with all the factors out of his control that he came close to having a panic attack. The fear and worry seems to be paralyzing.

? What advice would you give the person/people in this situation?

Conventional Mindsets...

1) Focuses On Non-Moral Decisions

Micah 6:6-8 (NIV)

⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

? According to this passage, where is our focus to be?

? What advice would you give Carrie?

Once, while preaching on this topic, I said in a bold declarative statement, “God doesn’t care where you go to school or where you live or what job you take.” A thoughtful young woman talked to me afterward and was discouraged to hear that God didn’t care about the most important decisions in her life. I explained to her that I probably wasn’t very clear. God certainly cares about these decisions insofar as He cares for us and every detail of our lives. But in another sense, and this was the point I was trying to make, these are not the most important issues in God’s book. The most important issues for God are moral purity, theological fidelity, compassion, joy, our witness, faithfulness, hospitality, love, worship, and faith. These are His big concerns. The problem is that we tend to focus most of our attention on everything else. We obsess over the things God has not mentioned and may never mention, while, by contrast, we spend little time on all the things God has already revealed to us in the Bible.²

? How can having too heavy of a focus on non-moral decisions be dangerous?

2) Sneaky God

In the conventional view of God’s will, however, we get the impression that He not only hides His will from us, but He then expects us to find it. So we obsess over God’s will of direction, eventually getting frustrated with God for not showing us what He wants.

We end up disappointed with ourselves or angry with God because we can’t seem to figure out how to find God’s will for our lives.³

? What advice would you give Frank?

² DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will or How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleeces, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* Moody Publishers. Page 42.

³ Ibid., Page 44.

Ephesians 3:17b-18 (NIV)

^{17b} And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

? How would this passage help comfort someone like Frank?

? How can viewing God as sneaky with a secret agenda be dangerous?

3) Causes An Unhealthy Preoccupation With The Future

James 4:13-15 (NIV)

¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

? How do these verses instruct us to view the future?

? Given the passage above, what advice would you give Owen?

? How can a preoccupation with the future be a dangerous pitfall?

4) Undermines Personal Responsibility

...if we say "God told me to do this" or "God's leading me here," this puts our decisions out of reach from criticisms or concerns. We should choose some different terminology. "I prayed about it, and this seems best" or "It seems like the Lord is leading" would be a more helpful way of communicating our dependence on God. We don't want "God told me so" or "God laid it on my heart" or "It's

God's will" or worse yet, "God told me that He wants you to do such and such" to be conversation stoppers that remove accountability in decision making.⁴

Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV)

¹²Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

? How can we acknowledge God's sovereignty and yet still take personal responsibility for our decision-making?

? Why is this unhelpful pitfall so tempting?

? What advice would you give Matt?

5) Generates Worry

Matthew 6:25-28, 33-34 (NIV)

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ... ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

⁴ DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will or How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleeces, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* Moody Publishers. Page 47.

? What does this passage teach us about worry?

? How does worry reflect on our trust of God?

? Based on the passage above, what advice would you give Walter?

? How can we combat the temptation to become anxious?

For Discussion and Accountability

? Which of the above pitfalls do you often fall prey to? Do you often:

- Focus solely on non-moral decisions instead of Christ-likeness?
- View God as hiding things from you?
- Find yourself consumed with the future and what it might bring?
- Neglect your own personal responsibility?
- Struggle with fear and worry by your lack of trust in God?

? How can our small group come alongside you in addressing your personal pitfalls?

Discerning God's Will

Week 4: Potentially Misleading Methods

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
What Is "God's Will"?	What Is Our Motivation?	Typical Mindsets	Potentially Misleading Methods	Wisdom	Decision-Making

5 Common Pitfalls Of Unhealthy Mindsets When Seeking God's Will:

1. Focuses on Non-moral Decisions
2. Sneaky God
3. Causes An Unhealthy Preoccupation with the Future
4. Undermines Personal Responsibility
5. Generates Worry

Pretend You're A Mentor

Scenarios

1. Carrie is trying to make a decision on what college to attend. She's been really wrestling with the decision. She's debating going to the U of MN in the Twin Cities or going to Madison. One night, she had a dream about all the lost students in Wisconsin and their need for the Gospel. She says that this was a clear sign from God, and decided to go to Madison.



Would you hold her up as an example to follow? Why or why not?

2. Owen has been worried about his job situation for quite some time. He hates his job, and it's starting to affect him negatively. While in the midst of his turmoil, a job offer came his way from the conglomerate giant in his small town. However, they have a pretty poor reputation. But, Owen can't shake the timing of the opportunity, and really sees this as a door God is opening before him. He decides to take the new job.



Would you hold him up as an example to follow? Why or why not?

3. Frank is wrestling if he should ask out Megan or not. There are so many factors in the air, that it seems almost impossible to get a clear answer. In desperation, while at a series of stoplights, and offers up a prayer and says, "God, if you want me to ask her out, make all of the stoplights go green in the next 5 seconds." Low and behold, four seconds later, all of the lights go green and Frank decides that he is going to ask Megan out.

? Would you hold him up as an example to follow? Why or why not?

4. Matt is torn about marrying Gretchen. He just can't shake this feeling that they are supposed to be together and God wants him in this relationship. Gretchen isn't a Christian, and so a lot of Matt's friends have concerns about their relationship. Matt's mentor has even expressed concern. Again, he just can't shake the feeling though. After a long season of praying about it, Matt senses a lot of peace about the decision, and decides to marry Gretchen.

? Would you hold him up as an example to follow? Why or why not?

The Conventional Methods...

1) Supernatural Intervention

Acts 9:10-16 (NIV)

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying." ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." ¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

When we read the Bible, we know we are hearing from God. We are not only reading what God has inspired by the Spirit, but what He continues to say by the same Spirit. By contrast, hearing from God outside the Bible in these last days is always more tenuous, less clear, and less authoritative. We have no promise in Scripture that God will speak to us apart from the Spirit speaking through His Word... If you think you've heard from God, I'm not ready to lock you up in a psych ward, nor am I ready to bless whatever you "heard" because you think God said it.

Hearing from God directly can be important and legitimate, but I certainly wouldn't treat a special impression from the Lord as more special than the sure word of the Lord found in the Bible.⁵

⁵ DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will or How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleeces, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* Moody Publishers. Page 66-67.

? Have you ever had God intervene miraculously to show you His will? If yes, how so?

? Why do we need to be careful in interpreting circumstances that may seem miraculous?

? On occasion, God intervenes in the lives of His people in miraculous ways to offer direction. How do we balance this reality with an understanding that miraculous intervention is just that—miraculous?

? What advice would you give Carrie as she wrestles with what her dream could mean?

2) Circumstances: Open And Closed Doors

Jonah 1:1-3 (NIV)

¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: ²“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” ³But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

? Why did Jonah go to Tarshish rather than Nineveh?

? How could an available ship to Tarshish been viewed by Jonah as an “open door”?

? How have you used the open/closed door method when attempting to discern God’s will in the past?

? Why is it so tempting to use this method as a significant part of decision-making? When can this method be useful and when can it lead us astray?

? In a lot of cases, Christians are tempted to view difficulties, trials, and discomfort as “closed doors.” What does God have to say about suffering in His Word? How could viewing all discomfort as a stop sign hinder our obedience to God’s will?

? What advice would you give Owen as he wrestles with what his “open door” could mean?

3) Divine Chance

Judges 6:12-17, 36-40 (NIV)

¹² When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.” ¹³ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.” ¹⁴ The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

¹⁵ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” ¹⁶ The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.” ¹⁷ Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. ...

³⁶ Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— ³⁷ look, I will place a wool

Israel During the Time of Judges

The book of Judges reflects a time of turmoil for the people of Israel. “For several centuries...the Lord periodically provided leaders to come to the aid of Israel just when they seemed to be on the brink of extinction. These leaders were called ‘deliverers,’ or ‘ones bringing justice’--the ‘judges’ for whom the book is named.”* These judges, like Gideon, would not have had the guidance of Scripture like we do today, though their understanding of who God is would have been shaped by their history as a people and the “oral tradition” passed down of how God had intervened in their lives.

**A Survey of the Old Testament*, Andrew Hill & John Walton, 192

fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.”³⁸ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.”⁴⁰ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

? Why do you think Gideon sought God’s will in this way?

? How is Gideon’s situation different from ours today?

? Why is it dangerous to expect God to do “tricks” or miracles to confirm our direction in decision-making?

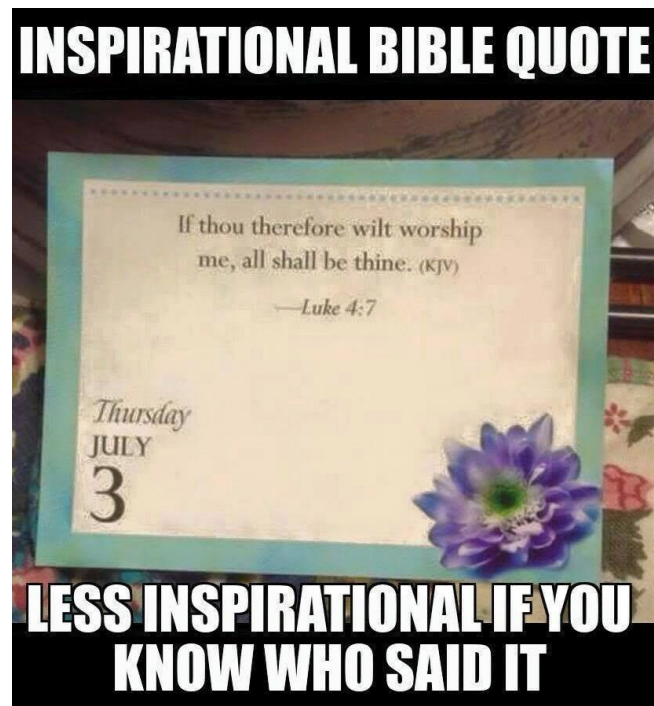
? What advice would you give Frank when he tells you his plan for making this decision?

4) Impressions

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

? How do Christians typically use feelings as signs to validate decision-making?



? The verses above mention the peace of God. What are some truths about God that offer us peace?
How is that different from the peace that is found in circumstantial comfort?

Here's my profound wisdom on the matter: Impressions are impressions. They are not in a special category. Don't confuse impressions, hunches, and subjective feelings with certain words from the Lord. If a thought or impulse pops into your head, even if it happens while reading Scripture, don't assume it is a voice from heaven. We all get intuitions and hunches and gut feelings all the time. Some are from the Lord. Some aren't.⁶

? What advice would you give to Matt as explains his rationale for marrying Gretchen?

For Discussion and Accountability

? Which of the decision-making methods we discussed do you find yourself typically using?

? How do your decision-making methods line up with biblical principles?

⁶ DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will or How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleecees, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* Moody Publishers. Page 82.

Discerning God's Will

Week 5: Wisdom

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
What Is "God's Will"?	What Is Our Motivation?	Typical Mindsets	Potentially Misleading Methods	Wisdom	Decision-Making

Three Subdivisions of God's Will:

1. God's Will: Eternal Plan
2. God's Will: Gospel-Living
3. God's Will: Direction

? Can anyone summarize the meaning of each of these three categories?

Where Does Wisdom Come From?

Proverbs 1:1-7 (NIV)

- ¹ The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
- ² for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;
- ³ for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
- ⁴ for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
- ⁵ let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance—
- ⁶ for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.
- ⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 2:1-6 (NIV)

- ¹ My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
- ² turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
- ³ indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,

⁴ and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

? How is wisdom referred to in these passages?

? Why is the “fear of the Lord” referenced as a basis for understanding and wisdom?

? What other sources for wisdom and knowledge do you see people seeking out?

What Is Wisdom?

Ephesians 5:15-20

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

? What do we learn about wisdom from this passage?

? How is wisdom closely linked to God’s eternal plan and Gospel-living in the passages we’ve read today?

The fool, the opposite of the wise person, is not a moron or an oaf. The fool is the person who does not live life God's way. Wisdom is knowing God and doing as He commands. Foolishness, on the other hand, is turning from God and listening only to yourself. So when we talk about wisdom, we are talking about more than witty aphorisms and homespun advice. We are talking about a profoundly God-centered approach to life. Biblical wisdom means living a disciplined and prudent life in the fear of the Lord.⁷

Definition of Wisdom:

Living in such a way with godly, sound judgment in light of internal and external factors.

Why Do You Need Wisdom?

1) Direction Matters

- The Path Principle = Your Direction, Not Your Intention, Determines Your Destination
- Every bad moral decision usually comes from a series of unwise decisions.
- Every good moral decision usually comes from a series of wise decisions.

2) Motives Are Confusing

- When Motives Aren't Completely Pure

3) It's More Than A Matter of Morality

- When Decisions Go Beyond Moral, e.g. Do I get a drink with this person? What are my physical boundaries in dating? Should I eat that next piece of pie?

4) You're Commanded To Be Wise



Which of these four reasons landed with you the most? Why?



What other reasons do you have for pursuing wisdom in your own life?



In what ways can Gospel friends help us in our decision-making process?

⁷ DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will or How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleeces, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* Moody Publishers. Page 87.

For Discussion and Accountability

? What do you need to pursue to gain wisdom in your own life?

? How are you seeking and applying wisdom in your life? Where do you need to?

Discerning God's Will

Week 6: Decision Making—Wisdom Applied

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
What Is "God's Will"?	What Is Our Motivation?	Typical Mindsets	Potentially Misleading Methods	Wisdom	Decision-Making

Proverbs 2: 1-10 (NIV)

¹ My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
² turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
³ indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
⁴ and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
⁷ He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
⁸ for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.
⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just
and fair—every good path.
¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

? The word "if" is used several times in this passage, implying a cause and effect relationship. What are the "ifs," and what do they lead to?

? What tools for decision-making do we see listed in the passage?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

1. God's Word—Store Up God's Commands

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NIV)

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

? What does this passage say about God's Word?

? How has Scripture equipped you for "every good work"? Are there any passages that have "equipped" you? Which ones?

Psalms 1:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

? What is being contrasted in this passage? What does this reveal about God's Word?

God doesn't want us to merely give external obedience to His commands. He wants us to know Him so intimately that His thoughts become our thoughts, His ways our ways, His affections our affections. God wants us to drink so deeply of the Scripture that our heads and hearts are transformed so that we love what He loves and hate what He hates.⁸

⁸ DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will or How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleeces, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* Moody Publishers. Page 90.

2. Holy Spirit—Turn Your Ear To Wisdom

John 14:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ “All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Galatians 5:13-17 (NIV)

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.



How does the Holy Spirit equip us to make Gospel-centered decisions?



The Galatians passage highlights the tension between flesh and spirit. How do you see this tension playing out in your own decision-making?



How are you walking in the Spirit? How are you rooting out sin, living by faith, and surrendering your life to God?

3. God’s People—Call Out For Insight

Proverbs 12:15 (NIV)

The way of fools seems right to them,
but the wise listen to advice.

1 Kings 12:1-19 (NIV)

¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. ² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. ³ So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and

said to him: ⁴ “Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.”

⁵ Rehoboam answered, “Go away for three days and then come back to me.” So the people went away.

⁶ Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. “How would you advise me to answer these people?” he asked.

⁷ They replied, “If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.”

⁸ But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. ⁹ He asked them, “What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, ‘Lighten the yoke your father put on us’?”

¹⁰ The young men who had grown up with him replied, “These people have said to you, ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter.’ Now tell them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. ¹¹ My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”

¹² Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, “Come back to me in three days.” ¹³ The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, ¹⁴ he followed the advice of the young men and said, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.” ¹⁵ So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

¹⁶ When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king:

“What share do we have in David,
what part in Jesse’s son?

To your tents, Israel!

Look after your own house, David!”

So the Israelites went home. ¹⁷ But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.

¹⁸ King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

? When do we need sound advice from other Christians the most? (e.g. When we don’t have the knowledge/experience needed.)

? Do you have Gospel friends in your life who will give you (sometimes hard) feedback? Who are you going to for advice? How can our small group play a part in doing this for one another?

Two Questions

Matthew 6:19-21, 25-27, 33-34 (NIV)

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . .

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? . . . ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

? Where is Jesus telling His disciples to put their focus?

? Where is Jesus specifically telling His disciples to NOT put their focus?

? What decisions are you facing in your life right now?
How can these two questions help you in this process?

**Best Questions to Always Ask
Together When Making A Decision:**

- Is it moral?
- Is it wise?

For Discussion and Accountability

? Thinking back on the six parts of this series, what is one thing you need to change about your decision-making process? Who can encourage you to make those changes?