**DECISION MAKING AND**

**THE WILL OF GOD**

Review

 So far in our series on “The Bible for Daily Living” we have considered that:

1. The bible is authoritative – it should be the authority for how we live our lives.

2. The bible is sufficient- it doesn’t talk about everything it could (exhaustive) but it does give us the truth, promises, and principles we need to live to please God (comprehensive).

 Last week we talked about four steps to help us in studying the bible:

1. observation- asking questions of the text

2. interpretation-What is the writer saying?
3. Application- How does this passage apply to my life?

4. Implementation- What am I going to do with this truth?

Introduction

 We want to talk about determining God’s will for our lives. How do we know what choices

should make? Does God care what we do and if so how can we know what He wants?

I. General comments about God’s will

 A**. God’s will is good**

 Rom. 12:2

‘Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is- His good, pleasing, and perfect will.”

 1. Sometimes we think it is God’s will to have us do what we least want to do.

 2. God’s will is to rescue us, not put us back in misery. Gal. 1:3-4

 Galatians 1:3-4

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, **4**who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,”

 B. **God’s will is knowable.**

 1. Sometimes we feel like we have to go on a treasure hunt to find it.

 2. There are many places in the bible that say, “This is God’s will that you be:”

 a. saved

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not willing that any should perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

 b. sanctified

1 Thess. 4:3 “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;”

 c. spirit-filled

 Eph. 5:17-18 “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,”

 d. submit to authority

1 Peter 2:13-15 “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, **14**or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. **15**For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.”

 e. suffer for well doing

1 Peter 3:17 “For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”

 C. **God’s will is never contrary to the Word of God.**

II. Understanding the Will of God

A. **Sovereign/ secret Will (Daniel 4:34-35)**

 Isa. 46:9-11

“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.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.’ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill

my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.”

1. This is God’s pre-ordained will that is unknown to us, but will happen.

2. Defn: God’s secret plan that determines everything that happens in the Universe Eph. 1:11

3. It is secret so man can only learn it after it happens. It cannot be learned in advance.

 Deut. 29:29 “the secret things belong to the Lord.”

4. God’s sovereign will ultimately leads to God’s greatest glory.

God can take even the sinfulness of man and use it for His glory (Christ on the cross) Rom. 8:28

 a. However, since it ultimately determines whether our plans are accomplished, its reality should give us humble attitudes in decision making.

 b. there are many things we don’t understand but we know who is in control of all things.

 c. so how do you respond to things that happen in your life that are out of your control?

 Good- be thankful Bad- accept with humility and a heart to learn.

 5. Since we cannot know God’s sovereign will it does not help us in making daily choices.

B. **Moral/ Revealed Will (Deut. 30:10-14)**

1) This is God’s moral will that is revealed to us in the Scriptures.

2) It includes God’s commands and godly principles. An example of the moral will of God is the Ten commandments. “Thou shalt not steal.”

3) The moral will of God can be “missed” through ignorance or disobedience. We need to learn it for guidance. Ps 119:105.

4) it includes behaviors and attitudes that conform to God’s character.

5) While the sovereign will of God includes everything that happens, the moral will of God expresses what should happen.

6) In the life of Joseph, God’s moral will was broken, but God’s sovereign plan was accomplished (Gen. 50:20).

7) Since we don’t know the sovereign will of God, the moral will of God is what we should focus on

 Deut. 29:29

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”

8) There may be some decisions we make that are non-moral issues, but our attitude in making these decisions may have moral ramifications. 1 Cor. 10:31, Phil. 2:5, Rom. 14:23

 I Cor. 10:13 “So whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

C. **Individual Will (Center of God’s will)**

1) This view teaches that God has a unique, individual plan for my life, which includes every specific detail.

2) This describes God’s sovereign plan, but the Bible says it’s secret.

3) The problem with the idea of individual will is that if God cares about every detail of my life, and I need to obey it or I’ll be out of God’s will, then how do I determine it?

 What do I do with equal options, there can be none, for only one could be God’s perfect will.

4) I want to suggest to you that the bible does not teach an individual, perfect will that we need to try find and therefore live out.

 (So how should we go about making decisions that glorify God?)

III. Biblical Decision Making Process Always Begins with Scriptures

 (These are different levels of decision making that we need to work through in this order)

 A. **Prohibitions in Scripture**

1) Does the Bible prohibit me from doing it?

2) If the Bible says not to do this, then we know God’s will and don’t need to go any further.

3) For example, should I marry Handsome Harry, the unbeliever?

The Bible tells me not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.(2 Cor. 6:14-15). Therefore, I know he is not the one. (If the Bible does not prohibit it, then I need to go to the next level.)

B. **Positive Commands/ principles in Scripture**

1) What positive commands and principles of Scripture might help me to make a wise choice?

2) For example, Handsome Harry is a Christian. What questions could be asked, based on principles of Scripture, that could help me make a wise decision?

(a) Is he a spiritual leader?

(b) Does he have godly character?

(c) Is he apt to serve others or is he selfish?

(d) Does he communicate in a godly way?

(e) How does he handle money?

(f) Is he sexually pure? Does he take this area seriously?

(g) Is he involved in church?

(h) Does he honor his parents?

(i) Does he know how to resolve conflict?

C. **The Way of Wisdom/ Personal Choice** Eph 5:15-17

 1) In those areas where the Bible gives no command or principle (non-moral decisions), the believer is free and responsible to choose his own course of action. Ps 37:4

 2) Think of it like this. You are going down the discipleship highway moving along. On one side of the highway are the guardrails called the prohibitions of scripture, “Thou shalt not.”

 On the other side of the highway are the guardrails called the positive commands and principles of scripture. They are there to protect you on your journey. As long as you are between these two guardrails you have the freedom to make decisions based on wisdom.

 2) In such decisions the objective of the Christian is to make wise decisions on the basis of spiritual expediency.

 3) What is the wisest choice that will bring glory to God?

 Phil. 1:9-10

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10**so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,”

 3) This means making a decision that will bring the most glory to God and His Kingdom.

 4) For example, say I believe God wants me to be a career missionary.

 (a) The question of which school to attend is a non-moral issue. But, if I choose a school where I’ll have a large school debt, that will hinder me from going to the field.

 (b) If I’m in high school, I might decide to take guitar lessons instead of play sports, because I think that will help me more in missions.

 (c) I probably wouldn’t get into a serious relationship with someone who wasn’t interested in missions.

5) IF you want to make a wise choice, you need God’s help, which means that you need to be walking with God daily. (Gal. 5:13, 16) and praying for God’s wisdom (James 1:5)

 1 John 2:6 “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus walked.”

6) God is not obligated to give us guidance unless we are willing to do what He says. (John 7:17). When it comes to God’s guidance, why would we expect God to reveal more to us if we aren’t willing to obey what He has already revealed to us?

 John 14:21

 “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.””

 7) it scares me when people are making significant life decisions, like who they are going to marry, when they are not walking closely with God.

 Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:1-2 talk about our daily surrender as “living sacrifices” and our need to be transformed in our minds so then we will be able approve what God’s will is.

 8) To deprive ourselves from God’s Word and our close walk with God, is to deprive ourselves from the guidance we need for making life decisions.

IV. How to Make Wise Decisions at level three- “The Way of Wisdom”

A. Study the Word to see what it says in that specific area or related areas.

B. Do outside research: the more information you have, the easier it is to make a wise decision. This might include making a pro/con list.

C. Seek wise counsel. Prov. 12:15

 Prov. 15:22

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”

 D. Ask yourself some spiritually expedient questions:

(1) Am I putting God’s desires ahead of my own?

(2) Will it help me love God and others more?

(3) Will it help me fulfill the Great Commission?

(4) Will it help me lead a holy life?

(5) Will it help me further my Christian training?

V. What is the Place of Feelings, Impressions, Circumstances, Counsel, Desires, and Prayer in the Decision Making Process?

A. Feelings, Impressions, Circumstances, Counsel, Desires, and Prayer

1) Two major problems with feelings, impressions, circumstances, counsel, desires, and prayer.

(a) They are often **given authority** in the decision-making process

None of these are unimportant in our choices, nor are they wrong in themselves, but they should never be given authority in our minds, especially not at the level of scripture.

All of these elements, being subjective, must be submitted to the objective truth of Scripture, and to the wisdom that comes from the Word.

(b) They **expect special revelation** through the means of feelings, impressions, circumstances, etc.

2) Feelings

(a) Examples: uneasiness, happiness, contentment, exhilaration, butterflies

(b) Proverbs 28:26, “He who trusts in himself is a fool.”

(c) “Peace”

(d) Two observations:

Feelings can be influenced by many things

Feelings can act as an inhibitor or responder

3) Impressions, Promptings, Burdens

(a) Ideas “popping” in your mind

(b) God’s still small voice (1 Kings 19:12)

(c) Must always evaluate whether or not what you are thinking or longing for is consistent with Scripture and wisdom.

 4) Circumstances

(a) Circumstances are not “road signs” of God’s will

(b) Open and closed doors

(1) So what kind of circumstances do you think we would expect if this was God’s will?

For example, Paul received the call by God to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10)

(2) Acts 16:19: Riot in Ephesus

 Acts 16:22-23: try to kill Paul, beating him, put in prison

(3) Just because a circumstance seems good or bad, doesn’t necessarily mean it isn’t God’s will

5) Counsel

(a) Two extremes of counsel

(1) Seeking too little advice

 (Proverbs 12:15; 13:10; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 27:9)

(2) Expecting too much from counsel. (Remember, God only speaks to us through counsel when someone give us the Word in context.)

(b) All counsel must be evaluated by Scripture - don’t’ forget there are both wise and foolish friends. Your friends can be a detriment to you! (As well, of course, as a great blessing!)

6) Desires

(a) Two extremes of desires

(1) Whenever someone believes desires are unimportant or even detrimental

(2) Whenever one gives desires too much authority

(b) All desires must be evaluated by Scripture, as to their validity or wisdom

(c) The heart must be considered in relationship to how much it longs for a particular desire

7) Prayer

(a) Utmost important, but often either misunderstood or misapplied

(b) We are never commanded to listen to God in prayer

(c) Prayer is a helpful time when you are thinking about Scripture and responding to it in appropriate prayer to God

(d) As Paul, you pray your heart concerns. Make sure the focus is on the inner man, as much as anything else.

B. Feelings, Impressions, Circumstances, Counsel, Desires, and Prayer are all factors to be considered when trying to make wise, Godly decisions.

1) We need to be careful we don’t elevate them on the same level as God’s Word or His principles.

2) They can come into place at Step 3 in the process when we are seeking to make a personal choice.

CONCLUSION

If we are not living our lives daily according to God’s revealed will, we will have a difficult time making Godly decisions based on wisdom.

 Let’s review the three steps to follow in determining God’s will

1. Prohibitions in scripture- Does the bible prohibit it? “Thou shalt not.”

2. Positive Commands and principles of scripture- What principles of scripture apply to my decision?

3. The way of wisdom- in non-moral decisions (no biblical commands/principles are given) I am free to make a wise choice.

SMALL GROUP

1) What is your attitude towards God’s Word? Do you see it as the ultimate authority for how you should live your life and make decisions? Why or why not?

2) Why is it so important that you are daily walking with God when you are trying to discern His will?

3) In your decision making, what is the predominant way that you decide what to do?

4) What is the problem of elevating feelings, circumstance, and desires when making decisions?

5) What principles from this lesson do you need to being to apply so that you are seeking to live according to God’s will?