

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 7/18/93 PM
I John 2:17 "A Model for Decision-Making"

Overview of Series:

"The Will of God and the Word of God" Ephesians 5:17

"How to Find the Will of God" Romans 12:1-2

"Why Plan If God Has A Will?" Romans 15:32

"A Model for Decision-Making" I John 2:17

"The Work of the Spirit and the Will of God" Romans 8:27

"The Place of Prayer in the Will of God" Colossians 4:12

Skit: "The First Supper" (taken from Decision Making and the Will of God, 165-6)

Intro: Decisions. Decisions. Life is full of decisions. Ranging from what clothes to wear in the morning, to what to have for supper, to who to marry and what occupation to pursue. Decisions.

Q: What ought to be the number #1 factor for the Christian in decision-making?

A: Turn to I John 2:17. We're not going to do an expositional study tonight. But I want you to see, as we begin, what ought to be our passion in life.

I Jn 2:17 "...he that does the will of God abides forever."

Think of the implications of that statement. The person who does God's will shall live forever. Wouldn't you agree there is great value in doing the will of God?

Jesus knew the value of knowing and doing the will of His Father.
Jn 4:34 "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

Jesus did God's Will. God's priority for us is that we do His Will.
Heb 13:20-21 "Now the God of peace...make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ"

No doubt, the will of God is important. That's why we're devoting some 6 weeks to a series entitled, "Decision-Making and the Will of God." Tonight is week 4.

Review: "Decision-Making and the Will of God"

Week #1:

God's Will will never contradict God's Word.

Week #2: Romans 12:1-2 To understand the Will of God, I must...

Principle #1: I must be in the place of Total Surrender to God.

Principle #2: I must be aware of the Conflict of Values.

Principle #3: I must emphasize the importance of my Mind, and not my Feelings.

Principle #4: I must evaluate the alternatives with these questions...

Week #3: Principles about Decision-Making from Paul's Experience in Romans 15:

1. It's OK for me to PLAN. God often utilizes our plans to accomplish His Will.
2. I must make sure my plans reflect God's Revealed Will.
3. I must submit my plans to God's purposes and timing.
4. I must not be intimidated by Roadblocks.
5. Prayer is a vital part of the Decision-making process.
6. I must seek ways to invest my life in God's service.

Perhaps you're thinking, "Ok, I can see the value of doing the will of God. And, I want to do the will of God with my life. But how do I do it? How can I know what God's will is in the decisions I make?"

How can I know whether God wants me to pursue a new job opportunity?
Marry this person? Buy this house?

Tonight, we want to be very practical. I want to present you with a "Model for Decision-Making." It's not THE model. But I think you'll find it helpful.

Resources:

- James Grier, article in RBP quarterly, 1991 [A Life of Integrity: Right Choices](#)
- Gary Friesen, [Decision Making and the Will of God](#)
- Haddon Robinson, [Decision Making By the Book](#)

Outline:

- I. Assumptions in Decision-Making:
 - #1 God's Word is sufficient.
 - #2 God is NOT now revealing Himself in Special Revelation.
See: Heb 1:1-2; 2:1-4; II Tim 3:16-17; II Pt 1:3
 - #3 God's Will is always consistent with God's Word.
 - #4 My Choices reveal my Values.
- II. The Question to ask in Decision-Making (H. Robinson)
The Wrong Question: How can I know God's Will?
The Right Question: How can I make a Good Decision?
- III. Steps to follow in making a Good Decision (J. Grier)
 - #1 Define the Problem.
 - #2 Gather all the information needed to make a good decision.
 - #3 Build Alternatives.
 - #4 Predict the Consequences of each alternative.
 - #5 Evaluate and make the decision.

I. Assumptions in Decision-Making:

Before we go any further, let's establish some ground rules. Before I even present the model, there are some assumptions I need to state.

#1. God's Word is sufficient.

The Scriptures give us everything we need for faith and living.

#2. God is NOT now revealing Himself in Special Revelation.

When God gave the church the final book of the NT, special revelation ceased. When we talk about God revealing His will, we cannot expect Him to reveal His will to us in a direct and immediate way. We are dependent upon Scripture.

Quote (Smith, 9): Someone has said, "God's will is not a voice, but a verse."

See: Heb 1:1-2; 2:1-4; II Tim 3:16-17; II Pt 1:3

You say, "Well God guided Gideon by using the fleece. Wasn't that special revelation?" Yes. But special revelation was open when Gideon put out the fleece.

You can get yourself into a lot of trouble if you try to make decisions the way Gideon did!

Illust:

#3. God's Will is always consistent with God's Word.

Listen. The Spirit of God will never lead us to do something that violates what God has already revealed in His Word.

If a person says, "I'm going to divorce my wife. I just don't love her anymore. I love somebody else. God made it clear to me it's His will to marry the other person." There's a problem.

Quote: J. I. Packer says this in his booklet, "Finding God's Will," "The Spirit leads within the limits that the Word sets, not beyond them. 'He leadeth me IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS'--but not anywhere else." (17)

#4. My Choices reveal my Values.

What is it that causes a Christian to buy a \$15,000 new car, but not give his tithes and offerings to the Lord?

What prompts a person to take a job that pays \$45,000, but involves weekend work so that he cannot participate in weekly worship?

What motivates some parents to give their kids everything in the world, like musical lessons and fashion clothes and the latest toys, yet neglect the spiritual development of their children?

The answer to all of these questions. Values. The choices we make reveal our values.

Q: What value should direct every decision I make, if I am a Christian?
Mt 6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

I am to operate by Kingdom Values. It's always God's will for me, in every decision I make, to choose that option which will please God.

II. The Question to ask in Decision-Making (H. Robinson)

Haddon Robinson tells the following true story (121). Several years ago, when he was the president of Denver Seminary, the seminary faced a major decision...

Illust: see p. 121-2

The Wrong Question: How can I know God's Will?

The Right Question: How can I make a Good Decision?

Why is the first question, the wrong question? When I ask the question, "How can I know God's will?" I am passive. But the question "How can I make a good decision?" makes me active.

Listen. God has given us a lot of freedom. As long as we remember the assumptions (that His will will never contradict His Word), I have a lot of God-given freedom in making decisions.

Let me illustrate. When you got dressed to come to church, did you ask God what He wanted you wear? Did you pray, "Lord, please show me Your will on what I should wear today?" I doubt it. What did you do? Hopefully you used the mind God has given you to make a wise decision about what to wear (I don't see any wool hats or winter coats tonight, since it's 85 degrees).

The point is, God has given us a lot of freedom in making decisions.

You say, "Well that's a small decision. What about big decisions?"

Q: How can I make a good decision?

A: I need to apply the values and principles of God's Word to the alternatives I face. How do I do that?

III. Steps to follow in making a Good Decision (J. Grier)

I first heard Dr. Grier present this model 14 years ago when I was a student at Cedarville College. I ran across it again in the RBP booklet, "A Life of Integrity: Right Choices" (pp. 27-8).

#1 Define the Problem.

This is critical. The first step in making a good decision is having a firm handle on the problem that demands a decision.

Often, because we're unwilling to face up to the real problem, we make a poor decision. For example, if my child comes home from school with an "F" on a test, and my response is, "Well that lousy teacher! We need to get a decent teacher in that school!" I may have missed the real problem.

Maybe the problem is not the teacher. Maybe the problem is my child. Maybe the problem is that my child isn't following instructions, or that my child has a behavioral problem. Or perhaps the real problem and reason my child got an "F" is because he has an undetected hearing impairment, and hasn't been able to hear the teacher's instructions.

So before I decide to go to the school board to get the teacher fired, I'd better do what? Define the problem!

#2 Gather all the information needed to make a good decision.

Proverbs has much to say about this.

Illust: Printout of verses from Proverbs (Robinson, 124)

Gathering information may take time, but it's worth the effort. In fact, a sure way to increase your chances of making a bad decision, is to rush it. If you're making a major decision, don't try to make it in a short period of time.

For instance, suppose you're considering a job change. If you want to make a wise decision, it's going to take time to gather all the information needed.

Discuss: What kind of information should you gather?

--Information about the new company

--Will the job change involve a move? If so...

--the cost of living in the new area, availability of housing, schools

--Is there a good church?

Illust:

#3 Build Alternatives.

It's probably wise to have a pen and plenty of paper in this process. Especially at step 3. To make a good decision, I need to build as many alternatives as possible, and write them down.

Key: Write down the alternatives you DON'T like as well as the ones you like. But don't write down any alternatives that violate God's commands.

Eg--Suppose I'm wrestling with a decision to buy a house. I've gathered the information. The new house will cost me \$100,000. My present house will be paid for in another 5 years. But we bought it before we had kids. Now we have 3 children. And with only 2 bedrooms it's too small. If we buy the new house, we can swing it financially, but it will really stretch the budget.

Q: What are the alternatives?

A: One we need not write down, and yet Christians do it all the time, is this. To say, "Let's not give our tithes to the Lord until we get the financial situation under control." Why is that not a legitimate alternative? It violates Scripture!

Various alternatives:

--Buy the new house --Stay put

--Remodel current home, adding a couple of bedrooms

--Not buy this time, but keep looking for a larger, more economical home

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#4 Predict the Consequences of each alternative.

Each alternative will lead to a set of consequences. Now I realize it's impossible to predict with 100% accuracy. But that's not the issue. We can predict a lot of consequences. Write down the consequences for each option (i.e. spiritual consequences, financial, family, etc).

Eg--Suppose I buy the \$100,000 house. How will that affect my family life? Will I have to get a second job to swing it? Will my wife have to find employment outside the home? Will the kids have to go to day-care?

#5 Evaluate and make the decision.

Now we come to the crux of the matter. Here's where assumption #4 is vital. My choices reveal my values. I need to identify my values. And write them down.

1. I need to identify my values.

Assignment: (used in pre-marriage counseling) Rank the following in order of priority in your life: Vocation, Family, Self, Leisure, Church, Money, God, Spouse, Education

Be honest.

2. I need to measure my values by Scripture.

Now I need to search the Scriptures to see what order God puts on these areas of my life. I am not free to place whatever value I wish on wealth, church, spouse, kids, etc. God has attributed value to each of these.

3. I need to apply God's values to my alternatives.

Eg--Grier, p. 29