

Decision Making God's Way by Gary T. Meadors, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2003 (89 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Introduction

1. Learning to Discern

The goal of *Decision Making God's Way* is to help you learn to discern life's decisions and gain confidence in the process. Knowing God's will about the issues of life confronting you is primarily a process of clarifying life's questions and challenges from a biblical worldview and values set. [Page 13]

2. Changing the Way We Think

Decision Making God's Way moves from synthesis to analysis. For example, a classic text on the will of God is Romans 12:1-2: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is." This statement raises some foundational issues for our quest to know God's will. The fact that we need a transformed mind indicates that we already have a problem! It also implies that we have a responsibility to think and act. Our "problem of knowing" will be identified along with the solution God has provided. Because the mind needs to be transformed, we must know how we process life's decisions. How do we think about things? How did our worldview and values develop? [Page 14]

3. Being Objective

...process your decisions within an objective framework of values rather than merely "feeling" your way along. [Page 14]

Part 1 Foundations for Knowing God's Will

4. Developing a Biblical Worldview

...God expects us to change the way we think so that we can deal with our world. Romans 12:1-2 calls us to transform our minds so that our thinking reflects God's teaching. We need not only to know the command expectations of the Bible but also to develop a biblical worldview and values set so that we can answer the questions that a single Bible verse does not address [Page 18]

Chapter 1 Knowing God

5. We Have Problems

"Houston, we have a problem." This is the classic statement from Captain James Lovell, commander of Apollo 13, during a live television broadcast on April 14, 1970. Captain Lovell's words set in motion an intense rescue scenario that guided the crew safely back

to earth, landing them in the Pacific Ocean on April 17. It was a harrowing three-day experience that captured the world's attention on television. [Page 19]

6. God Wants Our Heart

After two chapters in Genesis, paradise is over. The rest of the Bible describes the aftermath of Adam's sin. We now see that the fall brought distortion to our ability to know God and even ourselves. The ability to glorify God through our obedience to his revealed truth has been aggravated by our participation in humanity's fall from paradise. But alas, all is not lost. Though the fall brought distortion to our being created in his image, clearly we carry on as image bearers (see Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). While it is now harder for us to obey (Rom. 7), it is not impossible. In fact, God demands our obedience [Page 27]

7. Being Like Jesus

We therefore do the will of God as we come to understand how biblical truth applies to our everyday lives. In fact, our moral development is a biblical theme of hope, for when we see Jesus, we will be like him (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2). Our likeness to Jesus is a moral likeness that is the product of obedience to God's teaching. This is what doing God's will is all about. [Page 27]

8. Divine Intervention

Genesis is a book of beginnings. But by the end of the Old Testament, the prophets moan the failure of the world to respond to God's message. They look off into the future to a consummation of earth history when God will set things in order. These same themes are reworked in the New Testament. The Gospels present new beginning with Christ. John 1 particularly views Christ as the Creator who comes to redeem the world. Yet Christ is crucified by a fallen world that will not respond to God. The apostles pick up the themes and proclaim to their audiences this same understanding of God's will for the world. Yet the world does not hear. Therefore, the Book of Revelation, like the Old Testament prophets, presents divine intervention as the only hope to consummate earth history. [Pages 28-29]

9. A Conscious Act on Our Part

The effects of sin, however, are no less prevalent in the lives of *believers* when they refuse to hear God's teaching. Paul made this clear to the Corinthians in regard to their rejection of revealed truth when he called them immature and carnal in their thinking (1 Cor. 1-3; 14:37-38). Moving from darkened to enlightened thinking requires a conscious, focused transformation of the way we think about our world and ourselves (Rom. 12:1-2). [Page 32]

10. Limited Abilities to Know

In the Old Testament, God's children were given adequate instructions (the law) about living, and they proceeded to order their lives on that basis. Proverbs follows up on this by saying, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law" (29:18). Ecclesiastes reflects on the fact that "no man knows the future," and we should therefore follow ordained stipulations in order to move through life in a way that pleases God (Eccles. 8:7). Paul reflects on the problem of knowing in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Paul views our ability to know as limited until the consummation of the age. [Page 32]

11. Renewing Our Minds

The product of revelation that Paul declares in 1 Corinthians is the Bible. Even though the Bible provides an accurate record of God's mind, we as readers still have the problem of our own mental distortion. The Bible becomes subject to imperfect interpretation, because interpretation is a human task. Consequently, the solution God has provided is only partial. God has not chosen to overcome the mental distortion we all possess. This is why we need the exhortation of Romans 12:1-2, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. [Page 36]

12. God Wants Us to Use His Guidelines

...the Bible is God's sufficient communication to us to know his will, if we will only learn to read and apply its truths appropriately. ...God's revealing acts are special and not normal operating procedure. God's recorded acts of revelation provide for us the data we need to pursue life's decisions. As with Adam, God defines our fences and expects us to tend the garden within his guidelines. [Pages 36-37]

Chapter 2, The Need for a Transformed Mind

13. Learn to Think God's Way

...the mind of God is available within the Bible he has given us (I Cor: 2:16). When Romans 12:1-2 calls for every believer to have a "transformed mind," it exhorts us to learn to think God's way. [Page 43]

14. Use God's Word in Daily Decision Making

The reality of life's struggle that we experience as Christians teaches us that God has not chosen any shortcuts for our moral and personal development. He created us to make choices and thereby glorify God by our thoughts and actions. The Garden of Eden illustrates that Adam and Eve were not moral robots, programmed to do only the will of God. The implication is clear that God wanted them to choose to do right. He wanted them to process decisions and choose the right path. They were responsible for their thoughts and actions. This is all part of being created in the image of God. We are

thinking, choosing, self-determining, feeling, moral beings. God's design is that we seek him and his ways by our own choices. Therefore, in divine wisdom, as he gave Adam instructions in Eden, so he has given us instructions in his Word, the Bible. We glorify God by engaging that Word in our daily decision-making. [Page 44]

15. Use the Lamp and Do the Walk

God provided the Bible to enable us to deal with the dilemma of knowing him and his ways. This provision, however, only provides a light for our path. We have to use the lamp and do the walk. God's solution only provides us with a database. We must learn to apply it to our situations in life, which is why we are commanded, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." We need to learn to think biblically. [Page 45]

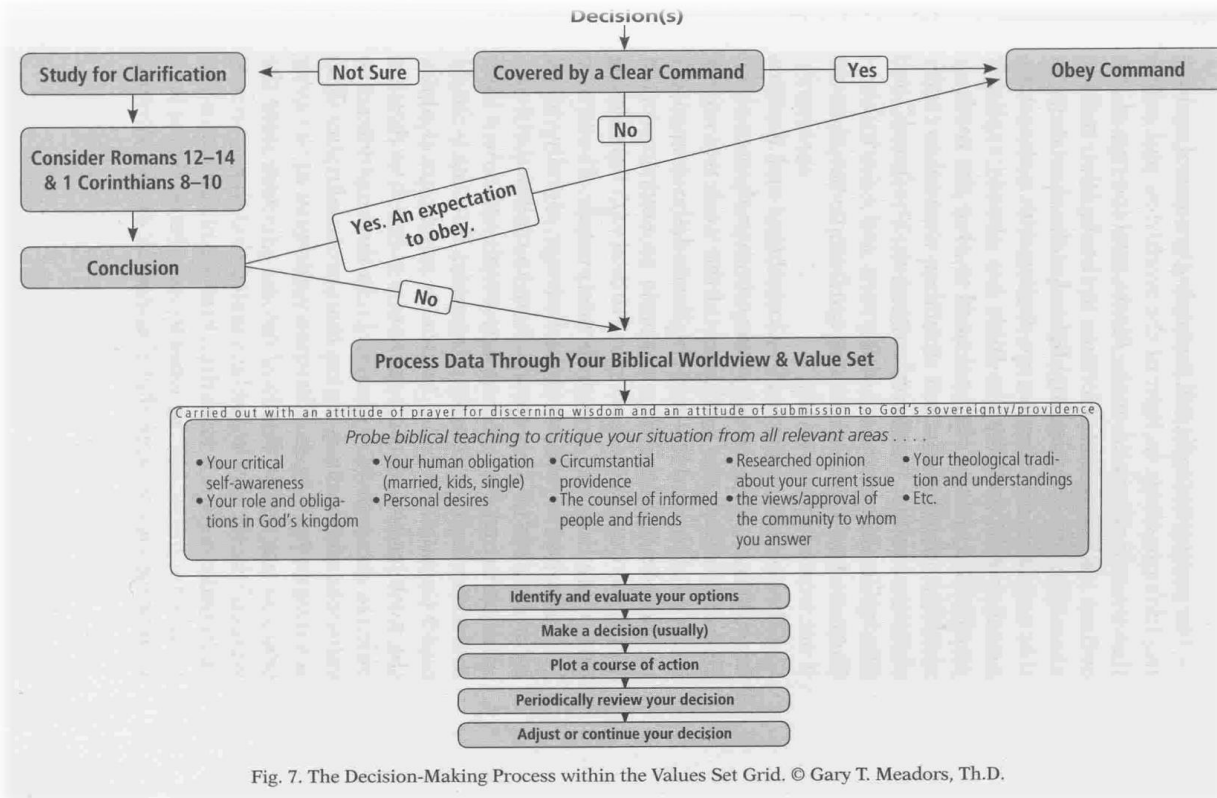
16. Right Belief to Right Behavior

All of Paul's Epistles are organized by the twofold themes of theology and ethics (the application of theology). Paul always moves from right belief to right behavior, recognizing that behavior is the product of our thought patterns. [Page 46]

17. Changing the Way We Think

Romans 12:1-2 provides a hinge for the flow of the book. It states the expected results of the truth of chapters 1-11, "therefore," and leads the reader into an elaboration of ethics in chapters 12-16. The call to Christian commitment of Romans 12:1-2 is based on the believer's obligation to respond to God's grace as represented in the theological story of chapters 1-11. The language Paul used in this exhortation is drawn from Old Testament religious ceremony. In the Old Testament a sacrifice was brought to the altar to die so that the supplicant might have life and access to God. In Romans, we are "living sacrifices," since Christ already died for us. Our part of this process is to change the way we think, based on the analogy that we have died to the old ways and are now to live for the new values that come with salvation. [Page 46]

18. Processing Data Through a Biblical Worldview



No illustration can be comprehensive but this chart provides a framework that you can utilize and expand.

19. We Are Responsible to Deal with Life

We are responsible to deal with life as Christians. God has given us his Word and expects us to use it in our everyday living. This process helps us ask the right questions in relation to the decisions we face. When we learn to use questions to draw appropriate meaning from Scripture, we often find the answers we seek. [Page 69]

20. Discerning God's Will Through a Transformed Mind

The expectation of Romans 12:1-2. We are responsible to discern God's will on the basis of a transformed mind—one that has developed a renewed worldview and values set from biblical teaching. [Page 72]

21. Acquiring a Biblical Worldview

The acquisition of a biblical worldview and values set transforms the way we think and make decisions in the face of life's challenges. [Page 73]

22. One Needs Discernment

We need to come to grips with when the Bible is telling us what to do and when it is merely telling a story about what someone else did. Discerning when and how the Bible applies to us is to determine its “normative” nature. That is, the Bible both prescribes and describes, and you must decide which it is doing in any given passage. [Page 76]

23. Knowing the Differences

An analysis of the will of God in the Old and New Testaments leads us to consider the difference between knowing God's will and seeking godly discernment from that revealed will. [Page 76]

Chapter 4. The Will of God in the Old Testament

24. The Process Has Not Changed

While our lives may seem more complex, believers of all ages practice the same method of decision making-validating life's challenges by means of a biblical worldview and the values system that proceeds from it. The illustrations may vary, but the process is the same. [Pages 77-78]

25. Disregard Those Who Do Not Speak the Word.

“When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.” Isaiah 8:19-20 [Page 83]

26. Settle Down With the Bible for a Good Read

Like Israel of old, modern Christians waste a lot of time seeking sensational solutions to their quest to know God and his will, solutions that sometimes border on pagan divination, rather than settling down with the Good Book for a nice long read. [Page 84]

27. Direct Conduits of God's Will

The early, non-writing prophets were a special provision of God for the guidance of the nation. Persons like Deborah, Gideon, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha were direct conduits of God's will to the people. When these persons spoke on God's behalf, their words were still to be evaluated in terms of God's previously revealed truth (Deut. 13:1-5). Once God's Word was in place, oral speech that claimed to speak for God was critiqued in terms of what was already known. [Page 84]

28. God Can Do All Things

Job's journey was not an easy one. In fact, some might even say, “Wow, would God really allow that to happen to one of his children?” In the end, Job recognized God's sovereignty and stated, “I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained” (42:2 ASV [Page 88])

Chapter 5. The Will of God in the New Testament

29. Grow in One's Understanding of God's Word

The privatized emphasis of our culture is not the mindset of either an Old Testament or a New Testament believer. The believers' struggle over God's will in the biblical record centers on the effort to “do” God's will. They do not model a process of “finding” God's will, because they had already received it. They understood God's will to be equivalent with the truth and behavior patterns he had revealed as his desires for his people. They were more concerned with growing in their understanding of God's revelation and living up to the standards they knew pleased God rather than with gaining additional information about the future. [Page 92]

30. Doing Good and Suffering

Peter wrote to a community that was undergoing severe trials. They faced life-threatening situations and the threat of physical harm. Peter appeals to God's sovereign will as a way to bring divine reason to human suffering (1 Peter 4:19). Peter used Christ as an example of one who did good and yet suffered for it within God's will (1 Peter 3:17). Knowing that doing good was not a ticket to bypass suffering brought some comfort to Peter's audience. The early Christians were able to accept that although God was able to intervene on their behalf, it was all right if he chose not to do so. God's choice was part of his sovereign discretion and not contradictory to his goodness. [Pages 95-96]

31. Love God and Love One's Neighbor

In the Old Testament, God's will was equivalent to his law in the understanding of the Old Testament believer. If we asked Old Testament believers, “Do you know God's will for your life?” they would look at us a bit oddly and say, “But of course!” Then they would tell us that God's will for their life is to love God and love their neighbor as they obey his commands. The New Testament pattern is the same. The phrases and sentences that portray this subject may differ slightly between the testaments due to time and culture, but the ideas are the same.

In the New Testament, God's will is often equivalent with his teaching. Paul reflects the connection with the Old Testament in Romans 2:17-18 where he concludes that God's will and the law are equivalent. Paul set a high value on God's Word, viewing the possession of the revealed Word as the highest privilege of a Jew (Rom. 3:1-2). Other examples of equating God's will with biblical teaching include texts where the statement

“this is God's will” is followed by moral teaching. This is observed in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8: “It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should [fulfill these moral instructions].” First Thessalonians 5:18 concludes a series of exhortations with “This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Peter 2:15, in the midst of a moral exhortation context, states, “For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.” In these kinds of contexts the content of God's will is the teaching in the texts themselves. [Pages 96-97]

32. Tying God's will to God's commands

The Gospels contain a statement that has often troubled the casual reader. Matthew 7:21 states, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only *he who does the will of my Father* who is in heaven” (emphasis added) (cf. Matt. 12:50; Mark 3:35). Some have struggled to explain that this phrase does not contradict Ephesians 2:8-9, where Paul denies works as a means to grace but views them as a product of grace (Eph. 2:10). There is no conflict between Jesus and Paul; they are looking at two sides of a coin. Jesus in the Gospels states that conformity to God's revealed will, namely his moral teachings, is an evidence of true salvation. False professors who speak the name of the Lord but do not show the evidence of salvation in their lives will not fool God and will not enter heaven. Jesus and the Gospel writers portray salvation very much like the Old Testament. They view righteousness as an act of obedience to God's teaching. Paul tends to image salvation from the legal viewpoint, indicating who we are in our standing before God. The Gospel statements about “he who does the will of my Father” tie God's will to God's commands. They are equivalent. [Page 97]

33. Conforming Attitudes to Teachings of God's Word

The fact that God's will constitutes his teaching accounts for the presence of the verb *do* as the dominant verb in “will of God” passages. Contrary to the common stereotype about God's will, the Bible never exhorts a believer to “find” God's will. There is no need to find it because it has never been lost. Perhaps the reason we often feel like we cannot “find” an answer to our questions is because we are demanding that the Bible yield information it was not designed to yield. If we process our questions appropriately, they will answer themselves, because answers flow from a well-understood biblical worldview. We are constantly exhorted to “do” God's will, assuming a pool of knowledge to which the believer can respond. Doing God's will is not a search for unrevealed information in order to make a decision. Rather, we are to conform our attitudes and behavior to what God has already taught in his Word. This is part of the fabric of the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 21: 31; Luke 12:47; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 7:17; 9:31) and of the apostles (Eph. 6:6; Heb. 10:7, 9, 36; 13:21; 1 John 2:17).

A surface reading of “will of God” passages where verbs like *know*, *be filled with*, or *understand* are used have caused some to think that these terms are synonyms for *find*.

Such an understanding, however, is not true to the biblical contexts. These exhortations are not invitations to obtain new revelation but are appeals to engage the information already available. The contexts of these kinds of phrases are usually self-defining and focused on the believer's growth in obedience to God's revealed truth. [Pages 97-98]

34. Believers' Lives to be Characterized by Known Spiritual Truth

Paul's prayer is that the Colossians (1:9-12) be "filled" with the knowledge of God's will. The term *fill* is a metaphor that needs explanation. The literal meaning of fill, "to increase the content of a container," is not to be imported into Paul's statement. Paul's religious language especially makes use of this metaphor. He speaks of being filled with unrighteousness (Rom. 1:29), knowledge (Rom. 15:14), comfort (2 Cor. 7:4), the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), the fruits of righteousness (Phil. 1:11), and joy (2 Tim. 1:4). These contexts are about what characterizes our lives. *Characterize* best explains the metaphorical use of *fill* in Colossians 1:9. Paul desired that these believers' lives be characterized by the spiritual truth that they already knew. Paul made it clear in Colossians 1: 3-8 that the Colossian believers were taught God's truth by Paul's protégé, Epaphras (1:5-7), and that they had exemplified that truth to all the saints (1:4). He now prays for the Colossians to continue and increase in what was already a reality. The application of God's Word fulfills Paul's exhortation to "live a life worthy of the Lord and...please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (1:10). [Pages 99-100]

35. Acquiring, Processing, and Applying God's Word

Abounding in knowledge and insight (Phil. 1:9) is the product of pursuing the transformed mind of Romans 12:1-2. Discerning what decisions to make in life is not a magical process but the consistent acquisition, processing, and application of God's Word (Phil. 1:10) [Page 102]

36. God's Will Is Discovered in Revealed Truth

The New Testament never explains decision-making discernment as some kind of search for new information. God's will is not something we need to find; it is discovered in the application of revealed truth to daily living. This is true for the individual believer and for the church as a corporate community. Decisions we observe in the Book of Acts are derived from the church's discussion and community consensus under the Spirit's conviction. [Page 102]

37. Use the Teachings of God's Word

New Testament texts that directly address the subject of God's will reflect the same patterns as the Old Testament. God has a sovereign and a moral will. His *sovereign will* is reflected in the provision of a redemptive plan and the general supervision of life circumstances. The early Christians did not seek to know the content of God's sovereign actions, they merely submitted to certain circumstances in life as part of God's overall

control. They exercised their responsibility to the best of their ability and then rested in the results as part of God's plan.

God's *moral will* is presented in biblical teaching about attitudes and behavior. Commands and exhortations about living are given, and believers are then responsible to transform their lives into conformity with God's teaching. Alignment with this teaching becomes the criteria to judge one's salvation and spirituality. The New Testament does not present a model of searching for God's will in order to make decisions. Rather, the pattern is to respond to biblical teaching and use that teaching to order our lives.

This, however, is not all there is to discerning God's will for our lives. Many of the decisions with which we struggle do not fall conveniently within the direct statements of Scripture. Decisions about what house, car, or computer to buy and when to spend the money do not require a biblical proof text, although our values will affect these decisions. Neither does the Bible suggest that we appeal to God to reveal his sovereign will or to give us omniscient insight into the future. We must process life issues from a biblical worldview and values system. From biblical teaching we learn to derive sound reasons for decisions that cannot be addressed with a simple proof text. This process is part of God's plan to develop us after his image. [Pages 102-103]

Chapter 6. Is Every Example in the Bible for Me?

38. Use the Whole Bible

Second Timothy 3:16 states, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Such a statement calls for us to determine how to utilize the total Bible, both Old and New Testaments, in our worldview and values development. In order to do this, we need a view of how the Bible as a whole teaches us, as well as an understanding of how we construct our own views on applying its teaching in our situations. [Page 107]

39. Life and Developing Biblical Worldviews Are Not Simple

Biblical teaching is both observed (descriptive material) and obeyed (prescriptive material) on the basis of how a faith community understands the normative nature of any given passage. A normative text is one containing a command or exhortation that transcends time and audience and universally requires the obedience of all God's people. A command such as "do not steal" is timeless. A command not to intermingle two kinds of cloth, however, is considered to be limited in its application, because it addresses certain issues within a limited time and culture. The task of biblical interpretation is to determine what is or is not a normative teaching. It is helpful when both testaments give the same command, but it is not required that the New Testament repeat normative truth of the Old Testament. The laws of incest illustrate this fact in

that the New Testament does not repeat what is evident to all. There is a good deal of unity in the church about what is normative, but various traditions do debate certain details.

The Christian community develops biblical teaching at three levels: direct, implied, and creative constructs. There are passages that speak directly to an issue but have a limited shelf life, such as “Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk” (Exod. 23:19) or “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). There are also passages that all perceive as transcending time and culture. Examples might include terse and direct commands such as “do not lie, “do not steal,” “do not commit adultery,” or perhaps Paul exhorting communities to turn from idols to Jesus. Most readers sense the difference between teaching that has a normative ring to it and statements designed for a limited time period.

There is also a level of *implied* teaching, which can be called upon to represent crucial areas of theology. For instance, no text in the Bible states there is a Trinity, but Christian scholars agree that the concept of Trinity correctly represents the “plain” teaching of the Bible about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we bring modern questions to the Bible, it is often the implied teaching of Scripture to which we appeal. Issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and spousal abuse illustrate the need for this kind of interpretation from the Bible.

The third level of teaching is the development of *creative constructs*. This is the larger-picture type of teaching. Theological leaders within Christian communities look at the whole Bible and argue for a certain macro view of biblical teaching. That is, they create systems of theology that they believe account for the whole Bible. Calvinism, Arminianism, covenantalism, dispensationalism, millennialism, views of counseling, and such are creative theological constructs that various believing communities argue best represent the whole teaching of Scripture. When one decides upon a system, the tendency is to read the details of the Bible from that viewpoint.

Many Christians operate with the assumption that a surface reading of the Bible combined with “what it means to me” provides accurate information to guide our lives. Unfortunately, this simplistic approach demeans Scripture and robs the reader of its treasures. Life is not simple. Developing a biblical worldview and values set is not simple either. Understanding the broad concepts of the nature of the Bible's teaching and how we construct that teaching into a model advances our ability to use Christian discernment. [Pages 109-110]

40. Jesus Fulfilled God's will by Submitting to the Sovereign Plan

Psalm 40, quoted in Hebrews 10:57 and applied to the earthly life of Christ, summarizes Christ's example of doing God's will:

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.

Then I said, `Here I am-it is written about me in the scroll-I have come to do your will, O God.”

The reference to God's will here is a classic example that God's plan is God's will. Jesus was unique, of course, but he became a man under the messianic expectations of the Old Testament. How did he fulfill those expectations? Did he have to figure out what doing God's will meant? Did he have to find it? No. He merely obeyed God's Word with the special application of being its fulfillment! As Hebrews 5: 8-9 states, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.” Even for Jesus, character development was at the core of doing God's will.

Jesus fulfilled God's will by submitting to the sovereign plan and exemplifying the moral expectations of Scripture. He was born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of Micah 5:2. He consciously lived out the purposes of the Servant of the Lord (Luke 4:14-30). He fulfilled the plan of God by his choices (Matt. 3:13-17; John 4:34). He promoted conformity to God's moral will to those who followed his teaching (Mark 3:35; Matt. 7:21; John 7:16-17; 9:31). He sought the teaching of Scripture to deal with the issues of life that confronted him (Matthew 4:1-11; 5:17-20; chapters 5-7). Furthermore, Jesus expected the Jewish people to whom he was sent to know what the Bible expected and act on it (John 3; 5:39-40; Luke 24:25-27). He insisted that those who possessed the Bible not only obey its explicit teaching but also reason out the implications of its teaching and values in life's circumstances (Matthew 23:23; chapters 5-7; cf. 2 Cor. 3:6). For Jesus, to live under and flesh out God's plan and moral teaching was the substance of doing God's will.

Jesus passed his teaching to the apostles so that they could pass it on to the next generation (Matt. 28:18-20). The apostles understood Jesus' teaching as crucial and they in turn taught what they had received without reduction (2 Tim. 2:2). [Pages 121-122]

41. The Book of Acts Is Not a Manual for the Church

Is the Book of Acts prescribing how we should operate or is it describing what happened in that time frame? Acts is a story, not a manual; it is primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive. We see no mandates to duplicate the methods within the Book of Acts, merely the story of how the church began to fulfill the Great Commission given by Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20) [Page 123]

42. The Apostles Lived Out the Word of God

The apostles' standard operating procedure for the pursuit of God and godliness was to live out the Word of God they had received. They expected their followers to do the same. Neither Jesus nor the apostles left us a paradigm for knowing God's will through a subjective process to figure out what God requires. Rather, they modeled living and making decisions on the basis of applying God's truth to their world. The process is bathed in prayer and submission to God's sovereign plan. A search for knowledge about the future in order to make a decision in the present is absent in apostolic instruction. Paul's final letters, the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), present a paradigm of sound doctrine and judgment as the basis of discernment. No model of an appeal to miraculous guidance is present. [Pages 124-125]

43. God's Truth Will Direct Our Paths

As we walk in God's ways, leaning on his values and not our own, we can rest in the fact that his truth will direct our paths. This is the way of Proverbs 3 and Romans 12. [Page 126]

Chapter 7. What About Bob?

44. See for What God Has Revealed

A careful read of the Bible presents a different view of the meaning of God's will. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament presents a model of living that requires finding some secret plan of God and learning how we fit into that plan before we can make any decision. We should be concerned instead with what God has already revealed. What has not been revealed is not our business (Deut. 29:29). We can trust God to fulfill his sovereign plan. We have arrogantly assumed that if God knows the future, he is bound to guide us through that maze. Such an assumption is driven by self-interest, no matter how piously we may state it. [Pages 128-129]

45. God's Will Is a Guide

The model of God's will that we do find in the Bible is clearly focused on the sovereign and moral will. God has an overall plan for his creation within a time and space continuum, which is part of his sovereign nature and prerogatives. Creation has no on-demand access to this plan. We know God's plan when he chooses to reveal it or when we see it fulfilled. On the other hand, the moral will of God is clearly aimed at the regulation of God's creation, dictating human responsibility. God's moral will is first contained in the command and exhortation structures of Scripture and is recorded in the Bible and the Bible alone. His moral will is derived secondarily by the implications of these structures. God's moral will is designed to guide the attitudes and behavior of his subjects. [Page 129]

46. Struggle Brings Maturity

We need to get the message that God has ordained our struggle in order to mature us in his image and help us deal with life. We confront these challenges by discerning how a biblical worldview and values set apply to life's decisions. [Page 130]

47. Using Critical Thinking

Reflect for a moment on the biblical command to love, the greatest of all commands according to Jesus. How do you factor love into your godly discernment of God's.) will? The term love is a “logical construct,” an abstract term that is not self-defining as are terms like chair, rock, girl, and boy. How do you know the loving thing to do? Discerning the meaning of “Love God and love your neighbor” requires critical thinking about how to fulfill God's command. [Page 131]

48. Higher Level of Moral Reflection

The fact that God wants Christians to move to a new level of moral reflection is illustrated by the very terms that describe the Christian life. Paul and Peter give us major lists of Christian qualities that are to guide our lives.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-Control
(Gal. 5:22-23)

CHRISTIAN VIRTUE LIST

Goodness
Knowledge
Self-Control
Perseverance
Godliness
Brotherly Kindness
Love
(2 Peter 1:5-8)

49. Virtues Represent Christian Values

Most of these terms are logical constructs that solicit broad description rather than simple concrete definition. For example, you cannot draw a picture of love or joy or peace or kindness. As terms of Christian virtue, they need to be described by thinking about how such terms represent biblical values. Consequently, pursuing the Christian life brings with it the responsibility to grow in our ability to understand the deepest levels of virtue that a biblical worldview promotes. [Page 132]

50. Applying a Biblical Worldview

Godly discernment in reference to God's will is what wisdom is in reference to knowledge. Wisdom is a product of knowledge. Discernment is a product of applying

what we can know about God's will. Since discernment is a product, there must be a process to produce it. The process is found in Romans *12:12*: Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. When the mind is renewed, it is then able to evaluate life from a new perspective. It is empowered to apply biblical worldview and values set to everyday decisions. This is part of what Jesus meant when he distinguished between the letter and spirit of the law. [Page 132]

51. Unity in Diversity

There is no decision or issue in life that is not addressed by biblical values. We sometimes believe the Bible is silent on some issues. We think this, however, because our minds are too small and our discipline of drawing truth from Scripture too unpracticed. On the other hand, we will experience a lack of absolute proof for some of our decisions. We will also experience a variance in the understanding of discernment within the greater Christian community. Yet God allows the diversity in order to achieve a greater goal than mere uniformity. We live now with unity in diversity. This is God's plan. This is the reality we know.

So what are you as a decision maker to do? “Study, make every effort, to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, correctly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. *2:15*, author's paraphrase). [Pages 132-133]

52. Responsible to Do What God Says

If the core of God's will is Scripture's record of God's sovereign and moral will, then discernment consists in the application of our understanding how God's revealed will applies to our decisions. You are not responsible to find God's will; you are responsible to do what he has told you to do and to develop a biblical sense of what to do when there is no clear direct teaching. Discernment takes the various levels of biblical teaching—direct, implied, and creative constructs—and develops a worldview and values mindset to interpret the decisions of life. [Page133]

53. Job Did Not Abandon His Worldview

Is it not amazing that in spite of circumstances and the advice of others, Job never abandoned his worldview about God and his circumstances? An objective criterion helped him stay the course in the midst of pain and suffering, enabling him to fulfill God's sovereign plan and learn lessons he could never have learned in more pleasant pastures. [Page135]

54. God Will Fulfill His Plan

God expects his image bearers to engage the challenges of life and make decisions in light of the worldview and values system the Bible teaches. God is glorified by his creation when we do this. God will oversee his sovereign plan while we fulfill our responsibility to do what Jesus would do to the best of our ability. We do this in

submission to God. We do this in an atmosphere of godly living that is bathed in prayer. We fulfill our roles, with all the ups and downs, with full confidence that God will fulfill his plan for his world and us. [Page136]

55. Immerse Our Minds in Scripture

There is only one answer. We have to permeate our minds with the same information Jesus absorbed and applied in his own thinking patterns. The Old Testament supplies the ideas Jesus devoured. The Gospels provide the results of Jesus' assimilation of those ideas. The Epistles of the New Testament continue the accumulation of learning from Jesus' thinking. If we are going to take WWJD? seriously, then we must immerse our minds in the only literature that can prepare us to give a reasoned answer to the question WWJD? as it applies to the events of life. [Page137]

As we described earlier in this book, a worldview is comprised of the basic beliefs we hold that give us a conceptual framework to interpret our world and ourselves.¹ A Christian worldview is one that is informed by biblical knowledge. It will address our beliefs about who we are (ontology), how we know what we know (epistemology), and what we value as acceptable behavior (axiology). A Christian worldview will account for these categories within the framework of the biblical story of creation, fall redemption, and consummation. [Pages 137-138]

56. Different Circumstances Are Used by God

Missionaries often face major decisions about God's will for their lives. The *researched opinion* of their mission board is often very influencing, if not directive, in regard to their service. I have often heard missionary couples explain how they had changed their minds from one field to another. Their explanation was often difficult, because they were trying to think out loud about how to deal with what they thought was a change in God's mind. If they felt called to one field but then changed direction, was that not a change on God's part? I think a good deal of this kind of stress is based on false assumptions of how they decided on a field in the first place. A first choice is often based more on emotional than reasoned response-friends served on that field, a certain speaker was totally captivating. There may be any number of influencing settings. These settings are usually part of God's providence to draw persons into vocational Christian service. But the development of their calling geographically is usually subject to the researched opinion of the needs and opportunities of world evangelism at any given time in history. Godly discernment pays attention to these details and assumes that this is part of God's guidance. Researched opinion also applies to the church in its global presence. [Pages 144-145]

57. Live Responsible Lives in Light of Biblical Teaching

When you try to make your decisions by searching for information about the future, you find yourself paralyzed by inaction or frustrated by a silent heaven. This is not the way

God has taught us to pursue him and his will. God has called us, and the apostles have taught us, to live responsible lives in light of biblical teaching. This pattern is also observed in the Old Testament. [Page 147]

Chapter 8. The Role of Conscience

58. Conscience Is a Servant of Our Knowledge Base

The function of conscience always lags behind, because a change of view takes time. Conscience is a servant of our knowledge base, and when our knowledge has changed to the level of new convictions, conscience accommodates that change. [Page 161]

59. Know Yourself and How You Think

Our conscience reminds us of the values we recognize and apply. Values refer to the personal beliefs we hold about every area of life, from whether there is a God to which grocery store gives the best deals. It is helpful at this point to remind ourselves about the various categories of values. First, there are obligatory moral values-the clear commands of the Bible. No one who holds Christian values disputes this category. Second, there are community values-the beliefs and traditions of a given group of believers with which we associate ourselves. These values may not all be obligatory, but they do dictate participation in good standing with a community. For example, the consumption of wine at a meal is biblically permissible, but many modern Christian communities forbid the practice. In this case, one might forego a freedom for the benefit of the community. Third, there are personal values-the beliefs we all develop that make us who we are as individuals. For example, each of us values different kinds of music, food, exercise, hobbies, careers, and what we are free to do on Sunday.

The conscience monitors all levels of values equally. We will feel convicted in the same way, more or less, whether we violate a clear command not to lie, publicly violate a community standard, or violate our own personal standards. This is the job of the conscience. It does not discriminate the level of values; it merely monitors and holds us accountable to the ones we recognize and apply.

In our decision-making, therefore, we must delineate the kind of value that we are dealing with when we feel the pressure of conviction. Knowing ourselves and why we think the way we do, we raise the conversations we have with ourselves to new levels. [Pages 162-163]

60. Using Godly Discernment

The final authority for right or wrong, as well as the continuum of godly discernment, comes from properly established and verified values. Conscience will eventually align itself with this educational process.

These reflections should help us see that Christians cannot make feelings and the little voices we hear the foundation for discerning life's decisions. Godly discernment is driven by a careful delineation of value. [Page 164]

61. Making Sure an Action Is Right

Peace addresses a wide variety of experience, but it is never used scripturally as an internal barometer for gauging God's will. While Christians freely use the phrase “I know this is God’s will because I have peace about it,” the Bible never uses the term in this manner. Peace is a product of doing right, not a reason for action. This kind of an expression is similar to saying, “My conscience doesn't bother me, and therefore it must be okay.” Conscience and peace are appealed to as evidence for action. If, as we have observed, this is an incorrect use of conscience, it is also an invalid use of peace. We have a clear conscience or we feel peace when we are not violating our values. We can, however, have these feelings and still be wrong if our values are incorrect.

Peace is never a reason to do something. Peace is a product, a feeling that comes when we are contemplating or acting in conjunction with the norms and values that we recognize and apply. Our values should be correct lest we have a false sense of peace. We are not to seek a sense of peace in order to act; we are to determine if an action is right and appropriate so that we can have a sense of peace. Peace does not justify actions; values do.

Consider the account of Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4. These two ladies were valuable workers in the early church. Their relationship, however, went sour. This breakdown was causing tension in the congregation. They were earning the nicknames “Odor” and “Stinky.” Paul publicly appealed to them and the church to get their act together. He affirmed their value and pointed out the products that would be theirs once the problem was addressed (4:2-7). The familiar passage, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (4:7), promised the end result for the Philippi and church once harmony was restored. [Pages 165-166]

Chapter 9. The Role of the Spirit in God’s Will and Godly Discernment

62. Spiritual Guidance for the Disciples

The statement in John 16:13 that the Spirit “will guide you into all truth,” is not a general promise to any Christian but is addressed to the disciples who would chronicle Jesus’ earthly ministry and God’s will for the church. [Page 170]

63. Get Involved and Do

Spiritual gifts, therefore, are part of God’s will for our lives. We do not “find” our role through some mystical process. We do not wait till we “find” what we should do in order

to serve God in the church. We get involved and in so doing, God's plan is fulfilled in amazing ways. [Page 181]

64. The Spirit's Work of Conviction

Conviction is the work of the Spirit in guidance. Our work is to determine the right or wrong of what we are convicted about in terms of our biblical worldview and values set. We are responsible to pursue godly discernment in this matrix. We can rest in the fact that God will fulfill his will in this process. [Page 183]

65. Biblical Values, not Prayer

Every decision we confront is filled with value conflict. Sometimes it is a clear conflict of right and wrong, sometimes it is the difference between good, better, and best. Prayer is not a divining rod to settle the decision. We need the guidance of biblical values in order to deal with life's circumstances. We need to know what values drive us in order to pray appropriately. [Pages 187-188]

66. Knowing God First

Our knowledge of God is foundational to our worldview and our understanding of prayer. God is all-powerful, good, and loving. Yet he does not always exercise his power to accomplish the good things we pray about. For example, how many of us have prayed for the salvation of a loved one only to watch him seemingly die in unbelief? How many have prayed for a wayward child only to watch her destroy herself? We wonder, where is this good and all-powerful God who claims to love us? Or perhaps we become depressed because we assume that something is wrong in us that hindered God from responding to our petitions. This kind of thinking does not adequately account for prayer and God's will. [Page 188]

67. Accepting God's Sovereign Will Expresses Faith

Does God answer prayer? Yes. The Bible says, "Ask and it will be given to you" (Matt. 7:7-8). But is this an unconditional promise so that we always get whatever we request? No. Neither are our faith and personal godliness the ultimate keys to having our prayers answered. Godly people often find their prayers unanswered. Unanswered prayer is not a barometer of spirituality. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane illustrates that the sovereign will of God is the ultimate arbitrator of answered prayer. The "cup" with which Jesus struggled (Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46) probably refers to that period on the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:45-46, Mark 15:33-34). The honesty of Jesus' soul confesses that it was a cup he would choose to avoid. He prayed to avoid it. But instead, he yielded to the will and plan of God. Jesus' understanding of God's plan as revealed in the Scripture he studied, along with his unique relationship with the Father, shaped all of Jesus' prayers. Accepting God's sovereign will in the outcome of our prayer is greatest expression of faith. This kind of faith is the product of a worldview that is informed about who God is. [Pages 188-189]

68. Accepting the Results of God's Will

If the greatest person ever born [John the Baptist] experienced a silent heaven, then what right do we have to demand whatever we request of God? God answers prayer in accord with his will. While John's life ended in Herod's prison, it would be God's will to deliver Peter from a similar fate at a later time (Acts 12). God is not obligated to inform us when something is or is not his sovereign will. It is merely our obligation to pray and then accept the results as God's will. [Page 190]

69. Our Prayers Are Part of God's Plan

If it is true that prayer is subject to God's sovereign plan and will, then why pray? The answer is simple. Because God has commanded us to pray, and in his own wisdom, he has designed that our prayers are a part of his plan. [Page 190]

70. Rest in God's Goodness

God expects us to rest in his goodness and wisdom whatever the outcome of our prayers may be. Prayer does not form God's will but is an obedient response to God's expectations for us. [Page 191]

71. Commanded to Pray

Prayer is a response to God's moral will. We are commanded to pray. In fact, the verbal forms of prayer language are usually in the imperative mood! "Our Father in heaven... *give us* today our daily bread. *Forgive us* our debts ... *lead us* ... *deliver us* ." (Matt. 6:9-13) [Page 191]

72. Prayer Does Not Manipulate God

I view prayer as instrumental, as part of the process that God has ordained to accomplish his purposes in the world. Our prayers are directly related to the fulfillment of God's will in the world. But prayer does not manipulate God's ultimate purposes. Rather God has designed his plan so that our prayers participate in the fulfillment of his eternally wise purposes. Because we do not know God's sovereign will ahead of time, answers to the way we pray are always conditioned by conformity to that will. This is the assumption behind the apostle John's statement "that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14). John is not exhorting us to find God's will but to condition our prayers to conform to it. This condition brings us back to our responsibility to discern God's desires from our transformed worldview. The better we know God and how he runs his world, the more likely we are to pray appropriately in the situations that confront us. But whatever the case, and whatever the outcome in our eyes, we must pray. [Pages 192-193]

73. Prayer Is a Product of Maturity

The Bible never exhorts us to pray to know God's will in advance in order to pray for its fulfillment. Prayer is not a means to gain knowledge of the future in order to conform prayer to that future. If this is so, then you might ask what the prayer in James 1:5-6 means: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." James's call to prayer is set in his teaching about our responses to life's trials. He exhorts us to endure (1:2-4), to pray (1:5-8), to accept the providential orderings of life (1:9-11), and to continue to endure (1:12). I find it informative that James does not give prayer as the first response to unexpected trials. Prayer is not our first line of defense when trials occur; our own spiritual maturity is our first response (the point of James 1:2-4). Prayer is second because it is a product of our maturity. This is once again a transformed-mind issue. If we are developing in our Christian worldview, prayer will come naturally and quickly when we encounter the difficulties of life, because prayer is an expression of our dependence on God. [Page 193]

74. Sometimes God Choses Not to Intervene

James's call to pray for wisdom is a call to process life's events in light of our biblical worldview. An informed believer understands that life's bad events do not mean that God does not love us. Rather, they remind us that we live in a messed up world, and God does not always choose to intervene for our safety or comfort. Godly believers today face death in many parts of our world. They pray for God's protection while they are brutally raped or murdered. Such actions against persons clearly violate God's moral will. Therefore, when we pray that God fulfill what we know his desires to be, why do we not have what we request? Because for reasons unknown to us, God has chosen not to intervene, and we must accept that reality without losing faith. [Page 194]

75. God Is Wiser than Us

Prayer, in and of itself, fulfills God's will because we are commanded to pray. We should not hesitate to pray in light of our concerns and burdens. There are no limits as long as our prayers are within the boundaries of God's moral will. Yet we have all experienced mixed results in regard to our requests. These results indicate to us in hindsight God's sovereign will about the matters of our concerns. Sometimes it brings us joy and encouragement; sometimes it tests our faith. Our responsibility is to continue to obey God by praying while we also submit ourselves to the results that reflect a God who is wiser than us and whose purposes in the world are beyond our understanding. [Pages 194-195]

Part 4. Reflections on God's Will Applied

Chapter 11. "Q & A" on Discerning God's Will

76. God Planned to Work Through Diversity

Each of us must engage discernment about God's will in our own context. Different persons may address questions not directly answered by Scripture differently. There is no one answer for everyone about how we deal with singleness, adoption, models of parenting, educational choices, church selection, use of time and money, and many other issues. When the Bible clearly addresses an issue, we are all equally bound by what it says. But when we are developing answers to questions from a biblical worldview and values system because there is no one clear text, then we see diversity surface within the believing community. God, for his own purposes, planned life to work in this manner so that we might glorify him by the use of our created capacities. While believers may have differences, we will all answer to God for how we applied our worldview and values to life's issues. [Pages 200-201]

77. What Does the Bible Teach

Knowing God's will is not a process of receiving immediate information from God about life's issues but one of discerning life's issues on the basis of the revelation that God has already given to us. The Bible is the only accurate record of that revelation. God has not chosen for us to accomplish discernment by receiving immediate revelatory answers to our questions. Rather, he has given us his Word, and we are to deal with life from a biblical perspective. We must discern life's issues from the standpoint of biblical teaching and the worldview and values set we develop. Therefore, when we ask the question "What is God's will for _____?" we are required to ask, "What does the Bible teach about _____?" in order to begin to frame an answer for the question of God's will in that situation. [Page 201]

78. We Grow Through Joy and Pain

We are forced to make our choices on the basis of the biblical teaching that we have as we evaluate our own values about life. After we have made our choices and entered into the covenant of marriage, the Bible begins to teach us God's will about marriage. His will is explained in terms of the moral and social responsibilities that come with marriage and raising a family. We must find ways to continue our commitment through the changes life brings us. After a few years of marriage, the incompatibilities will begin to surface! When they do, we are not free to seek another marriage if this one develops in unexpected ways. Rather, we are responsible to cultivate the garden in which we find ourselves. Since marriage is the closest of all relationships, it will supply the most intense experiences of joy and pain. It is God's will that we grow in dealing with both. [Page 206]

79. Helping Others to Avoid the Pain We Have Experienced

... How do believers who have suffered this tragedy face the rest of life on earth? The answer is simple. They do what every other believer who is damaged by sin does. They apply the biblical theology of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration to their life

context. Psalm 51 reflects the journey of one believer in this regard. This psalm expresses how David dealt with his sins of adultery, lying, and murder (Ps. 51: 1-12). David certainly experienced the human aftermath of the consequences of his sin, but he still found his way back into fellowship with God (vv. 10-12). He also went on to use his life experience, as bad as it was, to help others avoid the pain he had experienced (vv. 13-19). [Page 207]

80. The Rate of Pastoral Change

Barna's data, as early as 1990, reflects that "change" affects both lay and vocational ministers. Barna's June 2002 data lists the median length of a senior pastor's ministry in a given church as four years. If ministers change so quickly, what influence does that have on the attitudes of parishioners? [Page 214]

81. Christianity is a Life

Believers in the God of the Bible in every age live in light of the truth that belief in God is a lifestyle. Gathering with other believers at set times during the week does not completely fulfill our stewardship to God. Add to those meetings the performance of all of the spiritual disciplines and you still come up short. We are believers 24/7. Being a Christian is a philosophy of life, not just one of our activities. In fact, some perform all of the activities but are empty inside. Bible-believing people must address how all of their time and resources are a stewardship to God. [Page 215]

82. All Parts of Life Are a Gift from God

Living the Christian life does not mean compartmentalizing our activities. Statements like "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31), and "God ... richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" (1 Tim. 6:17), teach us that each part of our lives is a gift from God and we may freely exercise any area as long as we do it within divine boundaries. [Page 216]

83. Glorify God in All We Do

We do not find God's permission or justification for our activities by seeking a subjective confirmation or denial. Instead, we exercise all of our gifts and desires in a manner that is balanced and glorifying to God. [Page 216]

84. The Pain of Living in a Sinful World

They now suffer, not because of their actions, but because of the sins of others. This is the kind of world we live in, and God usually does not intervene to deliver us from it. We have to apply God's moral will even in the aftermath of tragedy. Read how the psalmists and writers of the Proverbs struggled with the pain of living in a sinful world. They prayed that God would bring justice upon wrongdoers while he gave the victims the grace to endure. Their prayers were often presented in the midst of suffering for doing the will of God. [Pages 217-218]

85. God's Word Is Fully Sufficient

The difference in issues now from the biblical world of two thousand years ago highlights the need to study Scripture in order to develop a biblical worldview and values mindset. A simple proof-text approach will not provide us with the answers we seek. God never intended that the Bible be a comprehensive proof-text reference manual for every imaginable occasion that would arise. It did not even do this for the redeemed community during its composition! Rather, the Bible is a story of God's dealings with the redeemed community in their time and space. He has forced us into the laboratory of his Word to derive how we should think about our world today and its changing issues. The Bible is fully sufficient for everything we need to know if we will pursue its lead. The church as a community must diligently evaluate the issues of life and apply a biblical worldview and values set to the questions it faces. While we make decisions as individuals, certain seminal issues must be more than an individual believer's task, or we fall back into the privatized mindset of Western culture. [Page 218]

86. The Church Decides That One Is Called

The New Testament is quite clear about what constitutes a "call to ministry." First Timothy 3 addresses this issue. Two elements are present: first, the applicant's burning desire to do vocational ministry, and second, the church's judgment that he is qualified. The context is also clear: it is the church that decides whether one is called, not just the desire of the one who claims a call. The experience of the call is not a vision or mystical experience. It is first the conscious nagging inner drive that will not permit one to do anything else. Then it is the development of that person within a believing community that demonstrates the correlation of claimed call and giftedness. So in this case, God's will is determined by the consensus of the community. [Page 219]

87. No Short Cuts In Developing a Biblical Worldview

God expects each of his children to take the responsibility to develop and apply a biblical worldview and values set. This is not an easy task. There are no shortcuts. But when you invest yourself in this kind of growth, and experience the confidence of settled convictions about your decisions, the reward is far greater than the labor.

Conclusion

88. God Builds on Our Mistakes

Many have approached knowing God's will as some sort of mystical process to procure divine guidance before making a decision. This approach leaves people in a state of limbo. They are looking for some undefined inner impression in order to make a decision. This impression is supposed to give them confidence to move in a certain direction. When people come to understand that knowing God's will is a matter of obeying God's moral will and applying a biblical worldview and values set to all other

decisions, they feel free to make a decision-they have an objective framework in which to process their questions. They are free from the fear of making a mistake or “missing God's will,” because as long as they operate within the parameters of God's moral will they know that God is present and doing a work in their lives. Furthermore, throughout history, “God often builds our character and his work on our mistakes.” [Page 223]

89. God Communicates Through the Bible

But I firmly believe that the values-driven model drives us to God in a way that he designed. First, our access to God in the realm of knowledge is his Word. I'm sure you have seen how I value the Bible. I cannot separate valuing the Bible from valuing God's mind. This is how God ordained to communicate to every generation. It is our only objective source of knowledge about God and his will. When a model about knowing God's will emphasizes subjective communication from God over careful study of Scripture, it has undermined the very way God has chosen to communicate to us! When we pray, “Sir, we would see Jesus,” then we need to see him by reading the Gospels, for therein he is fully revealed. [Pages 224-225]