



Biblical Counseling, The Holy Spirit and Guidance

Introduction

I. The Holy Spirit



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II. Behind the Scenes of God's Guidance: The Importance, beliefs and practices



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

Principles:¹ (With a Redemptive Story Line for God's glory)

- i. Literal Principle
- ii. Historical Principle
- iii. Grammatical Principle
- iv. Synthesis Principle
- v. Practical Principle



Key Definitions (two aspects of God's Will)

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

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



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b. Other Terms



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

- a. Misusing the Bible
- b. Personal Advice (without checking it out)
- c. Circumstances / Results
- d. Setting Up Conditions (Fleeces)
- e. Opened and Closed Doors
- f. Ideas, Inner Feelings, Desires, and Impressions
- g. "Led by the Spirit"
- h. An Audible Voice
- i. Misusing Prayer
- j. Inner Peace
- k. Devices
- l. Signs
- m. Isolation
- n. Dreams
- o. "Waiting" on the Lord
- p. Conscience
- q. Reason (relying on)
- r. Pseudo Faith
- s. Fasting
- t. The "Call" (all experienced based)



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- u. Small Group (“...where two or three are gathered...”)
- v. Etc.

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

- a. Prerequisites for Biblical Decision-Making
 - i. Be rightly related to Christ by responding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in context (2 Cor. 5:14-21)
 - ii. Pursue a life of worshipping and glorifying God (John 4:23-24; 2 Cor. 5:9; Phil. 1:21; 3:10-14; Col 1:9-12; 1 Cor 10:31)
 - iii. Recognize God’s sovereignty over all (Ps. 115:3,8; Eph. 1:11; Eph. 5:17; James 4:13-16; Prov. 16:9; Rom. 8:28-29). God’s sovereignty works in sync with (never apart from) all His other attributes (e.g. Goodness, Wisdom, etc.)
- b. Methodology and Process (these all interrelate).
 - i. SUBMIT... Humbly pray for wisdom as you gather data.
 - a. Continually have a humble, yielded, and dependent will before God (Rom. 12:1-2). This would be reflected in the prayer request “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done....” (Mt.6:10, Luke 22:42). Remember that knowing and doing God’s Will is “so that we might walk worthily as unto the Lord...” Col 1:9-14
 - b. Continually pray for wisdom – for the Spirit to assist you in bringing Scripture to apply to the situation (Jas. 1:5).
 - c. Gather as much of the factual data as you can to make a wise decision (Prov.18:13). The amount of time spent on this process often depends on the weight of the decision (e.g. Jesus choosing the twelve -Luke 6:12).
 - ii. COMMANDS... Study any direct commands in Scripture concerning this particular issue (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15-17). This may take on the form of positive commands or the form of prohibitions. (Make use of a Bible concordance, Topical Bible (with caution), and other Bible reference books.)



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iii. PRINCIPLES... Study the applicable principles in Scripture concerning this issue (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15-17). Wisdom is at its purest in Scripture and then starts to rely more on human reasoning, advice and experience after that (obviously less reliable). This is one of the most neglected areas of decision making. (many of these questions below are from *The Discipline of Grace*, Jerry Bridges, 213)

a. WALK WITH CHRIST

- Is this something I can thank God for? (Rom. 14:6; 1 Cor. 10:30; Col. 3:17)
- Is this something that will glorify God? (1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:9)
- Is this following the example of Christ? (Rom. 15:7-8; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 John 2:6)
- Is this beneficial? Does it promote my spiritual life?
- Is this a practice that over time will tend to master me? Will it stimulate a desire that will be difficult to control?
- Is this an occasion where my “flesh” (sinfulness) is seeking to indulge itself? (Gal. 5:13)

b. INFLUENCE ON OTHERS

- Is this worth imitating? (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9)
- Are you not seeking outside counsel due to wanting what you want? (Prov 18:1-2; 24:6)
- Is it self-serving at the expense of someone else’s benefit? (Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:33; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:1-4)
- Will my choice affect others around me? If so, in what way?
- Is it constructive? Will it promote the spiritual well-being of other believers if they engage in this practice that is permissible for me?”

c. NEED



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

Case Studies



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Further Resources

Jay Adams

A Call to Discernment (Eugene: Harvest House, 1987)

What to do on Thursday (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1995)

A Christian's Guide to Guidance (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1998)

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

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

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

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

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

John MacArthur

Ashamed of the Gospel (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993)

Found: God's Will (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1978)

Our Sufficiency in Christ (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991)

Reckless Faith (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994)

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

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

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

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

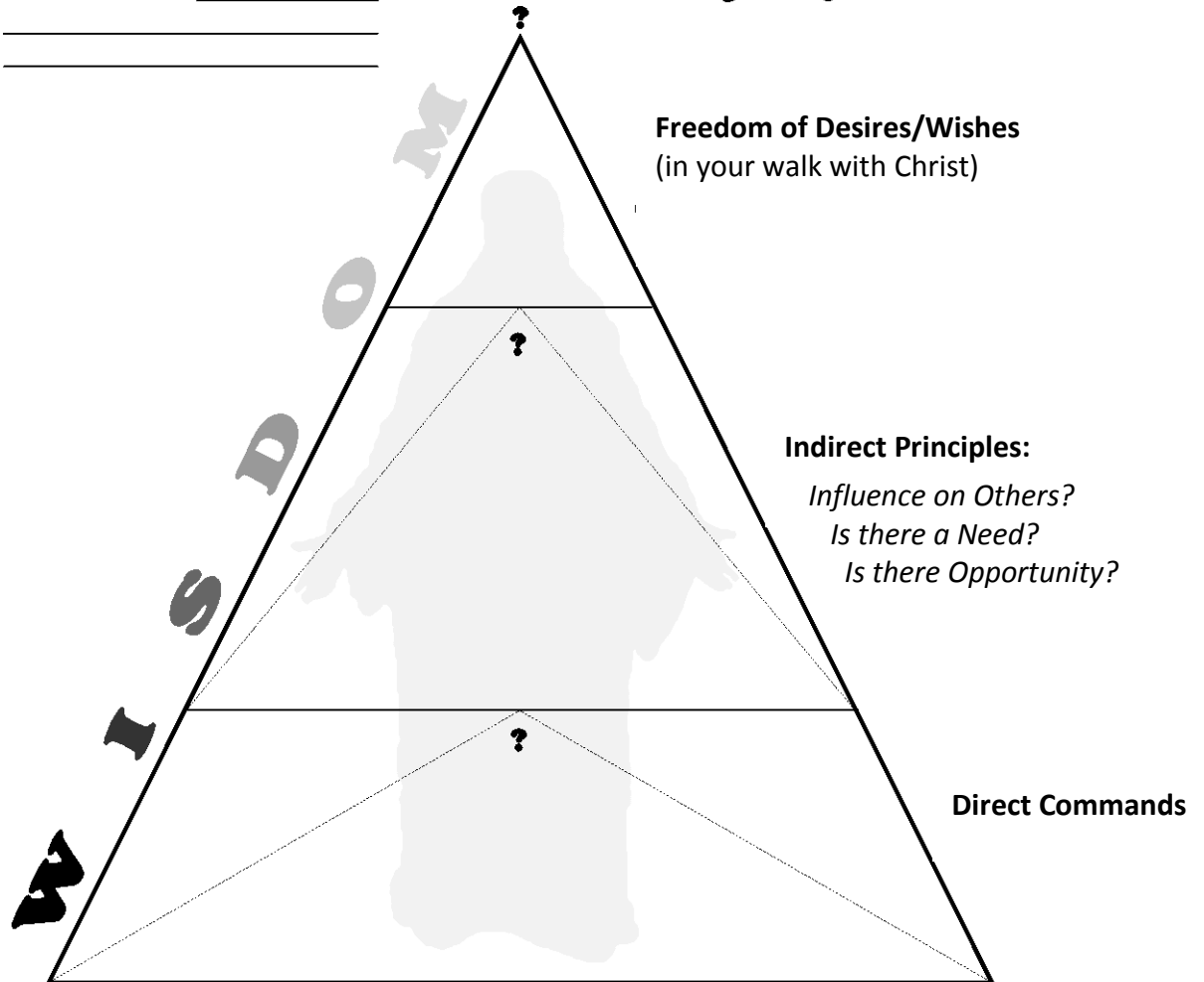
David Swavely, *Decisions, Decisions: How (and How Not) to Make Them* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003).



Biblical Decision Making

The Decision: _____

"Holding Principle" Rom. 14:23



Attitude: Prayerfully, humbly, to please Christ

Any Factual Data (Prov. 18:13): _____

