

Decision Making and the Will of God

Session 1

Introduction

“To many Christians, guidance is a chronic problem. Why? Not because they doubt that divine guidance is a fact, but because they are sure it is. They know that God can guide, and has promised to guide, every Christian believer. Books and friends and public speakers tell them how guidance has worked in the lives of others. Their fear, therefore is not that no guidance should be available for them, but that they may miss the guidance which God provides through some fault of their own.”¹

Conventional View

I. Conventional view in a nutshell:

A. *God has an individual will or blueprint for our lives that we are to be about figuring out.*

B. *We use a variety of methods to figure out what that will is.*

II. Lingo ...

-
-

III. _____ of Christian _____

IV. Makes it appear as though God’s will is _____. *Why else would we have to “look for it?”*

V. Paralysis

A. Don’t make a move until you “_____”

B. Confusion--How do we know ...? Is that God’s voice? ...

C. Therefore, we do nothing out of fear that we will make a _____ !
[God’s plan for marriage example]

¹ Packer, J.I., *Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press, 1993 ed. p. 230.

VI. What Does the Bible Teach About Reading the Signs?

A. Ouija Bible—

“The Holy Spirit gave me this verse”

Relativism (true for me but not for you...)

B. Feeling Led (by the Spirit)—

1. Elijah’s “still, small voice”—
2. Romans 8:14 & Galatians 5:16—

Have nothing to do with _____, but empowerment for holy living.

3. Jesus was “led by the Spirit” (Matt 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1)

^{ESV} **Matthew 4:1** Then Jesus was **led up** by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

[GING] ἀνάγω

ἀνάγω—1. lead or bring up [Mt 4:1](#); [Ac 9:39](#); [Ro 10:7](#). Bring before [Ac 12:4](#). ἄ. θυσίαν bring an offering [7:41](#).—2. mid. or pass. put out to sea, set sail [Ac 13:13](#); [18:21](#). [anagogic] [pg 11]

^{NAS} **Acts 9:39** And Peter arose and went with them, ... they **brought** him **into** the upper room ...

^{ESV} **Acts 9:39** So Peter rose and went with them. ... they **took** him **to** the upper room ...

^{ESV} **Romans 10:7** or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to **bring** Christ **up** from the dead).

Notes:

4. Dangers of “felt led” theology

Packer:

“The consequences of this mistake among earnest Christians have been both comic and tragic. The idea of a life in which the inward voice of the Spirit decides and directs everything sounds most attractive, for it seems to exalt the Spirit’s ministry and to promise the closest intimacy with God; but in practice this quest for superspirituality leads only to frantic bewilderment and lunacy.”²

Bizarre examples:

“These pathetic stories are sadly typical of what ensues once the basic mistake about guidance has been made.”³

a. It gives _____ to impulses or thoughts that drift through our minds.

² Packer, J.I., *Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press, 1993 ed. p. 235.

³ Ibid.

- 1) Effect on biblical leadership model—
- 2) *This blasphemous practice* _____! (repent!)
- 3) Also stop _____. (lovingly challenge it!) –Columbo Questions⁴
 - a) What do you mean by “God told you”?
 - b) How did you come to that conclusion?
 - c) Have you considered how dangerous/offensive it is to God to put words in His mouth? (**Deuteronomy 18:20**)

C. Having a Peace About It—The Bible does not teach that we get guidance from inner peace.

Colossians 3:15—

“rule” <1018> βραβεύω (brabeuo)
Meaning: to act as umpire ← Makes decisions... but based on what?

“peace” – used two ways

- 1. Lack of _____—context: between parties (**Matt. 10:34, Rom. 5:1**)
- 2. Sense of _____, etc. —context: inward/personal (**Cor. 1:3, Jam. 2:16**)

Context vs 3:12-15 “¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in **your** hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

ὑμῶν ← pronoun personal genitive **plural** from σύ

Koukl:

“let your commitment to interpersonal harmony among the members of the church be the ‘artiber,’ ‘judge,’ or ruling principal.”⁵”

3. Dangers of “peace about it” theology

_____—Major decisions are by nature _____.

Basically anything we really want to do, we can eventually convince ourselves we have a peace about it (or feel led to it) (Jer. 17:9, Mark 7:21-23)

^{ESV} **Psalm 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Packer:

“We can never distrust ourselves too much.”⁶

Effect on biblical leadership model—

⁴ Find out more in Ambassador Essentials Training class materials at the objectivegospel.org web site under “Training.”

⁵ Koukl, Greg, “Decision Making and the Will of God” message outline. Stand to Reason.

⁶ Packer, *Knowing God*, p.238.

D. Open and Closed Doors—The Bible does not teach that we are to receive guidance from opened and closed doors.

1. Paul _____ some open doors: (1 Corinthians 16:8-9)
2. But Paul _____ other open doors: (2 Corinthians 2:12-13; Acts 16:26-28)
3. Confusion/Excuse—
4. Doors God opened in Scripture were recognized _____ (Acts 14:27; 2 Cor 2:12)
5. The prayers for opened doors (Col 4:3) had no implications of _____

These were men _____, not sitting and looking for opened and closed doors.

E. Fleeces & Providential Signs—Though there are some examples of their use, the Bible does not teach that we are to use these techniques for divining the will of God.

1. Gideon's fleece (Judges 6-7)
2. Essentially puts an _____ upon God (Luke 4:12)
Examples:
3. "loading the dice" – *lame fleeces!*
4. A biblical fleece (a la Gideon)
5. Providential Signs in Scripture (Gen 24:12ff –picking a wife for Isaac)

F. Confirmations—The whole "confirmations" theology is a recent unbiblical creation.

1. Classic example of completely _____ a _____ term.
2. All "confirmations" in scripture serve a _____ function in the context of either the laws of Israel or in church discipline. (Matt 18:15-16; 2 Cor 13:1-2; 1 Tim 5:19-20; Heb 10:28; Deut 17:6;19:15)
3. There is no evidence that a perceived convergence of "divine _____" (or chance events) is to be discerned as "_____ " of God's will.
4. This is _____, nothing more.

Interact/Feedback:

Don't hesitate to email me (Tim@objectivegospel.org) or post your questions or comments on the class blog (solid-ground.blogspot.com).

Be Strong and Courageous!

March 21, 2007

The Morning I Heard the Voice of God

By John Piper

Let me tell you about a most wonderful experience I had early Monday morning, March 19, 2007, a little after six o'clock. God actually spoke to me. There is no doubt that it was God. I heard the words in my head just as clearly as when a memory of a conversation passes across your consciousness. The words were in English, but they had about them an absolutely self-authenticating ring of truth. I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that God still speaks today.

I couldn't sleep for some reason. I was at Shalom House in northern Minnesota on a staff couples' retreat. It was about five thirty in the morning. I lay there wondering if I should get up or wait till I got sleepy again. In his mercy, God moved me out of bed. It was mostly dark, but I managed to find my clothing, got dressed, grabbed my briefcase, and slipped out of the room without waking up Noël. In the main room below, it was totally quiet. No one else seemed to be up. So I sat down on a couch in the corner to pray.

As I prayed and mused, suddenly it happened. God said, *"Come and see what I have done."* There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that these were the very words of God. In this very moment. At this very place in the twenty-first century, 2007, God was speaking to me with absolute authority and self-evidencing reality. I paused to let this sink in. There was a sweetness about it. Time seemed to matter little. God was near. He had me in his sights. He had something to say to me. When God draws near, hurry ceases. Time slows down.

I wondered what he meant by "come and see." Would he take me somewhere, like he did Paul into heaven to see what can't be spoken? Did "see" mean that I would have a vision of some great deed of God that no one has seen? I am not sure how much time elapsed between God's initial word, "Come and see what I have done," and his next words. It doesn't matter. I was being enveloped in the love of his personal communication. The God of the universe was speaking to me.

Then he said, as clearly as any words have ever come into my mind, *"I am awesome in my deeds toward the children of man."* My heart leaped up, "Yes, Lord! You are awesome in your deeds. Yes, to all men whether they see it or not. Yes! Now what will you show me?"

The words came again. Just as clear as before, but increasingly specific: *"I turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There they rejoiced in me—who rules by my might forever."* Suddenly I realized God was taking me back several thousand years to the time when he dried up the Red Sea and the Jordan River. I was being transported by his word back into history to those great deeds. This is what he meant by "come and see." He was transporting me back by his words to those two glorious deeds before the children of men. These were the "awesome deeds" he referred to. God himself was narrating the mighty works of God. He was doing it for me. He was doing it with words that were resounding in my own mind.

There settled over me a wonderful reverence. A palpable peace came down. This was a holy moment and a holy corner of the world in northern Minnesota. God Almighty had come down and was giving me the stillness and the openness and the willingness to hear his very voice. As I marveled at his power to dry the sea and the river, he spoke again. *"I keep watch over the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves."*

This was breathtaking. It was very serious. It was almost a rebuke. At least a warning. He may as well have taken me by the collar of my shirt, lifted me off the ground with one hand, and said, with an incomparable mixture of fierceness and love, "Never, never, never exalt yourself. Never rebel against me."

I sat staring at nothing. My mind was full of the global glory of God. "*I keep watch over the nations.*" He had said this to me. It was not just that he had said it. Yes, that is glorious. But he had said this to me. The very words of God were in my head. They were there in my head just as much as the words that I am writing at this moment are in my head. They were heard as clearly as if at this moment I recalled that my wife said, "Come down for supper whenever you are ready." I know those are the words of my wife. And I know these are the words of God.

Think of it. Marvel at this. Stand in awe of this. The God who keeps watch over the nations, like some people keep watch over cattle or stock markets or construction sites—this God still speaks in the twenty-first century. I heard his very words. He spoke personally to me.

What effect did this have on me? It filled me with a fresh sense of God's reality. It assured me more deeply that he acts in history and in our time. It strengthened my faith that he is for me and cares about me and will use his global power to watch over me. Why else would he come and tell me these things?

It has increased my love for the Bible as God's very word, because it was through the Bible that I heard these divine words, and through the Bible I have experiences like this almost every day. The very God of the universe speaks on every page into my mind—and your mind. We hear his very words. God himself has multiplied his wondrous deeds and thoughts toward us; none can compare with him! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told (Psalm 40:5).

And best of all, they are available to all. If you would like to hear the very same words I heard on the couch in northern Minnesota, read Psalm 66:5-7. That is where I heard them. O how precious is the Bible. It is the very word of God. In it God speaks in the twenty-first century. This is the very voice of God. By this voice, he speaks with absolute truth and personal force. By this voice, he reveals his all-surpassing beauty. By this voice, he reveals the deepest secrets of our hearts. No voice anywhere anytime can reach as deep or lift as high or carry as far as the voice of God that we hear in the Bible.

It is a great wonder that God still speaks today through the Bible with greater force and greater glory and greater assurance and greater sweetness and greater hope and greater guidance and greater transforming power and greater Christ-exalting truth than can be heard through any voice in any human soul on the planet from outside the Bible.

This is why I found the article in this month's *Christianity Today*, "My Conversation with God," so sad. Written by an anonymous professor at a "well-known Christian University," it tells of his experience of hearing God. What God said was that he must give all his royalties from a new book toward the tuition of a needy student. What makes me sad about the article is not that it isn't true or didn't happen. What's sad is that it really does give the impression that extra-biblical communication with God is surpassingly wonderful and faith-deepening. All the while, the supremely-glorious communication of the living God which personally and powerfully and transformingly explodes in the receptive heart through the Bible everyday is passed over in silence.

I am sure this professor of theology did not mean it this way, but what he actually said was, "For years I've taught that God still speaks, *but I couldn't testify to it personally*. I can only do so now anonymously, for reasons I hope will be clear" (emphasis added). Surely he does not mean what he seems to imply—that only when one hears an extra-biblical voice like, "The money is not yours," can you testify *personally* that God still speaks. Surely he does not mean to belittle the voice of God in the Bible which speaks this very day with

