

Decision Making and the Will of God

Session 2

Opening prayer. (wisdom emphasis)

I. Introduction

One thing I have learned over the years in apologetics is that any time you look to the Bible *plus something else* for your revelation of God, even among those who claim to revere the Bible, the Bible *always* takes the back seat¹.

Whether it is:

- The Pope and church tradition
- The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
- The writings of Joseph Smith or Mary Baker Eddy ...
- Or the Christian who claims to “hear from God”

II. Review

A. Conventional view in a nutshell:

1. **God has an individual will or blueprint for our lives that we are to be about figuring out.**
2. **We use a variety of methods to figure out what that will is.** Some of the methods:
 - a. looking for private messages in the Bible
 - b. trying to “tune in” to the leading of the Holy Spirit through our thoughts and feelings—two-way prayer techniques, etc.
 - c. depending on our feeling of “having a peace about it”
 - d. looking for and depending upon “opened and closed doors”
 - e. putting out fleeces
 - f. looking for “confirmations” in various forms

B. We briefly went through these popular techniques and demonstrated how: 1) Scripture teaches none of them as models for our decision making, 2) the proof texts offered for the texts do not support them, and 3) some of the dangers of the methods.

III. Hearing God’s Voice

The techniques we described specifically last week are all described as ways of hearing the voice of God. Today I’m going to group these techniques together and speak on a broader level about hearing the voice of God.

¹ Koukl, Greg, “Decision Making and the Will of God” message outline. I depended heavily on Greg’s materials for large sections of this study. It was Greg’s study, along with his other message “From Truth to Experience” that inspired me to prepare and offer this course. Visit the Stand to Reason web site at str.org. Though this is Greg’s illustration, I have observed exactly the same thing.

- A. Walk into any Christian book store and you will find a lot of books on learning how to hear the voice of God (two-way/conversational prayer, others from last week, etc).
- B. Basic Reasoning:
- We are in relationship with God
 - Relationships entail two-way personal conversation
 - Therefore, we should all be having two-way conversation with God.
- Are all relationships the same?
 - Are some aspects of relationships unique? (husband/wife, ...)
 - Is it safe to assume that what is normal for one kind of relationship can be applied to all?
 - Is our relationship with God unique? –Like any other relationship?
 - Where do we turn to discover the true nature of this relationship?
- C. Nature of our relationship with God

1. Very different (God to man)— It is not one of equals – *God is not your “homie.”*

There is not a single example of “conversational prayer” in the Bible.

- When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray (Matt 6, Luke 11), there is no mention of “then listen really carefully, else you may not hear God talk back to you”

^{ESV} **Matthew 6:5** "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

2. Jesus taught us how (not what) to pray, and you find no instruction to “listen” (the Bible often speaks of “listen to my voice” but this is used in the sense of **obey** what you **have heard**)

I’m not saying:

3. There is no value in quiet meditation upon God’s Word and asking God’s Spirit to reveal the truth of it to you and empower you to obey it.
4. Prayer cannot/should not be in conversational tone. In fact Jesus taught us to pray conversationally. (Note: He didn’t insert the word “just” all over the place or use “Lord” or “God” as though they were commas).

Definitions:

§ Revelation—God reveals Himself

§ Special Revelation—God speaks. 2 Tim 3:16—Scripture is “God breathed”

D. *Implication:* Every Christian is entitled to special, inerrant, personal revelation from God.

- God is speaking to you (special revelation) and God cannot err
- As we examine our own thinking and hold one another accountable, it is important to be able to ask questions (“When you say God told you, do you mean that inerrant/infallible?”)

E. *Implication:* God is trying to speak to us, but we are not hearing.

1. ***Does God try?*** If he does, this implies he can fail. He could only fail if he lacked the knowledge or the power to do as He wills. God does not “try;” He does.
2. There is not a single example in Scripture of people failing to hear God communicate.
 - a. They often did not listen (obey).
 - b. They may not have understood.
 - c. They always heard—***God never failed to communicate.***
 - d. If God attempts to speak and we thwart Him, who’s stronger?

F. Samuel and Eli (1 Sam 1-3) --some insights

Often used as an example of how one person mentors another to learn to hear the voice of God. As we look a little closer:

1. Samuel did not know the Lord (3:7) and Eli may not have either (unclear)
2. Samuel never failed to hear the (audible) **voice**. (not a nudge or “check in spirit”)
3. God also speaks to the boy in a vision (3:10a, 15)—Samuel never failed to hear ...
4. ***No implication that God’s call to one of God’s greatest prophets is to be the norm for all children of God.*** (no more the norm than Paul’s conversion...)

G. **You do not need to learn to hear the voice of God.** Two Reasons:

1. The Bible does not teach this.

^{ESV} **John 10:27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Context: Jesus was explicitly using this as “a figure of speech” (verse 6)

- Nothing is a metaphor for itself – not a voice.
- These “sheep” are unbelievers called to salvation (contrast verse 26)
- This is an indicative (what is) rather than an imperative (command/directive)

2. It’s not even possible to learn to hear the voice of God

- Either God is speaking or He is not!
 - a. If He is not speaking, there is nothing to hear.
 - b. If He is speaking, He intends to be heard, and He will be. No amount of busyness, sin, or your “rock and roll” music will be loud enough to drown out the voice of the Almighty.

IV. “You’re Limiting God!”

We’ve spent a lot of time and effort dismantling a way of discerning God’s will for us in decision-making. By now I’m sure some of you are ready to accuse me of limiting God. Please ask yourself these very important questions:

A. Which view is more “limiting” of God?

1. The idea that there is no human limitation that can thwart the intention of God to communicate His will, or ..
2. The idea that God can only get through when we learn just the right techniques of reading the signs or listening for his voice.

B. The issue is not one of limitations on God, but “*What does the Bible Teach?*”

1. The Bible does not teach that we are all entitled to, nor should we expect special revelations from God.
2. The Bible does not teach that we need to develop a special spiritual skill in order to “hear” God’s voice.

The Lesson of the Bugle

In the context of the use of tongues without interpretation, Paul gives the following principle:

ESV 1 Corinthians 14:7 If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, **do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?** ⁸ And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹ So with yourselves, **if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?** For you will be speaking into the air.

Do we really believe that the same God who is concerned about our clarity of message here is going to guide us with indistinct signs or unintelligible speech?

V. *When God Speaks*

God can and does intervene in the life of believers with special direction.

Beware of our tendency to take the exception and make it the rule!

Characteristics of God’s intervention:

A. It is rare

1. Only a handful of instances, mostly clustered (along with miracles) around times of special revelation (Acts—establishing of the church and inspiration of Scripture)
2. Only one of Paul’s missionary journeys was specifically directed by God.
3. A handful of incidents don’t make for a model.

B. It is an intrusion. There is no indication that the guidance was being sought after. They weren’t waiting for it—God spoke in His time on His terms.

C. It is supernatural and absolutely clear. In Acts the visions, prophetic utterances, instances of the Holy Spirit speaking, and the voice of Jesus left no room for doubt.

1. Imagine Paul after his encounter on the road to Damascus—*Is God telling me something?*
2. Peter’s trance/vision—repeated 3 times to make sure he got it!
3. No indication these were “inner nudges” that they needed to learn to hear.
4. It generally goes against wisdom/changes current understanding. Thus the need special direction.
5. Therefore it becomes the moral will of God—*must* be obeyed. There is no indication of latter nudges canceling out previous nudges...

D. What about Acts 16:6-7?


^{ESV} **Acts 16:6** And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, **having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit** to speak the word in Asia.⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them**.

Either:

- This was divine direction but we are not given the form that it took

E. It was given to his servants ***in obedient motion:***

^{ESV} **Acts 16:6** And **they went** through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, ~~having been forbidden~~ by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, **they attempted to go** into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.



VI. What Bible Teaches About God’s Will

^{ESV} **Ephesians 5:15** Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

John MacArthur speaks rather bluntly:

As believers—people in God’s family—if we do not know God’s will, what are we? Uninformed? No. Searching? No. We are stupid.²

In order to understand how God’s will relates to our decision-making, we need a good understanding of what we mean by “God’s will.” The Bible speaks of God’s will in two different ways. His sovereign will and his moral will.

A. God’s Sovereign Will –God’s decrees or designs

1. It affirms God’s total control over the events of the universe.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:11** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will

^{ESV} **Romans 9:19b** " For who can resist his will?"

^{ESV} **Daniel 4:35** all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

^{ESV} **Acts 2:23a** ...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God

^{ESV} **Acts 4:27** for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

^{ESV} **Job 12:9** Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?

2. God’s sovereign will is secret other than where it is explicitly revealed.

^{ESV} **Acts 1:7** He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

^{ESV} **Job 9:10** who does great things beyond searching out

3. God’s sovereign will is revealed in two ways:
 - a. Predictive prophesy³ in Scripture such as the fate of the lost, end times events, etc.
 - b. History –*What does God will for today? I’ll tell you tomorrow.* Nothing is a surprise to God and nothing is outside of His control.
4. Includes God’s sovereign election⁴—Salvation is a work of God from start to finish. Jesus Christ does not try and fail to save—he is the perfect Savior⁵. Note how the

² Found: God’s Will, John MacArthur, David C. Cook Publications, 1977, p. 16

³ Most prophecy is a “forth-telling” God’s revealed Word. Here we mean God’s foretelling of future events.

⁴ For my non-Calvinist friends, please don’t get distracted at this point. We can disagree on “free will” issues and still have common ground on our view of biblical decision-making. Please hang in there!

following verses leave no room for failure and express everything in a “done deal” fashion:

^{ESV} **Romans 8:29-30** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:4-11** ... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ... ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

^{ESV} **2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ⁶

5. *We do not have access to God’s unrevealed sovereign will for the purpose of making decisions.*

Bruce Waltke, professor of Old Testament at RTS says:

“Simply because God has a plan does not mean that He necessarily has any intention of sharing it with you; as a matter of fact the message of Job is in part that the Lord in His sovereignty may allow terrible things to happen to you, and you may never know why.”⁷

We need to be very careful about judging God based on human standards (our sense of “fairness”) especially considering our limited perspective and knowledge of the bigger/eternal picture.

- a. Attempting to tap into or decipher God’s mind is called *divination* and is, for the most part, strictly forbidden in Scripture.

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 18:10-11** There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer ¹¹ or a charmer or a medium or a wizard or a necromancer,

^{ESV} **Leviticus 19:26** "You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes.

^{ESV} **Leviticus 20:27** "A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them."

⁵ James R. White’s *The God Who Justifies* and *The Potter’s Freedom* give scholarly exegesis of the disputed texts.

⁶ This text is often erroneously cited to refute Reformed/Calvinist doctrine. Understood in context (hint: follow the pronoun “you”), it cannot be interpreted to demonstrate Christ as a savior who tries to save all, but fails most of the time. Also see “The Big Three” summary on objectivegospel.org on the “Reformed Faith” page.

⁷ Walke, Bruce K., *Finding the Will of God a pagan notion?* Eerdmans, 1995, p. 15.

- b. “*for the most part*”—There are examples of God-allowed divination in Scripture. The casting of lots (Josh. 7:13,16-19; Num. 26:55, 56; 1 Sam. 10:20, 21; Acts 1:26) and the use of the Urim and Thummim (Num. 27:21)⁸. Two important things to understand about these methods:
- 1) There is no recorded use of them after Pentecost. (why important?)
 - 2) There is no instruction or encouragement to use these methods anywhere in the New Testament. The only recorded use was the selection of Matthias to replace Judas (and he’s never heard from again).
- c. Includes the identity of the elect. We will see that the Great Commission is part of God’s moral will as well as his sovereign will. God has commanded us to go into all the world and preach the gospel/make disciples. He will see that it is done, and we are the means through which He will accomplish it.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 1:21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

“If God would have painted a yellow stripe on the backs of the elect I would go around lifting shirts. But since He didn’t I must preach ‘whosoever will’ and when ‘whosoever’ believes I know he is one of the elect.” --*Charles Spurgeon*

B. God’s Moral Will –His Commands, His Law, His Standard of Righteousness

1. Can be resisted/disobeyed⁹.
2. Is completely revealed in the Bible. Some examples include:
 - a) Ten Commandments (Ex. 20)/Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31)
 - b) Great Commission (Mark 16:15, Matt. 28:19)
 - c) ^{ESV} **Romans 12:1** ... present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
 - d) ^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 10:5** ... take every thought captive to obey Christ
 - e) many more ...
3. Applies broadly—to every person or to every Christian. Conspicuously absent from these verses is individual guidance. God’s will is not:
 - a) ... whom to marry, but what kind of husband/wife you are
 - b) ... what job to take, but what kind of worker you are
 - c) ... where you live, but what kind of neighbor you are
 - d) ... what ministry you’re in, but how faithfully you serve
4. Two wills—A contradiction?

⁸ For a thorough discussion of the use of these methods, see *Finding God’s Will – a pagan notion?* by Bruce k. Waltke.

⁹ Remember, Scripture teaches both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. See the following note.

This generally just takes us back to the old argument of God’s sovereignty and the responsibility of man. Scripture teaches both¹⁰. Sometimes examples in the Scripture demonstrate it better than we can describe it:

- 1) Judas betrays Christ (violates moral will) but fulfills God’s plan.
- 2) The Jewish religious leaders deliver Christ over for execution (violates moral will) and fulfill God’s plan. (Acts 4:27-28)
- 3) Israel asks God for a king like other nations (1 Sam 8) in violation of God’s moral will, but part of God’s plan (throne of David, etc.)
- 4) Assyria is used of God in judgment against the rebellion of Israel, and are then themselves judged for the intents of their hearts (Isaiah 10:5-7,12)
- 5) Joseph understood and expressed it this way:

^{ESV} **Genesis 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

C. God’s Individual Will –*That I Am Supposed to Figure Out*

1. The problem is not with the first part of this description, it is with the second. God’s “individual blueprint plan for our lives” does indeed exist, but belongs under the category of God’s sovereign will. It is not to be “figured out” nor can it be missed.
2. Paul’s second letter to Timothy is his final word to the church. Knowing he would soon be dead, what instruction did he give about living the Christian life? Upon what source were we to draw our operating instructions? Where were we to look for guidance?

^{ESV} **2 Timothy 1:13** Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

^{ESV} **2 Timothy 2:2** ... and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

^{ESV} **2 Timothy 3:14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.
^{4:1} I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Paul makes no mention of looking for the best and latest techniques for divining God’s will. He points us back to the revealed word of God in Scripture.

¹⁰ The theological concept of compatibilism clarifies this seeming paradox. See D.A. Carson’s *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* or the *Compatibilism* page at objectivegospel.org on the “Reformed Faith” page.

3. Peter and Jude speak of God's revelation of Himself being "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3), and had been "once for all delivered to the saints.(Jude 3)"

4. J. I. Packer describes the problem:

"Earnest Christians seeking guidance often go wrong. Why is this? Often the reason is that their notion of the nature and method of divine guidance is distorted. They look for a wil-o'-the-wisp; they overlook the guidance that is ready at hand and lay themselves open to all sorts of delusions. Their basic mistake is to think of guidance as essentially *inward prompting by the Holy Spirit, apart from the written Word.*"¹¹ [emphasis in the original]

5. We spent a great deal of time dismantling a popular system of decision-making that is built upon this faulty premise. Such a will "individual blueprint *that we are supposed to figure out*" does not exist.

VII. *Wisdom*

We'll start with some definitions.

A. *Defined* wis·dom¹² n.

1. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting; insight.
2. Common sense; good judgment: "*It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things*" (Henry David Thoreau).
3. The sum of learning through the ages; knowledge: "*In those homely sayings was couched the collective wisdom of generations*" (Maya Angelou).

R.C. Sproul in his introduction to wisdom in the Reformation Study Bible:

"Wisdom in Scripture means choosing the best and noblest end to which to aim, along with the most appropriate and effective means of achieving that end."¹³

Dr. Walke at RTS:

"'Wisdom' in the Old Testament is a character trait, not simply thinking soberly. People with wisdom have the character to make good decisions."¹⁴

B. *Important*

1. Large sections of God's Word are dedicated to teaching wisdom
Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, many of the Psalms, significant sections of 1 Corinthians and James, etc.

¹¹ Packer, J.I., *Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press, 1993 ed. pp. 233-234.

¹² "wisdom." *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. 18 Feb. 2008. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/wisdom>>.

¹³ *The Reformation Study Bible*—English Standard Version, R.C. Sproul gen. Editor, Ligonier Ministries, 2005. "Wisdom and the Will of God" article, p. 1214.

¹⁴ Walke, p.17.

2. Desert Springs Church leadership—teaching through Proverbs

C. To be pursued and prayed for

^{ESV} **James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

^{ESV} **Colossians 1:9** And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

^{ESV} **Proverbs 4:5** Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 2:6** For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

^{ESV} **Proverbs 4:7** The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 7:4** Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call insight your intimate friend,

D. Of great value

^{ESV} **Proverbs 8:11** for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 23:23** Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

E. Essential as Witnesses, Ambassadors, Evangelists (agents of the Great Commission)

^{ESV} **Colossians 1:28** Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

F. Solomon—A Case Study

^{ESV} **2 Chronicles 1:7** In that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you."⁸ And Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and have made me king in his place."⁹ O LORD God, let your word to David my father be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth.¹⁰ Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?"¹¹ God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life, but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king,¹² wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like."

1. Solomon actually had God's ear, but would not presume to have constant access to God's explicit will at every juncture.
2. Solomon understood the purpose and value of wisdom

G. Source

1. From God through prayer (James 1:5; Col 1:9—quoted above)

2. From Study of God’s Word

^{ESV} **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

^{NAS} **2 Timothy 2:15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

3. From Advisors/Teachers/Parents

^{ESV} **Ephesians 4:11** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 15:22** Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 22:6** Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

H. Godly vs. Worldly Wisdom

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 1:17** For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. ¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Is this a repudiation of the importance of wisdom? (no, but of a dependence on worldly/incomplete wisdom)

1. Godly Wisdom

a. Built on the foundation of “the Fear of the Lord”

^{ESV} **Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

^{ESV} **Psalms 111:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

^{ESV} **Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

- b. Shares a common source with the “Fruits of the Spirit”

^{ESV} **James 3:13** Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the **meeekness** of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first **pure**, then **peaceable**, **gentle**, **open to reason**, **full of mercy** and **good fruits**, **impartial** and **sincere**.

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

2. Worldly wisdom is folly because it lacks a foundation. It is based on very limited knowledge.
- Is it wise to give away 10% of your money? (worldly?) (Godly?) What’s the difference?
 - Is it wise to quit fornicating or stealing? (worldly?) (Godly?)
 - Is it wise to quit your job and go into full time ministry? (worldly?) (Godly?—maybe)

I. Function of Wisdom

- Open to the floor*
- Demonstrate how each response falls under the general heading of “decision making”*
- Role of wisdom in the popular model:*

When you consider the pop-church method of decision making, what do you notice about the role of wisdom?

- It is not there. Who needs wisdom when you can just “listen for the voice of God” on every decision that comes along?
- If I can just divine God’s will by my inner urges, personal between the lines messages in Scripture, listening techniques, etc. there is no place for teaching, understanding, council of pastors, teachers, parents, etc.
- Result—Biblical illiteracy.

VIII. Conclusion

Now that we have “cleared the lot” of some unbiblical ideas and laid a foundation understanding of God’s will and wisdom, next week we will start building our new decision-making model.