

God's Word

Discerning God's Will—part 2

Colossians 1:9-10

June 4, 2017

DAY 1: Review the main points from last week's message regarding discerning God's will:

3 Prior Questions we should ask ourselves:

1. What has God commanded? Am I doing what I know He already wants me to do?

2. Am I committed to God's calling? (*Romans 14:8*)

God's prior claim on our lives: His kingdom; His glory. Our lens: this ruling value is to affect how I relate, how I work, how I think, what I say and don't say.

3. Am I willing to do His will?

2 Dangers:

Danger #1: Trusting our own judgment (*Proverbs 12:15*)

Danger #2: Waywardness (*Romans 10:21*)

How should I approach the bible to make decisions, to determine God's will?

Here is a rubric for using the bible.

1. **Commands:** → We start with the clear commands of scripture.

a. The "Musts" – what are we commanded to do?

b. The "No No's" – what are the things we are not allowed to do?

c. The "Permitted" – what are we allowed to do because there is no prohibition?

2. **Form and Freedom**

a. Imagine a rectangle. Outside of that rectangle are the things you are not allowed to do. But inside the rectangle, you are given freedom to choose what you'd like, as long as you stay within the boundaries of the rectangle (the boundaries of scripture)

b. An example is from Genesis "You may eat from any tree, but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (There is both form and freedom)

3. **Principles** and **values** of scripture, (which we'll focus on this week)

4. **Wisdom:** discernment vs. simpleton; foolishness; folly, etc.

Example: though I have the freedom to drink, is it wise for me to drink given my past history?

5. **Ministry** (Witness); effect → **Calling**

Example: though I have the freedom to drink, is it a good witness to my friend I want to reach?

→ What is your biggest take away from today's devotional?

DAY 2: "...that I may be filled with the knowledge of His will ..."

1. If we are trying to discern God's will and have already considered His **Commands** ("musts," "no no's" and "permitted") but we're still confused as to what to do, we move into "**Form and Freedom**" territory.

2. But what if we're still confused as to what God wants us to do? We move into the **Principles and Values** evaluators.

3. Today and the next few days we'll look at some of the principles and values that will help us is determining God's will, and making wise decisions.

Colossians 1:9 (RSV) And so, from the day we heard of it, 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,

¹⁰ to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

4. For what does Paul pray for the believers in Colossae in v. 9?

5. He wants the believers to be "filled with the **knowledge** of His will..."

6. The Greek word for "**knowledge**" is "epignosis." "Epignosis:"

- a. Is a prefix and root word, meaning "full knowledge."
- b. Is directly related to God's will.
- c. In the Old Testament it's always connected with practical obedience.
- d. Is the opposite of theoretical knowledge.

7. How would you summarize what Paul is praying for them?

8. Finish today by praying Colossians 1:9-10 for you.

DAY 3: Spiritual wisdom and understanding

Colossians 1:9 (RSV) And so, from the day we heard of it, 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,

¹⁰ *to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

1. Being filled with the knowledge of God's will is more than a generic wanting to know what I should do. The goal is something higher!

2. "**Wisdom.**" The Greek word is "Sophia"

3. "Sophia (knowledge) is a knowledge of first principles, or standards which regulate your action.

4. "**Spiritual**" – considerations; aspirations; motivations.

"Spiritual" as opposed to "worldly," the way of the world, or the way of human nature. The idea is to know God's will in such a way that I can move with the most practical wisdom, for the highest and noblest spiritual goals (in others and myself), and for the highest purposes (which we will look at tomorrow!)

"Guidance is largely consecrated and sanctified thinking." – James Jauncey

5. "**Understanding.**" The Greek word is "Sunesis."

The Greeks used "sunesis" to describe a certain kind of understanding: a critical knowledge, or a clear view of what needs to be done.

Ephesians 5:15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,

¹⁶ *making the most of the time, because the days are evil.*

¹⁷ *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

6. Let me summarize: The ability to apply first principles to any given situation which may arise, to advance God's kingdom in others and me, for His glory.

7. What strikes you most from today's devotional?

DAY 4: "...Worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him..."

Colossians 1:9 (RSV) And so, from the day we heard of it, 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,

¹⁰ *to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

1. We continue to filter discerning God's will from:

- Commands, to
- Form and Freedom, to
- Principles and values.

2. Today, we look at **two values** that can guide our decisions as we try to make godly decisions and discern God's will in our life's situations.

3. "...**to lead a life worthy of the Lord...**"

Here are some companion verses on the same topic:

Philippians 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Ephesians 4:1 (RSV) I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

4. How would you summarize what Paul is about this concept?

5. "**Fully pleasing to Him...**"

John 8:29 (RSV) (Jesus said) "And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him."

2 Corinthians 5:9 (RSV) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

("home or away" means living or dead)

6. May our decisions, words, actions bring pleasure to Him! This is another filter in discerning God's will.

7. May we rise to the level of our profession as Christ's people; may we rise to His character. May what we do and how we live and relate bring Him pleasure.

DAY 5: “Bearing fruit in every good work and Increasing in the knowledge of God”

Colossians 1:9 (RSV) And so, from the day we heard of it, 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,

¹⁰ *to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, **bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.***

1. Today, we look at two more values that help us discern God’s will in situations or relationships that are difficult and confusing.

2. “Bearing fruit in every good work”

*John 15:16 (RSV) You did not choose me, but I **chose you** and **appointed you that you should go and bear fruit** and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*

3. Will the way I act in this given situation or relate to this difficult person be a way of planting seeds that may bear fruit some day?

4. Will how I live in this given situation be an opportunity to advance God’s kingdom in someone else?

5. “Increasing in the knowledge of God”

a. The same word for knowledge is used here, as it was in Colossians 1:9.

b. “Epignosis,” meaning “full knowledge.”

6. The filter is something like this. “Will how I act in this given situation encourage me toward knowing God better?” (I’m not talking about avoiding difficult situations to focus on “me.” Oftentimes, we increase in knowing God by leaning in toward difficult people and difficult situations, just like Jesus did!)

7. Summary for the week: we filter discerning God’s will from:

- Commands, to
- Form and Freedom, to
- Principles and values.

8. Next week we’ll add two more “filters” to help us discern God’s will, especially in difficult situations and with difficult relationships.