

# God's Word: Wisdom, Witness

## Discerning God's Will—part 3

June 11, 2017

### **DAY 1: Review: How should I approach the bible to make decisions, to seek God's will?**

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.

Example: Colossians 1:9-10

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

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

God's word gives me wisdom for the long haul of life and for today:

*Psalms 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

God's word gives me much needed wisdom that I will never see without His word and wisdom:

*Psalms 119:130 The unfolding of thy words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*

## DAY 2: "...Wisdom, part 1

1. God has called us to live in dependence on Him. That means we will not know everything we think we need to know!

2. God wants us to come to Him for wisdom and direction. I wonder how often He intentionally allows very difficult situations to arise just so this happens!

*James 1:2 (RSV) Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials,  
<sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

*<sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*<sup>5</sup> **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God**, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him.*

*<sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.*

*<sup>7</sup> For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord.*

3. What strikes you from this passage in James 1?

4. But wisdom does not come "naturally," as we saw in James 1. Solomon says we must seek wisdom as top priority!

*Proverbs 2:1 (RSV) My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, <sup>2</sup> making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding;*

*<sup>3</sup> yes, if you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding,*

*<sup>4</sup> if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures;*

*<sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

5. Solomon gives a number of examples to describe how seriously we must seek wisdom. Which of the examples speaks most to you? Why?

6. Do you stand in need of wisdom with a relationship or a difficult problem?

7. Finish today's devotional asking God for wisdom, and seeking it in the manner of Solomon from Proverbs 2.

*Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

## DAY 3: Wisdom, part 2

1. Prudence is the ability to see and understand situations accurately. Prudence takes into account the many factors that often go into problems and difficult relationships.

2. Prudence (and “understanding”) give us the ability to accurately “read” situations, giving us insight into how to respond and not respond.

*Proverbs 22:3 (RSV) A **prudent man** sees danger and hides himself; but **the simple** go on, and suffer for it.*

3. “The simple” man (simpleton) is naïve about relationships and situations.

- “It can’t be that difficult!”
- “Just do something; it’ll be fine.”
- “What could possibly go wrong?”
- “Dang! Never saw THAT comin’!”

4. Prudence not only reads the complexities and dangers but can also see what needs to be done.

5. What does wisdom look like?

*James 3:13 (RSV) Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.*

<sup>15</sup> *This **wisdom** is not such as comes down **from above**, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.*

<sup>16</sup> *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*

<sup>17</sup> *But the **wisdom from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity.*

6. This passage in James is a contrast between earthly, unspiritual, devilish “wisdom,” vs. wisdom that comes “from above.”

7. What stands out to you about “earthly wisdom?”

8. What stands out to you about God’s wisdom?

9. What strikes you most from today’s devotional?

## DAY 4: Witness, part 1

1. Sometimes, making decisions or trying to determine God's will in a situation involves the value of our witness, or ministry to others.

2. Here is an example from Paul's life.

*Romans 15:18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed,*

*<sup>19</sup> by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ,*

*<sup>20</sup> thus making it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation,*

*<sup>21</sup> but as it is written, "They shall see who have never been told of him, and they shall understand who have never heard of him."*

*<sup>22</sup> This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.*

*<sup>23</sup> But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you,*

*<sup>24</sup> I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be sped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little.*

3. Notice the interplay between:

- a. How God is leading,
- b. What Paul wants to do, and
- c. Where Paul wants to go

4. What would Paul like to do?

5. What places would Paul like to go? Why?

6. How has Paul been hindered?

7. What's driving Paul is his purpose, his witness, his ministry to people. This is a value that God is building into every one of us, where we make decisions about our use of time, money, and activities, based not on ourselves but on moving God's kingdom forward!

## DAY 5: Witness, part 2

1. Paul again illustrates how some of his decisions and discerning God's will is left up to the realm of wisdom and witness.

*1 Corinthians 16:5 I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, <sup>6</sup> and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may speed me on my journey, wherever I go.*

*<sup>7</sup> For I do not want to see you now just in passing; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.*

*<sup>8</sup> But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

2. What is Paul's attitude toward God as regards his ministry plans?

3. What purposes and values are also driving Paul in formulating his future plans?

4. How would you describe the interplay of God's leading and Paul's plans for future ministry?

5. Here's another example of using witness or ministry to help determine God's will:

*2 Corinthians 2:12 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; <sup>13</sup> but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.*

6. What role did God play in this example?

7. For Paul, what witness or ministry considerations were driving him?

8. How would you describe the interplay between God's leading and Paul's discerning of God's will?