DECISION-MAKING & THE WILL OF GOD

Based on the Bible study by Dr. Garry Friesen, Multnomah Bible College
SEMINAR APPROACH TO
DEFINING GOD’S WAY OF DECISION-MAKING

1. Present the “Traditional View” of “decision-making” & its supporting thinking

2. Examine the “Traditional View” in the FULL light of Scripture

3. Conclude what God’s Word really says about His will and guidance for our lives

Bob Kostrubanic
- Adapted from "Decision-Making & the Will of God", Gary Friesen

July 9, 2008
QUESTIONS THE “TRADITIONAL VIEW” TRIES TO ANSWER

1. What does the phrase “God’s will” mean?
2. Does God have an “Individual Will” for My life?
3. How can I discover God’s will?
4. How can I know God’s will in specific situations?
TRADITIONAL VIEW:
ASPECTS OF GOD’S WILL

“GOD’S WILL” =

HIS **SOVEREIGN** WILL

HIS **MORAL** WILL

HIS **INDIVIDUAL** WILL
*(His unique will for each individual)*
TRADITIONAL VIEW:
“THE CENTER OF GOD’S WILL”

GOD’S MORAL WILL

God’s “Individual Will” for a particular believer

“A”

“B”

“ = Missing the IDEAL”

God’s “Permissive Will” for a particular believer

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### God’s SOVEREIGN will

1. God’s secret plan – determines everything that happens in universe
2. Mostly hidden
3. Cannot be learned before
4. Cannot be “missed” should be humbly accepted
5. **INDIRECTLY** ideal plan: Though it includes evil acts & foolish decisions, it will ultimately lead to God’s glory

### God’s MORAL will

1. God’s revealed commands in the Bible that teach how men ought to believe & live
2. Totally revealed
3. Must be learned for guidance
4. Can be “missed” through ignorance or disobedience
5. **DIRECTLY** ideal pattern: Includes only those behaviors & attitudes that conform to God’s character, thereby glorifying Him

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Bob Kostrubanic  
Gary Friesen  
- Adapted from "Decision-Making & the Will of God",  
July 9, 2008
### TRADITIONAL VIEW:
**COMPARING/CONTRASTING GOD’S INDIVIDUAL & SOVEREIGN WILLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>INDIVIDUAL WILL</strong></th>
<th><strong>SOVEREIGN WILL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Detailed plan for all decisions in believer’s life</td>
<td>1. Detailed plan for all events in the universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Believer can find &amp; know it</td>
<td>2. Hidden ... cannot be found or known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Believer is expected to find it</td>
<td>3. Believer is not expected to find it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Believer can miss it by failure to discover or obey it</td>
<td>4. It always comes to pass, so believer cannot miss it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Includes only the good &amp; ideal</td>
<td>5. Includes both good &amp; evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Decision-making requires discovering it</td>
<td>6. Will be discovered only after it happens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>DIRECTLY</strong> ideal plan:</td>
<td>7. <strong>INDIRECTLY</strong> ideal plan:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In harmony with Scripture</td>
<td>• Includes evil acts &amp; foolish decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decision is always ideal</td>
<td>• Ultimately leads to God’s glory</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Brings glory to God</td>
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**TRADITIONAL VIEW:**
**COMPARING/CONTRASTING GOD’S INDIVIDUAL & MORAL WILLS**

### INDIVIDUAL WILL
1. Detailed plan for all decisions in believer’s life
2. Believer is expected to find & do it
3. Believer can miss it by failure to discover or obey it
4. Is revealed to believer’s heart – cannot be found in Bible
5. Holy Spirit reveals it through inward impressions by many means
6. Gives specific directives for one specific believer

### MORAL WILL
1. Body of general commands & principles for life
2. Believer is expected to find & do it
3. Believer can miss it by failure to discover or obey it
4. Revealed to apostles & prophets – can be found completely in Bible
5. Holy Spirit revealed it in past by many means
6. Directives are generally for all believers

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TRADITIONAL VIEW:
“DOES GOD HAVE AN INDIVIDUAL WILL FOR MY LIFE ??”

- Yes – By REASON
- Yes – by EXPERIENCE OF BELIEVERS
- Yes – By BIBLICAL EXPERIENCES
- Yes – By DIRECT BIBLE TEACHING
TRADITIONAL VIEW:
7 “ROAD SIGNS” FOR DETERMINING GOD’S INDIVIDUAL WILL FOR ME

1. God’s Word
2. Circumstances
3. Inner witness of the Holy Spirit
4. Mature counsel from other believers
5. Personal desires
6. Common sense
7. Special supernatural guidance
TRADITIONAL VIEW: "HOW CAN I KNOW GOD’S WILL FOR SURE IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS??"

- By agreement of the “7 Road Signs”
- By monitoring the results
- By prayer
- By continued personal communion with God
CRITIQUING THE “TRADITIONAL” VIEW:
PROBLEMS WITH SOME OF THE “ROAD SIGNS” ... THE 3 “IMPLICATIONS” SIGNS

- Problems in conclusions based on REASON ...
  - Evidence of “order”
  - Evidence of God as Father, Shepherd, King

- Problems in conclusions based on EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS ...
  - Wrong concept of “success”

- Problems in conclusions based on BIBLICAL CHARACTER EXPERIENCES
  - Low number of recorded cases of direct guidance
  - Recipients of direct guidance not the norm
  - Directly guided decisions narrow in type
  - Not all recorded decisions had direct guidance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Passage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs 3.5-6</td>
<td>“... He will make your paths straight ...”</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Speaks of making believer’s life successful</td>
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<td>- Says one shows trust &amp; obedience to God by following His Moral will</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psalms 32.8</td>
<td>“...I will counsel you ...”</td>
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<td>- Key word is “counsel”, not “guide”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- David (not God) offers his counsel, which is to follow God’s Moral will</td>
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<td>Isaiah 30.20-21</td>
<td>“...hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it...’ ”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Plural “teachers” shows many guides, not one Holy Spirit, doing advising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Guidance not coming from within believer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Addressed specifically to rebellious Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colossians 1.9</td>
<td>“... filled with the knowledge of His will ...”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Key point = knowledge of God’s Moral will is vital</td>
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<td>- Contains exhortation to seek spiritual insight</td>
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<td>Romans 12.1-2</td>
<td>“... that you may prove what the will of God is”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Plea is to surrender your bodies for obedient living</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Context is to obey God’s Moral commands after surrender</td>
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CRITIQUING THE “TRADITIONAL” VIEW:
DIFFICULTIES IN APPLYING IDEA OF AN INDIVIDUAL WILL

ORDINARY DECISIONS
- Can’t be uniformly applied to the “minor decisions of life

EQUAL OPTIONS
- Since there is only one “correct” choice, there is ...
  - Anxiety over missing it
  - Lack of gratitude to God for multiple opportunities

IMMATURITY
- Its logic sometimes promotes immature approaches to making a decision

SUBJECTIVITY
- Since this view has no objective source supporting it, believer can’t have certainty that he/she has found God’s individual will for them
INSTEAD OF THE TRADITIONAL VIEW ....

Presenting ..... 

THE “WAY OF WISDOM”
WAY OF WISDOM – POINT 1

GOD’S MORAL WILL IS THE GUIDANCE SOUGHT FOR

- Intended to guide perfection of
- God’s intended RESULTS by this guidance:
  - **PRODUCTS (GOALS of guidance)**
    - God glorified (1 Pet 4.10-11)
    - “Expedient” results (1 Cor 10.23)
    - Believers are to be edified
    - Others are served (Rom 4.19)
    - “Fruit” is produced (Col 1.10)
  - Love  Joy  Peace  Longsuffering
  - Gentleness  Goodness  Faith
  - Meekness  Temperance

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WAY OF WISDOM – POINT 1

GOD’S MORAL WILL IS THE GUIDANCE SOUGHT FOR

- Intended to guide perfection of
- God’s intended RESULTS by this guidance:
  - **PRODUCTS (GOALS of guidance)**
  - **PURPOSE (ATTITUDES intended by guidance)**
    - “Put off” / “Put on” (Eph 4.22-24)
    - Love God & neighbor
    - Rely on God, not self
    - Humility, not pride
    - Submission, not self advancement
    - Courage, not fear
  - **PROCESS (MEANS urged by guidance)**
    - Must be scripturally lawful (Eph 5.1, 6-14)
    - Must be wise (Eph 5.15-17)
Responses God expects to guidance from His MORAL Will:

1. It must be KNOWN (John 13.16-17)
   - “Consider” it, “study” it (2 Tim 2.7,15)
   - “Meditate” on it (Ps 1.2)
   - Memorize it (Ps 119.11)

2. It must be OBEYED (Deut 10.12-13)
   - Get your priorities straight (1 Cor 7.19)
   - Obey it from the heart (1 Sam 16.7)

3. EXPECT it to produce RESULTS (Ps 1.1-3)

“In those areas specifically addressed by the Bible, the revealed commands and principles of God (His Moral will) are to be obeyed”
WAY OF WISDOM – POINT 2
UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRIT OF GOD’S MORAL WILL

- God’s principle of guidance as shown in Scripture ... FREEDOM OF CHOICE WITHIN LIMITS

Examples
- Started with Adam (Gen 2.16-17)
- Formalized in Mosaic Law = “Normative Law”
- Jesus corrected abuse of Scribes & Pharisees
  - God-given freedom gone! (Matt 23.1-4, 13, 15)
  - It must be returned

To understand the spirit, understand sin
- Sin is breaking God’s law (1 John 3.4)
- If law doesn’t cover it, it isn’t sin (Rom 4.15)

Scriptural support for freedom within revealed limits:
- Believers made in God’s Image (Gen 1.26-27)
- Mosaic Law
  - Certain animals not to be eaten (Lev 11, Deut 14)
  - Nazarite Vow, personal consecration (Num 6)
  - Freewill offering (Lev 22.18)
- Jesus’ parable of vineyard laborers (Matt 20.1-16)
- NT: Eating regulations (Rom 14.2, 1 Cor 8, 10)
- NT: Giving regulations (2 Cor 9.7)
“In those areas where the Bible gives no command or principle (non-moral decisions), the believer is free and responsible to choose his own course of action. Any decision made within the moral will of God is acceptable to God.”

**PRINCIPLE LEADS TO GOD’S MORAL WILL AND FREEDOM**

- Replaces “dot” of Traditional View’s “Individual Will”

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MAKE “NON-MORAL” DECISIONS: BUT ON WHAT BASIS?

- Freedom brings responsibility (Rom 14.5, 10, 12)
  - Believer is free and required to make decisions

- God has supplied:
  - Privilege of choice
  - Accountability
  - Needed instructions

- NT provides examples of apostles making decisions:
  - Should we help Thessalonica? (1 Thess 3.1-5)
  - Should we aid a fellow worker? (Phil 2.25-26)
  - Should we support the offering being taken? (1 Cor 16.3-4)
  - Improve care for others? (Acts 6.1-4)

... Note the common theme

**NOT**

“What is God’s will for me??”

**INSTEAD**

“Thought it best…”

“Thought it necessary…”

“...seemed good…”

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WAY OF WISDOM – POINT 3
MAKE “NON-MORAL” DECISIONS: KEY GUIDANCE POINTS

WISDOM-WAY PRINCIPLE # 3

“In Non-Moral decisions, the goal of the believer is to make wise decisions on the basis of spiritual expediency”

“SPIRITUAL”
- Means & ends governed by God’s Moral will
- Aim – Glorify & please God

“EXPEDIENCY”
- Conditions quality of the means
- What works best within God’s Moral will to get the job done

“WISE”
- Perceiving an effective way to accomplish spiritual goals

DECISION-MAKING BASIS = APPROPRIATE USE OF WISDOM
WAY OF WISDOM – POINT 3
MAKE “NON-MORAL” DECISIONS: GAINING THE BASIS

SPIRITUAL EXPEDIENCY IS THE KEY (Eph 5.15-17 + Col 4.5)

“Walk” = Conduct

“Wise”, “wisdom” = How you live your life

So, Principle # 3 summarized is ...

Make decisions ... with wisdom, that are spiritually expedient
WAY OF WISDOM – POINT 3
MAKE “NON-MORAL” DECISIONS: GAINING THE BASIS

SPIRITUAL EXPEDIENCY IS THE KEY  (Eph 5.15-17 + Col 4.5)

So, Principle # 3 summarized is ...
Make decisions ... with wisdom, that are spiritually expedient

Steps to gaining wisdom ...
• Must have a desire for it  (Prov 8.17)
• Must have the right attitude
  o Not self-dependent  (Prov 3.7)
  o Given to those of certain spiritual characteristics
• Must have the right approach
  o Ask God for it (Jam 1.5-6, Col 1.9-10)
  o Look for it in Scriptures (Ps 119.97-100)
  o Do outside research (Neh 2.11-16)
  o Seek wise counselors (Prov 13.20, 15.22)
  o Learn from life (Prov 6.6-11, Heb 5.12-14)
Reprise last slide –

“Given to those of certain spiritual characteristics”

- Reverence (Prov 9.10)
- Humility (Prov 15.33)
- Teachableness (Prov 19.20)
- Diligence (Prov 2.4-5, 8.17)
- Uprightness (Prov 2.7)
- Faith (Jam 1.5-8)
Reviewing the nature of God’s sovereign will

- It will be fulfilled (Dan 4.35, Job 1.12, 2.6)
- It is exhaustive (Jam 4.13-15, Eph 1.11)
- It is secret
- It is perfect

Concerns these raise

- “Is God responsible for sin?” .... (Isa 6.3)
- “How can there be any free choice in decisions?”
  - God operates at the “macro” level, man at the “micro”
  - God never forces us to act against our will
Effects of God’s sovereignty on decision-making

- **Planning: Decision-making = God’s growth plan**
  - Scriptural model (Jam 4.13-16)

- **Circumstances**
  - Not God’s “hints” ... shouldn’t replace decision-making
  - Dangerous to morale to “read” them (Eccl 1.1-11, Ps 37.1, Jn 9.2-3)

- **Role of “doors”** (≠ circumstances)
  - = an opportunity, usually to minister God’s Word
  - Come about through God’s sovereignty
  - Should be **wisely** evaluated
  - Scripture doesn’t mention “closed” doors (Rom 1.10-13)
  - “Putting out a fleece” = seeking a circumstantial sign
“In all decisions, the believer should humbly submit, in advance, to the outworking of God’s Sovereign will as it touches each decision”

GOD GIVES ...

His SOVEREIGN will
- Generates ...
  • Circumstances
  • Open doors (opportunities)
  • Attitude of humility

His MORAL will (Regulation)
- Holy Spirit guides believer in following Moral will

WISDOM (Resources)
- Holy Spirit guides believer with wisdom

BELIEVER ...
- Evaluates
- Decides / acts
SUMMARIZING TO ...

A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR PRACTICAL DECISION-MAKING
## Gaining a Biblical Model for Decision-Making

### Four Distinctive Ways in Which God Guides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sphere of Guidance</th>
<th>Moral Guidance</th>
<th>Wisdom Guidance</th>
<th>Sovereign Guidance</th>
<th>Special Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morality</strong></td>
<td>In Moral Conduct</td>
<td>In “Non-Moral” Decisions</td>
<td>In All things</td>
<td>In Unique cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Morality</strong></td>
<td>God Directly Guides believers</td>
<td>God MEDIATELY Guides believers</td>
<td>God SECRETLY Guides believers</td>
<td>God SUPERNATURALLY Guides believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Means of Guidance</strong></td>
<td>By REVEALED: -Commands -Principles</td>
<td>By ACQUIRED Wisdom</td>
<td>By SOVEREIGN CONTROL Over all events</td>
<td>By -Divine Voice -Dreams -Miracles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Governing Principle God Uses

- **Moral Will** (Bible)
- According to **Spiritual Expediency** (Gain His objectives, best way, best time)
- According to His **Sovereign Will**
- According to **Special Revelation**

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GAINING A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR DECISION-MAKING

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ASPECTS OF GOD’S WILL

God’s Moral Will

AREA OF FREEDOM

God’s Sovereign Will

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