

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
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## Questionable but Popular Decision-Making, Pt 2

### Selected Passages

**Keywords:** Decision-Making, God's Will, Prayer, Word of God, Wisdom, Counsel

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** In this third installment on biblical decision-making we begin to consider many of the common ways that Christians will go about making decisions. The goal is to see how well those ideas hold up under biblical scrutiny.

#### I. Introduction.

- A. I want to finish up with common methods that people use as Christians to make decisions.
- B. Three main areas that all decision-making models fall under. These areas are very broad in nature.
  - 1. Subjective.
    - a. This model is one that is almost completely based upon subjective opinion.
    - b. This model sees that there is a specific, "perfect" will of God for each person and that we are to discover it through many different methods.
  - 2. Objective.
    - a. This model looks outside of ourselves to begin to form a decision.
    - b. It believes in the supremacy of the Bible and view subjective methods as unacceptable since they allow for some other type of revelation from God other than the Bible.
    - c. As a rule, this model does not see that there is "perfect" will.
  - 3. Combination.
    - a. These models recognize that the Bible is authoritative and critical in the process of decision-making. However, they also do not see it as sufficient, therefore it needs to be supplemented by more subjective methods.

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- b. The subjective methods used are usually not extreme; but are seen as needed to help you determine how to be in the center of the will of God in your life.

## **I. Questionable Decision-Making Models.**

### **A. Questionable decision-making practices.**

- 1. Reasons to question them:
  - a. Errors in application or interpretation of Bible passages.
    - (1) The sticking point for many people is that they have biblical texts that seem to support their methods.
    - (2) But often these passages simply do not hold up when scrutinized.
  - b. The ability to bring self-seeking ideas into play.
- 2. A reminder of the grace of God in all of this.
- 3. A quick statement about some of what I have already taught.
  - a. I know that not everyone will fully agree with me on what I have taught.
  - b. I recognize that many have had experiences that would seem to contradict what I have said to this point.
  - c. My response is simple. Because they are experiences they cannot be verified. That doesn't make them false but they don't have any real authority behind them other than that you experienced them.
  - d. Examples:
    - (1) I have had people come to me and tell me that God has told them to tell me something. I am very reluctant to see any authority in these moments.
    - (2) I too have had moments where I experience great unease over a situation or decision. I do factor that into my decisions but I do not invest biblical authority in it.
      - (a) Often I will say something like, "I can't give you a good reason at this point but I find myself very uncomfortable with what I am seeing or hearing."
      - (b) At times it is a result of my own weaknesses and sinful tendencies. Other times I see it more as a result

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of having lived 53 years and there is a bit of wisdom that is working out beyond the edge of my consciousness.

- (c) I also have experienced a tremendous pressure to act or speak at times.
  - i) It may have been the prompting/conviction of the Holy Spirit. But there is simply no way to know.
  - ii) I find myself reluctant to say it was God moving me to do or speak because it can take on a level of authority that doesn't really exist.
  - iii) Who wants to be the one who says it wasn't God who told you to speak to that little old lady.

(3) I also have seen what seems to be unique situations where God speaks in unique ways. Too many to count stories of Muslims in closed countries who have a vision of Jesus Christ to ignore them all.

e. All of this is to say that I am not discounting these experiences I am trying to teach that they are not normative nor do they possess any real authority for us as Christians.

(1) We are to be a people of the Word of God.

(2) And we are to be a theologically sound people of God who operate under certain truths such as the sovereignty of God, the sinfulness of man, the freedom found in Jesus Christ, and the understanding that this age and world is passing away.

B. With these things in mind let us continue to examine some questionable but popular methods of decision-making.

1. Results/Pragmatism.

a. Just because something works does not make it right or of God.

b. In Numbers 20 Moses was told by God to speak to the rock and water would come out. Instead he struck the rock, water still came out (by God's grace) but Moses was severely punished.

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- c. Matthew 7:21-23 speaks of judgment day. People are claiming to have done tremendous works in the name of the Lord and though Christ does not dispute their claims, also says that they were not saved.
  - d. This is situational ethics. It also carries the assumption that the right decision results in positive, pleasant results.
  - e. God's providential guiding of our lives often leads us through difficult times of testing.
  - f. Often I find that when we are making decisions we are looking for the most pleasant path or the most convenient one. We therefore interpret the wisdom of a decision based on perceived results.
  - g. Example: Picking a church.
    - (1) What does it have to offer me and my family?
    - (2) How convenient is the drive or the times of the services?
    - (3) Whereas you could instead choose a church based upon where it is going rather than where it is at this particular moment. Or because you possess gifts that you could invest into the Body there.
2. Feelings (Goose bumps, chills, the warm fuzzies, feeling 'wrong.')
- a. This is a very common method of making decisions. All the time we hear or say that we feel that God wants us to do something.
  - b. The problem is that feelings should not be the basis of leading or decisions. A prime example would be with Jesus Christ in the Garden prior to the crucifixion. He felt one thing, but it did not control Him.
  - c. 2 Corinthians 5:7.
    - (1) Often quoted when using this method.
    - (2) God has given you a peace or a really strong feeling/conviction that you should do such and such. And because you walk by faith and not sight you are going to follow it, trusting God's leading.
    - (3) But notice the text itself.

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- d. In the ultimate sense, this method is mystical in its approach to God's will because you are trying to determine what is spiritually real by personal senses rather than the Word.
  - e. Having "peace" about something fits into this category. Jonah had peace, he was actually sleeping, but he certainly wasn't obedient. Most of the passages that are used to defend this view have no bearing whatsoever on making decisions. There is certainly no direct teaching from the Bible on this method.
  - f. Mind you that how you feel about something may still factor into a decision. I would simply say that I don't feel like doing something. I would never say that I can feel God leading me to make a decision.
3. Inner voice (impressions, promptings, 'a still, small voice.')
- a. We will say that God really impressed upon me that I ought to not do something. There is a reasonableness with this due to the convicting work of the Spirit. This convicting work is in conjunction with the Word of God.
  - b. Often this is used in the smallest of details and is simply subjective at its heart.
  - c. At no time does the Bible teach us to listen for that inner voice. Commonly it is taken from the narrative of Elijah's time with the Lord. 1 Kings 19:11-12:
    - (1) Here you have the story of when God caused a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire to pass before Elijah, but God was in the still, small voice that came after instead of in those mighty displays of power.
    - (2) Often you will hear this text to be used to mean that we need to get to a quiet place and learn to hear God's voice. And often that voice is small and quiet so it takes training to discern it.
    - (3) Context is that Elijah is hiding from the queen, Jezebel, even though he had just been a witness of God's strength. God confronts him in vs 9 and Elijah answers in vs 10.
    - (4) What Elijah needs to learn is not how to hear God's voice but about why he ought not complain or question God.

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- (5) After seeing these three events God again speaks (13).
  - (6) Notice his answer and then God's in vs 14-17.
  - (7) How many people is he to anoint? To what might these three correspond?
  - (8) Finally, look at vs 18. What, then, is the gentle blowing?
  - (9) Conclusion: the three powerful forces of nature are the three people who will be used by God to judge others. But the fullest expression of God's presence is in His preservation of the prophets and in that is the promise to keep a remnant.
- d. I would argue that when a person begins to lean upon promptings and such that it is reckless faith. It leads us away from the sureness of the Scripture and causes us to lean on our own understandings.
  - e. Bottom line with these 'voices' is that we can never know for certain that they are of God, unless they square with clear biblical passages—which then causes us to wonder why God needed to say them again.
  - f. We are commanded to study and meditate on the Scripture, to cultivate wisdom and discernment, to walk wisely and make the most of our time; to obey God's commands, but never to listen to an inner voice.
  - g. As one man properly observed, there is no actual difference between responding to an inner voice or leading and acting as a fortune teller.
4. Counsel/Advice.
    - a. This is another method that can be good, but not fool-proof. Men can be fooled (cf. Joshua 9) and they do not know your heart and motives.
    - b. Here we need to have a good understanding of our sinful tendencies. Remember James 1:14ff.
    - c. One huge temptation will be to hear only those who you want to hear.
  5. Prayer.

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- a. This is obviously fine, but must be understood biblically.
- b. Prayer is not a two way process where we talk to God and He talks to us. That is no different than the people who channel spirits.
- c. Prayer is us talking to God. The way the Lord talks to us is through His Word.
  - (1) What about James 1:5?
- d. Prayer is giving praise, thanksgiving, requests, confession, not conversation.
- e. This is often why I question people when they ask me if I "prayed about it." My question is, "How will I know if God answers it?"

## **II. The basics of sound decision-making.**

- A. Be rightly related to Christ.
  1. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.
  2. Philippians 3:8-14.
- B. Pursue a life of worshiping God.
  1. John 4:23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
  2. 2 Corinthians 5:9 Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.
- C. Develop a biblical mind.
  1. Romans 12:1-2, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
  2. The greater that you are conformed to the Word of God will result in a mind that is renewed, stable, and consistently conformed to God's will. You will know more and more what is good, acceptable and mature.

## **III. Conclusion.**

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- A. Let us be a people who do not put words into the mouth and mind of God.
- B. Let us be a people who seek first to do those things God clearly commands of us.
  - 1. To be a people who rest in the gospel.
  - 2. To be a people who speak that gospel to others.
  - 3. To be a holy people seeking to remain unstained by this age.
  - 4. To be a serious people, recognizing that the days are evil.
  - 5. To be a focused people knowing that we shall be judged by our Lord.
  - 6. To be a happy people knowing that in Jesus we are safe, we are loved, and we are free.
- C. And next week we will begin to look at how to make sound decisions.

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## Small Group Questions

- Discuss how this sermon affected those who heard it.
- Honestly I cannot come up with any other questions and I am tired of staring at my screen. So good luck!