

HOW TO MAKE DECISIONS IN THE WILL OF GOD

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I'm going to give a message about a subject I'm concerned with. There's a lot of young people here this evening. I want to share with you how you can make decisions in the will of God.

At the risk of being personal I was having a discussion with my children. One of them had heard a Christian adult talking about the fact that in order to know God's will you simply read the Bible and that's all of God's will you need to be concerned about. It's pretty much up to you the decisions you make. If you follow the Bible you won't ever make wrong decisions. And besides we don't hear from the Holy Spirit today anyway in a direct sort of a way. So this matter of really intensively praying and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and getting God's direction for your life is so much meaningless. It's all in the Bible, read the Bible, and that's sufficient.

Something in my Pentecostal blood kind of went up. I said that's not how grandma and grandpa found the will of God or their life. It's not how I found the will of God. It was a little over 13 years and a half ago that sitting in a chapel in Evangel college the Holy Spirit clearly spoke to my heart in the middle of a spiritual emphasis week and I heard these words. Not audibly as though someone had directly spoken them to me. Simply it said to me, "George, look around you because this isn't going to be your place of ministry much any more." If it hadn't been for that direct impressions from the Holy Spirit, I would never have been open to come out here when an invitation came a couple of months later. It came about that that invitation, the time I had that impression from the Holy Spirit was the same time the church out here had given itself to a period of prayer and fasting.

My father and uncle had made an encampment one night on the Tibetan hillside. In the middle of the night, God spoke to them in a very direct and personal way. Not audibly again. But a very direct impression. "Get up and move your encampment." So they got up and moved their encampment about two miles down the road. Later in the evening they heard some disturbance, some gunshots. They went back at dawn to find out what happened. They came to the very campsite they had vacated. During the course of later that evening another group of travelers had camped at that site, seeing I guess the smoldering fire or whatever that was there. The Tibetans had come and killed what they thought to be the missionaries. The missionaries weren't there. God in a special way, a way of providence, had spared their life by giving them a very direct impression for the Holy Spirit: *Move*.

I said to my kids, That part of the church of Jesus Christ which is growing in the world today is the part of the body of Christ that is listening to the Holy Spirit.

Christians today are divided into kind of two camps. Someone has called them the word camp and the Spirit camp. The people who are always saying, it's in the Bible and don't trust the Holy Spirit speaking today. And the Spirit camp sometimes are not consulting the word. It seems to be that we can bring both of those together. God speaks to us through his word. His Spirit will always be consistent with his word. But his Spirit speaks today in the last days.

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As I understand scripture, the last days began with the day of Pentecost and continues until Jesus comes. “In the last days I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,” and part of that pouring out is upon our young people who will dream dreams.

So God is speaking today and it'd be a shame for you to not opening yourself to hearing God speak to you in some way. If you simply say, Whatever I do in life God will approve it if I'm walking morally and spiritually in his will. It then doesn't cause you spiritually to stretch and open yourself as to the direct will that God may have for your life.

I grant that maybe 90-95% of the will of God for us is always in the scripture in terms of what we should be. If we're being what we should be we'll be in the place to do what God wants us to do. Persons have said and I think this is true that the Christian's life is like an iceberg. About 90% is under water. The same way with the will of God. About 90% of the will of God is living out the moral character and the spiritual character that God calls for us in his word. But there is that part of our life when it comes to making decisions we needed to have a way of getting a hold of how people make decisions in the will of God. How to know who to marry. How to know where to go. How to know what job to take. How to know what to do with your life.

We as people of the Spirit get our directions from the book of Acts. There are some people who think the book of Acts is history and doesn't teach doctrine. The experience of the church itself is a teaching model for us. How did people get direction for specific decisions they were to make in life from God? The book of Acts tells us the five ways they got directions.

I always go through this checklist whenever I'm making a major decision. I go through this checklist just like an airline pilot would go through a check off list before he takes off down the runway. It's automatic.

The first thing is simply this: Have I given God an opportunity to speak to me supernaturally?

Supernatural revelation. There are instances of this in the book of Acts. There is the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Saul on the road to Tarsus. And there is the visit of an angel to Phillip in Acts 8, giving him very specific direction about going to witness to someone. I site these simply as two examples out of the book of Acts that God may reveal himself in a very supernatural way.

In my life I've never had this kind of revelation where God sent an angel to speak to me. At least I haven't had that kind of revelation that I know of. Nor have I had an opportunity where God spoke to me in an audible voice. Although some persons I've heard give testimony to this effect. But certainly from the scripture that is a way that God may work.

If you want that kind of revelation though I should warn you that whenever that kind of revelation is given the person to whom it is given is called not only to do a great work for God but to undergo great suffering.

You look at the people whom God called in an audible voice ranging from Moses to the Apostle Paul and you will see that they endured much tribulation for the kingdom. The reason why they needed the audible call and the supernatural revelation was to sustain them when they were going later through the pits and began to wonder, How in the world did I get messed up in this thing anyway?

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But God will speak within this world, among the people here this evening, surely there is at least one person who will in their life experience a very dramatic unmistakable call intervention of God upon your life. By means of an angel, by means of a direct revelation or audible voice from God. It happens today.

A second way that God speaks and I have found this to be most often the case, although it combines these ways to meld together. Many different factors blend together. But the second way that God speaks is through worship.

Whether we are in corporate worship such as this evening or whether we're in individual worship God puts things upon our heart. As a young person growing up in the church I was encouraged to come to the place of prayer and to seek to know through prayer what God's will might be for my life. So when I came to prayer on Sunday nights I was continually saying, Lord, is there any place you want to call me to? Give me a vision. Give me an impression upon my heart that lays that upon my life.

I never received a vision of Africa or India or China. I didn't have that. Therefore I chose not to become missionary like my parents. God laid other directions in terms of a burden upon my heart. But worship is a time when we're together as a body or when we're individually seeking the Lord. We need to be open. You will find as you worship the Lord that you'll develop a sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit. It becomes sort of like a compass honing in on a direction. Like when you're flying a small airplane, you can hone in on the radar signal by having your radio set at the right frequency. Prayer and worship gives us a honing frequency into the Spirit of God.

I have learned time and time again to trust the impressions that are coming to me as I worship God. Whether it's in the body of believers or whether it's on an individual level. I have a feeling that those times of worship are what I would call a private line of communication with the Lord.

I grew up in a time when they still had party telephones and anybody could get on the line. You always had to be careful what you said because you never knew who down the block or the rural lane was listening in. It was a wonderful thing when private lines came in.

We have a private line with the Lord when we're praying to him. I believe that. I don't think the devil is able to bug our lines. I have learned to unerringly trust those impressions that the Spirit reinforces in my life over and over again as I open myself to the Lord in prayer, in worship, through song and in reading the scripture.

It was such a way that Peter found the will of God to go to Cornelius. A critical turning moment in the whole history of Christianity is in Acts 10:9 when Peter went up on the housetop to pray and he fell into a trance. It was in that place of prayer that God gave him a vision that opened him to going some places he'd never imagined going.

Jesus always prayed before he faced key moments. He prayed before he called the twelve to follow him. Luke 6:12. He prayed before he was transfigured, Luke 9:28. He prayed before Calvary, Mark 14:32. When you're facing any major decision in your life, pray. Seek God and pray.

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Sometimes too the word of God will very clearly speak to us and give us a sense of direction. God may speak to us in a mystical kind of a way through his word. He may simply speak to us as we're in the process of our devotions and something off the page will leap into our hearts.

He will also speak to us in times of corporate worship. The early church had this experience in Acts 13:1-2. The leadership at the church at Antioch was meeting for prayer and for fasting. While they were praying and fasting the Holy Spirit spoke to them. He said, "Set apart Barnabus and Paul for the work I called them to." Never in the world would they have been able to get that direction from just looking at the Bible they then had. The Bible they then had was the Old Testament. There was no Old Testament verse that says, Set apart for me Barnabus and Saul to the work for which I have called them. None at all. But the Holy Spirit shared that impression. Perhaps through a word of prophecy and God used it to change the whole direction of the church and begin the great missionary effort of the church.

God may speak to us in a very impression oriented way when we are in worship. We need to covet times of worship.

A third way that the Lord speaks to us and we know the will of God is through circumstances.

It was through the circumstance of there being trouble in the early church between two groups of widows that the need for deacons was created and because of that a man named Stephen was appointed. He would never have held his office had there not been a circumstance that brought it about. I'm convinced that the circumstances in our life ought to be called something other than circumstances. They are God incidences. Not coincidences. But God-incidences. The family that God gave you is God incident in your life that is preparing you for something special that only you can do. The circumstances that you've had in life are a God incident as God is able to work that out for the good.

The fact that I wear glasses is a God incident which in my early days God used to get me into books. Because it was too expensive to keep replacing glasses that had been broken in basketball. God uses circumstances.

Proverbs 16:33 says "The lot is cast into the lap but the decision is wholly from the Lord." That's the scripture that the early church had used in Acts 1 when they selected one of the apostles to replace Judas. They in effect drew straws. They cast lots. That circumstance resulted in a person's calling.

It will maybe be through circumstance that you begin to look around one day as a young person and discover that special person who will become your spouse in life. I know that was with me. If I'd not gone to Evangel college I would have not met Jewel. It was through the circumstance. The law of you need to be near somebody to be attracted to them. Circumstance.

The fourth way of specific guidance on decisions is the confirmation of other believers.

That's especially why people past 35 years of age need to keep ties going out to our college young people, our high school young people, junior high and elementary young people... we need to be interfacing with them and knowing them so that we can help give them counsel as they make decisions.

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It's interesting how the young man Timothy was confirmed in his call by the apostle Paul. Paul received a call for his life by direct revelation of the Lord. But Timothy received his call because Paul confirmed the traits that were in him and called him alongside.

There's really no such thing as a self called person. Every ministry and vocation, which we have in life must have the confirmation of others. Confirmation of other believers as we seek out people we spiritually trust and have faith in can be a great help to us. Not that they're ever given by God the right to make a decision for us. Because that is our place as a priest before God. But they may confirm it.

Then there is a fifth way of making a decision. That is through personal choice.

I tried to keep this in mind while going through the list. This is last on my list and I would much prefer first of all that the Lord speak to me in a supernatural way. And if he not speak to me in a supernatural way, he speak to me through worship. Then if worship is confirmed by circumstances and that's confirmed by confirmation of other believers. These things too are not just one and not the other but may be all of them combined together. Backed up by personal choice.

The Lord may say to us, "I have confidence in you. There's a fork in the road and two ways you can head at this point in life. In the absence of my speaking to you audibly I'm going to give you a choice. I trust you to make either decision."

I can look back at the days when our kids were younger and we had to tell them to do various kinds of things. Now they're old enough and they do them. I'm so glad that they're mature enough to be making many choices in life on their own.

Our heavenly Father, God, I'm sure feels that way toward us. As an example of the matter of personal choice is at beginning of the second missionary journey in Acts 15:36, it's different that the beginning of the first missionary journey where the Holy Spirit has spoken through a time of worship. This time Paul says to Barnabus, Let us go back and visit the brothers in all of the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they're doing.

He appears to have simply made a personal choice. And God ratified that choice in his life. But I'm sure that choice wasn't made flippantly. I'm sure that it was made only after he had spent time in prayer and counsel with other believers.

The will of God for your life has three parts. There is the will itself. There is the way that God wants his will to be carried out. And there is the time he wants that will to be implemented. If for example God's will for you to go some particular place and you know that in your heart that it's God's will but it may not yet be God's time and it may not be yet that you have God's way for doing that.

But if God reveals to you a direction in your heart as to his specific will for you, wait out things until the timing and the manner he's going to implement the will become clearer. It was the Lord's will that the apostle Paul go to Rome. But God had a very strange way of getting him there. Through three years of delay and imprisonment. And a time that was not consistent with

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what the apostle Paul himself had felt but the ultimate will of God he got there because it was God's will.

Waiting for God's will to be implemented in your life in terms of a specific direction follow the scripture: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all your way acknowledge him and he will direct your path."

Because you are special to God, every person in this room is special to God, because God is so aware of even the sparrow that falls to the ground he is certainly more aware of you just by the virtue of the fact that he's the Father and he cares for his children. He's got to have a will and a plan for your life. He wouldn't let someone so important as you go without some idea on his part as to what he wants your life to be. If you will wait before him, he will make that plain.

Our Father, the desire of each one of our hearts is to do your will. Not only in moral and spiritual character which is first and foremost to you. But we all want to find that specific place that is in the center of your will. A place where we can say with assurity in our life, This is where God wants me to be and this is what God wants me to do. I pray for those in this body who are making decisions at this time in their life. That there will be a special sensitivity in their heart to the Holy Spirit that even as Jesus before he faced major decisions spent considerable amounts of time in prayer. So we would open our heart in worship to spend time before the Lord and to seek his face. Specially for our young people, our Father, we pray that as they're making decisions that will affect them for years to come that everyone should be unerringly guided by you. To be the person you want them to be and to do the things you want them to do. We ask this through our Lord's name. Amen.