

Decision Making and the Will of God

Lesson 1: The Will of God and the Way of Wisdom -- Proverbs 3:5-8

There is a question that almost every believer carries at some point, often quietly, sometimes in the middle of a sleepless night. It usually begins with the words, "What does God want me to do?" Maybe a job offer has landed on the table and the deadline is Friday. Maybe two good people are interested in marriage and you cannot tell which way your heart should lean. Maybe it is a move, a major purchase, a hard conversation, a calling you can no longer ignore. You bow your head and you wait, half hoping that the ceiling will open and a voice will tell you plainly which way to go. And when no voice comes, you begin to wonder whether the problem is you, whether you simply are not spiritual enough to hear it.

A great many sincere Christians live with a low hum of anxiety about decisions like these. They have been taught, without anyone quite saying it out loud, that somewhere out there God has a secret blueprint for their lives, a single hidden plan, and that their job is to find it before they ruin it. So they look for signs. They lay out fleeces. They wait for a feeling in the pit of the stomach, an open door, a verse that seems to jump off the page, a still small voice that will settle the matter. And underneath it all runs a quiet fear: what if I miss it? What if I marry the wrong person, take the wrong job, and spend the rest of my life living a kind of second-best version of the plan God really had for me?

Into that anxious place the book of Proverbs speaks with remarkable calm. It does not hand us a technique for decoding hidden messages. It hands us something far better and far steadier: the fear of the Lord and the gift of wisdom. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart," Solomon writes, "and do not lean on your own understanding." Notice what trusting God actually looks like here. It is not passively waiting for a mystical sign while life stalls out. It is not, on the other end, charging ahead on pure human calculation as though God were not in the room. It is something braver and humbler than either: it is submitting every choice to the God who has spoken clearly in His Word and who quietly governs every outcome by His unseen hand, and then walking forward in trust.

That is the road this study will walk, lesson by lesson. We are going to learn to make decisions the way a wise child of God makes them, neither chasing secret revelations nor leaving God out of the equation, but trusting Him with all our heart, leaning hard on His revealed Word, and resting in His providence. Before we take a single step, hear the promise that crowns these verses: "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." God is not hiding from you. He is not playing a cruel game of hide-and-seek with your future. He is a Father, and He delights to lead His trusting children. I want to gratefully acknowledge the influence of Michael Fabarez, whose material on decision making and the will of God has helped me greatly over the years; the path we will walk together owes much to the way his teaching pointed me back to the plain wisdom of Scripture.

Group Discussion: When you face a big decision, where do you instinctively go looking for guidance, and where did you first get the idea that God's will is something hidden you have to discover? As a group, talk honestly about the difference between waiting for a sign and walking in wisdom. What might change in our decision making if we truly believed God has already told us most of what we need to know?

Personal Reflection: Think of a decision you are facing right now, or one still fresh in your memory. Be honest with yourself: have you been leaning more on your own understanding, or quietly waiting for a feeling to drop from heaven, rather than trusting the God who has spoken? What would it look like, this week, to bring that specific decision to Him with an open Bible and a trusting heart?

Read Proverbs 3:5-8

Study Questions

1. Solomon begins, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (v. 5). What does it mean to trust God with the whole heart in a decision, and how is that different from simply ignoring our own thinking? Why does Scripture set trusting the Lord over against leaning on our own understanding rather than over against using our minds at all?
2. Bring to mind one area of your life where you tend to lean hardest on your own understanding, perhaps money, romance, career, or your children. What would actually change about the way you handle that area this week if you trusted the Lord there with all your heart?
3. Verse 6 says, "In all your ways acknowledge him." What does it mean to acknowledge God in all our ways, and how is that different from acknowledging Him only in the obviously religious parts of life? How does a believer bring an ordinary decision, like a purchase or a schedule, under the lordship of Christ?
4. Is there a corner of your life that you have quietly fenced off from God, treating it as your own business rather than His? Name it honestly. What would it look like to tear down that fence and invite Him into that very area this week?
5. The promise of verse 6 is that the Lord "will make straight your paths." What does this promise actually mean, and what does it not mean? Does a straight path guarantee an easy or trouble-free road, or is God promising something deeper about where the path finally leads?
6. When have you found yourself waiting for a sign, a feeling, or an open door to tell you what to do, instead of asking what the wise and God-honoring choice would be? What did that waiting do to you, and how might the way of wisdom have served you better?
7. Verse 7 warns, "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil." How does the fear of the Lord serve as the starting point for every good decision, and why is being "wise in your own eyes" such a dangerous place to make decisions from?

8. Where does pride sneak into your decision making? Think of a recent choice you made quickly and confidently, without much prayer or counsel. How might a deeper fear of the Lord have slowed you down, softened you, or changed the outcome?
9. Scripture distinguishes between what God has plainly revealed for us to obey and what He keeps hidden in His own sovereign purposes. In light of verses 5 through 8, how should a Christian think about “the will of God” for a decision? Are we meant to discover a secret, individual blueprint by reading signs, or to walk in the moral will God has already made clear while trusting Him with the outcomes we cannot see?
10. Look back over Proverbs 3:5–8 as a whole. Solomon takes an anxious decision maker and points not to a hidden voice but to a trustworthy God, a clear Word, and the fear of the Lord. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from this passage that you most need to carry into the next decision you make?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Deuteronomy 29:29, the secret things belong to God while the revealed things belong to us and our children; James 1:5, God gives wisdom generously to those who ask; Psalm 32:8–9, God promises to instruct and counsel His people rather than driving them like a senseless horse; Proverbs 16:9, the heart of man plans his way while the Lord establishes his steps; Romans 12:2, a transformed and renewed mind that is able to discern the good and acceptable and perfect will of God

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