

Decision Making and the Will of God

Lesson 10: Make the Decision: Beyond Signs and Fleece -- Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

A farmer stands at the edge of his field on a gray morning, seed bag on his shoulder, looking up at the sky. The clouds could mean rain, which his crop needs, or they could mean a storm that would wash the seed away. The wind is unsettled. He cannot be sure. And so he waits. He will sow tomorrow, he tells himself, when the conditions are clearer. But tomorrow the sky is no clearer, and the day after that there is wind again, and the season slips by while the seed stays in the bag. "He who observes the wind will not sow," the Preacher says, "and he who regards the clouds will not reap." The farmer who waits for perfect certainty never plants, and never harvests.

We have spent nine lessons learning to weigh a decision well. We have asked whether a choice is biblical, examined our motives, weighed its impact, tested our desires, considered our capability and our opportunities, sought godly counsel, and prayed for wisdom. All of that is good and necessary. But there comes a moment when the weighing must end and the deciding must begin, and for many sincere believers that is exactly where they get stuck. They have done the work, but they cannot bring themselves to act, because they are still waiting for something more: a sign, a feeling, an unmistakable certainty that the choice is right.

Ecclesiastes speaks bracingly into that paralysis. The book has wrestled honestly with how little we can see and control, and here, in chapter eleven, it draws a surprising conclusion. Precisely because we cannot know the future, because we "do not know which will prosper, this or that," we must not freeze. We must act. "Cast your bread upon the waters." "Give a portion to seven, or even to eight." "In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand." Uncertainty is not a reason to wait forever; it is the very condition under which faith decides and acts. The God who knows the outcomes has called us to sow without seeing them.

This lesson asks us to do something that, for the chronically indecisive, can be harder than any of the previous steps: to actually make the decision. And it asks us to lay down the crutches we so often reach for instead, the fleece we put out hoping God will rig a sign, the inner voice we strain to hear, the demand for a certainty God never promised. Gideon once laid a wool fleece on the ground and asked God to make it wet while the ground stayed dry, and then, still unsure, asked Him to reverse it. It is a famous story, but it is a picture of weak faith being patiently accommodated, not a method for us to copy. The mature believer, having sought wisdom and prayed, does not keep demanding signs. He trusts his God, and he decides.

Group Discussion: Why do you think it is often easier to keep weighing a decision than to actually make it? As a group, talk about the difference between wise deliberation and the kind

of endless waiting that masquerades as caution. What “signs” or feelings do people wait for before they will act, and what does Ecclesiastes say to the one who keeps watching the wind?

Personal Reflection: Be honest about your own decisiveness. Is there a decision you have already prayed over and weighed carefully, but keep refusing to make because you are waiting for more certainty, a sign, or a feeling? What is that waiting really doing to you? What would it look like to trust God and actually decide this week?

Read Ecclesiastes 11:1–6

Study Questions

1. The Preacher urges, “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, or even to eight” (vv. 1–2). What do these images teach about acting in the face of an uncertain future? Why does the uncertainty of outcomes call for action rather than paralysis?
2. Where has the fear of an uncertain outcome kept you from acting on something you sensed you should do? What did that hesitation cost you, and what might trusting God have looked like instead?
3. “He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap” (v. 4). What does this proverb say about the person who waits for perfect conditions before acting? How can a desire for certainty quietly become an excuse never to decide?
4. Is there a decision you have delayed and delayed, telling yourself you are waiting for the right time or more clarity, when you have really been refusing to act? What would it look like to stop watching the wind and sow?
5. The Preacher says, “As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything” (v. 5). What does it mean to humbly accept that we cannot know God’s hidden workings or the outcomes of our choices? How is that humility actually freeing for a decision maker?
6. Where do you find yourself demanding to know the outcome before you will act, as if you were entitled to a certainty God has not promised? How might accepting that the outcomes belong to God change the way you decide?
7. “In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good” (v. 6). What does this teach about diligent, decisive action when we cannot predict results? How is sowing faithfully different from anxiously trying to guarantee the harvest?
8. What is one decision where you simply need to stop waiting and act, sowing the seed and leaving the harvest to God? What practical step would “making the decision” involve for you this week?
9. Having sought wisdom and prayed, the mature believer must decide and act rather than waiting indefinitely for a sign. How should a Christian think about the craving for a fleece, an inner voice, or a guaranteed certainty before deciding? Considering how Gideon’s fleece

(Judges 6:36–40) is described in Scripture, why is it unwise to make sign-seeking our method, and what does faithful decisiveness look like instead?

10. Look back across Ecclesiastes 11:1–6. The Preacher calls us to sow faithfully and decide bravely in a world whose outcomes we cannot see, trusting the God who can. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth here that you most need to carry into your next decision?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Judges 6:36–40, Gideon’s fleece, an instance of weak faith patiently accommodated rather than a pattern to imitate; Joshua 1:9, the call to be strong and courageous, for the Lord is with us wherever we go; Philippians 3:13–14, straining forward and pressing on rather than remaining stalled; Proverbs 3:5–6, trusting the Lord and acknowledging Him as He directs our paths; Matthew 25:24–30, the servant whose fear of risk led him to bury what he was given

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com