

## **GUIDANCE AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE**

*God's word is sufficient for our Guidance. So learn the Scriptures and practice applying God's word to our lives and decision-making*

### **1. FALSE MOVES IN THE SEARCH FOR GOD'S VOICE/WILL/GUIDANCE**

- **Mixed motives**

*We want to please God*

*Some of us are timid*

*We want perfect fulfilment*

*We have too many choices*

*We are cowardly*

- **A faulty strategy**

*Open Doors / reading God's will from circumstances*

*Fleeces*

*Random Bible Verses*

*Hunches / impressions / it feels right / I've got a sense of peace*

*I've prayed about it (!)*

- **Lousy results:**

*We focus almost exclusively on non moral decisions*

*We make God out to be sneaky*

*We get preoccupied with the future*

*We undermine personal accountability and initiative*

*We are left in hopeless subjectivity*

## **2. THINK BIBLICALLY ABOUT GOD'S WILL**

### **(a) God's will of decree – God always gets his own way**

<sup>ESV</sup> Ephesians 1:11, In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will...

<sup>ESV</sup> Matthew 10:29-30, Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

- **So trust Him**

### **(b) God's will of desire – God points out the way**

<sup>ESV</sup> 1 John 2:15-17, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world- the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions- is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

<sup>ESV</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:3, For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality

<sup>ESV</sup> Hebrews 13:20-21, Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.;

- **So obey Him**

### **(c) God's will of direction – Does God have a specific plan for your life?**

“Yes, God has a specific plan for our lives. And, yes, we can be assured that He works things for our good in Christ Jesus. And yes, looking back we will often be able to trace God's hand in bringing us to where we are. But while we are free to ask God for wisdom, He does not burden us with the task of divining His will of direction for our lives ahead of time.” De Young, p24.

### 3. A BETTER WAY

- **Believe that Scripture is sufficient! He has not promised to guide us by any other means**
- **What sort of decision? – moral or wisdom or who cares?**
- **What matters most to God?**

E.g. Jesus – Matthew 6:25-34

E.g. Paul – 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 5:16-18, Colossians 1:9-12, Ephesians 5:17

- **God wants us to grow up (even if we'd rather not): following the way of wisdom**

<sup>ESV</sup> Romans 12:1-2, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

<sup>ESV</sup> Hebrews 5:14, But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

<sup>ESV</sup> Proverbs 2:1-5, My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, <sup>2</sup> making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup> yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, <sup>4</sup> if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, <sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

<sup>ESV</sup> Proverbs 1:5, Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance,

Also: Proverbs 12:15, 15:22, 19:20

<sup>ESV</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:13, The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Get a Biblical perspective (on work/marriage/etc)... Listen to God's commands and obey them... Listen to God's priorities and reflect them... Listen to God's Gospel plan and live in the light of it... Seek wisdom (eg. Proverbs): fear God, ask him, seek advice

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

“So the end of the matter is this: Live for God. Obey the Scriptures. Think of others before yourself. Be holy. Love Jesus. And as you do these things, do whatever else you like, with whomever you like, wherever you like, and you’ll be walking in the will of God.” (Kevin De Young, *Just do something*, p122)

“There are grave problems raised by the habit of giving and receiving personal “messages” of guidance through the gifts of the Spirit... The Bible gives a place for such direction from the Holy Spirit... But it must be kept in proportion. As examination of the Scriptures will show us that as a matter of fact the early Christians did not continually receive such voices from heaven. In most cases they made their decisions by the use of what we often call ‘sanctified common sense’ and lived quite normal lives. Many of our errors where spiritual gifts are concerned arise when we want to make the extraordinary and exceptional to be made frequent and habitual. Let all who develop excessive desire for ‘messages’ through the gifts take warning from the wreckage of past generations as well as contemporaries... The Holy Scriptures are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.” (Assemblies of God pastor, Donald Gee, cited in *Just Do Something*, pp73-74)

“Choose that employment or calling (so far as you have your choice) in which you may be most serviceable to God... that in which you may do most good, and best escape sinning.”

“Ask yourselves seriously, how you would wish at death and judgement that you had used all your wits, and time, and wealth; and resolve accordingly to use them know.”

“Make not your own judgments or consciences your law, or the maker of your duty; which is but the discerner of the law of God, and of the duty which he maketh you, and of your own obedience or disobedience to him. There is a dangerous error grown too common in the world, that a man is bound to do every thing which his conscience telleth him is the will of God... conscience is not appointed or authorised to make us any duty which God hath not made us; but only to discern the law of God, and call upon us to observe it: and an erring conscience is not to be obeyed, but to be better informed, and brought to a righter performance of its office.”

(Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory*, pp114-116)

#### **FURTHER READING / BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Transcript, handout and audio of this session on the Immanuel Church website.
- See also my paper entitled *Charismatic theology and practice: an assessment*, also available on the Immanuel Church website.
- Kevin De Young, *Just Do Something: a liberating approach to finding God’s will – or how to make a decision without dreams, visions, fleeces, impressions, open doors, random bible verses, casting lots, liver shivers, writing in the sky, etc.*