

Light Brings Salt

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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

Pastor John Griffith

Everyday it is necessary to make many decisions. And how we decide matters, for all of our choices shape our lives to some extent. Dr. Haddon Robinson expresses an important consideration when he says: "We want to make right decisions, for we realize that the decisions we make turn around and make us. As we choose one end of the road we choose the other."

Everyone wants to make decisions that turn out well. But conscientious Christians have an additional, ultimate objective: "...we have as our ambition... to be pleasing to [the Lord]" (2 Corinthians 5:9).

The prerequisite for God-pleasing decisions is set forth by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:9-10: "...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects..." The principal task in decision making for the Christian is to learn what God wants him to do, and then do it.

So far so good. The obvious question is, how is the Christian to learn what God wants him to do as he is confronted with life's decisions?

God Has Spoken

Throughout history, the ways that God has communicated His will to men have varied. Before there was any Scripture, God revealed His will through direct revelation. Usually the message was received by a single individual who would pass along to others whatever content God would instruct. The means of

revelation included visions, angels, theophanies (manifestations of God in human form), or simply the audible voice of God (examples Genesis 28:12-16; 32:1-2, 24-30; 35:1)

As God's special revelation was committed to writing (Exodus 17:14; 24:4 34:27-28), His people had two sources of knowledge of His will, the book (Joshua 1:8) and the additional instruction that God gave by further direct revelation (Josh. 1:1-9).

Over a period of some 1600 years, God's will was written down (2 Peter 1:19-21). Finally, after God had revealed Himself fully in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:14,18), the Book we call the Bible was completed (Revelation 22:18-20). Since God's special revelation culminated in His Son, believers in this age possess in Scripture the full disclosure of God's will until the Second Coming of that same Son. As Paul reminds us we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

Accordingly, God has provided for us all that we need in order to make decisions that are pleasing to Him! (2 Peter 1:3).

Our objective here is to summarize the teaching of God's Word on how we can make decisions according to God's will.

The Principle of Obedience

When the Bible speaks of God's will, it does so in one of two senses. The first of these we will call the "moral" will of God. It may be defined as the commands and principles which God has revealed in the Bible to teach how men ought to believe and live.

For example, Paul wrote that even unbelieving Jews "...know [God's] will, and

approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the law..." Romans 2:18). He was saying that since they study the Scripture, they understand God's moral will. Therefore, they know right from wrong truth from error. Their fault is not ignorance, but disobedience.

Accordingly, the Principle of Obedience may be stated: In those areas specifically addressed by the Bible, the revealed commands and principles of God (His moral will) are to be obeyed.

The ramifications of this principle are more fully recognized when four crucial characteristics of God's moral will are brought into focus.

#1 The moral will of God is fully revealed in the Bible. One hundred percent of what God wants us to know about believing and living to please Him He has already told us. The Bible is our final and complete authority for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2).

#2 The moral will of God is the expression of the character of God (Romans 7:12). Because God's moral will reflects His character, it helps to produce that same character in the life of the one who obeys it (Luke 6:35-36 and leads to fullness of life (Psalm 19:7-11).

#3 The moral will of God touches every aspect and moment of life. That is true because God's will encompasses more than overt behavior. For God is not concerned simple with what we do; He cares equally about why we do what we do, our motivation, as well as how we do it. To put it differently, God's moral will prescribes the believer's goals and attitudes, as well as his actions. Furthermore, it shapes his perspective of reality which serves as the context in which his decisions are made.

This point is so important that it merits further consideration. Goals, by their nature are more general than behavioral commands. The Christian's goals should reflect God's stated purposes for his life. Some of the major ones are: to glorify God in all things (1 Cor. 10:31); to minister to others (Romans 14:19); to fulfill God-given responsibilities (1 Peter

4:10-11); to evangelize the lost (2 Peter 3:9); to do good works (Titus 3:8); to produce spiritual fruit (Colossians 1:10

Our decisions should not only conform to God given goals, they should reflect right attitudes. A partial listing of God's will for this area of our lives would include: love (Mark 12:28-31, reliance (Proverbs 3:5-6), humility (Philippians 2:5-8), gratitude (Colossians 3:17), integrity (Colossians 3:22); diligence (Colossians 3:23), eagerness (1 Peter 5:2), generosity (1 Timothy 6:17-19, courage (John 16:33, submission (Ephesians 5:21), contentment (Hebrews 13:5), and joy (James 1:2).

Of course God is concerned about our behavior, for the end does not justify just any means. With proper goals in view and right attitudes in our thinking, our actions must be lawful, (i.e. they must not be outside of the revealed will of God, Ephesians 5:1-14; and they must be wise (i.e. the believer is not to make a decision he knows to be foolish, Ephesians 5:15-17; Luke 14:28-32).

Since no decision is made in a vacuum, the degree to which we pursue godly goals with righteous attitudes and wise actions will be largely determined by our perspective on life. In particular, the Christian whose world-view is shaped by Scripture will have a much different sense of self-identity. Knowing that he is loved by God with a love which he did nothing to earn (and which, therefore, he can do nothing to forfeit, Rom 8:38-39, he will face life with a deep sense of security. Being aware that God has specifically equipped him to participate meaningfully in the outworking of the eternal purposes of God (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 4:10-11, he has a clear grasp of his personal worth. A strong sense of security and significance in Christ frees the Christian from self-promoting motivations in decision making, releasing him to focus more on the needs of others (Philippians 2:1-5).

Other passages should remind the Christian he is on assignment for God in enemy territory (Ephesians 6:12), that physical life on this earth is preparatory for "real life" in heaven, that what he invests for God now will

be repaid with interest later (Matthew 6:19-21; Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17). And he will recognize that the unseen forces and resources of heaven are involved on his behalf as he seeks to carry out God's will on earth (Hebrews 1:14; 11:1; 2 Kings 6:16-17).

It is God's moral will that we resist having our viewpoint molded by the world (Romans 12:2). Instead, we are to "walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7) seeing our lives, and therefore our decisions, through the lens of God's Word. Summing up then it is because God's moral will prescribes our goals, attitudes, actions and perspective that it touches every aspect and moment of life.

#4 Since the moral will of God contains His complete revelation for faith and life, it expresses God's own character, and touches every aspect and moment of life, it is fully able to equip believers for every good work. "All Scripture is God breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Our response to such abundant guidance from God should be obvious. First, we need to learn what God has said (Joshua 1:8).

Second, we need to do what God has said (John 13:17). As one observes the decision-making practices of people, one is forced to the sobering conclusion that the greatest impediments to making good decisions are ignorance of God's Word and stubborn resistance to God's known will (Prov. 16:25; Acts 7:51).

Afghanistan: Islamic fundamentalists control through terror

By Elizabeth Kendal

AUSTRALIA (ANS) -- One day Jesus was teaching and healing, and as he looked out over the crowds he felt great compassion for the harassed, helpless and directionless masses. So he instructed his disciples to ask the Lord to send out more workers/ servants (see Matthew 9:35-38). Up to 17,000 Korean

Christians serve the Lord abroad in this way, most in war-torn, volatile, hostile and 'restricted access' nations. There are around 100 South Korean Christians from a dozen humanitarian organizations and churches presently engaged in voluntary work in war-torn Afghanistan. Since 2002, some 400-500 South Koreans have visited Afghanistan every year in response to the Lord's sending. They do voluntary work in health, education, agriculture, information technology and other fields for the benefit of the people.

In early August 2006, Korean Christian professionals with the Institute of Asian Culture and Development (a Seoul-based Christian humanitarian-aid group that has run medical clinics in Afghanistan since January 2002) were suddenly deported. The IACD had organized a three-day 'Peace Festival' to celebrate five years of Korean aid work in Afghanistan. The festival was to include a medical conference, a round-table on reconstruction and two soccer games at Kabul's Olympic Stadium between Afghanistan's national team and a Korean team. The group's director, Kang Sung Han, said the aim of the festival was to give ordinary Koreans and Afghans the opportunity to interact and have fun. But when Muslim clerics protested, the festival was cancelled and the Koreans were deported, citing security concerns. According to Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, while the clerics complained that the Koreans were actively proselytizing, a spokesman for the chief of the Afghan National Police said there was absolutely no evidence to support that, adding that if there had been any evidence then the police would have 'put them in jail according to the law'. In order to maintain their hold over the people, the clerics are depriving the people of a future.

On Thursday 19 July 2007, Taliban militants in Ghazni Province kidnapped 23 South Korean Christians who were in Afghanistan doing medical and humanitarian volunteer work. The Koreans, most of whom are nurses, are members of the Presbyterian 'Saemmul Church' in Bundang near Seoul. They were en

route to visit a kindergarten in Kandahar which serves some 100 destitute children and war orphans when they were ambushed and kidnapped. The Taliban is threatening to kill the hostages unless South Korea withdraws its forces (which are non-combatant, engaged only in reconstruction) and the Afghan government releases the 23 Taliban prisoners held in Ghazni Province. This is the largest contingent the Taliban has ever captured. Because the group is so large the Taliban might drag the negotiations along, releasing one hostage (bargaining chip) at a time. They might also feel that because there are so many, they can afford to kill a few to increase the pressure on the two governments. On 24 July, Afghani villagers in Ghazni demonstrated peacefully in the streets for the release of the Korean hostages. Once again, Islamic fundamentalists are robbing the people and exerting control through repression and terror.

South Korea has now banned its citizens from traveling to Afghanistan, one of the neediest places on earth.

UPDATE: On Wednesday afternoon the Taliban made their first hostage-killing when they shot to death 42-year-old Sth Korean pastor, Bae Hyung-kyu.