

Date: May 17, 2019
Series: The Holy Spirit

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WISE DECISION-MAKING

(Part 1—Selected Scriptures)

Please open your Bibles to **John 14 & 16.**

For many centuries, there have been a number of verses that God's people have struggled with in regard to the Holy Spirit of God (God doesn't always put every truth of His on the "bottom shelf." Sometimes He makes us dig deep and work hard to discover the "gold, silver, and precious stones" of Scripture, e.g.,

John 14:25-26-----"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things**, and **bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

John 16:12-13-----"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; **and He will tell you things to come.**

Romans 8:14-----...as many as are **led by the Spirit of God**, these are sons of God.

Romans 8:16----- **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit** that we are children of God...

Galatians 5:18-----But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you are not under the law.

What complicates the struggles that believers have when it comes to understanding just what these verses are saying are the places in Scripture where we find the Spirit of God actually telling people exactly what to do or sharing important information to them:

Acts 8:27-28-----...a man of Ethiopia ... had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ was returning [to Ethiopia]. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ **Then the Spirit said to Philip**, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

Acts 10:19-20-----While Peter thought about the vision, **the Spirit said to him**, "Behold, three men are seeking you. ²⁰ Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

Acts 11:12-----**Then the Spirit told me** to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.

Acts 13:2-----As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said**, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Acts 20:22-23-----And see, now I [Paul] go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that **the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying** that chains and tribulations await me.

So we have verses here that not only say that the Holy Spirit will **teach** believers all things, **guide** them in all truth, and **bring** to their remembrance

the very things that Jesus said, but we also have verses where the Holy Spirit is telling people exactly what to do and where to go.

So all of us can see why, even 2000 years after Pentecost, Christians struggle to understand these verses correctly.

- **Some** say that the Holy Spirit tells them exactly what to do just as He did with Peter and Paul.
- **Others** say the Spirit speaks to them (not directly, like Peter and Paul), but through inward impressions in their mind or heart. (To these impressions, they add that He uses circumstances and God's Word as well. And when the inward impressions, outward circumstances, and God's Word all line up, that is when you know what God's will is and that the Spirit is speaking to you.)
- **Still**, others say, no, the Spirit speaks to us through the Word of God and the Word of God alone.

So, you can see that there is a diverse set of beliefs among people, even among believers.

Obviously, all of these questions cannot be answered in one message. There are dozens and dozens of verses that we would need to consider and study. But this morning, what I would like to do is to get the ball rolling in this matter of the Holy Spirit, the will of God, and biblical decision-making.

Does the Bible teach that the Spirit will tell you and I what to do in every circumstance and every situation (as He did with Peter, Paul, and others), or does the Bible teach a different view? That is what we will concern ourselves for the next few weeks.

Title: The Holy Spirit and Wise Decision-Making

(Prayer)

There have been many, many books written about how Christian's are to know God's will and make good decisions. Some of them are very biblical and others are very unbiblical. **The book that I have** on the screen right now is one of the one's that is very biblical. Its author, Garry Friesen, got a Master's and Doctor's degree from DTS in 1976 and his doctoral dissertation was the foundation of this book—*Decision Making and the Will of God*—which he published in 1980. It has sold nearly a quarter of a million copies since then. On the 25th anniversary of its writing in 2005, Dr. Friesen took all of the feedback and questions he got from his students and readers over the past 25 years and updated it with a new edition. He had a chance to study issues more carefully, make refinements, and to directly answer a couple dozen of the most often-

asked questions he received over all the years. (On the funny side, he said his mom told him first edition was too long.)

Before we share the Lord's Supper this morning, I would like us to look at a very popular (but unbiblical) way of making decisions that has been shared by many, many Bible teachers. This is the view that I was taught when I first got saved and is still very popular to this very day, which Dr. Friesen calls, very simply—**the traditional view**.

Next week, I would like to share what I learned many years ago from this amazing book that totally transformed the way I look at this topic. Of course, here at Ridge Pointe, we are all to “search the Scriptures, whether these things are so.”

The Traditional View

I. Premise: For each of our decisions, God has an ideal plan that He will make known to the attentive believer.

II. Definition: The phrase “will of God” is used in three ways in the Bible:

1. God's **sovereign** will

This is God's secret plan that determines everything that happens in universe.

Ephesians 1:11-----... the purpose of Him who works all things according to **the counsel of His will**...

(We all believe in God's sovereign will.)

2. God's **moral** will

This is God's revealed commands in the Bible that teach how people ought to believe and live, e.g.:

1 Thessalonians 5:18-----in everything give thanks; for **this is the will of God** in Christ Jesus for you.

(We all believe in God's moral will—that He has commands that He wants us to obey.)

3. God's **individual** will

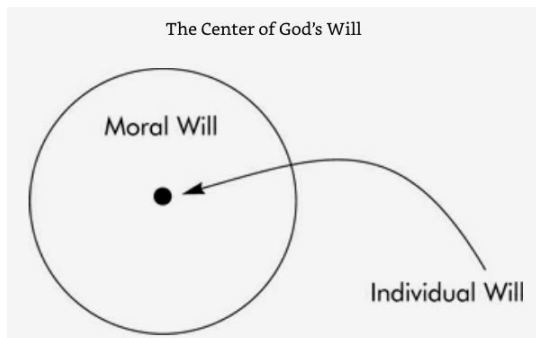
This is God's ideal, detailed life-plan uniquely designed for each person, e.g.:

Colossians 1:9-----For this reason we ... do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with **the knowledge of His will** in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...

Teachers of the traditional view make the following unbiblical argument:

“God’s guidance for decision making is given through the indwelling Holy Spirit who progressively reveals God’s life-plan to the heart of the believer through a variety of means.”

And they illustrate that this way:



Teachers of the traditional view contend that “within the larger circle of God’s moral will, finding the dot in the center is essential to making the correct decisions in daily life.” And when a believer fails to discover and do God’s perfect will, they miss the dot and can only get “second best” which they call “God’s permissive will.”

Some results of interpreting Scripture like this look like this:

- If you don’t find God’s perfect will and you choose the wrong college, you won’t be able to do God’s perfect will for your life.
- If you don’t find God’s perfect will in the spouse you choose, you will never have the best life you could’ve had, and therefore, you won’t be able to do God’s perfect will for your life.
- If you don’t find God’s perfect will in the company you choose to work at, you will have to settle for second best, and therefore you won’t be able to do God’s perfect will for your life.

Of course, this kind of teaching has led brides on their wedding day to shed buckets of tears before their wedding service because they haven’t been able to determine that the man they are about to marry is “God’s perfect will for their life.”

And, unfortunately, this view of scripture leads to all kinds of depression and sadness.

I. **Premise:** For each of our decisions, God has an ideal plan that He will make known to the attentive believer.

II. **Purpose:** Our goal is to discover God’s individual (perfect) will and make decisions in accordance with it.

III. **Process:** How can I discover God’s individual will?



1. **The Word** of God



2. **Circumstances** (open and closed doors, etc.) Also, what’s called “putting out fleeces”: *“Lord, if you want us to sell our home, please have someone inquire about it within one week without us advertising about it..”*



3. **Inward** impressions/Inward peace (the Spirit leads through giving us impressions as well as peace when we are making a decision that pleases God.

IV. **Proof:** If you get a “green light” on all three of these, you can be confident that you have found God’s perfect will.

“The confirmation that we have correctly discerned the individual will of God comes from an inner sense of peace and outward (successful) results of the decision.”

Lord’s Supper

