

**Date:** March 24, 2019  
**Series:** The Holy Spirit

## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WISE DECISION-MAKING (Part 2)

**In his book,** *Step by Step—Divine Guidance for Ordinary Christians*, Dr. James C. Petty shares the following story to illustrate the different methods Christians use in the matter of God’s will. He said...

**Let’s say that you** agree to house-sit for a wealthy couple who are going on safari in Africa. You offer to do some landscaping work while you are there. The owners are delighted and agree to the deal. You arrive at the house on the appointed day and find, to your horror, that the couple has already gone. You discover a note thanking you in advance for the projects you will complete. The note, however, says nothing about which specific projects they want you to work on and you cannot contact them. Puzzled, you go to the garage and noticed that certain tools are already laid out for you. A particular type of fertilizer is opened. You also find some photos of some plantings at a local arboretum. From these and other clues you put together what you hope is a reconstruction of their plan for your work. But until they return, you cannot be totally sure that you implemented their plan and not your own. It all depends on whether or not you read the clues correctly.

**Last Sunday,** we jumped into the issue of the Holy Spirit and His guidance in the matter of God’s will for our lives. The story I just told illustrates the view that we looked at last week which we called:

### **I. The traditional view**

of finding God’s will (which, we argued is an unbiblical view).

The traditional view of determining God’s will requires us to interpret, not only God’s Word, but also circumstances (open and closed doors), and inward impressions and peace to arrive at what we believe is God’s will for us. And as Dr. Petty said in the story, this view depends heavily on “whether or not you read [the often mysterious] clues correctly.”

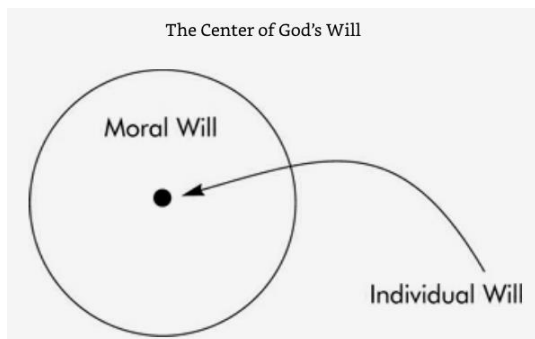
Last week, we showed how the traditional view saw three categories of God’s will.

**#1— God’s sovereign** will which is defined as God’s secret plan that determines everything that happens in the universe. (We agreed that this IS biblical and that we agree with this).

**#2—God’s moral** will, which are God’s revealed commands in the Bible that teach how people ought to believe and live. (This, too, we agreed is absolutely in line with Scripture).

However, to these two biblical forms of God’s will, the traditional view has added a third.

#3—God’s **individual** will (or, perfect will)—an ideal, detailed life-plan for each person.



In the traditional view, the key to decision making is to discover God’s individual will, and then do it. And as we saw last week, those that teach the **traditional** view, say the process of discerning God’s will includes:



1. **The Word of God**



2. Circumstances (open and closed doors, etc.)



3. Inward impressions/Inward peace

Thus, if you get a “green light” on all three of these, you can be confident that you have found God’s perfect will.

This is the most popular view of finding God will for your life in evangelical circles. It is definitely the majority view. And as we said, not all the pieces involved here are unbiblical, but most of them are.

Another view of finding God’s will is espoused by our charismatic brothers and sisters which Dr. Petty has called...

## **II. The Traditional Charismatic View**

This view, Dr. Petty says, holds that “... God communicates directly and verbally with individuals, families, and churches to let them know his plan for them. This often occurs through an apostle, prophet, prophecy, audible or inaudible voice, or a ‘word of knowledge’ ... Dreams and visions are also forms of direct communication from God to the Christian. In short, each means of

revelation that God used to give us the Scriptures is still available to individual Christians today.”

(If we go back to the “landscaping” story we told earlier, those who hold the traditional charismatic view would say, “You don’t have to figure out the homeowner’s desires about the landscaping from the clues, just wait for a phone call and the owner’s will tell you exactly what to do ... directly!”)

Again, this is another very popular view of how God the Holy Spirit directs Christian people today (and we understand why people hold this view).

What I would like to do today, and in the next few weeks, is to look at the view that Dr. Garry Friesen and many other biblical scholars espouse that is called...

### III. The Way of Wisdom View

Dr. Friesen believes that the emphasis of Scripture is on God’s **moral** will and argues that the Bible reveals nothing about an “**individual** will” of God that governs every decision we make.

Rather, the teaching of Scripture concerning God’s guidance may be summarized by four basic principles:

#### 1. **Where God commands, we must obey.**

In the Bible, the term “God’s will” most often refers to all the commands, principles, and promises that God has revealed in the Scriptures. **The biblical meaning of “God’s will” is best described as God’s moral will.** It is fully conveyed in the Bible. It does not have to be “found”—just read, learned, and obeyed.

Virtually all Bible teachers (including those who promote the traditional view & charismatic view) agree with this principle: “Where God commands, we must obey.”

#### 2. **Where there is no command, God gives us freedom (and responsibility) to choose.**

This principle is the point where we part company with those holding the traditional view of God’s will (and it **must be** denied by proponents of the traditional view or their position cannot stand). This principle helps us answer the question, “*What do you do when there is no specific command in the Bible to determine your decision?*” Decisions such as...

- Should I go to college, trade school, or enlist in the armed forces?
- What specific vocation should I choose for my life?

- Once married, how many children should my spouse and I have?  
...and so forth.

Where there is no command, God gives us...

- **freedom** to choose—He allows **us** to make the decision...BUT, God also gives us the...
- **responsibility** to choose (the responsibility to choose **wisely**).

Principle #2 does not mean that...

- (1) **God does** not **care** what we decide. (He absolutely does!)
- (2) **There is no further guidance** from God  
(we still have two main principles to share).
- (3) **Our decision** does not **matter** or that we can do our own **selfish** thing.

What principle #2 **DOES** say is that we are **morally free** to decide (a freedom that is God-given), but alongside that freedom is a God-given responsibility to decide **wisely**.

This principle is both liberating and sobering. It's liberating because, with **freedom** comes relief that I am not **missing** God's will (as people under the traditional view worry so much about). It is sobering because, since I am **responsible** for the decisions I make, I cannot blame bad decisions on God.

1. **Where God commands**, we must obey.
2. Where there is no command, God gives us freedom (and responsibility) to choose.

### 3. **Where there is no command, God gives us wisdom to choose.**

We are never free to be foolish, stupid, or naive. Why? Because, in Scripture, we are commanded by God to be wise in all the decisions we make. God's **moral** will for us is to be wise. And though God gives us the freedom to make decisions where there is no direct command from Him, those decisions must be wise decisions.

Numerous biblical commands exhort believers to act and choose wisely. In the area of freedom, it is God who promises to give wisdom when we ask Him in prayer (cf., Jas 1:5).

4. **When we have chosen what is moral and wise, we must trust the sovereign God to work all the details together for good.**

God's sovereign oversight of all the details of our lives assures us that after we have followed His guidance in the first three principles, He secretly works all the unknowns and details together for good. He is involved in the smallest particulars even when He does not tell us exactly what to do. This sovereign work of God gives the peace of mind that God is guiding in everything.

Now, I haven't proved these principles to you on the basis of Scripture. So, what I would like to do next week is to prove them from Scripture, and to apply them to our lives.

Before we close, you might say, *"Pastor Bob, what would the "landscaping" story look like under the "way of wisdom" view of God's will?"* Ok... Dr. Petty said:

"... this view suggests that the homeowners might leave a video series on "Landscaping for the Homeowner." In addition, the couple would leave their journals and letters to him to let him know their tastes and personalities. But they would leave no specific directions for the landscape design. They would trust the house sitter to come up with his own plan based on the information they left. What the house sitter does not know is that the couple has done extensive research on him. They have chosen him because they know how he will react to the information they left behind. They left him only the commission to make the property a beautiful and fitting place for them. They wanted him to create his own design—which will nevertheless be just what they wanted. The homeowners have a distinct vision for their property, but it is fulfilled through the wisdom and gifts of their guest."

**(Q & A)**