**AN OVERVIEW OF PATTERNS THE CHURCH HAS USED TO PROCESS**

 **DISCERNING GOD’S WILL** **[GM 3 NOTES]**

(Representative models used by most in one way or another)

Many ask about “what is the will of God for….” and the question is usually very personal. For example, whom should I marry? Should I go to college and where? What career should I pursue? For whom should I vote in this election? What church should I attend? These kinds of questions dominate popular literature about knowing God’s will. Yet, there is NO biblical paradigm for these individualized questions. The Bible certainly provides information that addresses the values that can frame our discernment about such issues. But it never promotes an individualized approach to find answers to these very important questions in order to make a decision. Rather, it calls us to live Christianly, biblically, and process life accordingly.

Throughout Church history, discerning God’s will has a history in both the appropriate application of the Bible and the consensus judgment of the Church when the Bible provides no direct instruction. We will overview the distinct aspects of this process in this lesson.

I want to remind you, this course is designed to teach you HOW TO THINK, NOT JUST ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS or give you some simplistic answer that provides a false promise of knowing God’s will.

Outline of following notes:

**I. CATEGORIES THE CHURCH HAS EXAMINED TO DISCERN GOD’S WILL**

1. **THE CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED**
2. The categories dominantly used in Church history

SCRIPTURE (the whole Bible)

 REASON (classic rational process / research in Scripture etc.)

 TRADITION (the Apostolic Fathers to development of denominations)

 EXPERIENCE (delineated by various theological systems / denominations)

A variety of groups have taken the lead reflected in the Early Church and created a process which has been adopted by many. In the Western world, the Anglican John Wesley developed what became known as the **Wesleyan Quadrilateral**. His theory took three items that had long been recognized and added a fourth category, Experience. The term “Wesleyan” is used historically not theologically. Wesley’s category of experience needs to be studied not assumed by association with the Wesleyan tradition. Each tradition will have their version of how experience relates to discernment.

(Cf. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/wesleyjournal/1985-wtj-20-1.pdf> )

I will not be representing the Roman Catholic Church’s model.

Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Comprehensive Introduction to New Testament Ethics. (Harper Collins), pp. 209-11, evaluated the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.* [Label coined by Albert C. Outler, in 1964 introduction to his work, *John Wesley* (Oxford).]

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **FORMS OF AUTHORITY** | **DEFINITION** | **ILLUSTRATION** |
| SCRIPTURE | ***Norma normans*** (“the norming norm”) | God’s normative\* imperatives. [which are still subject to interpretation across Scripture!] See later chart on “modes” of using Scripture. |
| TRADITION | Not general customs but refers “specifically to the **Church’s time-honored practices of worship, service, and critical reflection**.” (Hays, 210) History is important (cf. “Just War” theory and how it changed in modern times to fit political goals).***Norma normata*** (“the normed norm”) | Ancient Creeds, Orthodoxy, Dogma, Providentially key figures in Church history including key “teachers” God has given various Church expressions without violating Jesus’ exhortation of warning to those who “abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition” (Mark 7:8 and parallels) |
| REASON | **Reason** is an aspect of being created in *imago dei* (image of God). Gaining an understanding through “systematic philosophical reflection and through scientific investigation” (210) Yet in the **human arena**, reason is “cultural logic.” Our task is to bring “biblical logic” to bear on “cultural logic,” “…to coordinate the cultural logic of the Bible with the cultural logic of our own historical setting.” (210) Tension is inevitable. | Reason depends on epistemology, it is culturally condition by our setting. We must discipline ourselves to be aware of these merging cultures…God and ours…and exercise our God created skills (Hebrew *hokma*, wisdom is skillful living) in our discerning work.The standard “sources” of epistemology are senses/reason/authority/intuition.  |
| EXPERIENCE | Not individual experience BUT refers “to the **experience of the community of faith collectively**” (210-211). | Private claimed revelatory experiences are not norming. The witness of the Apostles is norming. Church history figures have had major norming influences, but not always in agreement!! The Apostolic Fathers, Post Apostolic Fathers, Luther, Calvin, etcetera.“Experience is the living appropriation of the text, which becomes self-attesting as it is experienced in faith.” (211)But in our human experience, diversity soon creates pluralism. **Since God has allowed such tension in our Christian culture, it must serve his will in ways we do not now understand.** |

\* “Normative” means an imperative is “always true.” Since Scripture covers over 2000 years of redemptive history, some items were normative but may not be currently normative. See the paradigm of “Descriptive and Prescriptive.” Compare how this model reflects standard sources of epistemology: Senses, Reason, Authority, Intuition (Slide). I would switch the flow of the Quadrilateral model to Scripture/Reason/Tradition/Experience.

“The right relation of Scripture to each of these other sources of authority has been a perennial problem for theology. The challenge has taken slightly different forms in different historical eras, **but the church must always struggle to get the balance among these four factors right.”** (211)

Many Christian groups/denominations have adapted the Quadrilateral or a form of it especially as a base for adjudicating issues **not** directly addressed in Scripture, although many excepted the “Experience” category or defined it according to their own understandings.

But even after all of this analysis, we end up with diversity that reads the same Bible differently!! This FACT is a major reality that cries for us to incorporate into our worldview and values structures. **We will discuss the issue of diversity in biblical interpretation as we proceed.** But, since this diversity does exist in the Church’s history of using Scripture to claim God’s will, we are not *ultimately* able to affirm “who is right,” we are only able to argue our understanding with the reasons why we hold it. It must be God’s will to put us into this matrix, because that is our reality! This is a deep theological issue that we must navigate.

**Our basic observation at this point is that the Church has ALWAYS had a process to discern God’s will WITHOUT some direct appeal to “new” revelatory information.** It is a process performed by godly leaders and believers.

 **B. THE CATEGORIES DELINEATED**

1. **SCRIPTURE**

**Scripture has always carried the ultimate authority for the Church since it was produced.** The challenge in this journey is “how” Scripture is used in discernment questions and what to do when there is no “direct” text that addresses our question/s. I will present here at least two major models about using the Bible to discern our issues.

 **1a. Richard Hay’s** notes 4 Modes of how the Scriptures provide guidance (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, pp. 207ff.)

**FOUR different modes to appeal to Scripture for “ethical” decisions.**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **MODES** | **DEFINED** | **ILLUSTRATIONS** |
| RULES | **Direct** commands. Either positive or negative | Divorce (Matt 10:2-12 and parallels |
| PRINCIPLES | “General framework of moral consideration by which particular decisions for action are governed.”**Implicational analysis** | LOVE command LINKED by Jesus …original command (Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18) linked to the “new” commandment to love your neighbor to form a model (Mark 12:28-31 and parallels) |
| PARADIGMS | Stories or accounts of characters who model exemplary or negative conduct.**Implicational to Creative Constructs** | Jesus uses the “Good” Samaritan to answer “Who is my Neighbor?” (Luke 10:29-37)There is DIRECT here also… |
| SYMBOLIC WORLD | Items that create perceptual categories through which we interpret reality … these represent the human condition and depicts the character of GodImplicational and Creative Constructs | Rom 1:19-32, the “fallen” human condition (assumes results)Matt 5:43-48, characterizes God (**read** this text to see point) |

When one captures the categories of this chart, they are mapping out a Worldview and Values model.

As Hays states it, “The presence of all these modes of discourse within the New Testament suggest that all of them are potentially legitimate modes for our own normative reflection. Thus, the hermeneutical task is—in part—the task of rightly correlating our ethical norms with the modes of Scripture’s speech.”

Would answering the question, “What would Jesus do?” or “What would Paul do?” …. Be a challenge to think beyond the direct. The PROBLEM is thinking about text carefully (by intense research) vs. assuming you think you know what they would do!! Too many Christians merely read their own assumptions into the Bible in order to claim God’s authority for themselves.

BECAUSE the Bible does not directly answer all our questions, we must work other ways of reading the text to perceive what God would have us do. The MODES other than direct do this. They “go beyond”\* direct meaning to theological analysis in order to assert what God desires.

[[\*Hays interestingly asserts that all of this [i.e. not having a biblical text that directly settles the issue] questions the dictum of *sola scriptura.* He notes, “No matter how seriously the church may take the authority of the Bible, the slogan of *sola* Scriptura is both conceptually and practically untenable, because the interpretation of Scripture can never occur in a vaccum.” The Bible is always read by interpreters with “their” lenses to make Scripture relevant. It is a conundrum that continually challenges us.]]

Consequently, we must carefully explicate our interpretation/use of Scripture in relation to other sources of authority such as “tradition,” “reason,” and “experience” (Hays, 210). BUT pursuing these “going beyond the Scripture directly” has brought significant pluralism to the Church and even its scholars. That fact should cause us to ask, what does God intend to achieve with the diversity?

1. **REASON**

Requires standard epistemological processes along with paradigms like Hay’s and Meadors’ along with careful research in Bible and theology.

Classic “epistemology” (theory of knowing) involves defining the sources, nature and validity of the knowledge we claim to possess (See Harold Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy*). Think about this chart…

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **SOURCES** | **NATURE**  | **VALIDITY** (Tests of validity) |
| **PRIMARY**SensesReason**SECONDARY**AuthorityIntuition | ObjectiveSubjective | CorrespondenceCoherence |

1. **TRADITION**

Includes everything that has formed you as a person and follower of God…upbringing, beliefs, worldview, values, how instructed by your religious authority in any category, views on cultural currency, etcetera.

Requires research in how the Church has discerned issues in order to obey/please God. Attention is paid to all of Church history and the judgments of theological traditions. In contradistinction to the Roman Catholic Church and its monolithic view of its being THE real Church, Church history reflects great diversity as God’s people have gathered in various geographical and ideological areas. ALL are required to live according to Scripture as they have delineated its meaning. While this diversity is not comfortable, it is God’s will as reflected by the reality he has created.

 **4. EXPERIENCE**

Each Church tradition will weigh experience differently. Unfortunately, many are non-critical in their self-reflections and are therefore trapped by experience/pragmatism.

Wesley’s “chief test of the ‘truth and nothing but the whole truth’ of a particular interpretation of Scripture is how it is seen in practical application in one’s Experience. Always the pragmatist, Wesley believed the Experience formed the best evidence, after Scripture, for the truthfulness of a particular theological view.” For Wesley, all truth, fully lived, leads to godliness.

Every “group” of Christians will define the category of how Experience is an authority. We are all either in control of our view of experience or a victim of lacking a view.

**\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \***

**EXCURSUS ON BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**... ADDRESSES AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW SCRIPTURE OPERATES

IN A DECISION MAKING MODEL.

***THREE LEVELS OF HOW THE BIBLE TEACHES***

**Gary T. Meadors, Th.D.**

**Emeritus Professor of Greek and NT**

When we use the Bible as a source of knowledge and make claims about what it teaches, we engage the discipline of epistemology (= the sources, nature and validity of knowledge). How do we know what we claim to know and why is our view more valid than another?

The *fact* that we have one inspired text and many uninspired interpreters is evidenced by the great variety of views that have always existed with Judaism and Christianity. While there are some core beliefs that have bound these religions to the Bible, there has never been a fully unified theology in either. Why? If we have one Bible and one God, why has this kind of unity never existed? Furthermore, some claim that the Holy Spirit is the trump card and “tells” us what Scripture means. This last claim seems odd, even arrogant, in light of the fact that several equally godly and trained scholars can come to radically different conclusions [the so-called idea of “illumination” that claims the conveyance of interpretive content is a popular level misunderstanding of the biblical concept of the “witness of the Spirit”].

Does this mean we are condemned to relativism in interpretation? No. It merely means, in a worldview kind of way, that God has chosen to give us an inspired text but not inspired interpreters. For reasons beyond our knowing, God has ordained to allow this diversity and not intervene. My personal opinion is that God has set up a situation that allows risk and tension so that we can reflect the image of God by how we deal with it.

There are, of course, many theological issues around which believers are unified. It would be impossible to assign percentages of unity and diversity and it is needless. What we do need to engage is “how do we handle our diversity?”

***Locating How the Bible Teaches***

I believe there is a paradigm that can help us reflect on how to understand the unity and diversity of interpretation that we experience. I call it “The Three Levels of How the Bible Teaches.” Before I define the model, it is helpful to review the domain of biblical and theological interpretation known as “The Theological Encyclopedia.” Christian study is such a broad and complex task it requires numerous professional fields of study in order to pursue meaning. The following chart (credits to James Grier who developed the idea from ‘Westminster divines’ with modest revisions by Meadors) images the “encyclopedia” of the tasks involved with the study of Scripture. Please think through the pyramid chart:

 **THEOLOGICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA**

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| **MINISTRY THEOLOGY**Doing theology in the context of ministry |

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| **APOLOGETICAL THEOLOGY**Theology’s defense of its conceptual framework |

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| **PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY**Theology’s evaluation and interaction with creation’s struggles |

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| --- |
| **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**A Church or tradition brings into reflective focus its own teaching based on its derived conceptual model |

|  |
| --- |
| **HISTORICAL THEOLOGY**A record of the church’s reflection upon its own theological development |

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| --- |
| **BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**Provides structural and conceptual model within which exegesis operates |

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| **EXEGESIS:** Competency to make reasoned judgments about biblical texts. Even prior to exegesis is textual criticism that establishes the text to be studied. |

The various disciplines that comprise the encyclopedia are to be integrated not bifurcated. The work of interpretation, however, must begin with the foundation of the triangle, the task of unpacking the meaning of the biblical text itself, and move to the top. *A reverse process reads “into” the text rather than “from” it.* If the initial work of exegesis and biblical theology is flawed, everything that follows is tainted.

From the bottom up, the first two categories order the actual speech of the Bible. Their goal is to let the Bible be the Bible on its own terms and unpack what it actually says, not what we want it to say. This is our best effort toward the “direct” teaching of Scripture. The continuing categories draw from the first two and contextualize Scripture into our own time and place to address the “implicational” and “creative construct” levels of teaching (see following discussion).

The next paradigm addresses the question, “How does the Bible teach us?” I would suggest a model of three levels by which the Bible teaches us in consort with our own interpretive skills. We will use the following diagram as a paradigm for this model.

 **THREE LEVELS OF BIBLICAL TEACHING**

**IMPLIED**

**DIRECT**

**Theological Analysis High Taxonomy**

 **(Higher level**

 **of critical thinking)**

**CREATIVE**

**CONSTRUCT**

**Teaching**

**Intent**

 **LowTaxonomy**

Christians affirm that the Bible is their ultimate source of knowledge for faith and practice. But when they look for a biblical passage that addresses the questions of their current setting they often discover that there is *not* a text that *direct*ly addresses their concerns. In order to compensate, they become ventriloquists, using the Bible as the dummy to say what they want to hear. The words of the texts seem to correlate with their question, but the contextual meaning of the passage they are forcing to serve their purposes has nothing to do with the subject queried. This is a reality we have all observed, been victimized by, and perhaps even practiced! This scenario merely illustrates that sometimes believers do not know how to read the Bible beyond a proof-text-for-my-pretext level.

Let’s unpack the meaning of this chart.

Biblical teaching is developed in at least three levels: Direct, Implied and Creative Constructs (see Chart).

1. The **DIRECT** TEACHING LEVEL relates to discerning the authorial-textual intension of a given context. This teaching might be as straightforward as a simple imperative, “Thou Shalt not…,” or as complex as an extended narrative. The supreme commands of the bible, to love God and your neighbor, seem simple until we ask, “What does that entail?” Direct teaching is not necessarily simple teaching but the starting point seems “clear”. Exegesis and biblical theology tend to work on the direct level.
2. The **IMPLIED** TEACHING LEVEL relates to concepts that are not directly stated by biblical words in a context but are teachings that the believing community recognize as the extensions of biblical statements and contexts. This level accounts for a number of crucial doctrines. For example, we hold the doctrine of trinity as essential for Christian thought, but it is an implied rather than a direct teaching. Alister McGrath observed, “The doctrine of the trinity can be regarded as the outcome of a process of sustained and critical reflection on the pattern of divine activity revealed in scripture, and continued in Christian experience. This is not to say that Scripture contains a doctrine of the trinity; rather, Scripture bears witness to a God who demands to be understood in a trinitarian manner.” (*Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, p. 294] Much of the work of the early Church Fathers and creedal development evidences this category. Many of the core concepts of the theology disciplines also reflect this category.
3. The **CREATIVE CONSTRUCT** LEVEL is the product of selecting one’s view of macro understandings of how the Bible has framed certain subjects. For example, are you premillennial or amillennial? Are you a covenant theologian or a dispensationalist or some other construct that provides a synthesis of the whole Bible? Are you an Arminian or a Calvinist…or just confused?![[1]](#footnote-1) These views of the whole Bible are large frames that help interpreters exposit the sense of the whole from its parts. *Constructs are the product of our sustained reflection upon texts, but they are seldom proven from any specific direct context.* Constructs are the product of an inductive process. The use of inductive logic brings another perspective to the nature of creative constructs. It is impossible to address this dimension with brevity, but let me put it this way. We have a Bible that is the product of revelation (deductive), but we use “inductive Bible study methods” to unpack it. In formal logic, deductively sound arguments can lead to certainty, but induction only leads to degrees of probability. Consequently, no matter how tightly argued and how convinced we are about our creative construct systems, they are still only in the realm of probability not certainty. Heated theological debates are the result of conflicting views/constructs about texts/subjects.

While creative constructs often emerge as large paradigms, they are not limited to that.  There are many legitimate CCs.  But there are bad CC readings take all kinds of shapes. For example, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess 5:22, KJV) has often been used to whip people into submission to a viewpoint.  They claim that this text = guilt by association.  BUT that is a bad creative construct from a surface reading of the words forced on the text.  When studied, this text means, "avoid every form/kind of evil" (which is more concrete in definition).  Avoid murder, lying, etc.  Not avoid a restaurant that serves booze!  Or a movie theater!  To force guilt by association on this text is neither direct or implied but their imagination (bad CC).

As you move from the bottom of the triangle upward, you move from “simple” direct teaching to more sophisticated theological structures, from “teaching intent” that the basic features of the text can sustain to complex lines of reason that comprise “theological analysis.” You move from a “low taxonomy” (= brute facts) to a “high taxonomy” (sophisticated systems of thought).

Every subject or text we study must be evaluated against these three levels of teaching. Where does our “claimed” text rest on the pyramid? One’s confidence and humility of conviction should also be scaled in concord with the appropriate level. One’s willingness to compromise for the sake of the community is also related to this scale. We might die for the Trinity, but not for a certain eschatological position. One’s ability not to be manipulated by others can also be controlled with this model. If someone claims a view that is only their construct, you have no obligation to conform to their view of things. The model also gives you a base line for discussion of your different views on the text. All of us have a propensity to deify our own views from time to time. American Christianity is drunk with individualism derived from our culture. With this individualism comes the assumption of self-authenticating authority. Theology, however, requires a community.

We should perceive that as we go up the pyramid, we are in the process of relating an ancient text written in ancient settings to modern questions. For example, is slavery an acceptable practice as “God’s will?” Most would say no. But how do you argue your view when there is no “proof text” to support your position? Furthermore, how do you avoid the embarrassment of biblical silence in relation to certain modern issues? In essence, how the Bible is *relevant* in the progress of history when culture moves “beyond” out-dated mores is a major challenge to hermeneutics. This is a more advanced discussion than the reflections of this handout can provide (For a fuller study of this see Gary T. Meadors, editor, *Four Views on Moving from the Bible to Theology*, Zondervan, 2009).

In regard to biblical interpretation, it is also essential to locate texts in regard to whether they are

 **Descriptive**

 **Or**

 **Prescriptive**

In meaning. This model for reading texts is simple in definition but challenging when applied to texts because our theological assumptions will massage the choice. **Consult** Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth* (4th edition. Zondervan).

**\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* END OF EXCURSUS \* \* \* \* \***

**So, A. CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED** [Scripture, Reason, Tradition, Experience]

1. **CATEGORIES DELINEATED** [Explaining items identified]
2. **REFLECTING ON EXAMPLES OF THE REALITY OF DISCERNMENT BY THE CHURCH**

When we ask the question of knowing God’s will, we open numerous issues of “HOW” we know “WHAT” we claim to know. This is extremely important, but not simplistic. So, strap down your thinking caps and begin to mature the way you think about living God’s way.

 **1. The Big Picture of How to Process Claims concerning God’s Will**

 1a. Categories to which discernment is/has been applied:

 1b. The Church “global” (the total Church, e.g. Early Church Councils)

 2b. The Church’s ethics (mostly moral categories)

 3b. The question of an “individual” will to be “found.” There is NO biblical pattern for finding a private, personal will of God.

 2a. Categories of identifying “will” in relation to God (**will be unpacked in our review of the actual texts in OT and NT**)

 1b. God’s Sovereign will

 2b. God’s Moral will

 3b. God’s narrative and proverbial “Patterned” will (illustrated by believers living in the biblical record))

 4b. Personal items of life that some claim God will provide if they seek answers.

 **2. Illustrations of How The Church Has Worked Out Issues NOT directly addressed in Scripture**

Since the Church’s birth at Pentecost, a myriad of views have been created by believers to reflect their view of what the Church is and what it should believe. Which one is right? Which is “the” God’s will view? !

For example, which theological system is God’s will?

Calvinism?

Lutheranism?

Catholicism?

Anglicanism?

Arminianism?

Which Church is “the” Church that God validates?

 Roman Catholic?

 Protestant? (Which one?!)

 Baptist?

 Pentecostal, Church of God, etc. ?

 The Vineyard Church?

Diversity among believers is a fact. WHY God has allowed this to exist is not revealed.

History records how the Early Church worked out major issues not directly addressed in Scripture. They did not just pray and ask God for more Revelation than they already had (The Bible). They worked through what they had and culled out the implications of Scripture and addressed foundational issues such as Trinity, the nature of Christ, etc.

But then someone will claim that hermeneutics is a moral issue and they have the moral high ground and are therefore right in their judgments! I don’t think so.

 **3. And these are not all of the challenges. What about**

* The issue of causality? (does God cause drunks to run over children?)
* The issue of how the Fall has distorted God’s will.
* John 9, the man born blind and the struggle everyone had with it!

**The only answer I can see is that it is God’s will that we struggle with this diversity because we are created in his image and we glorify him by our struggle.**

NOTE… The Roman Catholic Church “solves” all this by claiming it and it alone is the true Church. No more than one tribe was the “real” Israel is one church the “real” Church alone. Diversity is God’s will although we are not informed as to why this is “better” and therefore his will.

**Closing Summary…**

Knowing God’s will is a process of developing a biblical worldview and values set based on Scripture and processed in the Church’s traditions and our church’s engagement with our world (intentional play on words). God’s will is individual in the sense that we are all responsible to live according to Scripture’s precepts. Our biblical worldview and values set provides “wisdom” (hokmah), by which “skillful living” is attained. God’s will is not a process of seeking information (revelation) before a decision for whatever motives might be involved (e.g. doing right, doing well, avoiding pain, fitting into some grand plan we are supposed to find). See Acts 21:10-16. We will learn in our review of the OT/NT Scriptures on this subject that God’s will is “do” not “find.” The prominence of do/obedience indicates a pool of knowledge that provides for that need.

**At this point, the reason you were interested in this course of study may have been to “find God’s personal will for your life.” You didn’t intend to “buy into” all this detailed analysis…you just want a divine answer to your personal questions about life!! Be patient, stay the course. You will eventually see that the answers you seek are found in a different way than you assumed.**

1. Many individuals feel overwhelmed when they try to study these large paradigms of interpretation and often feel that real understanding will never happen. So some turn away from the hard work of the text. However, this should be an expected perception *because* one never understands any part of a paradigm until they understand the whole paradigm (e.g. the book of Revelation). Understanding the whole requires more reading, thinking and plain old hard work than most Christians are willing to do. I do not think that any person can grasp large paradigms with understanding and conviction—be it the eschatological issues or the bible on divorce and remarriage, or whatever—without working through a couple thousand pages of reading and studying on the topic. This, obviously, is the task of leadership not the laity. The Bible implies that this is why God ordained leaders in the church. My life verse is 2 Peter 3:16. In this text Peter refers to Paul saying, “… His [Paul’s] letters contain some things that are hard to understand….”. If the apostle Peter had a problem understanding the Bible, who are we to think we should not struggle with texts?! [↑](#footnote-ref-1)