

Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing God's Will, Session 9, Components that Emerge in a Biblical Model

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Well, welcome back to some of our last lessons in Part 2, Discernment Requires the Biblical Worldviews and Values Model. And this is GM 9, GM 9, so be sure you have your materials for that. GM 9 and 10, come back and recap.

I know we've had a bit of repetition in a number of ways, but each time I do a repeat, I do a little addition, and I'm just trying to wear it that way. I hope it works for you. In spite of the fact that you might feel like sometimes we're looking at the same things, the same things come back in different ways. They come back in worldview, they come back in values, they come back in relation to certain created models.

So anyway, knowing God's worldview and values and noticing this is a review of the components, we can think through these components one more time, and I think it will help us to do that. I just want to remind you that you've got your table of contents, and this is Lecture 9, Components that Emerge in a Biblical Model. I just want to kind of bring together the items that we've cited in a variety of places that are prominent, and then we're going to talk about in Lesson 10, Processing Some Decisions, to do a little more thinking out loud.

Then we'll be done with Part 2, and we'll go to Part 3. That will be Discerning the Subjective Challenges, and I can guarantee you that this one will be of interest to you. I enjoy working on conscience, spirit, and other items a great deal. So, just put on your seatbelts, and here we go again. All right, discerning God's will requires identifying the components of a biblical worldview and values model that guide, and we've done that in a variety of ways.

I'm going to come back and quickly go through these. These will be shorter videos, but I just want to highlight a good number of themes that we've been treating in certain ways. All right, now, themes that emerge.

Well, what emerges is this. Decisions must be processed by a reasoned biblical worldview and value system. So, if we're talking about knowing God's will and making decisions that are in correlation with that, it is all based on reasoning from that worldview and values model.

That's where we get our information. That's where we make our decisions. Furthermore, humans are to reflect the image of God.

We're representatives of God, not representations. That's a physical image, and we don't have that, of course, but we're representatives. I think that's why ethics is such a huge piece.

As I've mentioned before, be holy, for I am holy, and God has presented to us particularly an ethical approach to life. We're to be conformed to the image of Christ, and that means be conformed to the ethical image of Christ. Therefore, it's extremely important for us to think about the image of God.

I'll mention something about that in a moment. Oops. The Fall.

We've talked a lot about the Fall. It overshadows our skills. It affects our world, even the world in which we live, with the Fall and the Flood.

The terra firma that we investigate is not what God originally created. Things have happened, and there are different views on exactly how that's true, but I think that things have happened that have caused problems for us there. And the Fall affects our minds, our thinking, and our capacities.

We are not what we could have been. Adam was an amazing creation, and I wish I had the mental capacities that Adam must have had, but we have deteriorated ourselves in lots of ways. Furthermore, the interpretation of the text has to be in context.

That's crucial. You can't say what the Bible means until you understand what the Bible means. You must engage the scriptures on their own terms.

Poetry, narrative, epistolary literature, prophetic material, apocalyptic material, these genres mean in a certain way, and we have to understand that to be able to rightly draw from them what the authors intended to convey. That's a matter of research. Nobody does that just naturally on their own.

I had a library of about 7,000 volumes when I retired. It's near a theological library in Houston now. I have a very minimalistic group of books that I use for some online things and just my own edification.

But the fact is that we've got to research. That is the crucial piece to growing in God's Word for those who want to grow in a way that they can be leaders of others. A lot of people don't have the opportunity to do this.

The Biblically Learning site gives many, many people information that they couldn't have gotten other ways with the new artificial intelligence and translating these courses into other languages. This is just wonderful, and it will increase the

knowledge of God on the planet for those who will take the opportunity to learn. At the same time, if one doesn't have resources, one still has a challenge to get to that.

The Internet has made a big dent in that, and I've mentioned Google Scholar on a number of occasions. All right, so it's got to be in context. Proof texts are precarious.

Like someone said, a person with a proof text is a person with a pretext. And what that means is they're using the words of that text to make a statement, to say what they want to say. You can't do that with the Bible.

You can't just cherry-pick verses to create what you want to hear. And that happens a great deal when people are trying to buttress their own opinions and their own presuppositions by finding words in the Bible that support them. But the problem is those words meant something in context.

It might not mean what you think it means, and that has to be considered. So, proof texts are particularly precarious. We're free to discern.

We're free to choose, but we're free within our nature and also within our worldview and values, our model. Our nature restricts us in many ways because the attraction of a person's will is in the direction of their nature. So, being free to choose is true, but freedom is a myth because we're not free from ourselves.

We're not free from the presuppositions that drive us. So, being free to choose could be as much of a curse as it could be a blessing. We have to treat that very carefully.

Wisdom is derived from a worldview. Doing what is wise is argued, not merely asserted or assumed. Wisdom is a product of knowledge.

Wisdom is a knowledge of its own, as many wisdom critics and commentaries will tell you. Therefore, wisdom isn't the thing that we talk about in general life. You know, he's a wise person or she's a wise person.

No, wisdom in the Bible is a much more sophisticated domain than that. It's skillful living, and that skillful living is drawn off of Scripture, even when Scripture isn't quoted, like in much of the wisdom literature. So, themes emerge.

You can think these over a bit. We have the implications of the Imago Dei being created in the image of God. We've talked about this, and I don't need to labor it, but I do want to bring it back as one of the components in all of this.

Man is God's image, which means that he's a visual corporal, which means fleshly, representative of the invisible, bodiless, excuse me, God. There's a question sometimes we ask: does God, as God, take up a place in space? Now Jesus does

because Jesus became a man. How does the Spirit take a place in space? What does it mean that God is on the throne? We have that imagery, but Jesus is the only one we'll ever see.

As far as what I understand the Bible to be saying about him and the Incarnation and the invisible nature of God. He's not physical in the sense of corporality. We are representatives rather than representatives.

Now, all mankind, without distinction, are the image of God. No matter who it is. Anybody that's born is in the image of God.

The image is to be understood not so much ontologically as existentially. What that means is it's an expression of how God images himself in terms of transferring that to a human being. We think, we feel, we choose, and we can glorify God by our choices, or we can be against God by our choices.

And the Scriptures reflect both of those things. So the image of God is important. There's a lot of reading one can do on that.

Traditional functions of the Imago Dei. Traditionally, we talk about thinking, feeling, choosing, and self-determining. And that makes us different.

The animal kingdom does a lot of thinking. There's also a lot of what we call what's ingrained in them in various ways. If you've ever had a dog, you know dogs aren't stupid.

And yet, at the same time, they can't figure out how to get out of the house. At the same time, a human being can do that, even when the doors might be adjustable and so forth. So, there's a difference between the animal kingdom and the human realm, and we're the Imago Dei.

Angels are not the Imago Dei. We are. We have a special place in creation.

In a decision-making process, we reflect on God. We glorify him by engaging his worldview and value structure, engaging it as the avenue for our decisions. Not to think and choose violates our reflecting God.

In other words, if we say, oh, whatever, or we just abandon searching for answers to our questions, we're not glorifying God. We're insulting God. God created us to reflect him in our search, both for him and for other things as well.

Tradition functions the Imago traditional functions of that Imago Dei in humans. All right, moving on from there to slide six. Implications of the Fall.

We've talked a lot about this, but let's just hit some highlights. The Fall defined the noetic, and that word noetic comes from the Greek word nos, which means mind. There is a noetic effect, that is, a fall affecting the mind.

We are not what we could have been, even mentally. Every now and then, somebody comes along. Isn't it odd how autistic children can have such minds in certain areas? I mean, it's mind-blowing.

The term Fall is a theological construct that captures the consequences of Adam's sin for the whole human race. We are all Fallen in that regard. And the Fall doesn't mean that we are as bad as we could be, but we are as bad off as we could be until we're redeemed in Christ.

Key references about how the Fall affects the human context. We've looked at a number of references, and you've looked at more because I've asked you to do that in the notes. The word sin is just a morpheme; it's a single-syllable word that captures rebellion against God, violating God.

There are three big words in the Old Testament. We've got transgression, iniquity, and sin. And transgression has to do with trespassing.

Iniquity has to do with badness. Sin has to do with missing the mark. All three of those words are used metaphorically because they had a life in something other than religion before they were picked up and used as metaphors for sin.

Sin and missing the mark describe disobedience to God's instructions. There's a great study on this in Psalm 51. All those words are used in Psalm 51, which describes David's reflection on his sin with Bathsheba.

It's a very fascinating text that you could take a look at. How do we protect ourselves from the implications of the Fall? Well, there's only one way, and that is to engage the Scriptures in transforming your mindset. Our worldview and values and ongoing education, according to biblical teaching, is the only way we can advance ourselves beyond the damage that the Fall has done.

And that's going to be incomplete, but someday we'll know as we are known, as the Scriptures themselves say. So, the implications of the fall are another area that's missing in a number of treatments based on God's will. They do not adequately account for the horribleness of the Fall.

Okay, implications of the role of the Bible. Well, the Bible is our only means of knowledge of God. Yeah, you can look at nature, and I believe nature reflects God, but the fact is you have to look at nature through biblical eyes to understand it.

What David said, the heavens declare the glory, the firmament shows the handiwork, day in the day utter speech. David was a believer reflecting on the greatness of God in creation. He wasn't an atheist saying, oh, look at this.

It just isn't that way. Surface reading for a proof text is precarious in this regard. A lot of people will run to that.

The role of the Bible is absolutely essential. You cannot cherry-pick the biblical text to build a case for what you want to do. You'll say that God is leading me this way, but the fact is that you're building a case.

You're going to find words that fit what you, deep down inside, want to do. Sometimes you're aware of this, sometimes you're not. You could be serious in doing it but it's a seriously flawed methodology to cherry-pick text in the Bible to prove a point.

Serious biblical interpretation is essential. I've said that enough, haven't I? Adjudicating God's will for your actions is not a game. It is serious business and deserves serious reflection.

It deserves your best. If you're going to be in ministry, for example, it deserves the best education that you can get. We all have our limitations of what we were able to do during those education years, where we were able to go, and the teachers we were able to get.

But the bottom line is that a lot of it is up to us to take what they give us and really master it and take it to another level. I have many students who have far exceeded anything I ever did. It's kind of embarrassing, I suppose.

But the fact is, I've had some students who have gone way beyond where I tried to take them, and I'm so proud of them. There are no simple answers or instructions outside direct imperatives when the Bible gives you a direct command, a direct imperative. And yet, even those who love your neighbor, that has to be defined.

Love God, that's got to be defined. Consequently, even the sepulchral command may have a lot behind it. We talked about thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not lie. We talked a little bit about that. So, commands are to be followed, but sometimes, we even have to deal with the deeper meanings of the commands themselves.

Decision-making is not pragmatism. That is, pragmatism operates based on what makes sense. Maybe it makes sense to you or it makes sense to the church.

But that's not decision-making. Decision-making is reason judgment from a biblical base, and you have what we call lines of reason. You can connect A to C, C to E. You have lines that connect the logic that you're applying to a given decision in life.

No matter what that is. We've mentioned some examples, and we'll mention some more. You can multiply those.

Most of them are going to be things that aren't addressed directly in the Bible because those things are much more challenging, and those are the ones that we're trying to figure out. Furthermore, implications of our freedom to choose. I've said before that human freedom is a myth.

Why? It's not because of severe Calvinism or something. It's because we're sinners. We are trapped in our own devices.

We're trapped in a mind that will not naturally move toward God. We all think and act in concord with our nature and the worldview and values that we recognize and apply. Before being a Christian, our worldview and values were not toward God.

They were toward ourselves. Selfishness. They might have been more noble and for the community, your town, and your state, as if there was an innocent politician, I suppose.

I'm not going to go there. But the fact is that we are trapped in our nature and that takes human freedom into a new category. We are free in terms of our nature.

I use that imagery. The traction of a train is in the direction of its nature. And the traction of our will, using the analogy, is in the direction of our nature.

We are, by definition, wronged. And therefore we need to be changed. We need to be transformed so we can move in good directions and make good decisions.

We are self-determining in this respect. We're self-determining whether we're applying the old nature or the new nature. Hopefully, we'll be self-determining with the new nature and the good things.

It is a divine image that is allowed to work in us even if imperfectly. So that's it. Human freedom is a very interesting category.

The theologians talk a lot about it. They particularly want to talk about it in relation to salvation. But the fact is that human freedom is, at the end of the day, a myth.

Because we are sinners and even a sinner saved by grace, we need to inform our worldview and values so that our freedom will be applied appropriately. Human nature is the composite of attributes. Nature is not an ontological unit.

Now, we've used that word. So, I have a new nature, an old nature. Some people have used they'll say that, well, every Christian is like two dogs.

You have a white dog and a black dog. The white dog is godliness, and the black dog is sinful. And whichever one you feed the most is going to be the one that wins the battle.

I'm sorry, that's a horrible illustration besides being politically incorrect with color anymore. There are lots of things we shouldn't say, probably.

But because it's not a myth, it's just implications people take from it. But the fact is you are not two dogs fighting like that. You're one dog.

And your name is Spot. After you become a Christian, you're white with black spots, or you're black with white spots. The fact is that there are composites of attributes that you're being called to perform.

To obey. In relation to the virtues and vices to avoid that are cited in Scripture. Regenerate persons have the old nature and the new nature.

Two different mindsets. And we choose which we will obey. We try by education, learning the Scriptures better, and loving God to diminish old nature.

But it's never going to go away till we're redeemed physically by the second coming of Christ. Humans are naive about who they are and why they act because humans typically fail to think deeply enough to know themselves. People are constantly saying things.

They haven't thought about it. And if you're foolish enough like me to challenge them and say well, what do you mean by that? How do you know that? They almost get angry. Consequently, we are all part of that failure.

The human failure. Humans are naive about who they are and why they act because humans typically fail to think deeply enough to know themselves. Know yourself.

Know your presuppositions. Know your propensities. Know your sense.

So that you, through God's grace, can move away from them. Put that train on a better track. Humans are naive about who they are and why they act because humans typically fail to think.

I don't know if I did. I thought I grabbed that already. Yeah, I did.

So, our freedom to choose is real. Yeah, it's real. You're free to choose.

But you're not free. Because you're going to choose in the direction of your nature unless you educate that nature in a new direction. Within our minds, whether renewed or original, we've got to be conscious of our choices on the basis of our worldview and values.

Will we be obedient to the old nature? Or to the new? The works of the flesh excuse me; the fruit of the spirit and the works of the flesh are two major presentations of new nature: the fruit of the spirit, old nature works in the flesh. And there are all kinds of virtue and vice lists in the New Testament that we can learn from. Okay.

Moving on to the next slide. The Implications of Worldview and Values Model
Wisdom to choose is based on a recent application of our worldview and values, not pragmatism saying some people would say do what you think is the wise thing and without lines of reason. If there are no lines of reason you have nothing to say.

Knowing and doing God's will is not based on our hunches but on what we can explain as our worldview and values. It's not based on what I feel. Feelings are great things, and we all want to feel deeply about things, but the fact is that feeling is not a transformed mind.

The feeling is a product. You do right; you feel good. You do wrong, you feel bad.

And so, consequently, we've got to be careful about how we blame God for the voices we hear in our head that we call hunches and say God told me. Well God didn't. That's yourself talking to yourself.

The Spirit of God will convict you as the conscience that's right, the train will convict you in relation to your worldview. Those are the voices that are there, but they're not giving you content. They're barely applying the pressure of conviction in relation to the content that you recognize and apply.

We act because we have lines of reason to do so. Now, that's a very important phrase. Lines of reason to do so.

Please think about that. Put on the piece, whatever you're doing, thinking about something serious. You need to do that on paper where you can see it and think out loud with yourself. And draw lines of reason from one side to the other to show good and to show bad.

Do it out loud. Bounce it off to people with whom you can have a good conversation. We must understand the subjecting challenges in our process of thinking.

We're going to open those up in the next section, which will be section three after the next lecture. Because we are merely human, there will always be tension. We're never going to be completely confident or satisfied.

That's just not the nature of life in the human realm. God hasn't given us inspired commentaries and that sort of thing, so therefore, we have to be careful with ourselves and realize that a good person is probably never as comfortable as they want to be in decision-making, but you have to move forward. And if you're doing it the right way, you're making the best decision possible.

Now, I'm going to come back to Friesen. I've kind of alluded to that a few times, and I'll mention it here. Implications for Friesen. If you don't know his book, I'll introduce it to you a little bit at the end of our lectures, but it was a major book in the U.S. some years ago.

Friesen is naive about human freedom, as far as I'm concerned. The fall is not adequately considered in his model. The noetic effect of the fall affects believers as well as sinners.

So, if he tells you to do what's spiritually expedient, how do you know that you're thinking about what's truly spiritually expedient? That's not an address. Our freedom is bounded by our nature and by our maturity. We mature as we go along.

I agree that with a lot of decisions in life, redoing a bad decision is part of maturing as a decision-maker. In fact, as someone once said, God builds his work on our mistakes. Sometimes, in the providence of God, we make a decision that's not good.

It's not an immoral decision but a decision that's not good. And we realize that after we get into it. And then we have to work our way out of it.

But we learn things from bad decisions that we would never have learned if we had made the right decision in the first place. Do you ever think maybe that's God's providence in how to teach us things? I do. And that's a very deep thought to think.

His dictum, Friesen's dictum, is that Any decision made within the moral will of God is acceptable to God. I don't think that's adequate at all. Not any decision you make that's not violating the moral will of God.

Well, you should make decisions that don't violate the moral will of God. But it's a lot more to think about what's a good decision when you're not dealing with violating the moral will of God. Even more so than when you're dealing with the moral will.

God's moral will is larger than Friesen's model. God's will is larger than Friesen's model. The implication of God's moral will requires discernment, and wisdom discerns the alternatives.

Wisdom as spiritual expediency is hardly a Biblical paradigm. We talk about wisdom in the Old Testament lectures, and it doesn't. Wisdom really is an expression of a worldview and value system based on law but not quoting the law. Therefore, it's very interesting to read wisdom literature and try to track it to where we can see anything in Moses that would imply that. Where do they get that? Wisdom talks a lot about creation.

No, there are some questions right there. Therefore, we need to be sure that we realize that wisdom is not simplistic what you think and that someone is doing what you happen to agree with and calling it wise. Well, that's enough there.

I'm going to be coming back to that at the end of our lectures and pointing out three views to you that I'll call competition. It was mine, and competition was a worldview and model view. All right, thank you. We've got one more brief lecture where we're going to look at some items that are the processing we're going to do where we're processing thinking, and then we're going to go to the subjective challenges, which are lectures you don't want to miss because they're really very interesting aspect of knowing ourselves.

I'll just put it that way. Thank you, and have a good day.