

Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing God's Will, Session 10, Processing our Decisions by a Worldview and Values

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Well, welcome back. And if you've been watching your table of contents and retrieving your slides and notes as appropriate, you know that we've come to lecture 10, which is a lecture thinking a little about processing. There's some review and repetition, but we're going to talk out loud about issues, and I'm going to reflect out loud about things you would do to try to answer a decision related to some issues.

So, you are processing lecture 10, which is GM10, in your note packages. I have put notices for you in my book, *Decision-Making God's Way*, which you can't really see. I'll show you much since we're here.

Whoops, I won't come out of there. We're getting a mess here. I'll show you up close.

There you go, *Decision-Making God's Way*, a new way for knowing God's will. This is from Baker Press, which does the titles. I would have put a different title on it, but anyway, that's what they did.

That's now out of print with Baker. However, it is in print with Logos, in English, and in Spanish. When I'm done with these lectures, I'm going to start rewriting and producing the new volumes that will include everything I've been doing in here and then some.

It'll be sequenced pretty much like we're doing in here. However, I will, since it's a written book, have to reduce some of the pedagogical aspects of repetition that are important in a classroom, not always so important book. So be watching for that.

It's going to take a while to get that done and how I move along these days, but we'll see how that goes. Okay, *Processing Decisions*. How does the worldview and values model guide us? I've asserted that so many times it's dripping off of you.

Well, because it gives us a grid. We've seen that grid in the road picture I've given you. It gives us a grid by which we interpret.

We interpret our life and world by our worldview and model, and we kick out meaning on the other side. It is our perceptual set. That's the new language I'm giving you, but there are disciplines that use that phraseology, our perceptual set.

This means how do you perceive the world. It's a part of the worldview complex. A perceptual set from which meaning comes. We ascribe the meaning to it that way.

Now, I'm not going to stay here because you've seen this play. Your answers to all the decisions go through that perceptual set. As a person thinks, so are they.

The scripture points that out on numerous occasions, and that becomes extremely important. Okay, here's another little chart that I don't think I've given you before, but I think it's useful. At its foundation, God's will is revealed.

At the top, it says God's will is godly discernment. Well, how do you get there? Okay, God's will is revealed as the sovereign and moral will. Furthermore, godly discernment comes into play on that, and God's will is applied.

So, from revelation to application, we have a train going here that we need to keep in contact with each other. It goes from teaching intent to theological analysis. That's a bit like the chart on direct implied and creative construct.

You start at the bottom, from the teaching intent of a text to the theological analysis of a text. The same thing's true here. So I've given you a number of charts.

If you don't get the PowerPoints but get PDFs, you'll at least be able to compose them on your own. I would greatly appreciate it if you'd put a little thing down in the corner for credit on these, but I just want you to use them and to enhance your ministry if that works for you. Now, I have a chapter in the book called What About Bob? Now, that won't mean anything to a lot of folks.

This was a 1991 movie about a man named Bob, who was Bill Murray. He's a comedian, a very interesting comedian, and Richard Dreyfus. Richard Dreyfus was a psychologist, and Bill Murray was Bob, and he was the patient for Dr. Dreyfus.

In the movie, the scene goes like this: Bill Murray can't do anything on his own. He has to always talk to the doctor.

He always has to go to Dreyfus and say, and I don't know what to do. He became so dependent upon Dreyfus that he couldn't think for himself. But the movie has all kinds of strange twists and turns.

You could probably get it on the internet, and you'd have fun watching it. But at the end of the day, he just about drives the doctor crazy. The doctor leaves town to try to get away from him.

He shows up, and he even ends up marrying the doctor's daughter because he can't get away from the doctor. He's absolutely dependent upon the doctor. Well, God wants us dependent upon him, but he does it in a different way.

He does it in the way that we think about it and deal with it. God's guidance is personal, but it's not privatized. We process.

We don't have a system in scripture where every little thing comes up, or every big thing, I mean, there are lots of big things. Whom should I marry? Where should I go to college? What kind of a career should I have? Should I, can I change my career? Or should I go to church? All of those kinds of questions arise. But God hasn't given a system of privatizing it.

He's given a system of adjudicating that through worldview and values. And some of it is not a moral issue. Therefore, we have the freedom to choose, but that choice has got to be something that works within you and within your own capacities and worldview and values.

Guidance is personal but not privatized. Furthermore, we need to take responsibility for our actions and decisions. And so that means sometimes owning up.

I was too ambitious about that, or I had visions of grandeur and wasn't willing to admit it. Self-understanding and confession is good for the soul from time to time. And Bob faced that as well, but it's funny how he got there.

From biblical revelation to discernment is the process. And that's what we'd want to follow, moving from one to the other, no intermediary. All right, developing discernment skills.

Be self-critical about your presuppositions, including your traditions. That includes your personality. It includes everything.

My friends, there are very few people in life who end up in situations in which they truly become self-critical, where you know yourself. You're not going to know yourself if you don't have a context in which you have some very cherished friends to whom you could say, will you please tell me about myself? How do you see me? How do you experience me? Do you like me? Do you like the things I do? Do you think I'm crazy? Or do you think I've got good ideas? In other words, we need someone outside of ourselves to help us to be self-critical. Now, we can take scriptures and their teachings and be self-critical.

I don't do this, I do that, but we need people. And that's a very important piece in life is you're not interested in being evaluated. Then, you're not interested in growing.

You've got to be in touch with your presuppositions, with the things that you just naturally use to make decisions, for example. Some people are very hasty. They need to know they're very hasty.

Some people think too much. Analysis paralysis, we call it. They need to be told.

Self-criticism is at the foundation of a discerning process so that we know ourselves well enough to know words, to know God, to know His words, amen. So, and your traditions, you've got to be self-critical about that. In what way does being a Baptist influence you, or a Catholic, or a Protestant, or a Presbyterian, or whatever? How does that influence you? Know the Bible in its context.

Be self-critical, and know the Bible. That's a lifetime pursuit. Geez, I mean, I'm just overwhelmed with what it means to actually know Scripture.

And I'm so disappointed with what I see from the pulpit and from other so-called informed Christians about their level of knowing the Bible. They know it generally. They know it's general moral teaching, but they don't have a clue about proving a context that could bring light into a decision.

Well, if they see it, they'll like it. I've seen that happen, too. So be self-critical, know your Bible, and work at it.

You've got to start. You've got to have resources. You can't do it just from the internet.

You can't do it on your own, for sure. Now, if you're in a situation in the world, listening to these tapes where you don't have access to those things, then if you have access to the internet, that can be helpful, but it may even be dangerous for you to use it. I don't know.

But the fact is, is you've got to know Scripture. Start with a good dictionary. I mentioned Erdman's Dictionary of the Bible to you.

Here it is right here. I'll just show this to you. And this is the Bible, a one-volume Bible dictionary.

And I recommend it to people because you can go to this and get your answers to a lot of things. Here again, I'll bring it up a little closer. Erdman's Dictionary of the Bible.

Notice that this is not just about words; it's about articles on words. There's an introduction to every book in the Bible in this book. Every word in the Bible is covered in this book in some way.

All the names, places. There are certain theological issues, but most of them are keyed off of terms that are actually used in the Bible. Of course, it's keyed to the English Bible.

So Erdman's Dictionary of the Bible can be a massive learning tool for you if there's some way you can get that. The Bible was written for you but not for you. You get that concept.

It was written for us but not to us. See, let's take the epistles, for example. The epistles are letters.

We call them epistles. They're not the wives of the apostles, but they're epistles. They're letters in the ancient world.

And they look, and they act like letters of the ancient world with salutations and closings and main bodies and that sort of thing. They were written to communities of Ephesus, Colossae, and Philemon as an individual. 1 John is a general letter written to churches in Asia Minor, where John and Timothy were mentors, particularly Timothy after Paul was gone.

So, it's written for you, but not to you. You've got to understand what it meant to those individuals before you can say what it means for you. That's not simple.

And yet, it is a responsibility that we have if we're going to say we use the Bible against. The First Corinthians is a book where this is very prominent. I have about 30-some lectures, 30-some hours of lectures on 1 Corinthians, and I'm only scratching the surface, to say the least.

But you should go and look at some of those lectures about the issue of courts and numerous other issues, the gifts, and so forth, and learn what it meant to them. You can't use 1 Corinthians about courts and say that it's your courts. Those were Roman courts.

There weren't American courts. They weren't German courts. Every court system is different.

And Rome had what they called vexatious litigation. Roman courts were very much in favor of those who had status, and it put down very hard on those who didn't. So, the Bible was written for you, but not to you.

You've got to operate that way and understand that. Furthermore, a text without a context is a pretext. We talked about 1 Corinthians 5.22 earlier.

Avoid all appearance of evil. It means every kind of evil. There, you can go back to your Bible lecture and see how to compare whatever four or five main versions that you have so that you can see more recent translations of terms that will help you not to make the mistakes of the past.

Furthermore, on your worldview. Sit down and write some things out sometime. Have a journal about your worldview, how your worldview worked with you today, and what you learned that you had plugged into the worldview.

Your brain is like a computer. You have to keep putting software in, and you have to update it from time to time so that it will kick out good information. Own it.

Identify and clarify your values. That's a good thing to do at certain times. Christmas might be a good thing in some places because of the commercialization of Christmas.

And even things like, can we value fantasy? Santa Claus is a fantasy. Warren Wiersbe, that name you may not know, was a great preacher. One of the things Warren Wiersbe wrote about was the value of imagination for children.

We know it's not real. And those kinds of things. But there's an aspect of imagination that can be very valuable for a child who will eventually outgrow that.

It wouldn't hurt some adults from time to time. Identify and clarify your values. Also, apply a decision-making process.

And that's that chart that I have given you. And that's where you need the larger one. You'll never see it on a computer screen.

But if you would just take that chart for a moment and look at it again. I explained this to you a little more last time. I intended to, so I don't mean to say too much.

But take issues that you're confronting. For example, say you're in a country where it is illegal for you to be a Christian. Or there could be somebody listening to these tapes.

Where you could go to jail for owning yourself as a Christian, well, that's a challenge for you. How are you going to deal with that in terms of pleasing God? And I'm not going to say that you need to run out there and say, look, I'm a Christian.

You do need to think through what is the appropriate actions for you as a Christian. And you've got your family involved. You've got relatives involved.

You've got all kinds of challenges that I don't have a clue about. But you can work that through these, through your worldview and value system, to be able to try to

deal with that as best you can. There may be somebody listening to these that is a rich person.

Say you're a doctor or a lawyer or someone, and I've had a lot of doctors and lawyers in my classes who just want additional education. Because you're skilled in one area, it doesn't make you skilled in another. So, you need to get in touch with your worldview and your values and with how the Bible informs those.

And to bring your questions. For example, genetic engineering. All doctors face issues about fetal tissue and all kinds of things that go on.

What about genetic engineering? How do you bring that into a decision-making block? And what kinds of things do you have to ask questions about? Because the Bible doesn't have a proof text about that. So, as a Christian leader in medicine, you need to reflect on that. Maybe you could even write an article on it about how Christian worldview and values relate to genetic engineering.

Well, researching the Bible is going to take a lot more research than I know how to do. For example, I would think immediately of going and talking to some Christian philosophers who would have more instincts about how to do that kind of research and bring the biblical text into its creative construct play. That could be a great thing to do.

So, we all need to apply the decision-making process. I've given you lists. You've got your own list. Please think through these things.

I've given you another chart in this particular one. There's that one, but here's another one. This chart, which you need to blow up, is something you just read and see. I blow mine up like this single slide so I can see it.

I think this one is very helpful. I used to have my students do this in class. It's a process for writing a decision-making case study.

When you're making a decision that's really, really serious, sometimes writing up a case study, what do you do? Well, on the left side, you clearly state the decision to be evaluated. You should write it down. Write it down.

When I do evangelism, I always make the person I'm talking to read the Bible. I make them read the text. I don't quote the text, though.

I make them read it. Why? It may be it'll stick. Maybe it'll come back and haunt them.

I don't know how God might use that, but I make them put their eyes on it. And sometimes, dealing with a decision, we learn a lot by just pouring ourselves out on a piece of paper. We start to see ourselves that we didn't see before.

So, you put the decision down to be evaluated. You define the issues involved in that decision and you create, if you can, a case study, a story, in order to flesh out the details. You've seen these in various disciplines.

Secondly, you run the decision through the decision-making grid that I've given you, and you can change those little questions that are in there, answer them, and enlarge them in different ways. You run that through the grid. You raise and clarify questions to research in order to deal with the decision.

I can see running this through the question of abortion. There's no proof text in the Bible about abortion, but we certainly have to bring a Christian worldview into play when we're dealing with divorce. Doctors face this transgender issue.

Everybody faces, particularly in the church, gender roles, including women and men. How should that play out? Can women be pastors? So, every one of those has some kind of text, some more than others. Some are highly implied.

Things in the medical community would be extremely highly implied, and there would be creative constructs, however, to address that. Clarify the questions to research in order to deal with the decision. The more you look at it, the more you clarify it, and the more you try to find biblical text that might address it.

Sometimes, you can use a concordance, and words will get you there because of words being similar, but lots of times, the words won't get you there. You have to get to concepts, and that may take a different kind of book in which you can look at a table of contents and read about it. Maybe a theology book of some kind, depending on what the question is.

Research the questions that have been raised in concert with the decision grid. Bring your findings back to the decision-making grid and work it through yes, no, and so forth. List the pros and cons and reflect.

As you mature in your thinking about that decision, state in writing the options you see within a legitimate decision-making scenario. Work through those options. Eliminate some of the options, perhaps, but deal with those options.

I see a typo there. State in writing, make a decision and just keep cycling that decision through. That's a simple process to make you think. You've got the content to think about, and you've got the decision to bring to that content, but nine times out of 10, you're going to be asking a question that there is no direct text in the Bible

to answer your question, so therefore you must think in larger categories, but you dare not think that God doesn't care just because it doesn't happen to be in the Bible.

All right, so there you go. Summary of my model, and you've heard this enough. Decisions are made by bringing biblical thinking to the issues that confront us.

This is the process of the transformed mind. All humans discern from their worldview and values. It is the biblical component that gives believers the divine edge.

Our worldview and values give us the edge in terms of pleasing God, but all humans, I don't care who you are, what your religion is, what your philosophy is, you still do it, and you know as a Christian that they do it may help you to communicate with them. Our task is not to find God's will but to do it. Our freedom to choose is conditioned by our nature and applying our worldview and values.

Well, that's part two, and I've covered things from different angles. and I hope by now that you're beginning to get the big idea of how a worldview and values model processes the decisions you have to make and how essential it is for you to bring scripture into that play with each and every particular item that you have. Now, the things that many people are most interested have to do with the subject and challenge, and I'm just tickled to be able to talk to you about conscience, to talk to you about the role of the spirit, to talk to you about prayer, and I'm working on providence, that's a new component, to put it in a separate package, and I'm hoping to have it done so that I can include that in our lectures as well. So, please read those handouts ahead of time, look up the passages, and make our time together more profitable for you as I go through the issues of conscience and so forth.

Thank you for your attention, and I trust that you will have a good day.