

Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing God's Will, Session 15, Select Illustrations of How to Make a Decision

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Well, we are to the final couple of lectures in this series on Biblical Theology of Knowing God's Will. Most of what I've given you is what I mentioned to you at the beginning of the slides that I was trying to teach you how to fish rather than just giving you a fish. Most of the literature on knowing God's will gives you steps; do these and life will be wonderful.

Many of those things are Biblically true, but they're not organized in a way that makes you develop a system whereby you can grow in your discerning processes. That issue of the transformed world mind, worldview, and value set that we talk about is so crucial; Romans 12:1, and 2, I've tried to unpack that for you a bit and give you some suggestions about how you can develop yourself into a Biblical decision maker. That's not going to happen overnight, and it's not simple.

It means that you have to read and research. That's just part of life. If you've got a job as a computer tech or some other domain, it'll make a difference what your job is.

You've got to study, you've got to get some credentials, you've got to know what you're doing. The same thing is true for a Christian; it's not some walk in the park where you become a Christian and God slips in a disc in your head, and everything's hunky-dory; it doesn't work that way. You've got to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and in your capacity to apply a worldview and value system that God has provided us to the issues of life that we confront.

Well, I'm going to think through a number of items. We won't be doing any of what I would call a serious development. We need a classroom, frankly, for that, we need time to interact and so forth.

But I want to give you some ideas and suggest how you can work those out. So I hope that you have downloaded your GM 15. This is the lecture 15, GM 15, Discernment Cases.

I'm going to say a lot about a number of items that come up in life. This is actually what we call part four, Practicing Decision Making by a Biblical Worldview and Value System. And there's just one lecture here, which gives you a lot of homework to do and helps you to see the kinds of things to think about.

And you can add your own items to that. I will do one other lecture, lecture 16, I call it Appendix, which I'm just going to highlight. I have some details that I'll give you, but I'm just going to highlight some competing views that are dominant, not dominant, but are prominent in knowing God's will. We will see how we relate to that from my point of view.

All right. So, knowing God's will issues Christians' faiths. Let's think about this.

For example, I mean, and these are very common issues, I think. Age relates to a lot of them. When you're younger and just getting married, in many cultures, the question of birth control.

Well, if the Bible doesn't have a pretext, that's how you go get a pill or an implant or something of that nature. They had their own ways in the ancient world of this kind of thing. They also practiced exposure if they had an unwanted child, which was very nasty to let that child just die a natural death.

That was their way of abortion. So, birth control. Now, if you're going to answer that question, you're going to ask yourself, do I have direct Bible verses to answer that? Do I have implied Bible verses, or do I need to construct them creatively? And you're not going to find a proof text that tells you to practice birth control.

Rather, you will find texts like the metaphor in the Psalms: happy is the man who has his quiver full. Quiver was what you hold arrows in. That was an ancient hunting device.

And that verse refers to children. Happy is the person who has his quiver full. Lots of children.

Well, in the ancient agrarian world, you had large families because you needed workers, frankly. They grew up to do farming, tend the sheep, and tend the orchards and the vineyards and so forth. That was very much a part of being able to survive.

Everything was centered around the family. Your job was the farm. And that's true.

That was true in early America. Large families. Birth control was almost unheard of, but having 10 to 15 children was common.

And then children were very important because of the work that was going to be done in the fields. And so, birth control has had a different approach in the modern world. And frankly, that approach is really, is it not, motivated by our own selfish desires? If I don't have children, keep all the money to myself, my wife, and me. If I don't have children, I don't have those hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenses from birth through college and so forth for the child.

So, there's a lot of selfishness involved. The mandate of the Bible is have kids. The Bible doesn't mandate you decide whether you want children.

The mandate is to fill the earth and multiply. Now you say, well, that was when the earth wasn't full. It's full now.

Well, there are changing cultures and changing times. You bring that into your decision-making process. So, birth control is going to have to be a creative construct because we don't have direct verses and really not even implicational verses because everything is in the other direction.

So, then you have to ask the question, well, am I not being a biblical person if I practice birth control? The Roman Catholic Church, by the way, has often been against birth control because it wanted you to have a lot of children and thought that was the biblical way. And I'm not going to make a hard and fast statement on this. My wife and I haven't been blessed with children.

She had rheumatic fever as a child, and that sterilizes you in terms of your future. And so, we haven't been blessed with children, but it wasn't our choice. Many times it's not people's choice.

Therefore, that's something that you're going to see when making a decision about that. You don't have a proof text. You've got to reflect upon it.

And here you're in a bind because the Bible and the Bible times were times when it was expected. It was the norm. It was necessary to have children to work the agrarian life, to have heirs.

That was your social security system, particularly for the firstborn and the men's children, which was the social security system for the family. So, the cultures are very different. So we bring a lot of different questions to that question of birth control as we try to pursue God.

So that's something you study. You look for wisdom from your own traditions, from your church, and from the theological things you read more broadly to see what they have to say. Another is reproductive technology.

Say you want to have children, but you can't. You use in vitro fertilization. You have a child, a young child that's sick, and you need other fetal tissue, the doctor says, to be able to make your child healthy.

That means that the child just won't say, for the sake of argument, naturally aborted. What is your conscience about using the fetal tissue from that child? Or even a lot of

children that are aborted are put into that mix of science. So, there are a lot of questions that the Bible doesn't give you a text about.

You have to ask, what is my Christian worldview and my value system, and how do I approach this? That's not easy. It's not simple. You've got to look and see what people who are competent to write on these things, not somebody who wants to tell you what they think.

Forget that. When you want to know something, you have to ask this question. Is the person that I'm reading in a position to know, in a position to be able to speak accurately? This means about reproductive things; you may need to read a doctor and a theologian.

A theologian looks at it from the biblical worldview side, and a doctor looks at it from the scientific side. You have a pretty big range of things here. Now, that's a lot of work.

And you'll say, I didn't buy into that. Well, if you didn't buy into it, what'd you buy into? How are you going to make your decisions? Because you're going to make them one way or the other. You at least don't have some reasons for what you did.

Abortion is another. We don't actually have what we would call a direct text on abortion. I think we have plenty of implicational texts.

Now, you might say, well, when they exposed children, Moses was exposed. He was put in the bulrushes. That's what they were demanding: to get rid of the men, children who were born, the boys, and babies.

And they put them out for exposure. That was the ancient way. And you can't say, you're not going to use that as a proof text, are you? You're not going to take your child, put him in a basket in a canal, you'll go to jail.

Abortion was exposed in the ancient world. Well, today, we've got all these fancy technologies. And you've got this big debate about when does an embryo become a person? Traditionally, the Christian church has said that conception is when an embryo becomes a person.

And then there was the morning-after pill for rape and incest and things of that nature. And they could have mortgaged the baby before it was implanted on the wall of the uterus. As a result of that, it was not considered abortive.

So, they had the morning-after pill. The definition of when life begins has changed over time. It used to be life begins at conception.

David talks about it in Psalm 51, and in sin did my mother conceive me. That doesn't mean sex is a sin, but it means I was a person, and I was a sinner from conception. Well, of course, in the modern world, they've changed a lot of that.

Doctors changed some of it. For example, doctors came out with the idea that the person begins when this, I call it an embryo, I'm not a scientist, maybe misspeaking, but when it is implanted to the wall of the uterus so that it begins to develop its body and all those other things. So, they changed the definition in that sense.

Lately, philosophers have gotten into this mix more than doctors. In America, the United States, we have what they call the Planned Parenthood group. Planned Parenthood is pro-abortion even up to the time of birth.

So they philosophically, not scientifically, philosophically, they changed the definition. To make it convenient for them and justify their actions. And they say that a person is not a person until they're born.

And I'm not sure exactly how they ferret that out because there are some stories about even post-birth abortion for one reason or another. I'm not an expert on that, but you all are aware very much in every culture about this issue of abortion. You, if you're going to do God's will, you've got to come up with an understanding of what the Bible teaches about life, about respect for life, and about who controls life because that's where you get your information.

You're going to have an implication of a creative construct to address this. No proof. Euthanasia is in the same category.

Even physician-assisted euthanasia. Even suicide. We have a couple of incidents of suicide in the Bible, but we don't have any teaching about whether it's right or wrong, or how it should be done, and all those issues about euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, or suicide itself.

You've got to have that in your worldview, however. So, you've got to move up that ladder from direct implied to creative constructs to be up here to talk about this. So, how do you talk about it? When you talk about it, how does the Bible present life? Who gives life? Who controls life? Who decides when you go into the grave? There are particularly poetic texts that talk about this.

Didn't intend to address what we're asking, but it did intend what their view of life was, and it is part of Scripture, and so something that you take seriously. That's not easy to trace out, is it? You see, you thought that knowing God's will meant whether you buy a Chevrolet or a Ford as your next vehicle. Well, that's juvenile stuff.

This is real stuff here. Genetic science. Cloning.

There have actually been babies cloned to provide other babies with organs so that they can live. Some of it's legal, some of it's illegal. Scientists actually have huge debates over the ethics of genetic sciences and messing with the DNA code.

The things that science has become able to do. Amazing things. Good things in some ways, but it brings in the issue of ethics.

And by and large, scientists don't have an interest in ethics. They're only interested in science. And you take atheistic and agnostic scientists, and they will run right over any kind of a religious view of life, regardless of which religion it is.

So, genetic science, cloning, the use of fetal tissue, and more things that I know. I wrote some papers on this a decade ago, and I haven't looked at it much since, so, therefore, I'm not a source for knowing that. But those require creative constructs from Scripture.

The Bible didn't have any of that to directly speak to. When it speaks, you have to discern what it says. Transgender issues.

Well, this is a little easier because the Bible makes it quite clear that we're created male and female, and we're to have children, and the children are either male or female. And the Bible has a lot to say about deviant sexuality. I'm not going to deal with that right here, but that's another one.

I'll probably even mention it down below. So transgender issues. It seems to me the case is against it.

But you've got to have your lines of reason as to why you would say no. Sexuality issues. For example, homosexuality and lesbianism are condemned in both the Old and the New Testament.

I know that there are some liberals who have written some books and play hermeneutical gymnastics with the text. But the fact is that the Bible is relatively clearer. The Book of Romans even addresses it.

Gay marriage would be in that same category. So, the Christian church has generally been against these expressions of sexuality. It's not that we hate these people, but it is that we believe that they're not following a path that's been laid out by the God who created them.

And that has to be dealt with in different ways. The state of homosexuality, for example, regardless of whether male or female. We all have someone in our family who's in that category.

And many times, it's the best person in the family as far as being nice, being kind, being helpful. I've noticed this a number of times. Have you noticed how many artists at some of the highest levels of artistry are in this domain? Well, but does that justify it? No.

If you have a biblical worldview, the fall and the distortion of not only our minds and as the flood came, the earth, but human beings are distorted. The DNA code is not what God originally designed. It's distorted in different ways.

And so this whole debate about homosexuality, where the text is clear, people leave the text and go into the debate about right or wrong. And they talk about nurture and nature. Are you nurtured into it or is it part of your nature? And some Christians will say, well, it can't be part of your nature.

That's not how God created Adam and Eve. That's true. However, your nature's been screwed up by the fall.

Therefore, there are a lot of issues to consider. This stuff is high taxonomy discussions. And yet you're trying to decide what is God's will.

Well, you could make superficial decisions, which most of us are not qualified to make the higher decisions. So what do we do? We read people who are in a position to know, a position to make a reasoned judgment on the basis of science and also reasoned judgments on the basis of how Scripture relates to that. Another one, which seems sort of mild now after we talk about those, is the issue of war.

What about war? What about mass destruction? What about the bombs that were dropped on Japan? What about the chemical warfare in the Near East that's been reported even among their own people? War. What about self-defense? Does that sanction murder? Does it sanction killing? What about pacifism? Should you be a pacifist if you're a Christian? Well, here again, the Bible presents war. In fact, God commanded it.

Kill them all in the Canaanite situation. That's there. That's part of it.

And there's got to be an explanation. So, these are challenging. In fact, one of the sets of books that you ought to collect is called the Counterpoints series.

Zondervan, I think Baker, and also Kregel, particularly, have a series. They don't all call them Counterpoints, but Zondervan does. Zondervan has probably 50 volumes on four views on war, four views on pacifism, and four views on homosexuality.

And it's not that we can have four equal views, but that it puts before you and makes it easier for you to access information, study, and be able to.