

# Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 0, Orientation and Introduction Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 0, Orientation and Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Gary Meadors introduces his course on discerning God's will through a Biblical Theology framework.** He emphasizes utilizing provided notes and slides to actively engage with the lectures, which will follow a synthesis-to-analysis learning approach. **The course is structured into four parts:** grounding discernment in Scripture, requiring a worldview and values model, addressing subjective challenges, and practicing decision-making. **Meadors will also briefly evaluate competing views on knowing God's will and explains the organizational logic behind his lecture numbering.** He encourages learners to grasp the overarching model before focusing on specific components and highlights the importance of understanding the Bible within its original context, rather than using verses as isolated proof texts. **Meadors outlines his background as a professor of Greek and New Testament, clarifying his approach as biblical theology that considers the entire narrative of Scripture.** He acknowledges the influence of cultural expressions and his own presuppositions, suggesting his analytical model can be valuable across diverse theological backgrounds.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 0 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Knowing the Will of God).**



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on00.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 0, Orientation and Introduction

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Gary Meadors' "Knowing God's Will" - Session 0: Orientation and Introduction

##### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Gary Meadors in the introductory session (GM0) of his course "Biblical Theology for Knowing God's Will." This session serves as an orientation, outlining the course structure, pedagogical approach, and Dr. Meadors' underlying assumptions. The central focus is on providing a "big picture" of the course and encouraging effective learning.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

- **Course Structure and Organization:** The course is divided into four main parts:
- **Part 1: Discernment of God's Will is Based in Scripture:** This section will focus on the biblical foundation for understanding God's will, including the importance of Bible versions and historical perspectives.
- **Part 2: Discernment Requires a Worldview and Values Model:** This part will introduce Dr. Meadors' model, emphasizing the use of a biblical worldview and values system in discerning God's will, especially in situations lacking direct biblical commands.
- **Part 3: Discernment Requires Addressing Subjective Challenges:** This section will delve into internal factors influencing discernment, such as conscience, the role of the Holy Spirit, and prayer.
- **Part 4: Practicing Decision-Making by a Biblical Worldview and Model System:** This final part will apply the model to practical illustrations to demonstrate its use in answering life's questions.
- **Appendix:** An evaluation of competing views on knowing God's will.
- Dr. Meadors explains the numbering system (GM0, GM1, GM2, etc.) as a way to keep the notes and videos organized for easy navigation and understanding of the flow.

- **Pedagogical Approach:** Dr. Meadors emphasizes the importance of active learning and provides specific recommendations for engaging with the course material:
- **Utilizing Provided Materials:** Students are expected to download and use the Table of Contents, PowerPoint slides, and written notes alongside the video lectures. He states, *"Listening to a talking head on a video can be very boring, and I feel that if you have those notes, you can think along with me and consequently have a better experience in learning."*
- **Synthesis Before Analysis:** Drawing on educational theory, Dr. Meadors advocates for understanding the "forest" (the entire model) before examining the individual "trees" (specific components). He explains, *"I think it's much better to have a synthesis of a model than to take the pieces, piece by piece, and then eventually it fits together. So I want to help you see the whole thing and then we'll break it out into parts."* Lecture 1 will provide this crucial overview.
- **Creating a Learning Log:** Students are encouraged to create a notebook to track their thinking and learning throughout the course.
- **Iterative Learning:** Dr. Meadors suggests it is more effective to work through the course quickly once and then revisit it, rather than proceeding slowly and getting bogged down.
- **Engagement and Questions:** He encourages learners to keep track of their thoughts and notes that contact information will be provided for communication.
- **The Nature of Knowing God's Will:** The course aims to provide a framework for discerning God's will that goes beyond simplistic "five-step" approaches. Dr. Meadors acknowledges the complexities arising from the interpretation of Scripture and the influence of individual and cultural lenses. He points out that even those who read the same Bible can arrive at different conclusions because *"God gave us an inspired Scripture through the natural processes that he used with prophets and apostles, but he didn't give us any inspired interpreters."*
- **The Role of Biblical Theology:** The course adopts a biblical theology approach, focusing on the "meta-narrative of Scripture" to understand how the Bible as a whole addresses the question of knowing God's will. This involves understanding the Bible in its original context and then discerning how its principles apply to contemporary situations through a process of contextualization. He cautions against using the Bible as a mere collection of proof texts, stating, *"Many times*

*people will read the Bible as if every verse is a proof text for their life. That's a horrible use of the Bible."*

- **Cultural Expressions and Lenses:** Dr. Meadors highlights the impact of cultural traditions and individual "lenses" on biblical interpretation. He uses the analogy of different interpretations of the Book of Revelation to illustrate how pre-existing viewpoints shape understanding. He emphasizes the need to be aware of one's own lenses and to consider other perspectives. *"When you read the Bible, you have your lenses on and you tend to read it through those lenses which inform you about its meaning."*
- **Dr. Meadors' Background and Presuppositions:** Dr. Meadors introduces himself as an emeritus professor of Greek and New Testament with extensive teaching experience. He explicitly states his presupposition that he views the Bible as authoritative and God's normal means of guidance. He emphasizes a life based on scriptural analysis and reasoned application rather than subjective feelings. *"But I run life by an analysis of scripture, how it relates to life, and what I can show as lines of reason between the Bible and me in order to make a decision about a certain issue in life because that is the core of what it means to be a Christian."*
- **Universality of the Paradigm:** Despite his own theological framework, Dr. Meadors asserts that the model he will present is a paradigm that can be adopted and utilized by individuals with diverse presuppositions, including those from different Christian traditions or even non-religious backgrounds. He argues that the *paradigm* of analysis and thinking can be separated from the specific *content* or presuppositions one brings to it. *"You could take my model, my model of analysis and thinking and biblical interpretation, and some of the philosophical issues and theological issues that you relate to answering a question. You can take that model and plug in your own presuppositions, and it still functions."*
- **Personal Responsibility in Prayer:** Dr. Meadors will not include prayers within the lectures themselves but encourages viewers to pray at the beginning and end of each session as a personal practice.

### **Next Steps:**

The briefing concludes by anticipating the first lecture (GM1), which will provide an overview of Dr. Meadors' complete model for knowing God's will. Learners are encouraged to review the Table of Contents and prepare for the subsequent sessions.

## 4. Study Guide: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 0, Orientation and Introduction

### Knowing God's Will: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. According to Dr. Meadors, what is the primary organizational structure of this course on knowing God's will, and what are the main parts he outlines in the Table of Contents?
2. Dr. Meadors emphasizes learning from "synthesis to analysis." Explain what this means in the context of his course and why he believes this approach is beneficial for understanding his model.
3. Why does Dr. Meadors plan to dedicate a lecture to Bible versions (GM2), and what key aspect of Bible translation will he address?
4. In Part 2 of the course, Dr. Meadors discusses the importance of a "worldview and values model" for discerning God's will. Explain why he believes this is necessary, especially when the Bible doesn't offer direct commands for every situation.
5. Dr. Meadors notes the diversity of interpretations within Christianity despite the common source of the Bible. What reason does he give for this phenomenon?
6. What are some of the "subjective challenges" that Dr. Meadors plans to address in Part 3 of the course, and why are these important to consider when seeking to know God's will?
7. Dr. Meadors highlights that many of the challenges individuals face today lack a direct "proof text" in the Bible. How does he suggest we should approach these situations using Scripture?
8. What does Dr. Meadors mean by "cultural expressions" and why are they important to be aware of when discussing and understanding God's will across different contexts?
9. While Dr. Meadors has written a book on this subject, he states it is not required for the course. However, what is the original title he prefers for the material he is teaching, and why does it reflect his approach?

10. Dr. Meadors asserts that his model for discerning God's will is a "paradigm" that can be utilized by individuals with different presuppositions, even those who may not share his theological viewpoints. Explain why he believes this is the case.

### **Answer Key**

1. The course is organized into four main parts based on the Table of Contents. These parts are: Discernment of God's Will is Based in Scripture; Discernment Requires a Worldview and Values Model; Discernment Requires Addressing Subjective Challenges; and Practicing Decision-Making by a Biblical Worldview and Model System.
2. "Synthesis to analysis" means understanding the whole model or concept first before examining its individual parts. Dr. Meadors believes this is more effective for learning, allowing students to see the interconnectedness of his ideas before delving into the specifics of each lecture.
3. Dr. Meadors will discuss Bible versions because knowing God's will is related to the Bible, and all translations involve choices that reflect a certain paradigm of how to render the original languages. He will primarily focus on English Bibles and the spectrum from literal to more dynamic translations.
4. A worldview and values model is crucial because many life decisions lack explicit biblical commands. This model, based on the entirety of Scripture, helps believers draw implications and create biblically faithful constructs to navigate these situations.
5. Dr. Meadors explains that while God gave inspired Scripture, he did not give inspired interpreters. Consequently, even godly and trained individuals can arrive at different conclusions when interpreting the Bible due to the complexities of human understanding.
6. Some subjective challenges Dr. Meadors will address include the role of conscience, the influence of internal "voices," the operation of the Holy Spirit, and the relationship between prayer and knowing God's will. These are important because they represent internal factors that significantly impact an individual's discernment process.
7. When facing challenges without direct proof texts, Dr. Meadors suggests drawing implications and creating constructs that are biblically faithful. This involves using the broader worldview and value system derived from the whole of Scripture to make informed judgments.

8. "Cultural expressions" refer to the traditions, norms, and ways of processing information that are specific to churches, denominations, countries, and other social groups. These are important because they act as "lenses" through which individuals interpret Scripture and understand God's will, and can sometimes hinder objective understanding.
9. Dr. Meadors prefers the title "a biblical theology for knowing God's will" because it accurately reflects his approach of examining the entire Bible as a meta-narrative to understand how it addresses the question of knowing God's will, rather than offering a set of simple steps.
10. Dr. Meadors believes his model is a common "paradigm" of analysis and thinking about biblical interpretation that focuses on how one evaluates content in relation to Scripture and its application. Individuals can adopt his framework for decision-making while plugging in their own theological presuppositions and interpretations of biblical content.

## **Essay Format Questions**

1. Dr. Meadors emphasizes the importance of understanding his model for knowing God's will from "synthesis to analysis." Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of this approach for students engaging with the course material.
2. Dr. Meadors identifies "cultural expressions" as a significant factor influencing how individuals understand God's will. Analyze how cultural backgrounds and traditions might shape one's interpretation of Scripture and the process of discerning God's direction.
3. Dr. Meadors acknowledges the diversity of Christian interpretations of the Bible on the topic of knowing God's will. Explore the reasons he provides for this diversity and discuss the implications for individual believers seeking to understand God's guidance.
4. Dr. Meadors outlines a four-part structure for his course, beginning with the Scriptural basis for discerning God's will and moving through worldview, subjective challenges, and practical application. Explain the logical progression of these parts and why each is essential to his overall model.

5. Dr. Meadors claims that his model for discerning God's will is a paradigm that can be used by individuals with differing theological presuppositions. Critically evaluate this claim, considering both the potential strengths and limitations of applying a single framework across diverse theological perspectives.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Biblical Theology:** An approach to theological study that focuses on understanding the overarching narrative and themes of the entire Bible, interpreting individual passages within their historical and canonical context.
- **Systematic Theology:** A discipline of Christian theology that formulates an orderly, rational, and coherent account of Christian beliefs by drawing from Scripture and tradition, often organized by specific doctrines.
- **Hermeneutics:** The branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of biblical texts, focusing on the principles and methods used to understand their meaning.
- **Meta-Narrative:** An overarching story or grand narrative that provides a comprehensive explanation or framework for understanding the world and human experience; in this context, the Bible's unified story.
- **Contextualization:** The process of adapting or communicating the Christian message or biblical principles to a specific cultural or social context in a way that is understandable and relevant to that audience, without compromising the core message.
- **Paradigm:** A typical example or pattern of something; a model or framework of thought or a set of assumptions that shapes how one understands and interprets reality.
- **Presuppositions:** Underlying assumptions, beliefs, or biases that individuals hold, which can influence their interpretation of information and their approach to understanding various subjects, including Scripture.
- **Synthesis:** The combination of different ideas, influences, or things into a coherent whole. In the context of learning, it refers to forming a comprehensive understanding before examining individual parts.
- **Worldview:** A fundamental set of beliefs, assumptions, and values through which individuals perceive and interpret the world and their place within it.



## **5. FAQs on Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 0, Orientation and Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions: Knowing God's Will (Based on Dr. Meadors' Introduction)**

#### **1. What is the primary focus of this course on knowing God's will?**

This course focuses on developing a Biblical Theology for Knowing God's Will. It aims to examine how the entire Bible, as a unified story or meta-narrative, addresses the question of discerning God's will. The course emphasizes understanding the original context of biblical teachings and then thoughtfully applying those principles to contemporary life, rather than simply using verses as isolated proof texts.

#### **2. How is the course structured to help learners understand this topic?**

The course is divided into four main parts. Part 1 establishes that discerning God's will is based in Scripture. Part 2 explores how discernment requires a biblical worldview and values model. Part 3 addresses subjective challenges in discernment, such as the role of conscience, the Holy Spirit, and prayer. Part 4 focuses on practicing decision-making using a biblical worldview and model. The course begins with an overview of the entire model to provide a synthesis before breaking down individual components.

#### **3. Why does the course emphasize the importance of Bible versions?**

Understanding Bible versions is crucial because our access to God's Word is through translations from the original Greek and Hebrew. Different translation philosophies (literal, functional, dynamic) can render the same text with varying emphasis and interpretation. Recognizing these differences helps learners to critically engage with the Scriptures they are using and understand potential nuances in discerning God's will.

#### **4. What is meant by a "biblical worldview and values model" in the context of discerning God's will?**

This model refers to using the comprehensive teachings and values found throughout the Bible to make decisions, especially in situations where there isn't a direct command. It involves understanding how the Bible teaches (directly, through implication, and through creative constructs) and applying these principles to form a framework for evaluating life's challenges and discerning God's will in the absence of explicit instructions.

**5. How does the course address the diversity of interpretations within Christianity regarding God's will?**

The course acknowledges that despite a shared Bible, different Christian traditions and individuals arrive at varying conclusions about God's will. It highlights that while Scripture is inspired, interpretations are not. The course aims to provide a paradigm for thinking biblically about these issues, a model that can be utilized regardless of one's specific theological background, even if the content and presuppositions applied within the model differ.

**6. What role do subjective factors like conscience, the Holy Spirit, and prayer play in knowing God's will, according to this course?**

The course will dedicate specific attention to these subjective challenges. It will explore the nature and function of conscience, the diverse understandings of the Holy Spirit's role in the Western church, and the relationship between prayer and discerning God's will. The goal is to provide a biblically informed perspective on these areas to help learners navigate their internal experiences in the process of decision-making.

**7. Why does the instructor recommend reviewing the course notes and slides before watching the lectures?**

The instructor believes that active engagement with the material enhances learning. By having the notes and slides available while listening to the lecture, learners can follow along, think critically about the content, and have a better overall learning experience compared to passively watching a video. This approach aligns with the principle of moving from synthesis (the overview in the notes) to analysis (the detailed explanations in the lecture).

**8. Can individuals with different theological backgrounds or presuppositions benefit from this course?**

Yes, the instructor explicitly states that the paradigm presented in the course is designed to be adaptable. Even if learners hold different views on biblical authority or the role of the Holy Spirit, the model of analysis and thinking provided can still be valuable. They can integrate their own presuppositions and theological understandings within the framework of the course's model for evaluating Scripture and making decisions about God's will.