

# Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 4a, The Will of God in the Old Testament, Part 1 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 4a, The Will of God in the Old Testament, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture explores the concept of knowing God's will within the Old Testament. The session examines **patterns of divine communication**, including direct revelation, codified scripture, and the development of a "values deposit." Meadors analyzes **Old Testament nomenclature** related to God's will, differentiating between desire and purpose. The lecture further contrasts **sanctioned and non-sanctioned practices** for discerning God's will in the Old Testament and cautions against the **misuse of biblical texts** to support individualistic interpretations. The session concludes with an introduction to the topic of **wisdom in the Bible** as it relates to understanding God's will, which will be continued in a subsequent lecture.

2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 4a – 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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on04a.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 4a, The Will of God in the Old Testament

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Gary Meadors on Knowing God's Will in the Old Testament (Session 4a)

**Date:** October 26, 2023 (Based on the copyright year in the source) **Prepared By:** Gemini AI **Subject:** Analysis of Dr. Gary Meadors' Lecture on "The Will of God in the Old Testament, Part 1"

#### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and key ideas presented by Dr. Gary Meadors in the first part of his lecture on knowing God's will in the Old Testament (Session 4a). Meadors emphasizes that understanding God's will requires examining the patterns of revelation, the nomenclature used for God's will, and avoiding the misuse of biblical texts. He argues against an individualistic model of seeking God's will in favor of understanding God's will through the established means of revelation and the resulting values deposit.

#### Main Themes and Key Ideas:

1. **Old Testament Patterns for Knowing God's Will:** Meadors outlines several patterns through which God revealed his will in the Old Testament:
  - **Direct Revelation:** This occurred primarily in the pre-Mosaic period through oral communication with individuals like Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham. Even after the codification of scripture, God continued to reveal himself through select individuals like Moses and the prophets. Meadors stresses that this was "God speaking to chosen individuals, not just to anybody. It was not God's speech on demand, but it was him orchestrating history."
  - **Codified Scripture:** Moses is credited with codifying the pre-Mosaic redemptive history into the Pentateuch, drawing from oral traditions and possibly direct revelation (beyond the Ten Commandments). Deuteronomy, the "second law," demonstrates how Moses repeated and expanded upon earlier revelations, providing a pattern for understanding biblical implications.
  - **Values Deposit (Ancillary Product):** As God's redemptive work progressed, narratives of individuals (both good and bad, like Lot and Abraham) served as examples for the believing community. Teachers would use these narratives,

along with the direct revelation, to develop values and a worldview. Meadors highlights Lot as a "fascinating character that we'll look at in a little detail because he illustrates the negative side of doing God's will." He points to 2 Peter 2:6-8 which describes Lot as "righteous" despite his poor choices, indicating that his fundamental knowledge of God persisted even amidst his failings. This values deposit is not direct but implied through the narratives.

- **Emphasis on "Doing" God's Will:** Meadors emphasizes that the Old Testament consistently calls God's people to *do* God's will based on the revelation they have received, rather than constantly seeking new individual directives. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:1-3, noting, "The commission to God's people was not to find God's will but to do God's will from the revelation that had been given to them." He argues that there is "never, never a call for God's people. Why don't you go ask the Lord what he wants you to do? Never. Why don't you go read the law and the prophets and see what they tell you to do?"
- **Wisdom Literature:** Books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes take the message of the Torah and translate it into practical living, reflecting the product of a biblical worldview. Meadors notes that wisdom literature "virtually never quotes the Torah, but it takes the message of the Torah and translates it into how you live life now."
- **Prophetic Ministry:** After Moses, God disclosed himself through priests (initially), then judges, and significantly through non-writing and writing prophets. These key individuals conveyed God's will to the redeemed community, emphasizing that "patterns of revelation are by God's discretion, not believers' solicitation."

#### 1. Old Testament Nomenclature for God's Will:

- The phrase "will of God" as commonly used in Christian circles is primarily a New Testament construct. While the underlying concepts exist in the Old Testament, they are expressed through terms like "desire of God," "purposes of God," and God's commands in the Law.
- Romans 2:17-18 is cited as an example where Paul equates knowing God's will with knowing and approving what is instructed by the Law. Meadors states, "God's will for the Christian is the Bible. God's will for the Jew was the law."
- Meadors presents a continuum for the term "will" in the Old Testament, ranging from God's **desire** (what pleases Him, obedience) to God's **purpose** (God's sovereign choices and determinations).

- Interestingly, the phrase "will of God" does appear in Second Temple Jewish literature, possibly due to Greek influence.
- Meadors identifies two dominant categories of God's will in both the Old and New Testaments: **God's sovereign will** (his control over all things) and **God's moral will** (how he wants us to live). He explicitly states, "I have searched and searched. I cannot find anywhere what I would call an individual will where you go to God and say, God, tell me what to do." He argues that the idea that individuals need to find out a specific, personalized will of God for every decision *before* making it is a "myth of people's imagination."

#### 1. **Daniel's Life as an Example:**

- Daniel's life illustrates living according to God's revealed will. He recognized his dependence on God's revelation, organized his life around God's values (prayer, dependence on God), and patiently observed God's sovereign will.
- Daniel's model emphasizes living according to God's word and teaching, not relying on personal wisdom alone.

#### 1. **Abused Examples of Seeking God's Will:** Meadors critiques common misinterpretations of Old Testament passages used to support individualistic models of knowing God's will:

- **A Bride for Isaac (Genesis 24):** The servant's statement "being in the way God let me" is taken out of context. The servant was following specific instructions within God's covenantal framework.
- **Gideon's Fleece (Judges 6):** Gideon's request for signs was a sign of unbelief, not a model for discerning God's will. God was patient with Gideon despite his lack of faith.
- **Proverbs 3:5-6 ("Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."):** This verse, often used for individual guidance, is interpreted by Meadors as a call to follow the "value deposit, the law, and the prophets," not a license for subjective personal guidance separate from established revelation.

#### 1. **The Danger of Moralizing, Spiritualizing, and Allegorizing Texts:** Meadors warns against taking biblical texts out of context to fit personal desires and claiming it as God's will. He shares an anecdote about his wife misinterpreting a Bible verse to justify a business decision, highlighting the danger of reading personal meaning into scripture without proper understanding of context.

### Key Quotes:

- "God speaking to chosen individuals, not just to anybody. It was not God's speech on demand, but it was him orchestrating history." (Regarding direct revelation)
- "Lot is a fascinating character that we'll look at in a little detail because he illustrates the negative side of doing God's will."
- "The commission to God's people was not to find God's will but to do God's will from the revelation that had been given to them." (Regarding Deuteronomy 6)
- "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, there is no mourning in them. There's no light in them if they don't speak according to the word." (Isaiah 8:20)
- "God's will for the Christian is the Bible. God's will for the Jew was the law." (Regarding Romans 2)
- "I have searched and searched. I cannot find anywhere what I would call an individual will where you go to God and say, God, tell me what to do."
- "The model of an individual will that you have to find out ahead of time in order to make a decision does not exist. That is a myth of people's imagination."

### Conclusion of Part 1:

Dr. Meadors concludes the first part of his lecture by emphasizing that knowing God's will in the Old Testament was primarily about understanding and obeying God's revealed word through direct revelation to chosen individuals, the codified scriptures, and the resulting values deposit. He strongly cautions against individualistic interpretations and the abuse of biblical texts to justify personal desires as divine guidance. The lecture will continue in Part 2 with a focus on defining wisdom in the Bible.

## 4. Study Guide: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 4a, The Will of God in the Old Testament

### Knowing God's Will in the Old Testament: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the provided source material.

1. According to Dr. Meadors, what are the primary ways God communicated his will in the pre-Mosaic period?
2. What does Dr. Meadors mean by the "values deposit" in the context of Old Testament patterns for knowing God's will? Provide an example.
3. How does Dr. Meadors explain the significance of Moses in relation to the codification of God's will in the Old Testament?
4. What does Dr. Meadors emphasize regarding the pattern of revelation in the Old Testament in relation to believers' requests?
5. Explain Dr. Meadors' use of the story of Lot as an example of the values deposit. What does the New Testament say about Lot in 2 Peter?
6. What is the main point Dr. Meadors makes when discussing Deuteronomy 6:1-9 in relation to knowing God's will?
7. According to Dr. Meadors, how should Isaiah 8:20 ("To the law and to the testimony...") be understood in the context of seeking God's will?
8. What are some examples of non-sanctioned divination practices in the Ancient Near East that are mentioned in Deuteronomy 18? How does this contrast with Old Testament sanctioned practices?
9. What is Dr. Meadors' main point regarding the use of the phrase "will of God" in the Old Testament compared to the New Testament?
10. How does Dr. Meadors characterize the concept of an "individual will" of God that believers must discover for specific life decisions, based on his study of the Old Testament?

#### Answer Key for Quiz

1. In the pre-Mosaic period, God primarily communicated his will through direct revelation, speaking orally to chosen individuals like Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham. This communication was not on demand but orchestrated by God within the unfolding of history.
2. The "values deposit" refers to the accumulated narrative examples, both good and bad, in the Old Testament that teach the believing community about God's values and how to live. The story of Abraham's lies or Lot's choices illustrate this, providing implied lessons on godly living.
3. Moses is presented as the primary figure who codified the pre-Mosaic oral redemptive history into written scripture, particularly the Pentateuch. This provided a more concrete and accessible form of God's revelation for the Israelite community.
4. Dr. Meadors stresses that patterns of revelation in the Old Testament were at God's discretion, not based on believers' solicitation. He argues that the Bible does not present a model where individuals could simply ask God for guidance and receive direct personal revelation.
5. Lot's story illustrates the negative side of the values deposit, showing someone with knowledge of God's ways making poor choices based on worldly desires. Despite his flawed actions, 2 Peter refers to Lot as "righteous," indicating he knew God but struggled to live consistently with that knowledge.
6. Dr. Meadors highlights that Deuteronomy 6:1-9 emphasizes doing God's will based on the commandments and statutes already given, rather than constantly seeking to "find" a new or hidden will. The focus was on obedience to revealed truth.
7. Dr. Meadors explains that Isaiah 8:20 calls believers to test all claims and guidance against the established "law and testimony" (God's written word). If something doesn't align with this foundation, it lacks truth and divine light.
8. Non-sanctioned practices included casting lots for divination, organ reading, arrow casting, and astrology, which were condemned in the Old Testament. In contrast, sanctioned practices like lot casting in Israel were typically for ensuring fairness under God's sovereignty, and the Urim and Thummim were temporary provisions for national guidance.
9. Dr. Meadors points out that while the concept of God's will is present throughout the Old Testament (through terms like desire and purpose), the stereotyped

phrase "will of God" is primarily a New Testament construct. The underlying meaning remains the same, but the linguistic expression differs.

10. Dr. Meadors argues that the idea of an "individual will" of God that needs to be discovered for personal decisions is a myth not supported by the Old Testament. Instead, believers are expected to live according to God's revealed moral will found in the Scriptures and use wisdom in making choices consistent with that.

## **Essay Format Questions**

1. Discuss the evolution of how God communicated his will in the Old Testament, tracing the shift from direct revelation to codified scripture and the role of prophets.
2. Analyze the concept of the "values deposit" in the Old Testament and its significance for understanding and living according to God's will. Use specific examples from the text to support your analysis.
3. Compare and contrast the sanctioned and non-sanctioned methods for seeking guidance in the Old Testament, explaining why certain practices were condemned while others were permitted (albeit sometimes temporarily).
4. Evaluate Dr. Meadors' argument that the concept of a personalized, individual will of God for specific life choices is not supported by the Old Testament. What evidence does he provide, and how might this perspective challenge common Christian views?
5. Explore the role of wisdom literature and the emphasis on "doing" God's will in the Old Testament patterns for knowing and obeying God. How do these elements contribute to a practical understanding of God's guidance?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Direct Revelation:** God communicating his will or information directly to individuals through speaking, visions, or other immediate means, without intermediaries or pre-existing texts.
- **Pre-Mosaic Period:** The historical period in the Bible before the time of Moses, encompassing figures like Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham.
- **Codified Scripture:** God's word written down and organized into a systematic collection, primarily referring to the Torah (Pentateuch) attributed to Moses.
- **Values Deposit:** The accumulation of narratives and examples within the Old Testament that implicitly teach moral values and a godly worldview through the actions and consequences of various individuals.
- **Oral Tradition:** The passing down of information, stories, and teachings through spoken word from one generation to the next, a primary mode of transmission in the ancient world before widespread literacy.
- **Prophets:** Individuals chosen by God to receive and communicate his messages to the people, often involving both forthtelling (speaking God's truth) and foretelling (predicting future events).
- **Ancillary Product:** Something that accompanies or results from the primary means of revelation, in this context, the values and worldview that develop alongside direct communication from God.
- **Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, used by Greek-speaking Jews in the ancient world and often quoted in the New Testament.
- **Ancient Near East (A.N.E.):** The geographical and cultural region of the Middle East during ancient times, encompassing civilizations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan, which provides historical context for the Old Testament.
- **Divination:** Practices used to seek knowledge of the future or the unknown through supernatural means, often condemned in the Bible when practiced by pagans.
- **Urim and Thummim:** Objects used by the high priest in ancient Israel to discern God's will in specific situations, though their exact nature and function are debated.

- **Sovereign Will of God:** God's ultimate control and authority over all things, his power to bring about his purposes according to his own plan.
- **Moral Will of God:** God's revealed standards of right and wrong, the way he desires human beings to live in obedience to his commands.
- **Individual Will of God (as critiqued by Meadors):** The concept that God has a specific, detailed plan for each individual's life that must be discovered through direct personal revelation. Meadors argues this is not the primary model in the Old Testament.
- **Moralizing the Bible:** Interpreting biblical texts primarily to extract moral lessons or rules for individual behavior, potentially without proper attention to historical context or the overarching narrative.
- **Allegorizing the Bible:** Interpreting biblical texts as having a hidden or symbolic meaning beyond their literal sense, which can lead to subjective interpretations detached from the original context.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of biblical literature (including books like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job) that focuses on practical wisdom for living a godly life, often reflecting on universal truths and experiences.

## 5. FAQs on Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 4a, The Will of God in the Old Testament, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: Knowing God's Will in the Old Testament

#### 1. What were the primary patterns for understanding God's will in the Old Testament?

The Old Testament reveals God's will through several key patterns. Direct revelation was paramount, particularly in the pre-Mosaic period, where God spoke directly to individuals like Adam, Noah, and Abraham. This continued through chosen individuals such as Moses, who codified scripture, and the prophets who conveyed God's messages. Additionally, the "values deposit" played a crucial role. This refers to the values and worldview developed by the believing community through learning from narratives (both positive and negative examples) and the codified direct revelation. Obedience to the law and the teachings conveyed by God's representatives were central, with a strong emphasis on *doing* God's will as revealed, rather than constantly seeking new, individualized directives.

#### 2. How did God communicate His will before the scriptures were codified by Moses?

Prior to Moses, who is credited with codifying scripture, God communicated primarily through direct, oral revelation to chosen individuals. Examples include God speaking to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and His direct calls and instructions to Noah and Abraham. During this "pre-Mosaic" period, there was no written scripture for people to consult. Instead, God orchestrated history and revealed Himself through direct encounters with specific people over extended periods. Oral tradition played a vital role in transmitting the knowledge and values derived from these divine communications within the early believing community.

#### 3. What is the "values deposit" and how did it function in guiding God's people in the Old Testament?

The "values deposit" refers to the accumulated understanding of God's will and character derived from both direct revelation (oral and later codified in scripture) and the narratives of individuals within redemptive history. These narratives, both positive and negative (like the story of Lot), served as examples from which the community learned values and developed a worldview consistent with God's ways. Teachers within the community would transmit these values, helping believers understand how to live in accordance with God's known will. This implied understanding, alongside direct commands, formed a crucial guide for daily life and decision-making.

#### **4. The lecture mentions "abused examples" like Gideon's fleece and seeking a bride for Isaac's servant. Why are these considered misapplications for discerning God's will?**

These examples are often misapplied when used as a template for individual, on-demand guidance from God. In the case of the bride for Isaac, the servant's success was within the context of following Abraham's clear instructions aligned with God's covenantal promises. It wasn't a random sign-seeking endeavor. Gideon's fleece, on the other hand, is presented more as a sign of his lack of faith despite God's initial word. God accommodated Gideon's request, but it's not portrayed as a normative or recommended method for discerning God's will. Relying on such isolated incidents as repeatable formulas for personal guidance can lead to misinterpretations and a focus on subjective experiences rather than the established means of understanding God's will through His revealed word.

#### **5. How did the use of divination in the ancient Near East differ from practices within Old Testament Israel?**

Divination was a pervasive aspect of the ancient Near East, with various methods like casting lots, organ reading, astrology, and consulting mediums used to seek revelatory information. In contrast, the Old Testament strongly condemned these pagan divination practices. While certain practices like casting lots and the use of the Urim and Thummim existed in Israel, they were distinct. Lot casting in Israel often served to acknowledge God's sovereignty in decision-making, like dividing the land. The Urim and Thummim were a specific, temporary provision for national guidance through the high priest. Importantly, these Old Testament provisions were initiated and sanctioned by God, unlike the human-initiated and often manipulative practices of pagan divination. The existence of an adequate code of law and the teachings of the prophets diminished the need and legitimacy of seeking divine guidance through such methods in Israel.

#### **6. What is the significance of the shift from priests to prophets as primary communicators of God's will in the Old Testament?**

The shift from priests to prophets as the primary conveyors of God's revelation in the Old Testament signifies a change in God's chosen method of communication due to the failings of the priesthood. Initially, priests served as God's representatives, but their corruption and inadequacy led to the rise of the prophetic office. Prophets received more direct and immediate revelation from God and became the key individuals through whom God communicated His will, teachings, and warnings to the people. The Urim and Thummim, associated with the priesthood, disappeared as the prophetic voice became dominant, highlighting this transition in how God chose to disclose Himself.

**7. The lecture discusses God's "sovereign will" and "moral will." How do these concepts relate to understanding God's will in the Old Testament, and is there evidence for an "individual will" in the same way?**

God's sovereign will refers to His ultimate control and purpose in the world, encompassing everything from natural events to the rise and fall of kingdoms. His moral will is the way He desires humanity to live, as revealed through His commands, statutes, and the broader teachings of the Old Testament. The lecture argues that while these two categories are prominent, the concept of a personalized, individual will that believers must discover *before* making decisions is not supported by the Old Testament narrative. Instead, individuals were expected to live according to God's revealed moral will and exercise wisdom within the framework of His sovereignty. The focus was on obedience to the existing revelation rather than a continuous search for specific, individualized directives for every life choice.

**8. How does the example of Daniel illustrate the principles of knowing and doing God's will in the Old Testament?**

Daniel serves as a compelling example of someone who understood and lived according to God's will in the Old Testament. He recognized his dependence on God's revelation, studying and reflecting on what had been revealed. He organized his life around God's values, demonstrated through his prayer life and unwavering faith. Daniel also patiently observed God's sovereign will unfold in the historical events surrounding him. His actions were based on his understanding of God's character and commands, not on seeking individualized signs or revelations for every decision. Daniel's life exemplifies living according to the wisdom derived from God's revealed word and trusting in His sovereignty while adhering to His moral standards.