

Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 6, Assessing What We Have Learned 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 6, Assessing What We Have Learned, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

In the sixth session of his lectures on knowing God's will through biblical theology, Dr. Gary Meadors **summarizes the preceding discussions** and **prepares the audience for the next section**. He **reiterates the importance of scripture** as the primary means of understanding God's will, emphasizing that we are called to **do** God's will rather than merely **find** it. Meadors **introduces the concepts of God's sovereignty, decree, and providence**, while also acknowledging the complexities of human freedom within God's plan. Finally, he **highlights the necessity of a transformed mind rooted in a biblical worldview and values** for navigating life's decisions, especially those not directly addressed in scripture, setting the stage for an exploration of these concepts in subsequent sessions.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 6 – 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).



**Meadors_Will_Sessi
on06.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 6, Assessing What We Have Learned

Briefing Document: Assessing What We Have Learned About Knowing God's Will

Source: Excerpts from "Meadors_WoG_EN_Session06.pdf" by Dr. Gary Meadors

Date: October 26, 2024

Overview:

Session 6 of Dr. Meadors' lectures on biblical theology for knowing God's will focuses on summarizing and assessing the key learnings from the previous sessions, particularly regarding the biblical basis for discerning God's will. This session serves as a bridge between understanding the theological and ethical foundations laid in Part 1 and the upcoming exploration of worldviews and values in Part 2. Meadors emphasizes that the Bible presents God's will primarily as something to be *done* rather than found, with Scripture being the primary avenue for understanding this will. He revisits concepts like God's sovereignty, moral will, and decree, highlighting the complexities and the inclusion of human freedom within God's overarching plan. Furthermore, he debunks the notion that knowing God's personal will involves discovering a specific future plan and underscores the importance of a transformed mind grounded in biblical truth for ethical decision-making.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. Review and Summary of Part 1:

- Meadors begins by encouraging participants to review the table of contents and the handout detailing the occurrences of "will" with a divine name in the New Testament, noting the dominance of contexts related to *doing* God's will.
- He reiterates the structure of the lectures, moving from Part 1 (discernment based on Scripture) to Part 2 (worldviews and values).
- He justifies repetition as a crucial learning tool, mirroring its use in the Bible itself ("There's repetition, repetition, and repetition. We learn that way. Even the Bible does that.").

1. God's Will as Sovereignty and Moral Instruction:

- The Old and New Testaments present God's will as both His sovereign plan ("He is sovereign over his creation. Nothing takes God by surprise, and he has a plan, but

that's the secret part.") and His moral will, revealed through laws, narratives, and how He interacts with humanity.

- Meadors stresses a crucial point: "We are never told to find God's will. We are always told to do it. That's what the Bible says. Do God's will. To perform what God has taught."

1. **Scripture as the Primary Revelation of God's Will:**

- The Bible is presented as the "only legitimate, clear revelation that we have of God." While acknowledging potential for "bibliolatry," Meadors asserts that Scripture is essential for understanding God and His will.
- He encourages not just reading but "probing" Scripture, comparing interpretations, and understanding one's own beliefs in light of others.

1. **Understanding God's Decree, Sovereignty, and Providence:**

- **Decree:** God's eternal counsel, foreordaining all things according to His wise and holy will. This decree includes human freedom and culpability for actions ("God has decreed in himself from all eternity by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably all things whatsoever come to pass."). Meadors notes that God is not the author of sin despite His plan.
- **Sovereignty:** A noun describing God's status as the ultimate ruler.
- **Providence:** A term related to God's actions and management of the world.
- He acknowledges the complexity of reconciling God's sovereignty with human freedom and secondary causes, noting it as a deep area of theological discussion.

1. **Revisiting Romans 8:28-30 and 11:33-36:**

- Romans 8:28 ("And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good...") is acknowledged as a commonly quoted but often needing unpacking text, especially in the context of suffering.
- Meadors clarifies that "foreknew" in Romans 8:29 is more than just knowledge ahead of time; it implies God's purpose and volition. The predestination mentioned is to be "conformed to the image of his son," an ethical transformation.

- Romans 11:33 ("O the depths and riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments! How inscrutable his ways!") highlights the limits of human understanding of God's ways, even with the revelation provided.

1. **Addressing the Question of God's Control and Evil:**

- Meadors acknowledges the difficulty in understanding how a sovereign God allows physical evil in the world. He distinguishes between revealed and secret aspects of God's will, referencing Deuteronomy ("The secret things belong to the Lord. The things that are revealed belong to us.").

1. **The 1 Corinthians 2 Solution: God's Revealed Wisdom in Scripture:**

- Meadors revisits 1 Corinthians 2:6-10, emphasizing that the wisdom of the gospel is a "secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory."
- He clarifies that the statement "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" in this context refers to the understanding of God's redemptive plan, not heaven.
- He highlights the crucial point in verse 10: "God has revealed to us through the Spirit," arguing that the "us" refers to the apostolic community chosen to convey authoritative Scripture ("This is not a general text for us. This is not a text about what some people call illumination that God's going to reveal through his Spirit to me. No, no, no. This is to the community that God chose to convey to us an authoritative scripture.").

1. **Implications for Human Ethics and Obedience:**

- God's revealed will in Scripture provides order for human ethics, influencing even non-believing societies historically.
- The burden lies on all believers, not just leaders, to understand God's revealed will through reading and research.
- The domain of the believer's obedience is God's moral will – what has been revealed in Scripture.

1. **Reframing the "Personal Will" Question:**

- Meadors argues that when someone asks about God's personal will, the Bible itself is the answer. "God's revealed will is for us, and in that sense, it's personal."

- He emphasizes that God's word is addressed to the church corporately, but its interpretation is personal.

1. The Absence of Texts Promoting Finding God's Will Ahead of Time for Decision-Making:

- Meadors asserts that "Nowhere in Scripture does it tell you to find it out ahead of time in order to make a decision."
- He uses the example of Paul in Acts 21, who was warned of his impending arrest in Jerusalem but chose to proceed with his commitment to the gospel. This illustrates that advanced knowledge should not be the primary criterion for decision-making, but rather worldview, values, and purpose. ("Advanced knowledge is not a criterion for decision-making. It is trumped by other aspects of decision-making, and values, worldview, and our purpose in life.")

1. Transformation as a Rational Process Based on Biblical Teaching:

- A transformed mind, shaped by biblical worldview and values, is presented as the key to Christian decision-making.
- Many life questions lack direct biblical answers (direct teaching), requiring the application of a biblical worldview and values model.
- Decisions should be made through "lines of reason from text to our issue," emphasizing a logical connection between Scripture and practical application.
- Wisdom is defined as "skillful living, skillful use of God's Word to interpret the issues that we confront in this world."

1. Goal of the Study: Self-Conscious and Critical Thinking Consistent with a Biblical Worldview:

- Meadors' goal is to cultivate individuals who engage in "self-conscious deliberation" and "think critically about life's decisions in a manner consistent with the biblical worldview and value system."
- This process involves reading, research, comparing answers, and engaging with the larger church. It is not about passively waiting for divine revelation outside of Scripture.
- He criticizes churches that prefer comfortable, superficial teaching over deeper engagement with Scripture.

1. Transition to Part 2: Worldview and Values:

- Meadors concludes by highlighting the transition to Part 2 of the lectures, which will delve into the concept of biblical worldview and values as the necessary framework for discerning God's will in areas where the Bible does not provide direct answers. He promises a deeper explanation in the subsequent lectures.

Key Quote:

- "We are never told to find God's will. We are always told to do it. That's what the Bible says. Do God's will. To perform what God has taught."
- "God has revealed to us through the Spirit." (Regarding the apostolic community and the authority of Scripture)
- "God's revealed will is for us, and in that sentence, it is personal."
- "Nowhere in Scripture does it tell you to find it out ahead of time in order to make a decision."
- "Think critically about life's decisions in a manner consistent with the biblical worldview and value system."

Implications:

This session emphasizes a robust and intellectually engaged approach to understanding and doing God's will. It moves away from the idea of seeking a hidden, personal plan for every decision and towards a framework of understanding God's revealed moral will in Scripture and developing a biblical worldview and values system to navigate complex life choices. The importance of serious Bible study, critical thinking, and engagement with the broader Christian tradition is strongly underscored. The session sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how a biblical worldview and values function in the practical discernment of God's will.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 6, Assessing What We Have Learned

Knowing God's Will: An Assessment

Quiz

1. According to Dr. Meadors, what are the three "R's" that aid in learning, and why are they important in understanding God's will?
2. Explain the difference between God's decree, sovereignty, and providence as discussed in the lecture.
3. What is the key point Dr. Meadors makes about the phrase "God's will" as it appears in the Bible, particularly in relation to finding versus doing?
4. Why does Dr. Meadors emphasize the importance of the Bible in discerning God's will, and what caution does he offer regarding how we read it?
5. Briefly explain the theological concept of "secondary causes" as it relates to God's decree and human freedom.
6. According to Dr. Meadors' interpretation of 1 Corinthians 2:6-10, what is the primary focus of this passage, and who is the "us" being referred to in verse 10?
7. What does Dr. Meadors mean when he states that God's revealed will in Scripture is both "personal" and "corporate"?
8. Describe the situation involving Paul in Acts 21:7-14 and what key principle Dr. Meadors draws from this narrative regarding knowing the future and making decisions.
9. According to the lecture, what is the role of a transformed mind (informed by a biblical worldview and values) in Christian decision-making?
10. How should believers approach questions about life that are not directly addressed by a specific biblical text, according to Dr. Meadors?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The three "R's" are repetition, read, read, read, and research, research, research. Repetition aids learning, while reading and research are crucial for advancing one's understanding of Scripture beyond superficial levels and personal presuppositions.

2. God's decree is his eternal plan, decided before creation. Sovereignty is God's status as ruler over all. Providence is God's active management and governance of his creation, carrying out his decree.
3. The Bible consistently tells believers to *do* God's will, meaning to perform what God has revealed in Scripture. It does not instruct believers to *find* God's will as a prerequisite for action.
4. The Bible is the only legitimate and clear revelation of God and his will, making it essential for understanding. However, readers must probe the text, compare interpretations, and avoid simply reading their own presuppositions into it.
5. Secondary causes refer to the actions and freedom of created beings within God's overarching decree. While God has ordained all things, he is not the direct causative agent of sin, and human actions have real consequences within his plan.
6. The primary focus of 1 Corinthians 2:6-10 is epistemology, specifically how God revealed the gospel to humanity. The "us" in verse 10 refers to the apostolic community, to whom God revealed these truths through the Spirit for the purpose of inscripturation (writing Scripture).
7. God's revealed will is "personal" because the Word of God is for each individual believer to read and obey. It is "corporate" because the Word is also given to the church as a whole, and interpretation must be appropriate within that communal context.
8. In Acts 21, the prophet Agabus foretold Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem, and fellow believers urged him not to go. However, Paul felt compelled to continue his mission. This illustrates that advanced knowledge of the future should not be the primary criterion for decision-making; commitment to God's calling and values takes precedence.
9. A transformed mind, shaped by a biblical worldview and values, is central to Christian decision-making. Believers should reason from biblical principles to address life's issues, rather than relying on subjective feelings or expediency.
10. When facing questions not directly answered in Scripture, believers should engage in a disciplined search within the Bible for relevant information, applying a biblical worldview and values model to develop lines of reason from the text to the issue at hand. They should also consider the wisdom of the larger church.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the implications of understanding God's will primarily as something to be "done" rather than something to be "found." How might this shift in perspective impact a believer's approach to decision-making and their relationship with Scripture?
2. Analyze the relationship between God's sovereignty and human freedom as presented in the lecture. How does the concept of "secondary causes" attempt to reconcile these two seemingly contrasting ideas, and what are the limitations of our understanding in this area?
3. Critically evaluate Dr. Meadors' interpretation of 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 regarding the revelation of Scripture. What are the strengths and potential weaknesses of his argument, and what are the practical implications for how believers view the authority and accessibility of the Bible?
4. Explore the role of biblical worldview and values in navigating complex ethical dilemmas that are not explicitly addressed in Scripture. Provide examples of how this framework can guide Christian decision-making in contemporary society.
5. Reflect on the tension between the desire to know God's "personal will" for specific life decisions and the emphasis in the lecture on God's revealed will in Scripture. How can believers cultivate a healthy approach to discerning God's guidance in their individual lives?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Decree (Decretive Counsel of God):** God's eternal plan and purpose, decided in himself before the creation of the world, by which he freely and unchangeably ordained all things that come to pass.
- **Sovereignty:** God's ultimate and supreme authority and control over all creation. It is a characteristic of who God is as the ruler of the universe.
- **Providence:** God's active and continuous involvement in and management of his creation to accomplish his purposes. It refers to how God works sovereignly in the world.
- **Moral Will (of God):** God's revealed standards of right and wrong, found in Scripture through direct commands, narratives, and the teachings about how God deals with humanity. It outlines what God desires for human behavior and ethics.
- **Bibliolatry:** The excessive worship or idolization of the Bible, potentially to the exclusion of a proper relationship with God.
- **Revelation (Divine):** The act by which God discloses himself and his will to humanity. In this context, the Bible is presented as the primary and authoritative means of God's revelation.
- **Second Causes:** The actions and agency of created beings (humans, natural forces, etc.) that operate within the framework of God's decree. While God has ordained all things, these secondary causes have real effects and are the immediate means by which many events occur.
- **Foreordination:** God's purposeful predetermination of events that will occur in the world. It is more than just foreknowledge; it includes God's active planning and arranging.
- **Foreknowledge:** God's complete and perfect knowledge of all things, past, present, and future, including what creatures will freely do.
- **Predestination:** God's gracious plan in Christ by which he chooses certain individuals for salvation and conformity to the image of his Son.
- **Justification:** God's act of declaring a sinner righteous in his sight through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Glorification:** The final aspect of salvation, in which believers will be fully conformed to the image of Christ and experience the fullness of God's glory.

- **Epistemology:** The branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, its presuppositions and foundations, its extent and validity.
- **Inscription:** The process by which the Holy Spirit guided human authors to write the books of the Bible, resulting in God's authoritative Word.
- **Illumination (in this context):** A personal and subjective revealing of truth directly from the Holy Spirit to an individual, which Dr. Meadors distinguishes from the authoritative revelation given to the apostolic community in Scripture.
- **Worldview:** A comprehensive framework of fundamental beliefs and assumptions about reality, influencing how a person perceives, interprets, and interacts with the world.
- **Values:** Principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life. In this context, biblical values are those derived from God's Word.
- **Spiritual Expediency:** Making decisions based on what seems most convenient or personally beneficial at the moment, without a thorough consideration of biblical principles.
- **Proof Text:** The practice of taking Bible verses out of their original context to support a preconceived idea or agenda.

5. FAQs on Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 6, Assessing What We Have Learned, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Knowing God's Will

1. What are the primary ways the Bible presents God's will? The Bible primarily presents God's will in two ways: as God's sovereignty and as God's moral will. God's sovereignty refers to his ultimate control over creation and his eternal plan, much of which remains secret to us. God's moral will consists of his instructions and ethical teachings found throughout Scripture, revealing how he desires us to live and act. Notably, the emphasis in Scripture is on *doing* God's will, not merely finding it.

2. How does God reveal his will to humanity? God reveals his will primarily through his written Word, the Bible. While some might consider a strong emphasis on the Bible as "bibliolatry," it remains the clearest and most authoritative revelation of God and his will available to us. It is crucial not just to read the Bible superficially but to probe it deeply, compare interpretations, and understand its teachings to avoid reading in our own presuppositions.

3. What is the significance of God's "decree of will"? God's decree of will refers to his eternal plan, established before creation, through which he freely and unchangeably ordains all things that come to pass. However, this decree does not make God the author of sin nor does it negate the liberty or contingency of "second causes," meaning the genuine freedom and responsibility of created beings in their actions. God's sovereignty operates in a way that includes human freedom and culpability within his overall design.

4. How do the concepts of God's sovereignty and providence relate to his will? God's sovereignty is a characteristic of who God is – he is the ultimate ruler. Providence, on the other hand, refers to God's active management and governance of his creation. While often merged in common usage, understanding both aspects is important. God's sovereign nature underpins his providential actions in the world, working through various means, including allowing the consequences of human choices and natural events, without always directly intervening.

5. What does the passage in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10 teach about knowing God's wisdom?

This passage highlights that the wisdom of God, particularly the gospel message, is a secret and hidden wisdom decreed by God before the ages. This wisdom was not understood by the rulers or intelligentsia of the world through human means alone. Instead, God revealed this wisdom to the apostolic community through the Spirit, emphasizing the divine origin and authority of the scripture they conveyed. This passage is about God's communication of the Bible, not a general promise of personal revelation outside of it.

6. What is the believer's responsibility regarding God's moral will? The primary responsibility of believers is obedience to God's moral will as revealed in Scripture. This requires diligent reading, study, and research of the Bible to understand its ethical teachings. While individual circumstances vary, there is a fundamental obligation for all believers to learn about God's commands and principles so they can live in a way that is pleasing to him. Our focus should be on doing what God has already revealed rather than trying to uncover a specific "personal will" for every decision.

7. How should Christians approach decision-making when the Bible does not provide a direct answer to their specific questions? When facing questions not directly addressed in Scripture, Christians should apply a biblical worldview and values model. This involves developing lines of reason from biblical texts to the specific issue at hand. Wisdom is seen as the skillful application of God's Word to interpret and navigate the complexities of life. This process requires critical thinking, comparison of different perspectives within the church, and a self-conscious deliberation grounded in the principles found in Scripture.

8. Does God always reveal his specific "personal will" to individuals before they make decisions? The teaching emphasizes that Scripture does not promote the idea of finding God's will ahead of time in order to make decisions. God's revealed will in the Bible is considered personal for all believers. While prayer is important, decision-making should be based on a transformed mind guided by biblical worldview and values, not on waiting for a specific, direct revelation or feeling. The example of Paul in Acts 21 further illustrates that even with advanced knowledge of the future, commitment to God's broader purpose and obedience to his revealed will take precedence.