

## Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 8b, Developing Biblical Values, Part 2 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 8b, Developing Biblical Values, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture, "Knowing God's Will, Session 8b," explores the crucial role of values in Christian decision-making. The session distinguishes between **biblical commands, community values, and personal preferences**, emphasizing the different levels of authority and interpretation required for each. **Meadors stresses the importance of interpreting scripture** to understand direct and implied teachings versus community-developed constructs. He argues that **discerning God's will involves a rational process of engaging one's worldview and values with biblical principles**, encouraging critical self-awareness and consideration of various factors when making choices. **The lecture introduces a practical chart for navigating decisions**, highlighting the need for ongoing learning and applying biblical wisdom to life's complexities.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 8b – 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  
on08b.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 8b, Developing Biblical Values, Part 2

#### Briefing Document: Knowing God's Will - Values (Part 2)

##### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Gary Meadors in the second part of his lecture on "Knowing God's Will," specifically focusing on the concept of values in decision-making. Meadors emphasizes that understanding and navigating different levels of values – biblical commands, community values, and personal preferences – within a biblical worldview is crucial for discerning God's will. He argues against a simplistic, purely prayer-based approach and advocates for a process of informed engagement with scripture and life's issues.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. Levels of Values:

Meadors introduces a framework for understanding values, categorizing them into three distinct levels:

- **Biblical Commands:** These are the "bottom-line aspects of values" derived directly from scripture. While seemingly clear, even direct commands like "Thou shalt not kill" require interpretation, considering historical context and application in different situations (e.g., war, self-defense). Meadors highlights that normative teaching in the Bible requires interpretation, often influenced by theological systems. He cautions against manipulating scripture by claiming personal opinions as direct biblical commands, emphasizing the need to tie ideas to the text. Non-negotiable values are rooted in clear and consistently accepted biblical commands.
- **Quote:** "The Bible is our worldview, but within the Bible, we get commands. Those are the bottom-line aspects of values. Do what God says."
- **Quote:** "If we find a command that is not negotiable, that is, it's clear, it's for all time, and it's not really debated much, even in the church, that's a non-negotiable command. That's a non-negotiable value."
- **Community Values:** These are values held by a specific community, often a church, and can be found in constitutions or unwritten traditions. They may stem

from implied biblical teachings or creative constructs shaped by theological and social systems. Meadors uses the example of church picnics on Sundays to illustrate how cultural and traditional values can interact with biblical principles. He stresses the importance of discerning whether a community value is a direct biblical command, an implied teaching, or a human construct. While binding by agreement of the membership, community values are not deontological (not the absolute "ought") but rather consequential, reflecting the desired behavior of that specific group. They are negotiable and not necessarily normative for all Christians.

- **Quote:** "Community values, church, this would be a church, might be in your church constitution, and that has a whole new dimension to it. It may be unwritten."
- **Quote:** "They are negotiable, and they're not direct teaching values. See, if you frame your constitution and things in this manner, you're going to save yourself a lot of arguments with people. And you'll be better off."
- **Personal Preferences (Personal Values/Convictions):** These are individual values that can be strongly held and sometimes "deified." Meadors emphasizes that personal convictions should evolve with personal growth and understanding. He warns against imposing personal convictions on others without significant discussion and self-critical awareness that they are not biblical commands. While self-denial based on personal conviction may be appropriate for the sake of others' learning, it should be performed knowingly, not through manipulation. Personal preferences are always negotiable and should be approached with understanding and respect within a community.
- **Quote:** "You've got to know what's biblical, you've got to know what's community and why, and you've got to know what's personal. And you shouldn't press your personal convictions on another person without an awful lot of discussion, if ever. I should have self-critical awareness that my convictions are not biblical commands."
- **Quote:** "If a person is not able to walk away from a personal preference that you don't think has anything to do with the Bible, it's okay. Leave them alone. Let them have that personal preference, love them anyway, and don't ostracize or make them feel bad."

## 2. The Interplay of Worldview and Values:

Meadors reiterates the interconnectedness of worldview and values in decision-making. Our worldview shapes our understanding and application of values. Determining where a specific issue falls within the domains of biblical teaching (direct, implied, creative construct) is crucial for value clarification.

## 3. A Decision-Making Process:

Meadors presents a detailed flow chart for decision-making, emphasizing a structured approach beyond simply seeking a direct word from God:

- **Is it covered by a clear command?** If yes, obey. If not, proceed.
- **Study for clarification:** Consider applied and creative construct levels, and the nature of values within your worldview. Consider Romans and 1 Corinthians.
- **Is it an expectation of God (even if not initially clear)?** If yes, obey. If not, process data through your biblical worldview and values set.
- **Processing Data:** This involves:
  - Identifying underlying values.
  - Comparing them to your value model.
  - Probing biblical teaching.
  - Critical self-awareness (identifying biases).
  - Considering your human place in life (single, married, with/without children, etc.).
  - Circumstantial Providence.
  - Researching opinions and logical traditions.
  - Understanding your role and personal obligations in God's kingdom.
  - Considering your desires (while understanding God's providence).
  - Seeking counsel from informed people.
  - Evaluating options.
- **Make a decision.**
- **Plot a course of action.**

- **Periodically review your decision.**
- **Adjust or continue.**

#### **4. Components of a Biblical Model of Values:**

Meadors outlines key components that emerge in a biblical model of values:

- **Reflect God's image:** As God's representatives, our actions should align with His character.
- **Acknowledge the impact of the Genesis 3 fall:** Recognizing the pervasive effects of sin on all aspects of life.
- **Demand a transformed way of thinking (Romans 12).**
- **Discernment is a rational process:** Requiring sustained thinking based on the Bible within the current culture, not just emotions or intuition.
- **The Bible must be interpreted on its terms:** Understanding description, prescription, normativity, and the original audience.
- **Be a student of scripture:** Actively learning and engaging with the Bible.
- **Freedom is bound by nature, worldview, and values:** Our choices are shaped by these factors, whether consciously or unconsciously.
- **Worldview provides wisdom, not vice versa:** Wisdom is derived from a biblical worldview, not from pragmatic considerations alone.

#### **5. Practical Examples:**

Meadors provides several examples of decisions and how the framework of values applies to them, including:

- Education of children.
- Social drinking/alcohol use in the church.
- Lawsuits.
- Feeling called to be a full-time foreign missionary.
- Feeling called to be a physician.
- Unhappiness in one's church and considering a move.
- Whether to marry or remain single.

These examples illustrate the complexity of decision-making and the need to consider the different levels of values and a comprehensive biblical worldview.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Meadors argues that "knowing God's will" involves a deliberate and ongoing process of understanding and applying biblical values within the context of community and personal life. It requires critical thinking, diligent study of scripture, and a recognition of the different levels of authority and negotiability inherent in various types of values. He moves towards discussing the subjective challenges of discernment, including conscience and the role of the Holy Spirit, in subsequent lectures. The emphasis in this session is on laying a foundational understanding of values as an essential component of discerning God's will.

## 4. Study Guide: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 8b, Developing Biblical Values, Part 2

### Knowing God's Will: Values - Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. According to the lecture, what are the three levels of values discussed, and briefly describe each?
2. Explain why even direct biblical commands, such as "Thou shalt not kill," require interpretation. Provide an example.
3. What is the key difference between community values and biblical commands in terms of authority, and what term is used to describe the binding nature of biblical commands?
4. How should individuals navigate their personal preferences within a church community, according to the lecture?
5. Explain the significance of understanding whether a value originates from direct biblical teaching, implied teaching, or a creative construct.
6. In the decision-making chart presented, what is the first question one should ask when faced with a decision, and what action follows if the answer is affirmative?
7. Describe the role of "critical self-awareness" in the process of discerning wisdom when making decisions.
8. How should "Circumstantial Providence" be considered when making life decisions? Provide a brief example.
9. Why is it important to consider the "Council of Informed People" when making significant decisions, such as becoming a pastor?
10. What is the danger of being a "Romans 7 Christian" in the context of decision-making, according to the lecture?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The three levels of values are biblical commands (direct instructions from Scripture), community values (traditions and norms of a specific group, like a church), and personal preferences (individual convictions). Biblical commands are

considered bottom-line, community values are often culturally derived, and personal preferences are individual beliefs that can evolve.

2. Even direct commands require interpretation because their application can be complex in different contexts. For example, "Thou shalt not kill" raises questions about warfare, self-defense, and other situations where taking a life might be considered.
3. Biblical commands have deontological authority, meaning they are inherently binding obligations. Community values, on the other hand, are binding by agreement of the membership and are consequential rather than inherently the "ought."
4. Individuals should hold their personal preferences with self-critical awareness, recognizing they are not biblical commands. They should be kind and not force their convictions on others, while the community should also be respectful of individual preferences.
5. Understanding the origin of a value helps in determining its level of authority and how negotiable it might be. Treating a personal preference as a non-negotiable biblical command can lead to manipulation and unnecessary conflict.
6. The first question is whether the decision is covered by a clear biblical command. If it is, then the individual has an obligation to obey that command, and the discussion ends.
7. Critical self-awareness involves honestly assessing one's own biases and assumptions regarding a decision. It's crucial for ensuring that personal feelings or ingrained perspectives don't cloud the process of discerning God's will based on biblical principles.
8. Circumstantial Providence refers to the existing realities and limitations of one's life (e.g., health, circumstances). These factors should be considered when making decisions to ensure they are realistic and aligned with God's broader plan. For example, a person with a significant physical limitation should carefully consider that when pursuing a physically demanding vocation.
9. The "Council of Informed People" (referring to seeking counsel and listening to respected individuals and the community) is important because significant roles, like pastoral leadership, are often discerned and affirmed by the community, not solely by an individual's claim. Listening to others provides valuable perspectives and accountability.



10. A "Romans 7 Christian" in decision-making is someone who constantly struggles with wanting to do what is right but failing to take decisive action, remaining in a cycle of indecision and inaction. The lecture emphasizes the need to make decisions, plot a course, and periodically review them rather than being stuck in perpetual internal conflict.

## **Essay Format Questions**

1. Discuss the interplay between biblical commands, community values, and personal preferences in the process of Christian decision-making. How can an understanding of these different levels of values lead to greater clarity and fewer conflicts within a church community?
2. Evaluate the claim that "knowing God's will is not just praying and asking God to tell you what it is." Based on the lecture, what are the key components and processes involved in discerning God's will through worldview and values?
3. Explain the significance of interpreting Scripture (considering direct teaching, implied teaching, and creative constructs) when determining biblical values. How can a failure to properly interpret Scripture lead to the deification of non-biblical values?
4. Describe the decision-making chart presented in the lecture. How does this model guide individuals through the process of determining God's will in situations not explicitly covered by clear biblical commands?
5. Analyze the various factors (e.g., critical self-awareness, human place in life, circumstantial providence, desires, counsel) that the lecture suggests considering when processing decisions through a biblical worldview and values set. How do these factors contribute to a more holistic and informed discernment process?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Biblical Commands:** Clear and direct teachings or imperatives found within the Bible that serve as foundational values for Christian living.
- **Community Values:** Shared beliefs, traditions, rules, and expectations developed and maintained by a specific community, such as a church, which guide the behavior of its members.
- **Personal Preferences (Personal Values/Convictions):** Individual beliefs and convictions that are important to a person and influence their decisions, which may or may not be direct biblical commands.
- **Deontological:** Relating to duty or obligation; in the context of the lecture, referring to the inherently binding nature of biblical commands.
- **Consequential:** Relating to the consequences or outcomes of actions; used to describe community values, where adherence is often based on the desired outcomes for the community.
- **Direct Teaching:** Explicit instructions and commands found in the Bible.
- **Implied Teaching:** Principles or understandings that are not explicitly stated in the Bible but can be reasonably inferred from its narratives and teachings.
- **Creative Constructs:** Theological or social frameworks and interpretations developed by communities or individuals that go beyond direct or implied biblical teaching.
- **Normative Teaching:** Biblical teachings that are considered to be standard, authoritative, and applicable across time and cultures.
- **Prescriptive:** Providing rules, directions, or commands about what should be done.
- **Descriptive:** Describing events, people, or situations without necessarily providing a direct command.
- **Worldview:** A comprehensive set of beliefs and assumptions about reality that shapes how a person understands and interacts with the world.
- **Values Set:** A hierarchical system of principles and beliefs that guide an individual's or community's choices and behaviors.

- **Transformed Mind:** A mind that is being renewed and conformed to biblical teaching through a process of education and conscious engagement with Scripture.
- **Discernment:** The process of making wise judgments and decisions, particularly in spiritual matters, by carefully considering biblical truth and its application to specific situations.
- **Spiritual Expediency:** Making decisions based on what seems most convenient or beneficial at the moment, without a strong foundation in biblical principles.
- **Critical Self-Awareness:** The ability to honestly examine one's own biases, assumptions, and motivations when making decisions.
- **Circumstantial Providence:** The existing circumstances, opportunities, and limitations in one's life that should be considered when making decisions.
- **Council of Informed People:** Seeking wisdom and input from trusted and knowledgeable individuals or the community when facing important decisions.
- **Romans 7 Christian:** A term used to describe someone who struggles with indecisiveness and the inability to consistently act on their understanding of what is right.

## **5. FAQs on Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 8b, Developing Biblical Values, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions on Biblical Decision-Making and Values**

#### **1. What are the three levels of values discussed, and why is it important to distinguish between them when seeking to know God's will?**

The three levels of values are biblical commands, community values, and personal preferences. Distinguishing between them is crucial because they carry different levels of authority and applicability. Biblical commands are presented as non-negotiable and universally binding (though interpretation is sometimes needed). Community values, often found in church constitutions or unwritten traditions, are binding by agreement within a specific group but are not necessarily deontological (absolute "oughts" for all). Personal preferences are individual convictions that may change over time and should not be imposed on others as biblical commands. Understanding these distinctions helps avoid misinterpreting personal or community standards as direct divine mandates.

#### **2. How should Christians approach biblical commands, especially when interpretations seem to vary (e.g., "Thou shalt not kill")?**

While biblical commands have prescriptive value, their interpretation often requires careful study of Scripture, historical context, and interpretation history. Even seemingly direct commands may have nuances and exceptions when applied to complex situations like war or self-defense. It's essential to ground interpretations in the text itself, avoiding the elevation of personal or theological constructs to the level of unquestionable commands without textual basis. Identifying whether a teaching is direct, implied, or a theological construct is a key part of this process.

#### **3. What are community values in a church context, and what is their relationship to biblical commands?**

Community values in a church are the agreed-upon rules and regulations that guide the membership's behavior, often outlined in a church constitution or understood through tradition. While they may be influenced by biblical principles, they are not necessarily direct biblical commands. Instead, they might be based on implied teachings or creative constructs that the community believes best represent Christian living in their context. Community values are binding by the agreement of the members but are considered consequential rather than deontological, meaning they are not absolute moral obligations for all people at all times and are often negotiable within the community.

#### **4. How should personal preferences or convictions be handled within a Christian community?**

Personal preferences, while deeply held, are individual values that should be recognized as distinct from biblical commands and community values. Christians should exercise self-critical awareness that their personal convictions are not necessarily universal biblical mandates. While individuals should be allowed to hold and live by their personal convictions, they should not impose them on others without thoughtful discussion and should be prepared to show kindness and respect to those with different preferences. Similarly, the community should respect individual preferences and avoid forcing members to violate them, fostering an environment of understanding and acceptance.

#### **5. What is the role of a "transformed mind" in biblical decision-making regarding values?**

A transformed mind, as described in Romans 12, is the result of a process of education that brings our worldview and values into conformity with biblical teaching. It involves consciously engaging our worldview and value system in the everyday struggles of life. This transformation is crucial for discerning God's will, which is not simply about receiving direct commands but about negotiating biblical principles with the complexities of life. It requires active learning, critical thinking, and a commitment to aligning our understanding with the teachings of Scripture.

#### **6. The lecture emphasizes a decision-making chart. What is the first and most crucial question to ask when faced with a decision, according to this model?**

The first and most crucial question to ask when making any decision is whether it is covered by a clear biblical command. If the decision is determined to be under a clear command, then obedience to that command is the immediate obligation and the end of the discussion.

**7. If a decision is not covered by a clear biblical command, what is the subsequent process for discerning a wise course of action?**

If a decision is not covered by a clear command, the subsequent process involves studying for clarification, considering applied and creative construct levels of biblical teaching, and understanding the relevant levels of values within one's worldview. This includes processing data through a biblical worldview and value set, identifying underlying values, comparing them to a value model, and probing biblical teaching (considering relevant passages like Romans and 1 Corinthians). Factors such as critical self-awareness, one's human place in life, circumstantial providence, research of opinions and traditions, personal obligations, desires, and the counsel of informed people should also be considered with an attitude of prayer for wisdom and submission to God's sovereignty.

**8. Why is being a "lifetime learner" emphasized in the context of understanding and applying biblical values?**

Being a lifetime learner is emphasized because a Christian's understanding of the Bible, their worldview, and their values should be continuously adjusted and refined over time. As individuals grow in their faith and understanding, some convictions may change, and new insights may emerge. Every Christian is responsible for actively engaging with Scripture and seeking to learn to the best of their ability to align their worldview and values with biblical teaching. This ongoing learning process is essential for making informed decisions and living in a way that reflects God's will in a constantly evolving personal and cultural context.