

# Helping Others Use Principles of Biblical Decision Making

Presentation to the Elders and Wives

Midwinter Elder Conference  
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## What this Presentation IS:

- It is a description of the foundation principles that underlie biblical decision-making.
- It is a look at how people make decisions and the often unrecognized assumptions they use to make those decisions.
- It gives suggestions for elders and wives when providing guidance to individuals who come to them with questions about making decisions.
- The core of this material is taken from observations we have made working with people and seeing both good and bad decision making.

## What this Presentation IS NOT:

- It is not an effort to tell the elders and wives that they don't know how to make biblical decisions.
- It is not an oversimplified attempt to provide a "one-size-fits-all" or "formula" approach to knowing God's will.
- It is not a comprehensive look at this topic.
- We are not trying to convince you that we know it all!!

## Our Assumptions

- God can work any way that He chooses.
- God can use signs, opened and closed doors, and work in supernatural ways.
- God can work within individuals to use their logic, circumstances, experience, and wisdom.
- God is not obligated to work in the same way twice.
- God has given us free will and choices.
  - Choices are sometimes between right and wrong.
  - Other times, the choices are simply among various options.

## Our Assumptions

- The Word is inerrant and complete; however, God did not provide a formula approach for making all decisions.
  - He gave specific direction for some things.
  - For other things, He gave principles for us to apply broadly.
  - And yet for other things, He did not mention or specify.

## Common Questions

- What career or vocation should I choose?
- Should I go to college? Which one? What major should I choose?
- Should I marry? Who? Should I say yes?
- How should we school our children?
- Should we buy this car? Farm? Business?
- Should we adopt?
- When should I retire?
- Am I being called to the mission field?
- Which treatment options should we choose?

Consider:

1. Each of you has your own decision-making style... and each person you work with has theirs.
2. Recognizing and making allowances for the other person's style will help you to more effectively minister to them (and avoid frustration for you both!).

## Foundational Principles of Biblical Decision Making

### Foundational Principles

- **Believing the Word is the Foundation**
  - If the Word provides direct guidance to do or not do something, there is no need to search further.
  - **Psalm 119:105**, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
- **Walking with God/Abiding in Christ**
  - We cannot walk in sin or in friendship with the world without a dulling of our ability to hear God.
  - **Romans 12:2**, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

### Foundational Principles Cont'd

- **Acknowledging God's sovereignty.**
  - We can have confidence knowing that God's plan will ultimately unfold.
  - **Isaiah 55:8-9**, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
- **Praying for Direction.**
  - God invites us to pray and ask Him for wisdom.
  - **James 1:5**, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

### Foundational Principles Cont'd

- **Walking by Faith.**
  - We won't have certainty in all things, but can believe God is with us.
  - **2 Corinthians 5:7**, "(for we walk by faith, not by sight:)"
- **Trusting and having a surrendered heart.**
  - We pray and seek guidance from a God who knows us and has our ultimate good in mind. We can surrender our will to His.
  - **Matthew 7:9-11**, "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

### Foundational Principles Cont'd

- **Seeking wise counsel.**
  - Getting input from Godly, mature brethren gives us perspective.
  - **Proverbs 15:22**, "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established."
- **Waiting on God's timing.**
  - God sees the big picture that we do not see.
  - **Psalms 27:14**, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Consider:

*A man's heart  
deviseth his way:  
but the LORD  
directeth his steps.  
-- Proverbs 16:9*

## Three Examples (and underlying assumptions)

### Example 1: A Sign for a Proposal

On a Sunday morning at your church:

1. Before the service, someone gives off Zion's Harp 212, The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.
  2. During the service, the minister reads and talks about the love of God from the book of John.
  3. For the closing hymn, someone gives off Zion's Harp 37, Love.
- Is this a sign that a brother is supposed to put in a proposal for a sister or a sign to a sister who currently has a proposal? Yes? No? Maybe?

### Assumptions Possibly Present in Example 1

- That if the topic of love comes up (in song, Scripture, conversation, sermon, prayer) that it points to marriage (as opposed to other relationships).
- That the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and 1 Corinthians 13 are about marriage.
- That several things occurring in close proximity are automatically meaningful.

### Example 2: Waiting on God

An individual is graduating from high school in one month:

1. You ask her what she plans to do when she graduates and she says she hasn't made any plans.
2. You ask further and she says that she is "waiting on God."
3. When you ask if she has put any job applications out, she says, "No. I don't want my will to get in the way. So, I am waiting until a job comes to me."

### Assumptions Possibly Present in Example 2

- Waiting on God means doing nothing.
- Or, that waiting until something comes along is the same thing as waiting on God.
- That doing something (e.g., putting out a job application) indicates that "my will" is being asserted in a sinful or inappropriate manner.
- That all decisions are decided with a very clear outcome that is clearly identifiable as God intervening.

### Example 3: Two Jobs

A brother has just graduated from college and is trying to decide between two job offers (Job A & Job B)

1. He is qualified for both jobs, both are in his career field, both have essentially equal salary, and would give him essentially the same job.
2. Both are 15 minutes from his home which is close to his local church, family, and friends.
3. Job "A" comes with better office space, work culture, and opportunities for advancement than Job "B."

### Example 3: Two Jobs Cont'd

- He has been unable to make the decision for weeks and the deadline is approaching.
- When you ask about why he is struggling, he says he has two problems:
  1. He isn't sure that he has received a clear enough sign or specific direction from the Word.
  2. He says he really would like to take Job "A" due to the work environment and opportunities there. However, he is afraid that because he wants Job "A" that it must be his will and that God must want him to take Job "B."

### Assumptions Possibly Present in Example 3

1. There should always be a perfectly clear sign to help you make a decision.
2. Decisions should not be made if there is any ambiguity.
3. If I would like something, it automatically means that God would be against it.
4. I should be able to find specific direction in the Bible about each decision that I make.
5. There is only one right answer; God never gives us options.
6. If I make a mistake about this decision, it will mess up my life for good.

Consider:

*"When you have to make a choice and don't make it, that is in itself a choice."*

—William James

### Bringing Key Concepts Together

INTEGRATION NOT ISOLATION

Consider:

*But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

-- Hebrews 5:14

## 'Either-Or' vs. 'And'

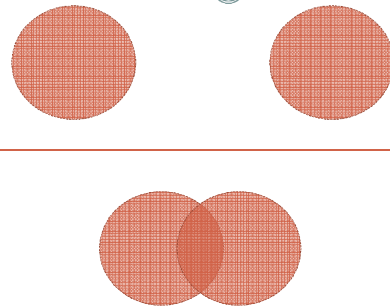
### Incorrect

1. Faith **or** Wisdom
2. Grace **or** Truth
3. Free Will **or** Sovereignty
4. God speaks to me personally **or** through the Counsel of Others

### Correct

1. Faith **and** Wisdom
2. Grace **and** Truth
3. Free Will **and** Sovereignty
4. God speaks to me personally **and** through the Counsel of Others

## Use the Skill of Contrasting



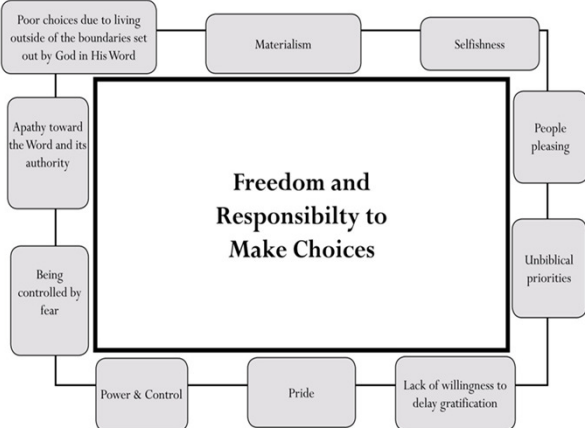
## Faith and Godly Wisdom

- God never pits faith and Godly wisdom against each other in Scripture.
- People, by nature, tend toward an either-or use of one or the other.
  - *1 Corinthians 1:22-25, "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."*

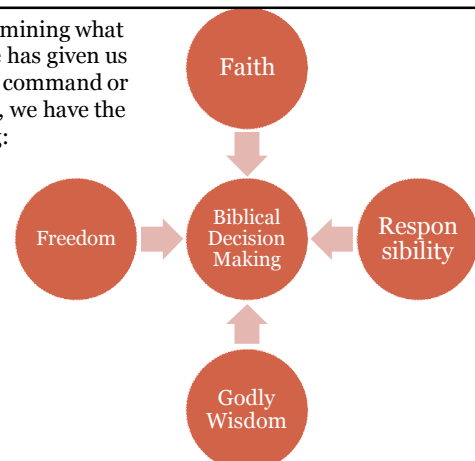
## Faith and Godly Wisdom Cont'd

- Both Jews & Greeks missed Christ due to their assumptions.
- **Over-spiritualizing and Devaluing Godly Wisdom**
  - Some individuals tend to "spiritualize" and over-interpret meaningless coincidences and benign actions.
  - They tend to look regularly for signs or rely on their emotions as they make decisions.
- **Relying on Worldly Wisdom and Devaluing Faith**
  - Some people rely too heavily on logic, facts, knowledge, education, and personal experiences when making decisions.
  - They may have difficulty walking by faith because it doesn't always "make sense."

## Freedom and Responsibility to Make Choices



After examining what Scripture has given us by either command or principle, we have the following:



## How Does the Individual View God in This Situation?

- Find out how the individual is viewing God in their decision-making process? Do they see God as a:
  - Loving, holy, Heavenly Father Who is present and aware of their situation.
    - ✦ The all-knowing God Who is and will be with them through this time of decision making AND in dealing with the outcomes of it.
  - Cosmic chess master who is playing a game with their life.
    - ✦ A 'god' whose attitude is, "I have a specific will for you that you must find. I won't tell you where it is. If you don't find it, you will suffer and mess up your life. If you find it, I will be pleased and you will be blessed. Good luck!"

## One Example: The Fence, Pasture, and Sheep

- This example is often helpful to people who have the tendency to take an overly-specific view of what God will show them.



- Note, the role of the shepherd.

## Helping People Identify Their Assumptions

### COMMON COGNITIVE BIASES

### NOTE:

- As we go through the remainder of the presentation, you will often find yourself thinking of people that fit what is described.
- You will also sometimes see yourself... and each other. ☺
- We find ourselves and others in this material **because we are human.**

Consider:

*If we can help people identify the assumptions they use when making decisions, we can more effectively help them make good decisions.*

## Common Assumptions

- **Present Bias:**
  - Tendency to pay attention to what is happening now and to lack adequate attention to the future.
  - Long term consequences of actions are minimized or ignored due to the desire to meet present day needs.
    - ✦ One study found that when making choices of food for the following week, 74% of participants chose fruit. But when choosing for today, 70% chose chocolate.

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/decisionmaking.html> ; study by Read and van Leeuwen

## Common Assumptions

- **Confirmation Bias:**
  - The tendency to selectively look for information that confirms what we already want or believe.
  - The tendency to discount or forget information that contradicts what we want or believe.
  - This bias tends to be strongest for emotional issues and deep beliefs.
- **Help people be honest about desire and find balance.**
  - We don't want them to believe that all desires are bad. For example, it isn't wrong for a young adult to desire to be married. However, desire that isn't balanced by other factors, can cloud their ability to discern.

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/decisionmaking.html> ;

## Common Assumptions

- **Negativity Bias:**
  - Tendency to remember negative events better than positive events.
  - Compliments and Criticisms x 3  
2
- **Familiarity Bias:**
  - Tendency to stick with what is familiar when faced with ambiguity or uncertainty.
  - Tendency to choose a "known" over an "unknown;" especially if the "unknown" is perceived to have some possibility of risk.

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/decisionmaking.html>

## Common Assumptions

- **Over-emphasis/Under-emphasis Bias:**
  - Occurs when individuals are repeatedly reminded of one point (over-emphasis) while not being reminded of a corresponding concept (under-emphasis) which leads to imbalanced focus.
  - This can make people fearful that doing something (that they desire, would enjoy, prefer, etc.) must be inappropriate or sinful when it is not.

## Common Cognitive Biases

- **Loss Aversion:**
  - Tendency to fear the pain of a potential loss much more than a potential positive impact and thus to choose the option with the least potential for discomfort.
- **Illusory Correlation:**
  - This is the primary cause of misinterpreting signs.
  - Tendency to see two things that occur close together as being meaningfully related when either (1) no relationship exists OR (2) when a minor relationship exists and the person perceives it to be more significant than it is.

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/decisionmaking.htm>; <http://psychology.about.com/od/index/g/illusory-correlation.htm>

## Satisficing vs. Maximizing

- These decision-making styles occur on a continuum.
- In some ways, these biases are like personality traits; they appear to have a genetic component.
- **Satisficing** – the person looks for options until finding one that meets baseline criteria, then stops searching.
  - **Pro:** Make their choices more easily; tend to be more satisfied with their decisions and not regret their choices later (i.e., they accept what comes and go on).
  - **Con:** Can overlook good options they would have found if they searched longer.

Simon (1956); Schwartz et al. (2002)

## Satisficing vs. Maximizing Styles

- **Maximizing** – the person tries to consider all possible options in order to choose the very best option.
  - **Pro:** thoroughly search through the options with careful analysis.
  - **Con:** Can get stuck in "analysis paralysis" and may get stuck in the decision making process. Tend to have more angst about their choices due to their tendency to endlessly compare options and wonder how the other options would have worked out.

Simon (1956); Schwartz et al. (2002)

## Common Assumptions

### • Faith-Feelings Confusion

- This occurs when individuals confuse what they believe to be true with what they feel to be true.
- A common, but unbiblical formula:
  - ✦ Faith = certainty
  - ✦ Leads people to grope for emotional certainty.
- A more challenging, but biblical approach:
  - ✦ Faith = trusting God through the uncertainty
  - ✦ Leads to trust, surrender, clinging to biblical promises.

## Uncertainty & Feeling Lack of Control

- Research shows that people tend to search for patterns and meaning, especially during times of uncertainty.
- Individuals are more likely to see patterns among random events and/or objects when the individuals are feeling uncertainty and lack of control.
- By nature, human beings tend to seek the path of least anxiety. Seeing patterns and meaning lowers anxiety.
  - How might this tendency affect a brother or sister who is seeking direction for a major life decision?

Whitson and Galinsky, 2008, Science, Vol. 322, No. 5898

Consider:

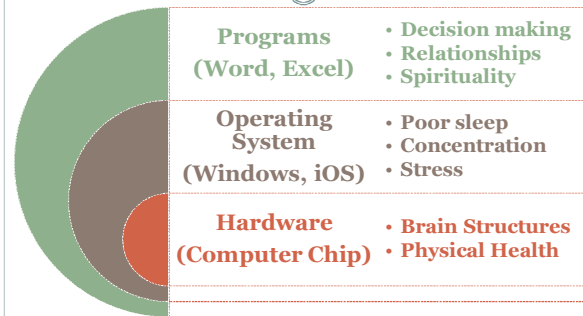
*One of the things that makes God “scary” to believers is that He is not willing to have His ways reduced to a predictable formula. He asks us to trust in His character and His promises, but does not attempt to give certainty in circumstances.*

## Factors that Affect Decision Making

## What Interferes with Good Decision Making

- Lack of sleep
- Too much distraction
- Information overload
- Lack of time to think
- Depression and/or anxiety
- Grief
- Time pressure (negative for some, a benefit to others)
- Severe stress – can lead to paralysis in decision making

## Levels of Brain & Mental Functioning





**Consider:**

*For some people stuck and anxious about a big decision, the best and most helpful advice you can give is for them to get some sleep.*

## Personality and Decision Making

- Personality can greatly affect decision making.
  - **Social vs. Internal:** Social individuals often want to talk through decisions with others, while internal processors tend to want to think things through alone.
  - **Big Picture vs. Here and Now:** Big picture thinkers tend to think about the long term implications and possibilities of decisions while others tend to think about what is in the here and now.
  - **Thinkers vs. Feelers:** Thinkers approach decisions in a logical/analytical manner while feelers are more emotion/person-focused.

## Responsibility: Mine? Yours?

- People vary in how comfortable they are in making large decisions.
- **“Responsibility Averse”**
  - Would rather not make decisions alone due to anxiety about making wrong decisions or fear of the outcome.
  - **Pro:** will readily seek counsel
  - **Con:** may avoid or delay making decisions in order to avoid the associated anxiety; often would rather that someone else take responsibility for making the decision (i.e., tell me the right answer).

## Responsibility: Mine? Yours? Cont'd

- **“Responsibility Inclined”**
  - Tend to view decisions as their personal responsibility whether it is or not.
  - **Pro:** Willing to step up to the decision and takes it seriously
  - **Con:** May take on responsibility that others should take themselves; may feel the weight of the world on their shoulders... even when they can't control the outcomes

## Helping People View Scripture Correctly When Making Decisions

## Teaching People to Interpret Scripture

- Working with people who are making decisions, provides us with a good opportunity to teach them how to rightly divide the Word when seeking God's guidance.
- The skills to interpret Scripture correctly are not natural, they are learned.
  - It is easy to assume that people have the skills, when they do not.
  - We must teach people to interpret the Word in context.

## One Model for Taking Scripture in Context

- As you talk with the individual, have them ask these questions as you chapter/passage together:
  - Who was the author and for what purpose did he write?
  - To whom was this text originally written?
  - What does the text say?
  - What words do I need to look up so I know the actual meaning of the words in this passage?
  - How does this text apply to life today?

### Consider:

*Do you drive differently when the weather is good and road conditions are excellent than when the weather is bad and road conditions are poor?*

## Scripture: Clear vs. Cloudy

- Scripture is sometimes completely clear:
  - Is Jesus the divine Son of God? Yes, absolutely clear!
- Scripture is sometimes “cloudy” or difficult to understand:
  - Understanding exactly how free will, sovereignty, election, predestination, and end-time prophecy all work.
- When Scripture is clear... be clear. When it is “cloudy” we must help people be more tentative about their conclusions.
- **When people become absolutist about things in the “cloudy-zone,” division always occurs.**

## Help People Distinguish Between ‘proverbs’ & Promises

“A proverb is a literary device whereby a general truth is brought to bear on a specific situation. Many of the proverbs are not absolute guarantees for they express truths that are necessarily conditioned by prevailing circumstances... Though the proverbs are generally and usually true, occasional exceptions may be noted. This may be because of the self-will or deliberate disobedience of an individual who chooses to go his own way - the way of folly instead of the way of wisdom... For that he is held responsible.”

Bible Knowledge Commentary on Proverbs 22:6

## Help People Distinguish Between ‘proverbs’ & Promises

**Examples of ‘proverbs’** (generally and usually true, although exceptions do occur):

- **Proverbs 22:6**, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
- **Proverbs 16:7**, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

**Examples of Promises** (promised truths):

- **John 14:2-3**, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

## Proof-Texting

- **Definition:** Proving a point or argument by taking a selected verse of Scripture out of context.
- The person appeals to the authority of Scripture to prove the point that he/she wants to make.
- However, when the verse is read in context, the meaning of the verse either:
  1. Doesn’t apply or support the argument.
  2. Or is so ambiguous that it must be “stretched” in order to make it fit.

### Interpret this Verse: Psalm 10:6

- If someone opens up to Psalm 10:6 during their devotional time, what should he/she conclude about the home he/she was considering moving to?
- What should he/she conclude about suffering and times of struggle?

### Interpret This Verse

*“He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.”*

*--Psalm 10:6*

### Interpret this Verse: Psalm 10:1-6 in context

1. Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?
2. The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
3. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.
4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.
5. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.
6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.
  - What does reading the context tell us about moving to a new house or about suffering?

### Point-in-Time vs. Normative Examples

- **Point-in-Time Examples:** Examples or teachings that occurred in Scripture, but that were not intended to serve as a truth or teaching for all people in all situations.
  - Paul went into the desert for approximately 3 years after his conversion (Galatians 1:15-18). That doesn't mean that after conversion all believers should go on a 3 year trip to the desert.
- **Normative Statements:** Biblical teachings or examples that God intended to be normative (“the norm”) for all people.
  - Thou shalt not lie, steal, commit adultery, have other God's, etc.
  - Believe in Jesus Christ to be saved; love one another, etc.

### Consider the Marriage Decision

- **Point-in-Time Examples:** How did people make the marriage decision in the Bible?
  - Isaac and Rebekah; a servant was sent to another land to identify the spouse and did so with a sign.
  - Jacob worked 7 years for Rachel, got Leah through an act of trickery, and then worked another 7 years for Rachel.
  - Ruth laid at Boaz's feet.
  - David delivered 200 foreskins of the Philistines to Saul (1 Samuel 18:27).
  - No New Testament examples of how people decided to get married.

### Consider the Marriage Decision Cont'd

- **Normative:** Principles God would have us apply to all marriage decisions
  - Marriage is a lifelong commitment (Matt. 19:6)
  - The character of each spouse should continually be growing toward the image of Christ.
  - The spouses should treat each other with love, respect, and honor. (Eph. 5; I Peter 3).
  - Submission to God and each other.
  - Spiritual leadership and roles

## Specific Issues

A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF A FEW COMMON,  
STICKY DECISION-MAKING ISSUES

Consider:

*Humans  
are not  
rational beings...  
they are  
rationalizing  
beings.*

## “God Told Me.”

- What are we talking about?
  - Hearing the audible voice of God? Seeing a vision? Specific Scriptures? How the Bible fell open? Promptings or impressions?
- Receiving promptings and impressions from God is a spiritually intimate experience.
  - We have all certainly experienced God’s movement in our lives through promptings and impressions. God interacts with us!!
- Because promptings and impressions are subjective, they must be validated.
  - You can’t experience mine and I can’t experience yours.
  - The experience is **real**, but may not be **true**.
  - The bigger the decision, the more important validation becomes.

Consider:

How Can I Tell  
if Impressions  
are from God?

“This is a critical question. For impressions could be produced by any number of sources: God, Satan, an angel, a demon, human emotions (such as fear or ecstasy), hormonal imbalance, insomnia, medication, or an upset stomach.”

Friesen & Maxson (2004) Decision Making and the Will of God, p. 93.

## “God Told Me.” Cont’d

- **The Ideal:** When working with others, the hope is that they will view promptings as one part of their biblical decision making process to be tested and taken together with prayer, counsel, Godly wisdom, etc.
- Aspects of a good attitude.
  - Humility and openness to consider other points of view
  - Submission to authority.
  - Willingness to allow the meaning of the prompting to be examined and, possibly, to be viewed as not-significant.

## “God Told Me.” Cont’d

- **Trouble ahead:** People who are adamant that God has spoken to them in isolation.
  - They believe that they have the ability to know “for certain.”
  - They often hold the corresponding belief that other people don’t have that same ability to know for certain.
  - They view those that don’t agree with them as “not listening to God” instead of “not listening to my impression.”

## How Can I Tell Impressions are from God?

“Impressions are real; believers experience them. But impressions are *not authoritative*. They do not constitute the authoritative voice of the Spirit. They may be useful in pointing the way to wisdom, but on the issue of their authority, impressions are just impressions. They may be ‘spiritual’ or reflect the influence of the Spirit, but they fall short of direct revelation and thus fall short of authoritative guidance. Impressions by any other name confuse the issue and confound the believer in decision making. Impressions are still just impressions.”

Friesen & Mansson (2004) Decision Making and the Will of God, p. 93.

## Open & Closed Doors – Easy & Hard

- Determining God’s direction through circumstances can be both helpful and tricky.
- Individual’s interpret these situations very differently... from practical to mystical.
- Some underlying assumptions people carry:
  - If something goes easily, then it must be from God.
  - If something is difficult, then it must not be from God.
  - If it is not hard, then it must not be true.
  - If it is easy, it must not be from God.

## Open & Closed Doors: Easy & Hard Cont’d

- We need to help people validate what they perceive to be open or closed doors.
- We must help people understand their assumptions about open/closed and easy/hard as a basis for making decisions.
  - Sometimes what God wants will only be attained through hard work, battle, and trials.
  - Other times, what is easy allows people to feel good, but to be short-sighted.
  - Other times, God opens the doors and things go smoothly.
  - Other times, difficulty means stop.

## Ordinary Decisions and Equal Options

- Significant time wasted and distress occurs in the lives of Christians searching for specific direction about items over which God has given us freedom to choose.
- This comes from the belief that every decision has only one right option.
- Ordinary Decisions:
  - Which sandwich should I pick? Turkey or Roast beef?
  - Should I wash the laundry on Monday or Tuesday?
- Equal Options:
  - Choosing between two minivans, both with similar mileage and options, both within your budget.

## What About Good Decisions That Turn Out Bad?

- **Example:** I made a good decision to buy a used minivan based on cost/budget, features, needs, reliability information, etc..... And then the engine needed to be replaced in 7 months, just after the warranty expired.
- We often cannot know ‘Why?’ in the present.
- Some possible reasons:
  - It might have been a bad decision after all.
  - Someone else may have refused obedience.
  - God may desire for us to learn obedience and trust or He may know that we need a certain type of growth.
  - God sometimes keeps us in the ambiguous in order to sustain our faith.

## Signs

- Many people go to extremes about signs (all or nothing)
- We must help people hold the following points:
  1. God can, has, and does use signs.
  2. Seeking signs is never commanded nor regarded as normative in the Bible.
  3. Our object of faith must be God rather than a sign.
- Inappropriate use of signs,
  - Demanding signs or telling God how He will respond to us, and more so, on what timetable He is to tell us is presumptuous.
  - Question to ask people, “Did God agree to that?”

## Signs Cont'd

- If someone believes they have been given a sign, listen well, and then gently help them test it against Scripture, wisdom, etc..
  - Anything from God will not contradict Scripture.
  - Openness to the counsel of others and willingness to not rush to a conclusion are key.

## God Can... So, does He Always?

- God can...
  - Heal people...
  - Use a miraculous sign to bring two people together in marriage...
  - Bring a job offer to someone without them even seeking a job...
- Just because God is able doesn't mean He will choose to.
- The fact that something worked one time for someone doesn't mean that it will work a second time or for a different person.

### Consider:

*When people come to us with big questions or problems:*

*We don't have all the answers. However, we can trust that God will help us to take one step at a time through it.*

## Conclusion

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- We hope this information will be helpful to you as you provide guidance to others.
  - As we noted in the beginning, we do not have all the answers or think there is a simple "one-size-fits-all" solution.
- We believe that God is faithful to His people in helping them through decision making.
- Helping people clarify their assumptions when making decisions will help them greatly.
- Helping people to use and combine multiple sources of guidance (Word, counsel, faith, wisdom) will produce good fruit.

Psalm 1:1-2

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*