

God's Will and Christian Liberty, Part 2 – March 4, 2012

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How do we discover God's will? 3 basic models

Key concept – when examining these models, consider how they relate to the 3 aspects of God's will: His revealed will, His secret will, and His providential will.

1. The Word of Faith, Positive Confession, “Name It Claim It” Model

The “word-faith” teaching may be summarized as follows: God created man as “little gods,” with the potential to exercise what word of faith teachers refer to as the “God-kind of faith” by “calling things into existence” and living in prosperity and success as sovereign beings.

Typical mindset/statements you hear from teachers in the WOF movement:

"We can write our own ticket with God if we decide what we want, believe that it's ours, and confess it."

"The reason you haven't been healed is that you don't have enough faith."

"You can have what you say. Speak it in the name of Jesus."

“Your words turn off and on the spigot of God's power...the spiritual world is voice activated. It is controlled by words.”

“You could put me anywhere and, because I would speak the Word of God into the situation, I'd prosper. I can change my world with my words.”

~ **Andrew Wommack on his daily TBN television program, 2/29/12.** He also related the story of getting a job in a photography studio as a young man and a new believer. He had to wear gloves because the oil on his hands and fingers would get on the negatives and ruin them. So he spoke to his hands and commanded the oil to dry up. Now, 30 years later he still has dry hands (making a side comment that it's probably not good his hands are so dry). Even so, this shows, in his perspective, the power that resides in our words.

“The major problem with Christians who get caught up in the “faith” and “positive confession” movement is that they believe they know exactly what God wants (His secret will) at any given moment. They act as if the whole counsel of God could be (and is) fully revealed to them. They respond, at times, as if God had explained to them everything He thought, planned, or willed. Therefore, they indeed do what they think is right--what they think God's will is--in their own perspective.” ~ Brian A. Onken, *Positive Confession*, www.equip.org

Summary of problems with this approach:

- ⤴ God's providential will is sidelined. Instead, the mind and desires of the believer are made supreme.
- ⤴ Negative occurrences reveal a lack of faith. Those with faith prosper financially and in their status.
- ⤴ Adherents to this model believe they can know the secret things of God.
- ⤴ Betrays an arrogant attitude that seems to view God as a powerful vending machine where the “currencies” used are formulas and a “positive confession.”

2. The “Tightrope” Model

The belief that God has one perfect will for your life. Pray hard, listen hard, and God will tell you through the Holy Spirit and other means what you should do. The more spiritual you become, the better able you are to hear God's spirit speaking to you and guiding you into his “perfect” will.

- ^ From my observations and experience most Christians operate under the assumptions of this model.
- ^ Examples: pray hard to find out whom I should marry, where I should go to school, whether I should take a job, be in the Minstrel, go shopping today, etc.
- ^ Derived from an erroneous view of the Bible in which all experiences of Bible characters are considered normative.
 - ^ God's direct revelation that became codified in Scripture was given to a few “inspired” men at specific times in history.
 - ^ We are not all Moses (the lawgiver), prophets, or apostles.
 - ^ It's dangerous to consider the stories of people in the Bible as normative for us today, and to infer from them ways we should seek guidance. The story of Gideon is a good example (Judges Chapters 6-8):
 - ^ God appears to Gideon through an angel. God tells Gideon He will save Israel from the hand of Midian. Gideon wants proof so the angel commands fire to consume an offering Gideon prepares. As the story unfolds, a fearful Gideon wants more proof. He puts out fleece...twice. Later the army is too big, so God instructs Gideon to pare down the size of the army by sending home those who are fearful, then by observing how the remaining men drink water (those who knelt down to drink directly from the water were sent home).
 - ^ From this story well-meaning Christians have inferred that God wants us to seek guidance through “fleeces” or through other “signs.” This is dangerous!
 - ^ Read further in the story of Gideon and you will discover that Gideon tried yet another wrong way to seek God's will and it led to his downfall. He abused God's patience.
- ^ Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, in *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, give this advice when reading the stories in the Bible: “Unless Scripture explicitly tells us we must do something, what is only narrated or described does not function in a normative (i.e. obligatory) way—unless it can be demonstrated on other grounds that the author intended it to function in this way.”
- ^ The problem with the tightrope model...you are unwittingly prying into the secret things of God. You are asking him to reveal his providential will before it happens.
- ^ God reveals his providential will in advance only when he wants to, not when we boldly or even humbly ask him to reveal it to us.

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign...” Matthew 12:39

- ^ If anyone claims “God told me...” or “I received a sign” and relates it to the future, or to things like how much money you should give to their ministry, or to something they think you should do, be very discerning! Instead, test it according to the model below.

3. The “Boundaries” Model

The freedom to make decisions about matters that are not revealed in Scripture without the fear of sinning against God.

- ^ Remember the difference between God's revealed will and his secret will.
- ^ **The only inerrant revelation of God's will is found in the pages of scripture.** God is not constantly revealing new information, no matter what others may tell you.
- ^ God's word guides us on many things in his moral law – ex: thou shall not steal. If our decision does not require us to transgress God's revealed moral law, the guidance in the New Testament, or valid implications made from these commandments, in wisdom, we can make a decision that is right to us and we can rest assured it is pleasing to God.

Examples from scripture:

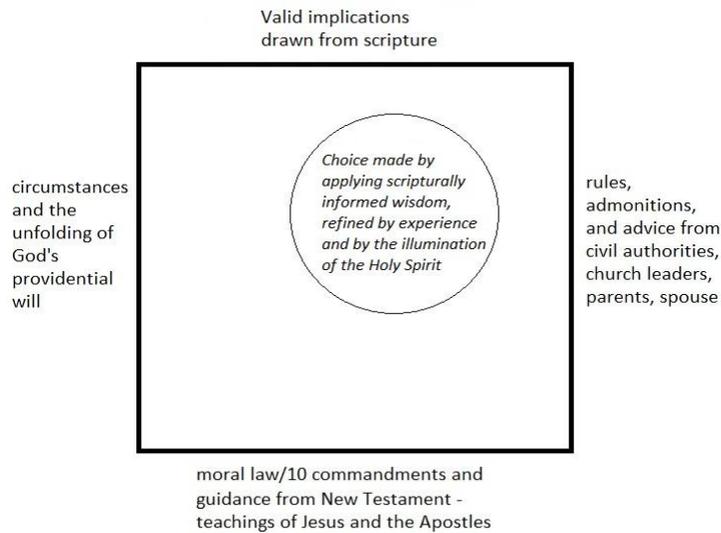
The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
(Genesis 2:15-17 ESV)

Adam had the total liberty to eat from any tree in the garden...except for one. Any of Adam's choices would have been pleasing to God...except for one.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.
(1 Timothy 6:17-19 ESV)

We have the liberty to make myriads of choices that God allows us to make at our own discretion and for our own enjoyment of his creation. You can choose to ride a bike instead of driving a car. You can choose an economical car, a hybrid, or an SUV. The choice is yours!

The “Boundaries” Model of Decision Making



Examples from my experience:

- ⤴ two people who came to me for advice about their affair
- ⤴ my own situation with retirement

The role of the Holy Spirit:

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:25-26 ESV)

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might... (Ephesians 1:15-19 ESV)

The role of wisdom:

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:5-8 ESV)

“Wisdom is not God dictating moment by moment decisions by personal revelation. Wisdom is the application of Biblically informed knowledge to life situations” ~ Pastor Bob DeWaay

In closing, the Christian walk is not cheap. It is a process, something we refine through our entire lives. Remember the admonition from Philippians 2:12-13 to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you. And consider this passage in the next chapter of Philippians immediately following the place where Paul talks about his earthly attainments being rubbish:

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.
(Philippians 3:8-16 ESV)

Links for further study:

God's Will and Christian Liberty (article) – Bob DeWaay
<http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue75.htm>

God's Will and Christian Liberty (2 part radio broadcast) – Bob DeWaay
http://cicministry.org/radio_series.php?series=godswill

What is Good and Acceptable and Perfect? - John Piper
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/what-is-good-and-acceptable-and-perfect>

What Is the Will of God and How Do We Know It? - John Piper
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/what-is-the-will-of-god-and-how-do-we-know-it>

Articles about the dangers of the Word of Faith Movement:

[http://www.equip.org/articles/what-s-wrong-with-the-word-faith-movement-part-one-](http://www.equip.org/articles/what-s-wrong-with-the-word-faith-movement-part-one)

[http://www.equip.org/articles/what-s-wrong-with-the-word-faith-movement-part-two-](http://www.equip.org/articles/what-s-wrong-with-the-word-faith-movement-part-two)

<http://www.equip.org/articles/christianity-still-in-crisis->

<http://www.equip.org/articles/positive-confession>