

## Biblical Decision-making

### Introduction:

Webster's definition of "decision": a determination arrived at after consideration

Webster's definition of "decide": to make a choice

To make any kind of decision one must take into consideration certain factors such as the "pros and cons", the various options that are available, etc. Something that is not addressed in the definitions includes one's "frame of reference", or presuppositions-deeply held assumptions about how life works-from which one makes decisions. The Nazis decided to exterminate certain groups based on their presupposition that they were a superior race and that life works under the philosophy of the survival of the fittest. A common philosophy for certain people is to "get all you can, can all you get, and spoil the rest", and their decisions reflect this belief system. Biblical decision-making requires a Biblical frame of reference from which we "consider" the issue before us. John Piper tells of his experience in college at Wheaton regarding a professor, Arthur Holmes: "Holmes embodied (something) I had never seen before: the quest for a comprehensive world view that helped make sense of everything-and that had Christ as the integrating center...". So we will look at a familiar passage in the New Testament which can help us determine our frame of reference for Biblical decision-making. There are two aspects of Biblical decision-making. One type of decision involves trying to determine God's will regarding an issue about which the Scriptures do not give us specific direction such as whom to marry, where to go to school, what direction to go in a career, etc. (Ephesians 5:10&17); and the other aspect is making the choice to do or not to do God's will in an issue that is clearly delineated in the Scriptures (Joshua 24:15).

Ephesians 5:10&17 "and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord...do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is"

What is the immediate context of these verses?

Ephesians 5:18-living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, rather living under the influence of the flesh, allows us to discern what is pleasing to the Lord and to understand what His will is.

What is the broader context of these verses?

Ephesians 4:1-walking in a manner worthy of our calling is the theme of the last three chapters of Ephesians and understanding God's will is right in the middle of those chapters..

Understanding our calling and walking worthy of our calling is the frame of reference, our own "comprehensive worldview with Christ as the integrating center that helps us make sense of everything", which is necessary for Biblical decision-making. The first three chapters of Ephesians help us understand our calling.

1 Cor.15:51-57 1 Thess.4:15-17

Phil. 3:20 1 Cor. 13:12

Romans 8:23

Physical death

1 Cor. 15:58 1 Thess. 4:18

Phil.3:12-19 1 Cor. 13:13

Hope of  
Glorification

Rom. 8:18-25

2 Thess. 2:14

1 Thess. 5:8

Eph. 1:13-14

A promise for the future

that should impact our  
present actions and  
attitudes.

Decisions

Sanctification

Rom. 6:12-13

Phil. 2:12-13

1 Thess.4:3

Eph. 2:10 (Titus 2:13-14)

An ongoing process of renewal  
in the present. Titus 3:5

Eph. 4:22-24

Rom. 12:1-2

Not legalism Col.2:23

Not license Gal. 5:13

Not automatic James 4:7

“As we gain insights into our  
needs through the  
Scriptures, and as we  
respond in humility, the  
Holy Spirit empowers us to  
act differently the next time  
the old patterns come  
around.” Jim Petersen,  
Church Without Walls

Decisions

Justification

Rom. 8:1

Rom. 5:1

Eph. 1:7

An accomplished fact

in the past, of receiving

positional righteousness

that should impact our  
present actions and  
attitudes.

Col. 2:6

John 3:3 / Spiritual birth

## General Principles to Help Understand What the Will of the Lord Is

1. The Lord offers to “instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go” and “will counsel you” and He cautions us to not be like a mule or a horse which requires bit and bridle. Ps. 32:8-9, Ps. 139:23-24
2. “He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way.” Ps 25:8-9, Prov. 22:4, 1Peter 5:5-6
3. I can pray and ask Him to “teach me the way in which I should walk...teach me to do Thy will for Thou art my God; let Thy good Spirit lead me on level ground”. Ps 143:8 and 10
4. I need to be willing to do His will in order to gain understanding of how His Word applies to me in the particular issue I am facing. John 7:17
5. I can grow in discernment about doing what is right rather than what is wrong by practicing doing what is right. Hebrews 5:13-14, John 14:21
6. It is God’s grace that trains us “to live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age” Titus 2:11-12
7. I can start by asking what do I want to do? Ps 37:4
8. I need to ask why do I want to do it? James 4:3
9. I need to be careful about being totally dependent on my feelings for guidance because my emotions can deceive me. Jer.17:9
10. I need to look at the potential benefits of following a certain course. 1 Cor. 6:12
11. I need to ask if it will be an encumbrance or weight that would have a negative effect on my walk with the Lord or decrease my sensitivity to His Word. Hebrews 12:1-2, Mark 4:19
12. I need to ask if it will harm my testimony. Phil 2:13-14
13. I need to be open and to ask for counsel. Prov. 15:22,, Prov.1:5 and 7
14. I need to be willing to wait on the Lord. Ps 27:14, Is. 40:31
15. I need to substitute worrying about a decision with praying about it and let the peace of God guard my heart. Phil. 4:6

Biblical decision-making requires me to apply God’s truth as revealed in Scripture to the various circumstances and issues I face each day. Most decisions are relatively routine, but this does not mean they are insignificant, based on Luke 16:10. There are a few decisions that are monumental in the manner in which they impact our lives, and we will be looking at Scripture regarding a few of these. Understanding the Lord’s revealed will in an area will help us apply His truth in the specific circumstance in which we find ourselves. We will look at Scriptures regarding work, preparing for work, marriage, preparing for marriage and finances. We are looking at work before marriage because Proverbs 24:27 says, “Prepare your work outside, and make it ready for yourself in the field; afterwards, then, build your house.” In general, from a timing standpoint, it seems wise for a man to have a job that will support them as a couple before asking a woman to marry him.