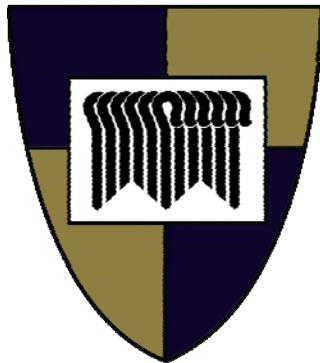


# Personal Discerning of God's Will

THE MASTER'S  
COLLEGE

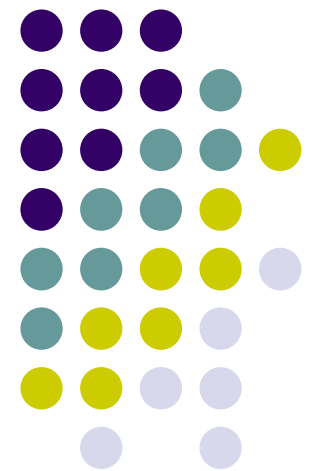


est. 1927

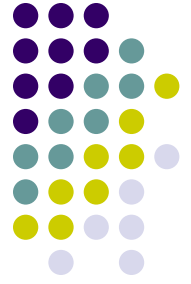
Grace Bible Church

Part One

Dr. John D. Street  
Chair, MABC Graduate Program



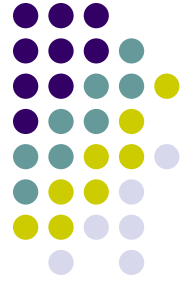
# Introduction to Biblical Decision Making



- Some Christians are facing extremely difficult or agonizing decisions and will seek your help to make sure they are making the best possible decisions.
- There are also many Christians who struggle with personal decision making because they are either unsure about the methodology for decision making or have been influence by some form of Christian mysticism.



# Introduction to Biblical Decision Making



## MORE SIMPLE

- Should I marry?
- Who should I marry?
- Should I go into full-time Christian service?
- Should I be a missionary?
- How much should I tithe?
- Is it right for me to change churches?
- Would it be good for me to quit my job?

## MORE DIFFICULT

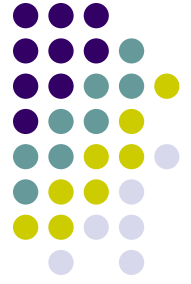
- Is it right for me to separate from my spouse for the children's safety?
- What if you are a pastor and discover your teenager has denied the faith? What to do?
- Should we use fertility treatments to have a baby?
- What do you do if you have an illegal immigrant as a member of your church?



# I. The Importance

## A. The topic within Scripture

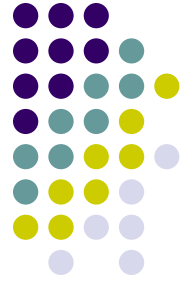
- **God's will is directly related to moral decisions:** "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
- **God's will is directly related to difficult decisions:** "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2:13-15).



# I. The Importance

## B. The topic to our daily decisions

- **God's will is directly related to YOUR moral decisions:** lying, cheating, stealing, immorality, adultery, sinful divorce, cursing, murder, rape, abortion, abuse, deceit, etc.
- **God's will is directly related to YOUR difficult decisions:** when to be submissive and when to disobey human authority; discerning sovereign possibilities as God's opportunities; understanding the difference between wisdom and foolishness in decision making; etc.



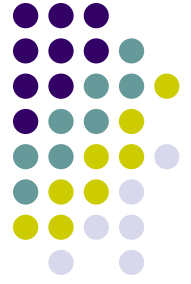
## II. Key Definitions

### A. God's decretive will

#### 1. God's sovereignty

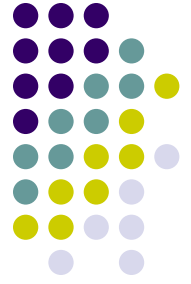
- His absolute right to do all things according to his own good pleasure (Dan. 4:25, 35; Rom. 9:15–23; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 4:11). Easton, M. (1996, c1897). *Easton's Bible dictionary*
- God alone is the Creator and sustainer of all that is; God is the sovereign Lord who designed the standards for life and directs all things toward their appointed destiny; God alone is wise enough, righteous enough, and loving enough to determine what shall become of his creation. God does what he wills (e.g., Ps. 115:3; Isa. 45:5-7; 46:8-11; Rom. 9:11, 15; Eph. 1:11). Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). *Harper's Bible dictionary*. Includes index. (1st ed.) (819). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

## II. Key Definitions



### 2. Providence of God

- Literally means foresight, but is generally used to denote God's preserving and governing all things by means of second causes (Ps. 18:35; 63:8; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Easton, M. (1996, c1897). *Easton's Bible dictionary*.
- Providence emphasizes a divine ordering and regulation of the world and history toward a positive goal, predestination emphasizes a divine predetermination of human destiny in conformity with an eternal plan. God 'foreordains' according to his 'design and purpose'; he 'chooses' and 'elects' according to his 'counsel' and 'will' (e.g., 2 Chron. 19:7; cf. Rom. 11:15; Prov. 16:4; Rom. 9:18, 20-24; Gen. 50:20). Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). *Harper's Bible dictionary*. Includes index. (1st ed.) (819). San Francisco: Harper & Row.



## II. Key Definitions

### B. God's Preceptive Will

#### 1. Not mysticism

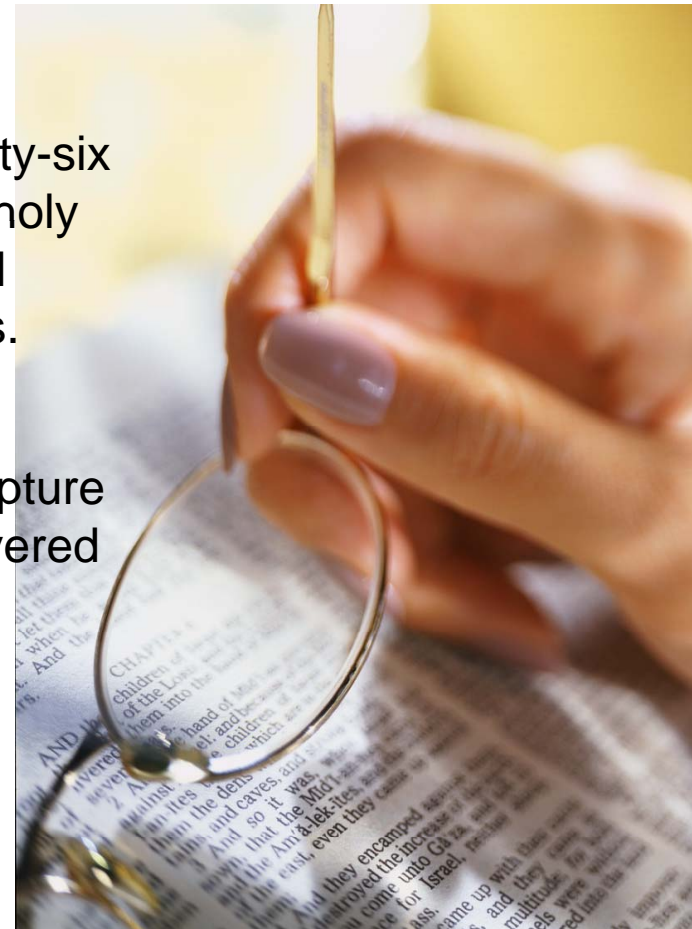
- It is the revealed will of God in the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible and not holy hunches, subjective feelings, mystical experiences, or goose-bump leadings.

#### 2. Biblical principles

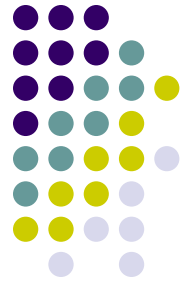
- What is not directly addressed in Scripture concerning a specific decisions is covered by broader theological principles.

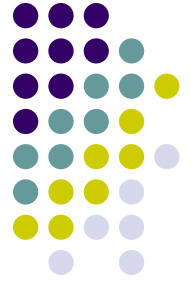
#### 3. Wisdom

- What is not covered in clear right and wrong categories in Scripture can be made through biblical discernment and prudence.



# Relationship between aspects of God's Will

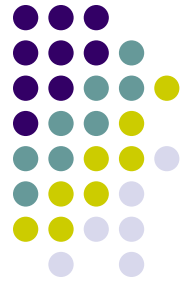




# III. Presuppositions

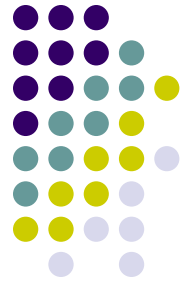


- A. We do not need to know God's decreed will and how He is providentially bringing it about before we make a decision (Deut. 29:29).
  
- B. The Holy Spirit's role is to convict, teach and conform us – all through the vehicle of the Word of God (John 16:8; 17:17).



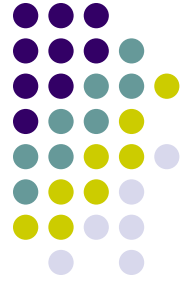
### III. Presuppositions

- c. God only guides or leads His people today:
  - 1. By providence (we know it after the fact) – Proverbs 21:1
  - 2. By Scripture (we can know it before we act) – Psalm 73:24
- d. God is a gracious God who has provided everything we need in order to do what He wants us to do (2 Pet. 1:3).
- e. God holds us fully responsible to search out and follow His preceptive will (God's written Word) in all of life (2 Tim. 2:15).



### III. Presuppositions

- F. If we make a decision based on biblical commands and principles alone we can fully trust that we are pleasing God in our decision and fully trust that He will providentially (by circumstances out of our control) change our choice if it is not within His decreed will (Ps. 119:30; Prov. 16:9).
- G. To rightly interpret and apply the Word of God we must use a prayerful, literal, historical, contextual, and grammatical method of studying it (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:20).



## III. Presuppositions

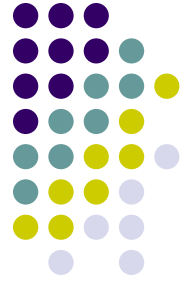
- H. No one is ever outside of God's decreed plan (Lam. 3:37-38; Rom. 8:28-29).
- I. Every believer needs pastoral oversight and the body of Christ to help him stay true to God's Word (Prov. 18:1-2; Heb. 13:17).



# III. Presuppositions



- The insistence of Jesus and the Old Testament writers was not on the importance of discovering the will of God, but always upon the necessity of doing it. It was as if they took for granted that we would know what we were to do (revealed will). The battle for us seems to be in the diligent study of His revealed will (2 Tim. 2:15), the application of it (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jas. 1:19-27), along with the proper motivation (Ps. 1:2; 40:8; 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 174).



## III. Presuppositions

- “The Bible must be our standard. Whenever we are confronted with a question about Christian practice, we must apply the teaching of the Bible. Sometimes the Bible will deal with it directly, and we must go by its direct teaching. Often the Bible will not deal with it directly, and then we must look for general principles to guide us. It does not matter what other people think. Their behavior is not a standard for us. But the Bible is a standard for us, and it is by the Bible that we must live” (J.C. Ryle, *Walking with God*).

