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“Wisdom for Wednesdays” Various Proverbs

Introduction

Today I've entitled the message “Wisdom for Wednesdays.” I am going to preach about biblical decision-making or discerning God's will in the 10,000 ordinary decisions of life as well as those few and far between huge decisions we have to make in our lifetime. Author and counselor Jay Adams wrote a book years ago called “What to Do on Thursday” and it too dealt with the idea of biblical decision making and guidance. Both my sermon title and his book title point to the fact that God's wisdom applies to our every day life—not just on Sundays or just when we are doing something spiritual or just when we have to make the decisions of life such as if and then where to go to college, which job or career to pursue, who we should marry, should we move or stay, buy or sell, and other important, often times, life changing decisions.

This topic of decisions, God's will, and decisions might evoke different initial responses from you. Some are thinking “not again”--another message on God's will. I heard enough of them when I grew up. Others may smile in their hearts because they remember a crucial time when they were at a crossroads and they sought to use wisdom and they made a good decision and they are so thankful. And then there are others who have maybe some inward pain because you know that there was a time in your life when you disobeyed God's clearly revealed will and you are still paying some consequences for it.

The truth is though, we need wisdom to help us discern God's will! We need God's wisdom to guide us through a process of biblical decision-making. If we are going to be skillful in life, we have to understand how to make good decisions and seek guidance in line with God's Word.

So again, we turn to Proverbs, a book that just overflows with wisdom, but not just wisdom on par with other writings—ancient or modern—but wisdom from the mind of God. Our key verse this morning is probably the best known one in all of this book: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

That is such a beautiful, clear verse, isn't it? So why is there such confusion on discerning God's will or biblical decision making or divine guidance (I will use those terms interchangeably this morning)? And why is there so much plain, bad teaching in this area?

To read or listen to much of the supposedly biblical teaching on this, one might think that God's will has been lost or hidden and God only gives out his guidance to those who really search hard for it—almost like a game of hide and seek where God is up in heaven saying, “You're getting closer! Oops, colder! Now, you are really hot!”

Others suggest that the ways to discover God's will are somewhat bizarre or traumatic such as the those who use Bible verses out of context, who rely on circumstances or results, who set up conditions for doing God's will even though what God has said is clear. Others rely on “open and closed doors”, ideas, inner feelings, impressions, or hear an audible voice which are treated as clear indicators of God's will. Many misuse prayer, rely on inner peace, look for signs, bank on dreams, wait on the Lord, conscience or rest in reason alone. And finally some approach the issue of God's will or guidance from God very spiritually but mystically and talk about “stepping out on faith”, deciding that if they fast that what God tells them must be His voice, responding to the call, or claiming the movement of God after small group because the Bible says, “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them” (a verse that has nothing to do with divine guidance).

Is there any hope in the middle of all the muddle to discern God's will? I am here this morning to say there is hope! God has spoken and he has stuttered when it comes to making wise decisions. In fact, most of God's will for our lives is crystal clear. I would say upwards to 90% of His will is clear! It is what we call his moral or directed will! And it is very clear. In fact the emphasis in God's Word is overwhelming on the side of what God wants us to be, not on what He wants us to do! In fact if you are the kind of person God wants you to be, you will be doing pretty much what God wants you to do. And when it comes to other 10%, He gives us solid principles and wise counsel that helps us make wise decisions.

So, let's look at God's wisdom when it comes to guidance and how to make wise decisions that are for God's glory and for our good—using primarily the book of Proverbs. To help us stay organized in our thinking, let's look at eight elements from God's Word that explain the clear process of biblical decision-making. (I acknowledge James Petty's *Step By Step* for the major headings here).

1. Salvation

The first element you must have is salvation. God's desired will for everyone here this morning is that you be saved!

Our key verse reads, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6). This verse has several applications but in its most basic sense it is teaching us that we must give up something to (our own understanding—the natural way to do things) and take on something (trust in the Lord—obey his directions).

The initial step to not leaning on your own understanding (and we will look at some more later) is that you receive the salvation of God. Salvation from what? Salvation from

the wrath of God which hangs over your head this day as a sinner, a rebel against the law of God. God wants to save you from His wrath! "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-4). He wants to save you from you! To trust in God brings results "a sense of security and safety that comes from being under the care of another more competent than ourselves."

The book of Proverbs speaks of salvation often in terms of the fear of the Lord. The fear of God is a broad concept that refers to a wide spectrum of fear, depending on if you have fled to Christ for the forgiveness of your sins or not. If you haven't then you have the fear of God akin to that of a slave toward His master. We will call this dread-fear. This is the fear that all sinner apart from God should have—a fear I once had. As a preacher of the gospel, my great task is to convince unrepentant sinners that God is angry with us. Indeed, he is. *"God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day." (Psalm 7:11). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31).*

On the other hand, repentant sinners also fear God. But we have the fear such as a son has toward his earthly father who is kind and loving, yet exercises gracious and God-given authority over his son. Such fear that children have motivates them to obey their father. Such fear of a son of God motivates one toward obedience toward their heavenly Father. Slave-fear makes us run from God, but son-fear makes us run to God! Proverbs says of this second kind of fear the following:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7).

"The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil." (Proverbs 8:13).

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. (Proverbs 9:10).

"Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity." (Proverbs 28:14).

"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe." (Proverbs 29:25).

The fear of the Lord culminates in the gospel. As William Farley notes, "The cross of Jesus Christ is the greatest reason to fear God in the Bible. At the foot of the cross, we learn what son-fear looks like—the fear that motivates God to bless His children."

My friends, God is a God who is so pure He hates sin! He is as it were allergic to it. If you are allergic to it, you have to separate yourself from it. You have to stay away from it. I am allergic to some sort of cat dander. And believe me I know it as soon as I am exposed to it. What do I have to do? I have to separate myself from it.

God, by His nature, must separate Himself from sin. He must judge sin. And His law, since the beginning of time has stated that the punishment for our sin is death and that is separation from God in this life, physical death, and ultimately eternal death in hell.

God in his mercy and grace—grace being His undeserved favor on sinners who deserve nothing but His judgment—sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, who is God, to this earth. Jesus came willingly to lay down His life for condemned sinners. God, having to separate from sin, turned His back on His own Son, while His Son bore our sins on the cross. The Father looked away as the Son became sin for us! The Son absorbed all the wrath of God for every sinner that the Father will save. The suffering, both spiritually and physically, that He endured for our sin is indescribable! After being laid in the tomb, He rose again after three days, which was the vindication, the approval of the Father, on His Son's sacrificial death! It was the Amen of the Father to the great cross work of the Son. And now the Father accepts all who repent of their sin and trust in the Lord with all their heart for Jesus' righteousness and everlasting joy in heaven!

You see, we are all sinners! The question is, “Are you a repentant sinner or an unrepentant sinner?” Oh, sinners today, won't you come to the cross of Christ understanding the terror of the Lord against you! And won't you call upon Jesus Christ in your fear to save you from your sins and call on Him to be Your Master! If you do, He will save you! He will save you today!

Now then, one of the benefits of being rescued from God's wrath and treasuring Christ is that as one of God's sons, you then receive His guidance. This is the first step of God's will for your life. To forsake your sin and trust Christ! Billions of people reject this free and gracious offer of salvation! Why? Because they don't want to confess their guilt—their unbelief and pride!

Friend, why will you die and perish, knowing you face eternal damnation? Yet sadly, most in this city and in this world today chose to mask their sin by calling it instead some “prenatal predilection” or some “idiosyncrasy of their individuality” or they blame it on some hormone or they way they are or their upbringing. But God's will is that you recognize your sin. He has sent His Son to pay the price of sin and to grant us His perfect righteousness! Oh, will you repent of your sin then? Will you trust in the Lord.

2. Consecration

The second element of biblical decision-making is consecration. Look again at Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the Lord *with all your heart*. . . *In all your ways* acknowledge Him.” Totality of person and totality of life. Knowing and doing the will of God isn't a “spiritual technique” that we use occasionally; it's a committed lifestyle that involves everything we do.

You see salvation from sin means that you will be surrendered to Christ! You will live a life that says, “Not my will, but Yours be done! Have your own way, Lord! You are the potter, I am the clay! Make me and mold me after your will. As I am waiting and trusting, yielded and still!” Once we come to Christ, we acknowledge that we are not

our own, but we have been bought with a price! So we want to glorify God in our bodies and in our affections and life.

I am always awed by the Olympic competition which showcases the finest in the world in their sport. But how did they get to that point? They were consecrated? Surrendered every aspect of their lives for years to getting a medal—to being the best in their sport. And they listened to their coaches. They do whatever their coaches tell them must be done—why? Because they want to win a gold medal! They implicitly trust their coaches.

Just like they listen to their coaches for guidances, we who love Christ are to listen to His instruction for guidance. The picture throughout Proverbs is that of a son listening to His father. "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments," (Proverbs 3:1). " My son, keep your father's commandment , and forsake not your mother's teaching." (Proverbs 6:20). "My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you;" (Proverbs 7:1).

This idea of consecration is clearly declared as Paul calls forth, " I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. " (Romans 12:1-2).

Do you want to know the will of God for your life? It is that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice and that you be totally consecrated, totally devoted, surrendered to God by the renewing of your mind. This is what it means to "acknowledge God in all your ways." The word *acknowledge* is not just give mental assent to—such as I believe God exists or I believe in Jesus Christ. Rather it is the word "to know" in the most intimate of settings—the same word used to describe the physical relationship between husband and wife in marriage. It is word that means our hearts are drawn to God!

We do this by not lean leaning on our own understanding. The word "lean" means to totally support yourself such as when a person leans on a cane or a walker to support her body when she walks. Usually "understanding has a positive spin in Proverbs but here it is used in the sense of pure human wisdom.

Rather than relying on our own human wisdom that is marred by our sin, we are to know God and His wisdom. Why? "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares 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. " (Isaiah 55:8-9). "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" " (Romans 11:33-34).

Do you want to know God's will for your life? To want to receive His guidance for His life? Then ask God to search your hearts for any areas of your life, beliefs or motives that are not given over to him. Seek the help of your pastors and others who will explore possible hidden agendas or unbiblical goals in your life.

Proverbs 3 and Romans 12 call for completely consecrated Christians, not cafeteria Christians—Christians who will hear and strive to follow the whole counsel of God, not believers who pick and choose what they want. Let's stop being cafeteria Christians and submit ourselves completely to God's rule in our lives. Let's pray, "Consecrate us Lord to your service now! Draw us nearer, Lord to you and to the cross of Christ!"

3. Information (Proverbs 4:11-13; 6:22-23; 9:9; 13:13; 16:20; 19:16; 19:17; 28:26)

Those first two elements of knowing God's will are crucial. Many of you listening have responded by faith to these first two elements: salvation and consecration. The last six now are for those who have come to Christ and who are seeking to live in obedience to His revealed will. You see God has a revealed will, a moral will! That covers about 90% of the decisions we make.

Most of the situations, opportunities, and decisions the average person encounters in life are already dealt with in the Word of God (this is where most of us can skip directly to last couple of steps—execution and expectation—moral purity, integrity, work, marriage, parenting, anger, money, etc. In these we know what God wants us to do. But then there is this part called his decretive will, the secret will of God—which God doesn't reveal to us until it happens. And that is where biblical decision-making occurs. A clear example of this would be in the area of which specific person you are going to marry or which house does God want you to buy or which job God wants you to take. But it can be as mundane as should I get a pet, what to do for your vacation, which contractor to hire as well as should I serve in this ministry, go on this mission trip, retire here or elsewhere.

What steps do we follow then? This is where Proverbs teaches us what I will call the path of wisdom. It begins by gathering information.

This step involves gathering all the facts—pros and cons, define the decision, determine the objectives, list the alternatives, get all the facts, and evaluate. You search out all the principles, examples and illustrations in Scripture that have a bearing on the decision. You don't rush this step. "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame." (Proverbs 18:13). "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." (Proverbs 18:17). An example of this is Solomon in 1 Kings 3 when two ladies brought him their babies, each claiming that the live one belonged to them and Solomon had to gather information and use wisdom to determine which one was telling the truth.

"I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life." (Proverbs 4:11-13).

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." (Proverbs 9:9).

"Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." (Proverbs 16:20).

"Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered. "
(Proverbs 28:26).

Gathering information isn't mystical at all. It is using the mind God has given you to get as many of the facts that bear on the decision as possible. "God has given us these wonderful faculties of brain-power and He will not ignore them. In grace He does not cancel action of His marvelous bestowments but He uses them for the communication of His purposes and thoughts (F. B. Meyer)

This is exactly what Moses did when he ordered the twelve spies to go into the land of Canaan before they entering that Promised Land. Paul used information gathering as he wrote the different letters to different churches. They aren't all the same—they are individualized to each church's needs and situation. And this is in part what Paul means in Romans 12:3 where we are told to "*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* "

4. Supplication

During this whole process of walking wisdom's path in biblical decision making you should also include the element of supplication. This is part of trusting the Lord. Supplication simply refers to prayer—which is also why it is critical that you are first saved, for you cannot commune with God in prayer until you have first been saved.

"yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, " (Proverbs 2:3–7)

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him. " (Proverbs 15:8)

Jesus prayed before times of big decisions and huge turning points in His life as well as on a regular basis, seeking communion and wisdom from His father. Before he called his twelve followers, he spent a night in prayer. And before going to the cross, he agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, seeking His Father's wisdom and strength.

So James, the NT book of Proverbs tells us, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* " (James 1:5) When we do this, Jesus assures us, "*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* " (Luke 11:13)

Supplication has many benefits, the first of course being answered prayer. As we know Him through His Word and through prayer, He promises to direct our paths. I have found that during times of extended prayer over decisions in my life or family that God has given new perspective as well. Supplication reminds us to "*look not to the things*

that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. ” (2 Corinthians 4:18). During times of concentrated prayer, God often helps to think about new ideas and connections and more creativity in our problem solving.

5. Consultation (Prov 11:14; 12:15; 13:10; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 24:6)

Another element in the path of wise decision-making is consultation. And Proverbs has much to say on this step.

“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.” (Proverbs 11:14)

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” (12:15)

“By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom.” (Proverbs 13:10)

“Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.” (Proverbs 15:22)

“Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.” (Proverbs 19:20)

“Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war.” (Proverbs 20:18)
“for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.” (Proverbs 24:6)

It’s dangerous to rely on our own wisdom and experience and to ignore the wisdom and experience of other believers who have successfully walked with the Lord. *“Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.”* (Proverbs 3:7) *“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.”* (Proverbs 18:1). *“Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* (Proverbs 26:12)

For young people this consultation would involve your parents first. This is obvious from the whole teaching of Proverbs 1-9 where you see this father pleading with his son. And then later as we read these verses.

“A wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.” (Proverbs 13:1)

“Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.” (Proverbs 23:22)

Consultation with godly Christian friends is also encouraged. *“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”* (Proverbs 27:17).

When we ask for counsel from friends and parents we should carefully listen for often they can see options, pitfalls, detours and dangers to your thinking patterns that you may not have seen.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy. " (Proverbs 27:6)

"The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. " (Proverbs 15:31)

"Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. " (Proverbs 15:32)

And don't just choose any friend. Choose one that will be able to draw you out "*The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.*" (Proverbs 20:5)

Don't choose too many friends either. Avoid getting too much advice or seeking out advice until you find someone who will agree with what you have already decided to do anyway and say, "See that person thinks that what I am about to do."

And thirdly, seek out godly counsel from your spiritual leaders and mentors in the faith. Really the emphasis in both the counsel you receive from friends as well as spiritual leaders is that they give you godly counsel.

As a Christian, you don't want counsel. As a Christian you don't even want just counseling. You want godly counsel. And do you know what godly counsel is? Godly counsel is someone who uses the Word of God, properly interpreted, to counsel. That's it. So seek godly counsel. This is what you have in Titus 2 where you have older women counseling younger women and in 1 Peter 5 where younger men are to listen to older men. So seek godly counsel.

6. Meditation

Next, on the path to wisdom is meditation! You have gotten as much practical information as possible as well as sought all the biblical principles and instruction that bears upon your decision. You have just bathed this whole process in prayer. You have sought out the godly counsel of elders, parents, friends, and mentors. Now, you spend some time thinking over this decision and pondering your destination before you embark upon the next step of your journey in wise living.

Now, there is this rule of scale in regards to decision-making . Small decisions don't require much reflection. Bigger decisions require much more time. You don't have to take much time in every day decision making like where or what you are going to eat for lunch. The bigger decision, the more meditation is required generally speaking.

Now biblical meditation is active, not passive. It is not emptying your mind. It is filling your mind with God's truth and the necessary information for the decision at hand. That is why it is so important to be daily in the Word, studying it, memorizing it, laying up knowledge. You never know when you are going to need to draw upon God's wisdom. Don't wait until you have to make a decision to be learning God's truth. "*Blessed is the one who listens to me [wisdom], watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. "* (Proverbs 8:34) "*The wise lay up knowledge.*" (Proverbs 10:14). "*Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. "* (Proverbs 4:26)

Edmund Clowney helps us out, “Meditation brings wisdom, and wisdom brings success, not necessarily in the estimate of men, but through the blessing of God. Our lives become fruitful and effective when we walk in wisdom. . . .God's blessing of wisdom is granted as we apply his Word to the situations of our lives. We grow in wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52). Unless we meditate on how God's Word applies to our situation *today*, we cannot walk in wisdom.”

Meditation is an antidote to presumption. So take appropriate time to reflect. *Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.* ” (Proverbs 19:2) “*The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.* ” (Proverbs 21:5).

Hasty decisions are usually bad decisions. Saul made a hasty decision not to wait for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice—he just didn't think he could wait any longer even though He had clear instruction from the Lord. Adam and Eve made a hasty decision in eating the forbidden fruit. So did Abraham in trying to help God out in fulfilling His promise of a son. David was spared from making a rash decision to kill Nabal himself by Abigail's wise actions. Peter didn't take time to meditate much when he resisted the Lord's declaration regarding His impending death.

Now sometimes you don't have much time to make a wise decision, due to circumstances beyond your control. But when God gives us opportunity to meditate and consider we should take it.

One more caution here: sometimes meditation can become an excuse for procrastination. So make sure that you aren't meditating in circles because you don't want to do the hard work or take the risk! But sometimes you will meditate a bit longer because you don't have a piece of critical information you need or you lack a clear direction. Sometimes it is wise to wait and meditate more. “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. . . .*For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.* ” (Romans 14:5, 23).

7. Execution

But eventually, in most cases you have to make a decision. The hour comes to put an offer on the house or land, to build, to give a response to the job offer, or to submit your application to a college or to decide which church you will become a part of. You execute your plan. But you do so again acknowledging God's sovereign control.

“In everything the prudent acts with knowledge.” (Proverbs 13:16)

“The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way.” (Proverbs 14:8)

“Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.” (Proverbs 16:3)

“The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9)

To make no decision is often a decision—and in some cases irresponsible or wrong, such as the man who was given some money and did nothing with it—he didn't even put

it in the bank to earn .25% interest. Don't let fear keep you from making a decision like that man did. Decisions expose us to the risk of being wrong, yet whenever we allow that to control our obedience, we serve self rather than God. Don't try to use guidance as a way to secure a life without risk.

Will you make some bad decisions in your life? Or at least not the best decision in hindsight? Certainly. But if you conduct due process and make an earnest and sincere attempt to follow God's wisdom, you will make more better decisions than if you don't. There is no such thing as a 100% guarantee in decision-making. And that is OK. For as James Petty reminds us, "This world is also a safe place for a Christian to make decisions because of the sovereign guardrail of God's providence. It is a mysterious control that not only protects what must be protected but works in every event for the inner transformation of his children into his image." God has not given us a spirit of fear, my friends!

Robert E. Lee, the Confederate general in the Civil War, believed this. He had to decide whether to attack the Union position, the entrenched high ground, at Gettysburg. His top general, James Longstreet, advised him to retreat to high ground between Gettysburg and Washington and force the Union Army to attack them. Lee weighed the fact that Jeb Stuart was "lost" and so Lee lacked key intelligence regarding the positions and strength of the Union armies. Should he attack today? Wait? Or retreat? Lee ordered the attack based on the best information he had and lost the battle. Longstreet when it came to tactical analysis, but historians have debated for years whether or not Lee was still correct in attacking. Many believe Lee was acting wisely, having even sought biblical principles. He believed to win you must fight. He also knew that to fight at Gettysburg might decide the war. He weighed that delaying the attack might prolong the war by years and result in the loss of many more thousands of men's lives than might occur even in a defeat in that battle. He knew if he retreated the war, the Union might continue to slowly bleed the precious resources of his beloved South. He did not desire a long, protracted war so he attacked with the best resources he had. He did, he lost, and Gettysburg proved to be the beginning of the end of the war in many respects. So perhaps Lee choose the path of wisdom. From his journals we certainly know that he sought the Lord, had confidence in God's providence and was obedient to God's calling as a military commander. He made a decision and then took the last step: expectation.

8. Expectation

When you have followed the path of wise decision making and finally set a course, then live in a spirit of expectation. Don't look back. If sometime later, you discover you didn't make a good decision, then learn from that and grow in wisdom. But if you follow God's principle you should live in a spirit of expectation. *"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. "* (Proverbs 3:6) *"For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught. "* (Proverbs 3:26)

John Kitchen wisely counsels, "When you abandon yourself to God in total obedience, finding your entire support in Him and striving in every avenue of your life to know Him

more intimately, He guarantees that the path before you will be clearer and smoother than otherwise it would have been, and that He will keep you in His will.”

Expect God to bless you in the path of wisdom. Expect Him to guide you. Remember you have a Father who is unfolding the best possible plan for you, His child. He reveals that plan to you in His time and always on schedule—His, not yours. So you trust Him.

“The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the blameless.” (Proverbs 10:29)

“Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.” (Proverbs 16:20)

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.” (Proverbs 19:21)

Summary

So, here's what we have learned today. Wisdom helps us to discern God's will and guides us in biblical decision-making. That all begins with receiving the salvation that comes from God's grace through faith, not one shred of our works. We live a thank-you type of life to God from then on, presenting our bodies to God as living sacrifices, consecrated completely to God. Then as we have to make decisions, both big and small we follow this process:

- Begin with Scriptures
- Pray for wisdom
- Gather all the facts
- Seek out wise, biblical counseling
- Consider the circumstances and opportunities we are presented
- Desire: Delight ourselves in the Lord and he will give us the very desires of our heart
- Freedom: pursue God's will and the highest good of others.

That is how God guides us. This is the path of wisdom!