

**Prayer:**

Father, we are needy children, full of uncertainty with blurred insight, please grant us biblical vision to know Your will.

**Overview of the Course:**

Vocation: What Am I Called to Do and to Be?

1. **The Caller and the Called:** *What is the Context of Calling?*
  - Your life is not your own. God is the Caller; we are the called. Find your calling in His Word.
  - Love Christ by obedience to His call and thus pursue your purpose: to glorify and enjoy Him forever.
2. **The Meaning of Means:** *What is the Concept of Calling?*
  - You are part of a royal priesthood. All work for the Lord is sacred – it has meaning and worth.
  - God loves His people through His people. Loving your neighbor is the framework of faithful calling.
3. **The Scope of the Summons:** *What is the Content of Calling?*
  - Christ is Lord over every sphere of life. You are called to glorify and enjoy Him in all things.
  - The Dominion Mandate and the Great Commission are equally ultimate ends.
4. **Calling Lived Out – In Our Work**
  - The framework applied to our work – in all our labor, including our jobs, and in our rest.
  - Common pitfalls: idolatry, identity, and indifference. Truths we must not forget in our work.
5. **Calling Lived Out – In Our Families**
  - The family is the basic unit of all society; it's the institution through which humanity lives on.
  - Abandoning God's Word as to the structure and functions of the family is devastating to all.
6. **Calling Lived Out – In Our Church**
  - The church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and is marked by certain defining traits.
  - Faithful followers of Christ will be members of His church and obey His commandments therein.
7. **Calling Lived Out – In Our Society**
  - God has ordained and established various, distinct institutions which make up His creational order.
  - Christ governs, with all authority, ever sphere of life and all must submit to His lordship in them.
8. **Wrong Way: How NOT to Discern God's Will**
  - In our biblical ignorance, we are tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine.
  - We misunderstand not only the nature of God's will, but also the pathways of learning it.
9. **Proper Path: How to Discern God's Will**
  - God is a good Father and a perfect Teacher. He offers clarity and not confusion for his children.
  - His Word teaches us how to think and make decisions like Him as we bear His image in the world.
10. **Productivity: Stewarding Our Most Limited Resource (Time)**

**Goal of Lesson 8:**

In this lesson, our aim is to review common religious lingo and concepts relating to the will of God and examine their validity, or lack thereof, against the clear teachings of scripture so as to remove any wrong thinking we may have about God's involvement in our decision making here under the sun.

**Head's Up** – This may sting a little.

Don't fret if after today you feel more confused or uncomfortable than you started. Next week we will map out the clear teaching on how to make biblical decisions. But the bitter must come before the sweet. We have to first put off the old, before we can effectively put on the new.

## Lesson 8: Wrong Way – How NOT to Discern God’s Will

Over the last seven classes together we’ve explored the topic of “vocation” or “calling” from God through a number of different lenses. We looked at the philosophy behind the context, concept, and content of calling and we examined four spheres or domains of life where our various callings, stations, roles, and duties in service of Christ take place.

We looked at the clear commands of God in scripture about our responsibilities within our work, our homes, our church, and society at large. We also discussed the 5-part ethical framework for determining whether a given course of action was wise and morally right. Those five questions for ethical assessment are:

1. By what **standard**?
2. To what **end**?
3. At what **cost**?
4. Through what **means**?
5. From what **motive**?

We learned that God loves His people *through* His people. That He employs *means* to accomplish His good ends. That He desires for us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And we saw how it’s not just our actions that matter, but the motivations of our heart behind them.

The task before us this week and next is to further unpack what the Bible teaches with regard to how we make decisions as Christians. We all want to please God. We all want to serve our Redeemer. We all want to return to Christ the great love He has shown to us. But the question is...how exactly do we do that in each situation we face?

How do we understand God’s particular desires for us in whatever circumstance we find ourselves? How do we make wise decisions about stewarding our time, talent, and treasures on behalf of our Lord? All that we have is His – even our very lives, as we were bought with a price and are not our own. So, how do we discover His marching orders for us so that we can dutifully obey?

I want you to know that there *are* in fact answers to those questions. There *is* a way, taught in the Scriptures, for us to know how to please God through offering our very bodies as living sacrifices to Him.

There are also numerous ways in which we are impacted by the *world*, our *own flesh*, and the *deceit of the devil* which muddy the waters of our understanding and lead us astray in the faithful path of obedience to Jesus.

So, today we will focus on tearing down some of those false constructs which we all have in some way built up in our minds so that next week we can assemble, from the text of God’s own Word, a proper model of making decisions.

The material that follows is almost fully taken from curriculum put out by Stand to Reason ministries. It is entitled “Decision Making & the Will of God” by Greg Koukl. Twenty years or so ago he put this together on the heels of his own study of the Bible as well as with guidance from some other helpful resources you may want to explore:

- Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View by Dr. Garry Friesen
- Hot Tub Religion – And Other Thoughts on Christian Living in the Material World by J.I. Packer
- Found: God’s Will – Find the Direction and Purpose God Wants for Your Life by John MacArthur

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### 1. There is potential for the following material to be upsetting to some.

- a. In it, we will question much of what is commonly understood about the “leading” of the Holy Spirit.

- b. For some, this will be frustrating.
    - i. You may feel as though God is somehow being taken away from you.
    - ii. You may even be a little depressed at first.
  - c. For others, this may make you angry.
    - i. You may feel as though this teaching is quenching the Spirit.
    - ii. You may challenge its orthodoxy.
  - d. This is a controversial issue...today.
    - i. But it has not been throughout the history of the Christian church.
    - ii. The current, prevailing model for decision making in the western evangelical church has only been around for 100-150 years (per J.I. Packer and Gary Friesen).
- 2. Once we're through all of the material, though (both this week and next) you'll likely be thankful.**
- a. Because after a careful examination of the scriptures and after a close look at the way the Apostles made choices, you'll see decision making in a completely new light.
  - b. By the time we're finished, there should be little question about what God's will is for your life.
  - c. This material is designed to give you the tools you need to make sound choices.
  - d. And, many of you will likely experience a deeper sense of relief and freedom in decision making than you've ever known before.
- 3. There is costly confusion around this topic.**
- a. There may not be a more important topic for practical, day-to-day Christian living than making decisions based on the will of God.
  - b. And there may not be any issue filled with more confusion, misinformation, mistaken proof-texting, and even downright superstition than knowing or discerning God's will.
  - c. "Few things are as misunderstood," says Koukl, "as the role of the Holy Spirit in making decision."
  - d. This misunderstanding is costly.
    - i. J.I. Packer wrote, "Wrong ideas about God's guidance lead to wrong conclusions about the right thing to do."
  - e. To summarize what lies ahead, we will do four things in this material:
    - i. Carefully analyze from the text the conventional wisdom on the issue.
    - ii. Construct a biblical model of decision-making.
    - iii. Examine actual cases in the New Testament where this model is employed.

- iv. Make some specific applications and then deal with questions.

#### 4. The core question: "How is God involved in the process of making decisions?"

- a. The prevailing view:
  - i. God has an individual blueprint (or plan) for our lives. We call this "His will for our life."
  - ii. We then attempt to find out what His decisions for us are in that plan so that we can then make our decisions in accordance with His. We call that "finding God's will."
  - iii. We do that by using certain techniques to get information from God before we can move forward with a given decision or action.
  - iv. This, we believe, allows us to function optimally in the Christian life.
- b. The associated Christian lingo:
  - i. "I feel led..." "I think God is telling me..." "God wants me to..."
  - ii. "I feel God is calling me..." "I believe it's God's will that I..."
  - iii. "I've received lots of confirmation about..." "I have a peace about it..."
- c. When you hear these statements, you may ask yourself the question: "How did they know?!"
  - i. Implied in that type of language is a kind of sixth sense, some Gnostic "special knowledge," that only the so-called spiritually mature are able to "tune into" and to "hear" the voice of God.
  - ii. This view and language spawns slogans like:
    - 1. "I want to be in the center of God's will."
    - 2. "I want God's perfect will, not His permissive will."
    - 3. "The good (i.e., my desires) is always the enemy of the best (i.e., God's will)."
  - iii. This creates confusion, frustration, anxiety, and even fear that we're not "tuned in."
  - iv. John MacArthur describes various views of God's will:
    - 1. God's will is a trauma – some dramatic event powerfully conveying God's "hints."
    - 2. God's will is scary – people "think God will take a robust athlete, break his legs and make him play the flute the rest of his life."
    - 3. God's will is a crisis – earthquakes, tornadoes, floods are the "acts of God."
    - 4. God's will is lost – people say things like, "I'm searching for God's will."
  - v. All of this is based on one very important assumption: that the "blueprint" or "road map" of God exists – that God made the decision which we must discover in order to make ours.

1. People act as though God is some Cosmic Easter Bunny dropping little hints here and there to let you know "You're getting warmer!"
2. This inevitably creates frustration:
  - a. You ask yourself, "Am I reading the 'hints' correctly?"
3. And often leads us to become very superstitious:
  - a. "I think God is calling me, but maybe it's my own desire."
  - b. "The door is closed..."
    - i. "But is it really closed ... or just ajar?"
    - ii. "Is it an obstacle to faith, some roadblock from Satan that I need to overcome, or a divine red light that I should heed?"
      1. "Let's bind the devil, claim the victory, and barge through!" ...or...
      2. "Maybe we're just not listening to God correctly..."
  - c. "I have an open door!"
    - i. "It must be a sign from God!"
    - ii. "Or...maybe it's just Satan's second best tempting me away."
4. Indeed, some Christian teachers on this issue even warn you not to do anything unless you've heard from God about the decision (e.g., Henry Blackaby)
5. Koukl says he determined to find God's will and did so by looking in the most obvious place: His Word.
  - a. This seems so very obvious, but it is often ignored.
  - b. All spiritual disciplines that are important and essential for productive Christian living are taught clearly in the Scriptures. *They are not hidden between the lines!*
    - i. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

## II. WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT READING THE SIGNS

In this section we will explore five things that the Bible does NOT teach. It does NOT teach that we get guidance:

- From "feeling led,"
- Having a "peace" about it,
- Open doors,
- Fleeces, or
- Confirmations.

## 1. The Bible does not teach that we get guidance from a feeling ("I felt led.").

- a. This teaching is simply not biblical.
  - i. Koukl says, "There's not a single instance in the Scripture that asserts this."
  - ii. The "still small voice" of Elijah is often used as a basis for this notion. But, note: it was a still small voice, not a still small feeling, thought, or nudge.
    1. 1 Kings 19:13 – "And it came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"
    2. Note that in v.9 the text says, "the word of the Lord came to him." And in v.13, it specifies a voice, not a feeling or inner sense.
    3. And this makes sense because Elijah was a prophet. You and I are not.
    4. Misreading this text is an example of using biblical terms in non-biblical ways.
- b. What does the Bible mean by the phrase "led by the Spirit"?
  - i. **Romans 8:12-14** (cf. v.9): "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die. But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."
    1. Being led by the Spirit in this passage is not referring to individual guidance, but rather empowerment to live holy lives. It refers to the Holy Spirit's work of convicting us of sin and "leading" a Christian into righteous living.
    2. Packer notes: "What does it mean to be 'led by the Spirit' in personal decision making? That phrase, found in Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18, speaks of resisting sinful impulses, not of decision making."
  - ii. **Galatians 5:16-21** also deals with the role of the Spirit in our lives.
    1. "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
    2. Clearly "led by the Spirit" (v.18) has to do with righteous conduct and not incidental decision making:

- a. This is why someone who is led by the Spirit in Paul's sense is "not under the Law."
- b. They are already fulfilling the law by their righteous conduct.
- c. It wouldn't make much sense for Paul to be saying, "If you get your directions directly from God, you don't have to keep the commandments."

3. Jerry Bridges sums up the biblical notion in *The Practice of Godliness*:

"The Apostle Paul describes Christians as people who are *led* by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14 and Gal. 5:18). Both of these passages refer to His leading, not in some decision we must make, but in the conduct and character issues of our lives. If we are led by the Spirit, we will put to death the misdeeds of the body, and we will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

The Holy Spirit leads us *objectively* through the general teaching of His word. There is where we learn His will for all Christians. But the Holy Spirit also leads us *subjectively* as He impresses certain Scriptures on our minds, applying them to specific situations in our lives. This is His way of showing us what He wants us to give attention to at a particular time; this is the way He leads us to establish a priority of applications."

iii. Jesus was also "led" or "impelled" by the Spirit into the wilderness (**Mt 4:1, Mk 1:12, Lk 4:1**)

1. First, whatever was happening here, a good case can be made that Jesus' experiences were unique since He was the incarnate Son of God.
  - a. This is the only mention of such an occurrence anywhere in the New Testament.
  - b. There is no teaching or even suggestion that we should follow this pattern.
2. Second, this does not seem to be an internal prompting of the sort Christians describe when they use the concept of being "led by the Spirit."
  - a. The text seems to indicate that the Spirit actually took Jesus to the wilderness rather than led Him in the sense that we use the word.
  - b. The words used (*ago, anago*) are the same used to describe Satan taking Jesus to different locations during the temptation.

c. Using the "felt led" theology creates all kinds of problems in application.

- i. It often makes God look capricious, changing His mind from moment to moment as the believer is "led" in different directions.
- ii. Christians do extreme, bizarre things, led on by their feelings of what God wants, making their lives very unstable.

- iii. It gives divine authority to impulses or thoughts that drift through our minds.
  - 1. To say “God is telling me” gives your feelings authority the Bible does not justify.
  - 2. It virtually ends debate – and also shields you from any sound counsel.
  - 3. You can’t argue with the person if God supposedly gave the command.
- d. Trusting inner feelings is not biblical. It’s confusing at best, and dangerous at worst.
  - i. The world says you should follow your heart.
  - ii. But God says through the prophet Jeremiah (17:9):
    - 1. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

## 2. The Bible does not teach we get guidance from inner peace (“Pray and see if you feel a peace about it.”)

- a. **Colossians 3:15:** “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”
  - i. The Greek word for “rule” means to act as an arbiter or judge.
  - ii. The conventional response is that this sense of peace in your heart is the judge.
    - 1. Peace about a decision equals “God’s green light.”
    - 2. No peace about a decision equals “God’s red light.”
  - iii. This is a classic example of how knowledge of the Greek can be dangerous if context is not taken into consideration.
- b. Note that the word “peace” can have two different meanings.
  - i. It could mean a sense of inner harmony or emotional equanimity, e.g., “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).
  - ii. It could also mean lack of conflict between two parties who were formerly at odds.
    - 1. Two countries are at peace, not war.
    - 2. The same sense is used in Romans 5:1: “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - iii. How would we know which sense of “peace” is in view here? The context must tell us.
- c. Here is the verse in context (v.12-15): “And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, which is the perfect bond of unity. **And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.”
  - i. “Peace” here means harmony – a lack of conflict between people in the church, based on love and forgiveness.



1. i.e., let your commitment to interpersonal harmony among the members of the church be the “arbiter,” “judge,” or ruling principle.
  2. There is no hint that this refers to an internal feeling as some divine stamp of approval on an individual decision.
- ii. Paul is not talking about a subjective guideline, but an objective one.
  - iii. There is an outside possibility Paul is referring to inner peace, but only as it results from living in harmony with other Christians.
    1. Paul is telling the Colossians that when dealing with each other they should pursue whatever promotes peace.
    2. Whether this is internal or external peace makes no difference to the main point. In neither case is Paul giving a guideline to judge various decisions in our lives. That use is foreign to the text.
- d. Applicational problems of this view:
- i. In major decisions, some emotional distress and consternation is normal.
  - ii. Sometimes doing the right thing is unsettling.
    1. e.g., Moses in Egypt or Jesus in Gethsemane.
    2. Even rightly confronting a brother or sister in their sin – this is the biblical path towards the end Paul teaches of peace among the body, but it almost always causes discomfort in the process.
    3. Even God’s discipline functions that way. Hebrews 12:11: “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”
  - iii. Sometimes you do have “peace” (you feel right) about doing something wrong.
    1. Ever had a peace about dating a non-Christian?
    2. Ever heard someone getting a divorce: “I have a peace about it.”
    3. Remember, the Mormons have a peace about the cultic book of Mormon.

### 3. The Bible does not teach we get guidance from open and closed doors.

- a. Paul walked through some open doors: “But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:8-9).
- b. But Paul ignored other open doors:
  - i. **2 Cor. 2:12-13:** “Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother, but taking my leave of them, I went to Macedonia.”

- ii. **Acts 16:26-28:** “And suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were unfastened. And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!’”
- iii. Conclusion:
  - 1. Paul did NOT read even miraculous divine opportunities as if they were divine directives.
  - 2. Paul viewed open doors (even open prison doors!) simply as opportunities that could be acted on or ignored depending on other factors.

#### 4. The Bible does not teach us to seek guidance from fleeces or providential signs.

- a. Gideon’s fleece (Judges 6-7) was not normal guidance:
  - i. It confirmed direction which was already supernaturally given (Judges 6:21) by an angel.
  - ii. The fleece itself was a supernatural sign, not like the lame ones we use, “Let her answer on the third ring if she’s *the one*.”
  - iii. Fleeces have another problem: they presume that God is obliged to answer. He’s not.
  - iv. If you really want to ask for a legitimate fleece, then ask for a supernatural sign in both directions:
    - 1. “God, if it’s Your will for me to marry her, then levitate the table.”
    - 2. “If it’s Your will for me NOT to marry her, then levitate the couch.”
- b. Gideon’s fleece was an expression of doubt and disbelief, an inappropriate request of Gideon’s that God was gracious enough to put up with.
- c. What about, “If these desires/feelings/ideas are not from you, take them away” or “Stop me if You really don’t want me to do this, Lord”?
  - i. This is an example of a request for a circumstantial sign.
  - ii. Placing this kind of ultimatum before the Lord is testing God and is wrong (Lk. 4:12).
- d. There are scattered examples of providential signs used in the Bible (e.g., Abraham’s servant selecting a wife for Isaac, Gen. 24:12), but there is no indication this is a standard way of making decisions.
  - i. The fact that this is not taught to us in the New Testament as a proper method of making decisions is a critical point.
  - ii. The only New Testament example that has some similarity is the drawing of lots to fill the apostolic vacancy left by Judas in Acts, hardly a common occurrence.

1. Brian's insert: the concept of casting lots (or our version of drawing straws) is mentioned in scripture – even in Proverbs. The Urim and Thummim gemstones of the high priest were likely used in a similar fashion to determine God's will as He actively and directly guided Israel – it was used to determine His word.
  - a. God has given us His Word today in the Scriptures, not in stones.
  - b. The other use of lots is for settling a score or deciding something impartially – you and a friend find a diamond ring in the middle of the woods with no way of knowing who it belonged to for returning. How do you decide who keeps it between the two of you if you both want it?
    - i. This is not a model for use in determining God's moral will, but only making an impartial decision between two moral choices.

#### 5. The Bible does not teach we get guidance from confirmations.

- a. The concept of confirmation by multiple witnesses is mentioned only four times in the New Testament (Matt. 18:15-16; 2 Cor. 13:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; and Heb. 10:28).
- b. Each of these passages refer back to virtually identical parallel verses in the Old Testament:
  - i. Deut. 19:15: "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed. On the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."
  - ii. Deut. 17:6: "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death. He shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness."
- c. In each case, confirmations have a judicial function, either under the law of Israel or in disciplinary matters of the church. No one could be convicted of a crime unless there was adequate testimony against him.
  - i. There is no evidence in these verses that a convergence of divine hints ("confirmations") is the way God communicates His will to us.
  - ii. Christians are not to read meaning into chance circumstances as if these were divine directives. This is superstition.
- d. Question: "Aren't we supposed to confirm prophecy in the church?"
  - i. No, the church is not told to confirm prophecies ("Do we have a confirmation?" "Yes, I got the same message.>").
  - ii. We are told to test prophecies. This is an active, thoughtful task of the corporate leadership, judging against God's clear teaching in scripture, not a simple nod of the head by someone in the congregation who "bears witness." (1 Thess. 5:20-21)

#### QUICK RECAP:

- The Bible does NOT teach that guidance comes from feeling led, having a peace about it, open doors, fleeces, or confirmations.

**TWO OBSERVATIONS:**

- First, what the bible does not teach is sometimes as significant as what it does teach. Should we be teaching as a biblical standard something not found in the Bible?
- Second, we draw misleading and sometimes dangerous conclusions when we do not use biblical terms in biblical ways.

**6. Does God ever give specialized guidance in the Bible? Yes, but close examination of the scriptures shows:**

- a. Personalized guidance in the Bible is rare.
  - i. The cases are exceptional. There is no hint that day-to-day decisions – be they big or small – were made by getting special directions from God.
    1. God’s specialized directives in Acts, for example, are limited to only 14 from the time of Pentecost (and these are addressed by Koukl in detail if anyone would like them).
    2. Only one of Paul’s three missionary journeys (the first) was specifically directed by God.
      - a. Acts 13:2: “And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”
      - b. This probably came as a prophetic word. Not the preceding verse: “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”
  - ii. Paul’s second missionary journey was not specifically commissioned by God.
    1. Acts 15:36: “And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.’”
  - iii. Remember:
    1. A handful of incidents do not constitute a model.
    2. You cannot build a biblical model of anything by citing irregular and exceptional events as support.
    3. It’s a mistake to take the exception and make a rule out of it.
- b. Personalized guidance in the Bible is an intrusion. It is not being sought after.
  - i. There is no evidence the Apostles were “waiting on the Lord” seeking special guidance. Instead, God surprised them with it when it came.

- ii. We're not told to seek specialized, supernatural guidance from God. If this is the way we're supposed to make decisions, then why doesn't the Bible explicitly teach us this important skill?
- c. Personalized guidance in the Bible is ***supernatural***, and, therefore, ***clear***.
  - i. In Acts, the majority (five) were visions, three were from an angel, four times the Spirit spoke, one seems to have been a prophecy, one was the voice of Jesus.
  - ii. Why is it clear? God expects it to be obeyed, and you cannot obey an unclear command.
  - iii. There is no evidence that these were inner urges or intuitions.
- d. Personalized guidance in the Bible generally ***goes against conventional wisdom***, that's why there needs to be a special intrusion.
- e. Personalized guidance in the Bible becomes ***God's moral will***, a command that must be obeyed.
- f. In sum, the biblical characteristics of special guidance are that they are ***rare, intrusive*** (unsought), ***supernatural*** in character, and ***clear***.

**7. We often don't take our own purported belief in "God speaking" very seriously.**

- a. Example from Koukl: "God said to speak on this, but you can do whatever you want."
- b. This is idle Christian lingo, assigning the voice of God to our stray thoughts.
- c. Do you realize how serious that is?!
  - i. Matt. 12:36: "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak."
  - ii. Deut. 12 teaches that a false prophet who attributed his own words to God was to be stoned to death. To claim God's authority for your own thoughts or desires is a dangerous and devilish thing.
  - iii. If this is a practice of yours, even an unintentional habit you've picked up, stop it. It's misleading and dangerous to yourself and other Christians, and it is a violation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment by taking the Lord's name in vain.

**8. Summary: The Bible does NOT teach that we get guidance from God through...**

- a. Feelings, having a peace about it, open/closed doors, circumstantial signs and fleeces, or through confirmations.
- b. Special directions are sometimes given, but the biblical pattern is that they're rare, intrusive, clear, supernatural, and often go against conventional wisdom.