

MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

Resolving "Gray Areas", Part 1

Greg Wheatley: Welcome to Radio School of the Bible, a ministry of the Distance Learning Center at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. My name is Greg Wheatley, and we're in the final week of our Radio School of the Bible series. Our instructor is Dr. Bill Thrasher, of the Graduate School at Moody Bible Institute...

Well, Dr. Thrasher, I think a few weeks ago it seemed like an awfully long time till the end of this quarter and now we're just about there. It's gone fast, there's no doubt about it. We've gained a lot of valuable insight and I appreciate the teaching you've had for us.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: Well thank you much. It's been a joy to work with you Greg, you've been a big help. We've talked about that a person who wants to know God's will must realize that God is eager to guide them. And we looked at some errors to avoid. Excuse me if I say error with a southern accent. That's E-R-R-O-R. Errors to avoid and also there are – and also we looked at some principles about how God guides.

Some of the errors that we mention avoiding is an unwillingness to think ahead, an unwillingness to take advice, an unwillingness to suspect one's self, an unwillingness to discount personalities, an unwillingness to learn from our experience, an unwillingness to wait on the Lord, and an unwillingness to follow the guidance that God has already given. And then we looked at the last couple times in regard to how is it that God guides. He gives us general instructions to heed as we live in light of those general principles. That leads us in the pathway of the will of God because the particulars can be left for us to discern and discernment is a fruit of consecration.

We said there's not only instructions to heed, there's also examples to follow and discernment to exercise. We talked about there being nudges to note, how God can, in the words of Nehemiah, he says, "God put it in my mind. God put it in my heart." God can enable us to sometimes visualize what He wants to accomplish like He did there in Caleb's life there in Numbers 13:30 how He can give us concerns He can put in our heart. He put the concern in the heart of David to build a temple, even though it was fulfilled through his son Solomon. He sometimes can give us restraints and close doors that ultimately lead us to other open doors.

Well, we also said there were circumstances to observe, wisdom to draw upon and peace to cherish. Now what we'd like to look to these next couple time is what are principles that aid us in pursuing God's will in regard to "questionable" matters that seems that maybe some people think it's okay to doing God's will, other people do not. The first thing I would start with, and once again, where we've started all of our time in this course is knowing the character of God. God's will is good.

God's commandments are not something to be feared. It says here in Deuteronomy 10:13, "These things I'm commanding you today for your own good." Or as what wisdom says, wisdom personified speaking there in Proverbs 8, "He who sins against me injures himself." God is good. God is good. God is wise.

I also need to know what true freedom is. True freedom is not doing my own will. We saw that that's how God disciplines by – what – giving us our own way. But true freedom is defined there in Romans 6:15-23 as being a slave of God; being a slave of righteousness; being a slave obedient. That's what true freedom is: the freedom to live as God created me to live.

Now with that in mind, I think that's the framework with which we talk about these principles in regard to that help us make decisions. Of course the first thing in regard to discerning God's will in regard to questionable matter is: Does the scripture forbid it? If the scripture forbids it, that's God graciously seeking to protect me. It's His finger pointing out the best path of life for me is in another direction. So do the scriptures forbid it?

Another in regard to discerning God's will, in regard to questionable matter is: Would it cause me to be tempted to sin? Scripture says, "Make no provision for the flesh," Romans 13:14. Will it cause one to be tempted to sin?

I remember a godly young man, he was living in the home of another family and this family was very gracious. They provided him a place to live I think free of charge in regard to when he was going through a particular graduate program studying for the ministry. But his particular challenge was there would be times he would come home and he would make the wrong choice. He would – this particular home he had had access to various kinds of TV programs – and he would sometimes make an unwise choice and he'd feel so defiled after he saw something.

He said, and he, in regard to his life he graciously opened up in regard to that and we talked about many things that could help in regard to temptation. But the thing ultimately that helped down the road was he had to gratefully and graciously, appropriately leave in a sense that particular residence because – now that may not be your problem or someone else’s problem – but that was his. You know would it cause me to be tempted to sin? He couldn’t handle that. And there are other things that maybe we can’t handle. Would it cause me to be tempted to sin? It’s something you have to honestly ask myself.

Another question in regard to seeking God’s will in regard to questionable matter is: Is it a weight? I think that’s how the King James translates that verb there, that noun there in Hebrews 12:1-2. “Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us.” Translated encumbrance here, otherwise it encumbers us. It weighs us down.

Something that may not necessarily be wrong in and of itself, but it’s truly hindering us from running the Christian life, running the race of the Christian life. It may be a relationship that’s not necessarily wrong in and of itself, but you know what, it’s hindering you. It’s dragging you down. Maybe some possession that’s not necessarily scripturally wrong to have but it’s – what -it’s dragging you down. There’s nothing wrong with a computer, but let’s say when a person becomes married to the computer rather than – what – married to their family and serving or whatever it may be, a possession or maybe even a hobby. There’s nothing wrong with, it’s wholesome, but they know it’s what, hindering in a sense their family life. So is it a weight? Is it a weight? And that’s why we, God is personally communicating His will to us. Is it a weight? Is it encumbering us?

You know, another question that we would ask, we was given a series of questions here: Do the scriptures forbid it? Would it cause me to be tempted to sin? Is it a weight? And another is: Is it profitable? Is it profitable?

I like those words there in 1 Corinthians 6 where Apostle Paul says there in 1 Corinthians 6:12, “All things are lawful but not all things are profitable.” You know, the question or not is: Can I do something and get as close to evil as I possibly can without doing wrong, but is it profitable? You know, there’s even a limited amount of time that God entrusts with us down here on earth and seems like until maybe we’re quite old we don’t think of it that way but as Moses, he was older, he said, “Teach me to number my days that I may acquire a heart of wisdom.” But is it profitable?

I like the prayer there in Philippians 1:9-11. That prayer in Philippians 1:9-11 that Apostle Paul says, "I pray that your love would abound more and more in knowledge and discernment; that you would approve the things that are excellent." You know, if you did this thing, is it approving the things that are excellent? Is it the best way? You know, I think sometimes areas, even in the area of leisure. Leisure's not necessarily wrong. It can be a gift of God. But are we approving the things that are excellent in regard to our leisure?

There's a time for downtimes, but is it a way that also ultimately enhances the relationships of your life, enhances in a sense the pursuit of God's will for your life? So is it approving the things that are excellent or in regard is it a wise use of your time? Is it a wise use of your energies? Is it a wise use of being a steward of your emotions or are we truly giving our heart away to something that's really not maybe wrong in and of itself but not something that is the very best. That approving of things that are excellent, as someone has said is discerning between that which is good and that which is best.

Greg Wheatley:

You know, and I think those are good words, Dr. Thrasher, because I think a lot of times we do what you alluded to earlier and that is, we always look at it from the negative standpoint. It's always well – what – could I do this? It's almost like, could I get away with doing this or that and would God mind if I do this when really, what you're advocating we do is look at it from a positive standpoint. What will enhance, what will most enhance either God's kingdom or my ability to get closer to the Lord. It's a positive spin isn't it?

Dr. Bill Thrasher:

Yes it is. I think God wants us to fill our life up with the best things – and so that the things that are maybe questionable can be crowded out – and to fill our life up with those things first. I think I gave that example one time cause it meant so much to me of that wise older pastor who said, you know, he takes out his calendar for the month and he, before anything else is put on there, he puts all over there, appointment with God, appointment with God, appointment with God. He says, "You know, that goes on there first." Because he says, "There's so many demands upon my life. There's so many expectations upon it that that tends to – what – no one is else is gonna be asking you to put these in there. So put those in there first." And that's one way in a sense we can be aided in approving the things that are excellent.

We wanna talk more next time in regard to this matter of principles that aid us in regard to questionable matters. We'll look at some other questions in addition to ones we've looked at today. We only have time now to just briefly review the ones we've looked at as you seek to examine your life in light of these.

Do the scriptures forbid it? If it does, it's wrong. Would it cause me to be tempted to sin? Is it a weight or an encumbrance? And then we also said: Will it profit me? Or perhaps in line with that: Is it approving the things that are excellent?

Greg Wheatley:

Well thank you Dr. Thrasher. I think that's a great list of things to look at as we consider any number of things that may come into our life that we may have questions about whether they fit into God's will. Well I don't know, friend, if you're like me, but I think that if so, you may have found that this quarter on Radio School of the Bible has proved to be a little different twist than you might have thought when you first thought about God's will for your life.

We haven't talked so much if you noticed about a roadmap or how to find out exactly what you should do eight months from now, but more importantly, we've talked about getting to know God as the primary thing and allowing those secondary matters to kinda be taken care of in due time. So I hope that you've benefitted from this study. Our instructor is Dr. Bill Thrasher, Professor of Bible and Theology in the Graduate School at Moody Bible Institute and we invite you to join us again tomorrow as we approach the close of our current study. Radio School of the Bible is a production of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

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