

“Knowing God’s Will”
Judges 6:33-40
(Preached at Trinity, March 8, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Good looms large in the Book of Judges. While Israel has rejected their God and has fallen into idolatry, God’s redemptive purpose continues undiminished. God’s eternal Covenant of Redemption is unaffected by the sinful folly of man. God has a people He has determined to save. The entirety of the Old Testament points to the fulfillment of this redemptive plan in Christ.
2. God has placed His call upon Gideon as the deliverer of Israel and has promised to be with him to defeat the Midianites.
Judges 6:16 - "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man"
3. We saw last time that God alone reigns supreme. He has no rivals. Before Gideon is to be Israel’s deliverer God commands him to tear down Israel’s idolatrous altars – **Verse 25**. Gideon obeys God.
Judges 6:27 NAU - "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night."
4. As we come to **Verse 33** Gideon’s faith begins to be stretched. The Midianites and the Amalekites assemble for battle. It was a fearsome army of great proportion. It is described in **Chapter 7**.
Judges 7:12 NAU - " Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore."
5. The Spirit of God came upon Gideon and he sent messengers throughout the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali to assemble an army. 32,000 assemble for war. Still the sight of so great an adversary was fearful to behold so Gideon seeks further proof that God was really with him; proof that this was really the will of God.
6. In **Verses 36-40** we find the famous fleece account.
Gideon decided to use a piece of wool fleece as a sign to determine God’s will.
 - A. The first time, Gideon wanted God to have dew on the fleece, but not on the earth around the fleece. vs. 36-38
 - B. The second time, Gideon wanted God to have the fleece be dry, but have dew on the ground all around the fleece.
7. One of the most pressing issues for us is how to determine God’s will for our life. We are faced with continual decisions – many with life changing consequences.
What school do I attend? Who do I marry? How many children do we have? Which job do I take? Which home do I buy?
How do we determine God’s will for our lives?

8. Gideon's fleece has become catchphrase to describe ways Christians have used to determine the will of God. We "set out a fleece." It involves some circumstantial sign to prove to us that we are taking the proper course of action.
- A. If it's God's will that I stay at this job I'll get the raise I'm asking for.
 - B. God I can't decide which school you would have me to attend. If Johnny gets accepted to school "B" I'll know that is the one you want me to attend.
9. Should we demand such signs from God? The answer is a resounding no. Tonight I want to explain why this is NOT how God would have us to determine His will for our lives and then give you several principles for knowing God's will.
- I. First, why should we see Gideon's fleece as the wrong approach for determining God's will?
- A. We cannot deny that there are examples in Scripture of seeking to know God's will through external circumstances—such as here with Gideon
 1. In the OT we have the Urim and the Thummim.
Exodus 28:30 NAU - "You shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually."
 - a. This was the appointed means for Joshua to know God's will.
Numbers 27:21 NAU - "Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD."
 - b. It would seem that the Urim and Thummim were used rarely and in matters of importance to the entire congregation of Israel. They were apparently lost in the captivity never to be used again.
 2. Abraham's servant sought a sign to know the right wife for Isaac
Genesis 24:14 NAU - "now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also' -- *may she be the one* whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."
 3. The Apostles cast lots in the selection of a replacement for Judas
Acts 1:24-2:1 NAU - "And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles."
 4. We have no indication that the continuing use of such practices is God's plan for the church.
 The Book of Acts is a book of history. It was a transitional book. It was not meant as a book of theology for the church. There are things in Acts that are not normative for the church.
 - a. The accompanying tongues with the giving of the Holy Spirit was not meant to be the normative sign for the church.
 - b. Paul's salvation was not normative
 - c. Peter's deliverance from prison was not normative

- d. Other signs, wonders, and mighty deeds were qualifications of the apostolic office and not normative for the church.
Acts 3:6 NAU - "But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!"
- B. Gideon's fleece was not a normative act – one to be followed consistently
1. Gideon was not asking for a circumstantial sign but a miracle
 2. God had already made His will clear. And He had already confirmed His calling with a miracle.
Judges 6:17 NAU - " So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me."
Judges 6:21 NAU - "Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight."
 3. Gideon's actions were a sign of doubting and unbelief and contrary to the Mosaic Law
Deuteronomy 6:16 NAU - "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah."
 And even Gideon knew that his actions were testing God
Judges 6:39 NAU - "Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece"
- C. For the Christian resorting to such testing of God it is spiritual laziness
1. It reflects a heart not willing to do the hard work of seriously seeking God's wisdom
 2. Modern man is impatient. Christians often want immediate answers from God for immediate decisions rather than prayerfully waiting upon God.
 3. Many don't want to wrestle with the weighty matters of life. They don't want to engage their minds in serious contemplation.
 They are not willing to spend sleepless nights in prayer. Many see such activity a lack of faith. To the contrary, it is a mark of faith.
 4. Instead of trusting God's normal means we make Him prove Himself in other ways
Matthew 12:38-39 NAS - "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."
³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign . . ."
 5. God demands that we trust Him by faith
James 1:5-7 NAS - "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord"

6. Our focus must always be upon submission, humility, and righteousness – not upon some outward sign of God's will for us
- D. There are some subtleties here
1. God is active in every aspect of our lives.
 2. Sometimes His Providence does makes His will clearly known
 - a. God's chastening should be clear to us
 - b. God often stops us from a particular direction making our folly clearly understood
 - c. Sometimes we have to make decisions before we have clarity
 3. This isn't the same thing as making Him satisfy you with a particular sign or looking at every detail of life as some sign from God that you should following some course of action.
 4. And we must have the wisdom to understand that every opportunity in life is not necessarily a sign from God of His approval. Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should.
- II. So what is the proper approach for knowing God's will and direction in our lives, particularly when making important decisions?
I want to give you five guidelines. They will help you as you make decisions and seek to do God's will.
- A. Is the decision in agreement with the Word of God?
1. We need to steer away from feelings. "I felt led . . ."
 2. God's Word is the ultimate measure of God's will. We call this God's revealed will.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAS - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
 3. God's Word informs and transforms your mind
Romans 12:2 NAS - " And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
 4. If your course of action is contrary to God's Word you need to change direction immediately. There are some things you do not need to pray about. You only need to obey.
- B. Do you have the proper motive in the decision? The high motive in all that we do is the glory of God.
1 Corinthians 10:31 NAS - "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."
Revelation 4:11 NAS - "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."
1. Motive is important. Are you sincerely seeking to know God's will or have you already made the decision and are now seeking to justify it?
I've had people seek my pastoral counsel when they have already determined what they are going to do.

2. Are you willing to step back and wait upon God?
Isaiah 40:31 NAS - "Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary."
- C. Will this decision be spiritually beneficial to you and your family?
1. Job related decisions:
 - a. A promotion that brings you to a town without a solid church is a bad decision. And you must not assume that all reformed churches are a good fit for you.
 - b. A job that requires you to miss both services every Sunday is probably not the best choice.
 2. An activity that consumes great amounts of time may not be the best decision.
 3. Especially when our families are young, we must learn the value of limiting our outside activities.
- D. What effect will this decision have upon your Christian witness?
1. Lost people are watching everything you do
 2. Will this decision demonstrate a life of holiness and consecration to God?
 3. This will affect countless details in your life
- E. Is the decision consistent with the Christian principle of love?
Ephesians 5:2 NAS - "and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."
Romans 13:8 NAS - " Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law."
 - a. This will help you to keep your priorities right. It helps protect you from making decisions that are entirely focused upon self.
 - b. Love should direct everything we do with our chief love directed to Christ.
- III. In the end we make the decision and trust God's hand of grace upon us
- A. We have what Gideon did not have
1. We have God's completed Word – His full revelation to man. This means we don't seek for fresh revelation.
Psalms 119:105 – "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
Matthew 4:4 NAS - "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"
 2. We have God's Spirit dwelling in us. While we don't receive fresh revelation we do receive wonderful illumination and guidance. He helps us rightly apply God's Word to life's situations. He will never give you counsel contrary to the Word of God.
John 14:26 NAU - "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

- B. God has give us spiritual leaders
1. Pastoral counsel should be sought. Pastors are not infallible. Their counsel does not relieve you of serious contemplation and seeking God's direction.
 2. But pastors should be able teachers. They should be students of the Word which helps them to properly apply it.
2 Timothy 2:15 NAU - "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."
 3. And a church is blessed if they have a plurality of elders
Proverbs 11:14 NAU - "Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory."
Proverbs 15:22 NAU - "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed."
Proverbs 24:6 NAU - "For by wise guidance you will wage war, And in abundance of counselors there is victory."
 4. Make sure your counselors are wise and will tell you the truth, and don't surround yourself only with counsel you are agreeable with.
2 Timothy 4:3 NAU - " For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,"
 5. The rejection of sound counsel led to the division and downfall of Israel.
2 Chronicles 10:6-8 NAU - " Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel *me* to answer this people?" ⁷ They spoke to him, saying, "If you will be kind to this people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." ⁸ But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him."
- C. After spending much time in prayer and seeking Godly counsel we make our decision.
1. We must not be frozen waiting to know God's sovereign will in every circumstance. We CANNOT know God's sovereign will. We can only apply His revealed will, His Word, in life's situations.
 2. But we have the confidence of God's guidance and of His blessings upon His people.
Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."