

#### How Do You Know What God Wants You To do?

Jeremiah 29:11: (NASB) For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.



Should I take that new job or stay with the old one? Should I get married? What about having children? Am I in a good place in the church where I am or is there a better fit for me elsewhere? Should we buy that house that is a little bigger or buy the one that is more affordable? Questions, questions! Now, if you are a Christian, here is the biggest question out of all of the other questions - how do you decide what God would have you to do if the choices before you all have strong positives? Is there some all-inclusive formula to figure out this entire dilemma? Now that is a good question!

How can we know God's plans for us in accordance with the principle of our theme text that was originally spoken to ancient Israel?

# What can we know that would be concrete and universal for all Christians regarding how we should make decisions?

Mark 3:31-35: (NASB) <sup>31</sup>Then his mother and his brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to him and called him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, Behold, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you. <sup>33</sup>Answering them, he said, who are my mother and my brothers? <sup>34</sup>Looking about at those who were sitting around him, he said, behold my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup>For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

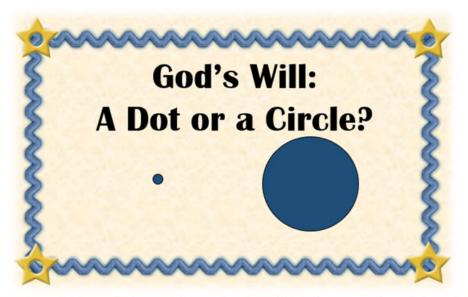
Is disowning our family doing the will of God? That is not what this Scripture is teaching. Jesus was not disowning his family but explaining that his mission was about something bigger than physical family ties. He was looking for those who would be in harmony with him and the Heavenly Father, those who would be seeking to do the will of God.

Doing the will of God by following Jesus brings us into a relationship with Jesus and therefore with God. But how do we know what the will of God is?

### )) A dot or a circle, How Can I know God's Will, Jefferson Bethke

• There's a point in life where I thought God's will in all big decisions that I came to, God's will was a dot. Meaning I had to get it exactly right or else I was off. I had to pick this one, or else I was out of God's will. I had to really labor because I was afraid I wasn't going to pick the right one. That is just problematic and that can be exhausting; it can burn you out; it can also give you a really poor view of God. Because if God's will is a dot, think about how much pressure that brings. Think about how in every decision you feel terrified you're going to get it wrong, because even if your dot is next to the actual dot, you still missed. You're still out of God's will. But I think there's a better analogy. What if God's will is more like a circle? What if God's will is like this flourishing, boundary circle where you can be in or you can be out?





Let's paint the picture of the circle of God's will and our circle of decisions. Ideally, our circle is a little smaller and can fit within His circle. Ideally we try and live with our circle completely within His, so that all you see from the outside is God's will. Sometimes our circle is bigger and sometimes it is off center. God gives us space within borders and boundaries.



Let's build a picture of the boundaries of the circle of God's will by reviewing several practical and clearly-stated ways we can be doing the will of God in our walk with Jesus:

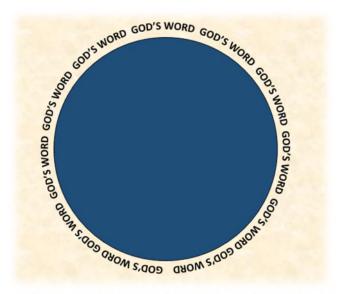
✓ Follow God's word.

A foundational part of the border of the circle of God's will.



#### **Old Testament:**

Joshua 1:7-8: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.



The way to be *very courageous* is to immerse yourself in the

word of God. Joshua was told to meditate on it day and night in order to be in accordance with it - stay in the circle!

#### **New Testament:**

<u>2 Timothy 2:15-16</u>: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness.

If we don't read, think, rehearse, speak, act and live Scripture, how can we think we are following His word? The more closely we follow His word, the more likely our "circles" will match.

## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



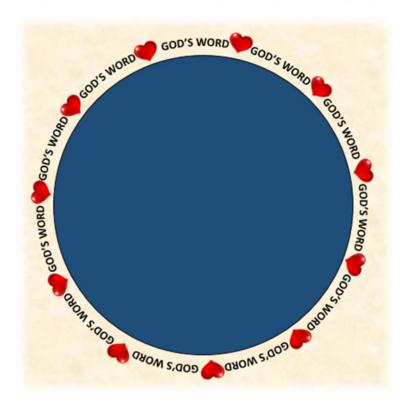
How often do I really look into God's word to get to know His will and His way, and therefore be able to identify His will and His way in my everyday decisions?

"When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier." — Roy Disney



#### Knowing God's word is one thing. What about learning to live it?

Love one another.
A "must" feature of the borders of the circle of God's will.



<u>John 13:34-35</u>: (NASB) <sup>34</sup>A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

A true mark of a true follower is how they act towards their spiritual family - people will know who you are by the sermon of action!

### )) Fatherly boundaries, How Can I know God's Will, Jefferson Bethke

• What happens when you go out of God's will? What happens when you go out of that circle? Then the Good Father says, "Hey, that's a bad decision. That's not helping you. That's not helping you flourish." It pulls you back in. It can be by discipline. It can be by pulling you back in. Do you believe that when you do go off the path that God's strong enough to say, "Hey, come over here. This is the trajectory; this is that direction we are going." But there is freedom to choose in that will. For me, that was ridiculously freeing - that God just says, "Choose," and the more you grow with a parent, think about how you build that trust equity, where the father set up these guidelines to flourish, and if you're in that you can choose. God delights when you choose. God delights when we're in that boundary of a father, the rules He's laid out because you're living in intimacy and joy and oneness with Him.



God gives us fatherly boundaries that give us space to grow and develop. When we make choices where either decision is inside the circle, God can work with that. Just because your decision may be more towards the left side of the circle and mine more towards the right side, mine is not more "right" than yours and vice-versa; they are both within the will of God.

#### A practical application of loving one another:

Galatians 6:1-2: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Our love for one another helps us to be alert to each other's weaknesses. Doing God's will is helping those who need it with gentleness and compassion. A real test of living within God's will is if we want to help - and forgive - each other. Instead, am I resenting my brethren? God's word does not allow for resentment.

## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



How often do I apply myself to others first, truly watching out for them and unselfishly helping them towards what is best for them?

## God is not a ninja, How Can I know God's Will, Jefferson Bethke

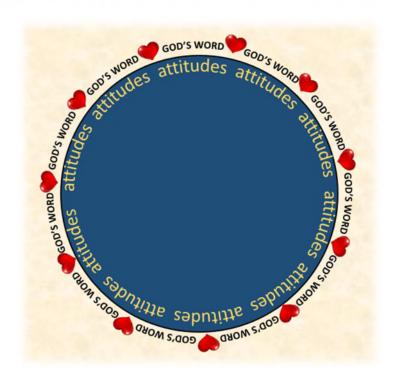
• I think God gives you the freedom to choose, and then sometimes He says, "I have a specific job and a specific mission for you." Here's the caveat. When you ever see those in Scripture or church history, no one was thinking God was hiding trying to tell them that. Sometimes when it's a God's-will thing, we think that God is like a ninja, like He is playing hide-and-go-seek with us. God deeply desires to reveal Himself to you. First of all, do you believe that? Second of all, when it is a specific mission or a specific will, it's so obvious. When the burning bush happened, I don't think Moses was like, "Hold on, God. Is that you?" Another one is Balaam's donkey where it talks to him. I don't know about you, but if I heard a donkey talk, I would probably get my head checked out, or I would think, "God, you're pretty obvious with what you want me to do."



God wants to be obvious in our lives. Sometimes we come upon situations where we do not know whether to turn left or right, requiring thought, prayer, study, meditation, waiting and watching. Those are parts of figuring out the next step.

✓ The attitudes Jesus modeled.

A comprehensive part of the borders of the circle of God's will.



Sometimes God (in this case through the direct words of his son, Jesus) is very direct in what he wants us to do and how he wants us to act. The Beatitudes were spoken to his followers while others listened.



Matthew 5:3-10: (KJV)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Be humble.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Feel the sadness of sin and loss.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Be teachable.



Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Have a longing for God's way. (Stay out of the "gray areas" of the circle.)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Be merciful. (Especially at times we want to be angry or jealous.)

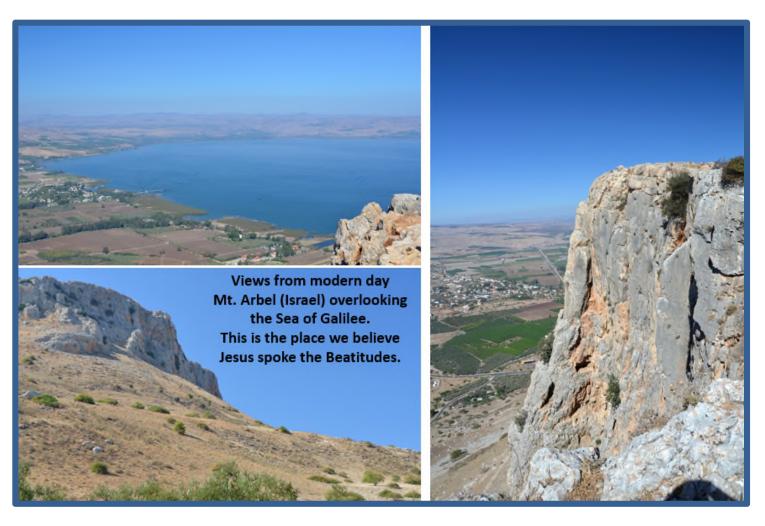
Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. Have the very best of intentions.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Stand against strife.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Stand for God's ways no matter what the cost.

Jesus gave us these "attitude checks" in the Beatitudes for us to focus on and compare our decision-making to the edges of God's will.



"A wise man makes his own decisions, an ignorant man follows public opinion."

— Chinese proverb



Our decisions are made based on the borders of the will of God, not on how we feel at the moment.

## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



After what model have I fashioned my life?

Have I modeled an athlete, movie star or famous actor, communicator or musician? Has my model got enough of Jesus in him or her to match the circle of God's will? Does my model create a larger circle that cannot fit within the borders of the circle of God's will?

Is there a cost to making decisions within the circle of God's will?



An app listener messaged us: Jesus knew his Father's will was to die for all mankind, it's true. But if for some reason he had never died, would he have lived forever, since he was perfect? I know it's off topic, but it just went through my mind. Love the show! Thanks.

Jesus earned the right for a perfect human life by fulfilling the Law, but that would not have been the will of God from the sense of Jesus fulfilling his mission. Yes, we believe he would have lived as long as he perfectly kept the Law.

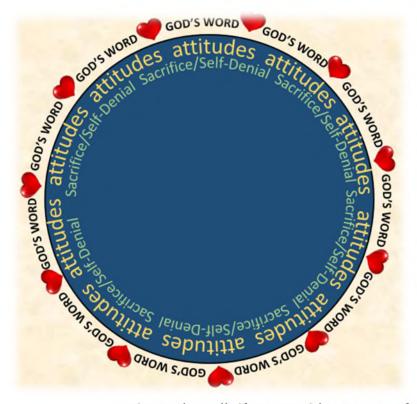




The fact that the circle of God's will has borders is a sure sign that there is a cost to our life decisions staying within those borders:

✓ Be faithful through sacrifice. Self-denial/a living sacrifice is the price of God's borders.

In this age of selfishness, the Christian is supposed to live selflessly.



# There are two parts to approaching a life of sacrifice:

Luke 9:18-23: (NASB) <sup>18</sup>And it happened that while he was praying alone, the disciples were with him, and he questioned them, saying, who do the people say that I am? <sup>19</sup>They answered and said, John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again. <sup>20</sup>And he said to them, but who do you say that I am? And Peter answered and said, The Christ of God. <sup>21</sup>But he warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,

The first part consists of understanding the reasons for a life of sacrifice. Grasping the magnitude of who Jesus was and is, sets the table for how we are to live...

<sup>22</sup>saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day. <sup>23</sup>And he was

saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Once we know who Jesus is, the second part is "walking the walk." That walk is a no-holds-barred commitment to his footsteps.

## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



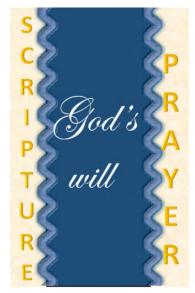
How does my life reflect the lifestyle of walking in Jesus' footsteps?

Am I in tune with it only on Sundays, Christmas and Easter,
or does it stay with me every day and direct me throughout
every part of my every day? What do the answers to these questions
evidence regarding the borders of my decisions?



#### (I)) Walls of Scripture and prayer, How Can I know God's Will, Jefferson Bethke

everything in. I was reading a commentary by a famous theologian, and he wasn't really talking about God's will but he was talking about the character and nature of the people in Acts, the early church. He said the thing that really defined them was on one side, in light of Scripture and in context of prayer. I like to see those as almost two walls. When something comes to you that you need a decision on, do you put it in the light of Scripture? Do you read God's word and say, "God, have you ever said anything specific on this? Have you ever said anything generally on this? Where can I go? Where can I lean?" And over here in the context of prayer, do you ever take it to God? Do you ask?





"When one bases his life on principle, 99 percent of his decisions are already made."

— Author Unknown



A caller from Connecticut suggests Pi (3.14) is a fixed factor of a circle. The fixed factor of God's will is our Lord Jesus, the key in our decision-making process.



✓ Be accountable.
 Part of the price of the circle of God's will is cheerful accountability.



#### Here is an example of being cheerful in accountability of wrong-doings:

<u>Luke 19:1-10</u>: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup>And there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. <sup>3</sup>Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see him, for he was about to pass through that way.

Here was a man on a mission, who knew his life was lacking. He saw Jesus as the way to the will of God and chased down the needed fulfillment.



<sup>5</sup>When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house. <sup>6</sup>And he hurried and came down and received him gladly. <sup>7</sup>When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, he has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. <sup>8</sup>Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much. <sup>9</sup>And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

The instantaneous accountability and generosity of Zacchaeus show us the magnitude of God's grace and the power of the very presence of Jesus in our lives!



# **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



How often do I volunteer my life decisions to be placed before God and ask for His scrutiny? Are the borders of my decisions inside the borders of God's judgment?

"Some persons are very decisive when it comes to avoiding decisions." - Brendan Francis

God gives us the ability to think, choose and apply ourselves. Avoiding making decisions is generally not within the will of God. There is room within the decision-making process to still be within God's will. Reminiscent of the parable of the man who buried his talent, avoiding making decisions is not within the circle of the will of God, as He gives us experiences to make decisions.

Some of the border principles that form the circle of God's will:

- ✓ Follow God's word.

  A foundational part of the border of the circle of God's will.
- Love one another. A "must" feature of the borders of the circle of God's will.
- ✓ The attitudes Jesus modeled.

  A comprehensive part of the borders of the circle of God's will.
- ✓ Be faithful through sacrifice. Self-denial/a living sacrifice is the price of God's borders.
- Be accountable.
  Part of the price of the circle of God's will is cheerful accountability.







So, we have loosely defined the borders of God's will. What now? Shouldn't we all now be easily focused? Shouldn't our daily decisions now simply adjust and flow as we seek God's ways above ours? Isn't the problem solved? NO! But it should give us more confidence that we can be in tune with God's will.



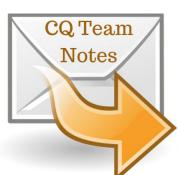
A caller from Connecticut has difficulty making decisions but feels God brings people into her life to help her make decisions, some good people and some bad. A woman at her church was scamming parishioners and our caller was able to help notify the leaders. She also said God brought this program to her and it has helped her tremendously.

Self-serving bias, How to Improve Your Daily Decision Making, Top 4 Cognitive Biases You Should Avoid, Bite Size Psych



Here are the top four biases that cloud your judgment: #1: The self-serving bias. A survey once asked people which celebrities would go to heaven? Mother Teresa topped the charts with 79% of people believing that she would be accepted, and yet there was someone who ranked even higher. When asked about themselves, 87% of people said that they'd make it into heaven, too. So, how do we get this delusional? We contribute any success to ourselves and blame failure on the external situation. This is the self-serving bias. For example, if we charm someone, it's because we have a charming personality, but if we get rejected, it's because they just don't get us. Admittedly, this bias is good because it protects our self-esteem. In fact, depressed people show significantly less self-serving bias. However, this bias also stops us from learning from our mistakes. If we don't take responsibility for our failures, then we will never take the initiative to change.

How do we really know *whose* will we are serving? One of our CQ staffers weighed in on this:



*Vicki says:* We must labor hard and labor often to keep "self" out of the way. Then - and only then - can we begin to do the Lord's will.

Here is a test to see how strong our fleshly desires are...try giving up a decision to someone else, it should be one that involves YOUR stuff...how to arrange YOUR furniture, what color to paint YOUR room rearranging YOUR make up drawer, YOUR tool box and the list goes on...can you do it?

This is an exercise I use to indicate how hard it is for me to let go of my will. If I cannot do it when I KNOW the test is upon me, what makes me think I am not holding on to my own will throughout the experiences the Lord sends my way that I may not be recognizing? For me it really isn't enough just to do good things and please God with my righteousness as it may be for some. For me, I want to make sure Christ is the head of every decision in my life so I need to train myself in giving up my will, not an easy task, yet still my prayer...may THY will be done.

We want to train ourselves to have Christ as the center of every decision, which would land our decision-making well within the boundaries of God's will. "Self" gets pushed outside those parameters.



Proverbs 3:3-6: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. <sup>4</sup>So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. <sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

The principles of these proverbs are often repeated throughout Scripture. How seriously do we take them? Are they the centerpiece of our thinking?



#### What is motivating me? How do I know?

#### The heart wants what the heart wants:

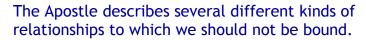
1 John 2:3-6: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup>The one who says, I have come to know him, and does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; <sup>5</sup>but whoever keeps his word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup>the one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.

Jesus was motivated by knowing and doing God's will <u>by being a son</u>. In contrast, Satan was self-motivated by trying to <u>be in the place of God</u>. Whose motivation best describes our desire? Parts of each?

#### What is motivating me? How do I know?

#### The following is a great "border" test:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. <sup>18</sup>And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, Says the Lord Almighty.





For an in-depth analysis of these Scriptures, please refer to our program from January 11, 2015 called, "Should Christians Only Marry Christians?"

To be different and to be separate are very difficult tasks, especially in a society that more and more expects everyone to be politically correct and comply with the prevailing ideas that everything is good and acceptable. These are not the borders God has set for our decisions!



## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



How willing am I to look in the mirror and be completely honest with myself regarding my motivation?

Am I being self-serving and cloaking it with spiritual words to make myself look good to others and myself?

Cognitive fluency bias, How to Improve Your Daily Decision Making, Top 4 Cognitive Biases You Should Avoid, Bite Size Psych



# 2: Cognitive fluency. Cognitive fluency is how easy an idea is to process and understand. The more fluent the idea, the more we unconsciously trust it. Now, the problem is whether something is easy has nothing to do with truth. This leads to an illusion. For example, one experiment showed that simply writing a message in a clearer font will make people think it's truer. In another experiment subjects either read the phrase, "woes unite foes," or "woes unite enemies." Both have the exact same meaning, but because the

first one rhymes and is hence more fluent, subjects found it more insightful. This can lead to some bad decisions. So, the next time you hear something that sounds about right, this is exactly when you should start questioning it.



When cognitive fluency piggy backs on a self-serving bias, we really can have a problem, for things sound better, feel better and look better when they are feeding our ego. ("That look is SO you!")



#### Are quick decisions better than slow decisions?

Am I patient in this decision-making process or do I just want to decide and move on?

<u>Philippians 4:6-7</u>: (NASB) <sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Oftentimes impatience is a cover for selfishness, because what I want is usually the first choice.

This next text shows two sides of the issue.

#### First, the selfish and hurried approach:

James 3:13-18: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

#### Now comes the wise and patient approach:

<sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

<u>Isaiah 30:21</u>: (ESV) and your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, this is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

This is the kind of spiritual thinking that needs to go into our decision-making. It will help us to slow down and make reasonable choices according to God's will.

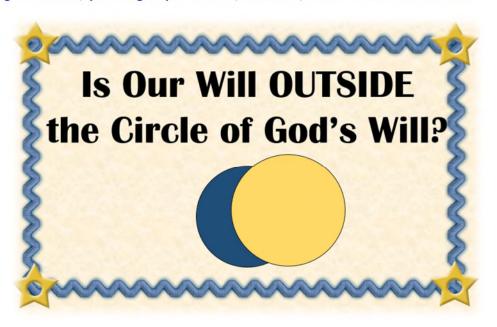
## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



Do I hurry through decisions and therefore rely on how I feel about the situation to conclude it or do I pause and consider wisdom from above to see how I serve God with the situation?



The circle of God's will is a circle with boundaries. The circle of our decision-making also has its boundaries. Sometimes our circle is too big to fit within God's will. Sometimes it might be small enough but off center. Even if we are off center or some of our decisions are outside the will of God, He can still help us. But He will take those decisions outside His will and show us we are wrong - with gentleness, pruning experiences, wisdom, kindness and direction.



(1))Sunk cost fallacy, How to Improve Your Daily Decision Making, Top 4 Cognitive Biases You Should Avoid, Bite Size Psych



#3: The sunk cost fallacy. Imagine you've paid \$20 to watch a two-hour movie and after one hour, you're convinced the movie is trash. You want to leave, but you feel like it would be a waste of money. This is the sunk cost fallacy. See, whether you decide to leave or stay, you've already lost \$20. In fact, by staying on top of the \$20, you've now wasted another hour of your life - therefore you'd be better off leaving. This fallacy stems from our intense aversion to loss. The thought that we wasted resources motivates us to carry on, even if it's clearly a lost cause. In all cases, you should focus on the future costs and benefits and not let your previous loss influence your decision.

What do I do when my decision is finally made?

#### Hopefully we can be like this:

<u>Job 23:10-12</u>: (NASB) <sup>10</sup>But He knows the way I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. <sup>11</sup>My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside. <sup>12</sup>I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.



#### Let us be sure our decisions pass the "borders" test:

James 4:13-17: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit. <sup>14</sup>Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup>Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that. <sup>16</sup>But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Take your steps forward but be flexible and ready to change direction if need be.

## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



Do I have a spiritual confidence or an earthly confidence once I have made a decision? Do I just think about my circle of decisions, or do I think about how my circle fits within the borders of God's will?

Confirmation bias, How to Improve Your Daily Decision Making, Top 4 Cognitive Biases You Should Avoid, Bite Size Psych



#4: The confirmation bias. Considered one of the most dangerous biases of our minds, the confirmation bias means you only search for evidences that confirm your beliefs. This simple bias explains why so many people stick to unscientific beliefs. For instance, someone who believes that humans are inherently good will only seek out cases that support this claim. However, there's plenty of evidence that humans are inherently bad, too. So, they are only getting one side of the story. Another consequence is that the framing of a question becomes vital. For example, people who are asked, "Are you happy with your social life?" report being more satisfied with their social life than those asked, "Are you unhappy with your social life?" Why? Simply because people try to confirm the first question by searching their memory for happy events whereas the second question does the opposite.

Always leave room for the will of God to show you more than you already know. Be able to be corrected when necessary.



Once again we are faced with the human propensity to want to be right! While this is not necessarily bad in and of itself, it can lead to the development of blind spots.

#### What about the bad decisions we make?

How much of my decision-making circle is outside that of the will of God?

He that has a choice has trouble. — Dutch Proverb

Depending on the decision, we should try and retrace our steps if a commitment of too serious of a nature hasn't been made, or make the best of it if that is the more righteous and godly path.

 First, we need to take our troubles to the throne of grace - a place to engage in "border repair!"

Hebrews 4:14-16: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who



cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Be honest - when we make a mistake, how boldly do we want to come to *the throne of grace*? Here it says we can come with confidence so we can receive mercy. This is where we belong when we have made a bad decision.



- Second, we need to focus on God's mercy and overruling in our lives:
- 1 Corinthians 10:13: (NASB) No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
- Third, we need to see there is value in our fallen earthly experiences:
- <u>2</u> Corinthians 4:7-11: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; <sup>8</sup>we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup>always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup>For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.



Finally, we need to focus on getting back up!

<u>Proverbs 24:16</u>: (NASB) For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity.

## **Circle Comparison Checkpoint:**



Do I have the courage to not only admit my mistakes,
but to refocus my priorities and place myself
back within the borders of God's will?
Am I willing to do whatever it takes to get back there?
If so, then I have learned much about what God wants me to do!



So, how do you know what God wants you to do? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...

Think about it...!

And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!



A few Scriptures to enhance our focus on the circle and the borders of God's will:



#### Stand firm and strong within the circle of God's will:

2 Timothy 1:7-9: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. <sup>8</sup>Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, <sup>9</sup>who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

# As "spiritual" Israel, we can take hold of this next promise in the same way that natural Israel can:

<u>Isaiah 41:8-10</u>: (NASB) <sup>8</sup> But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, <sup>9</sup>You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. <sup>10</sup>Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

God can only hold us in His hand if we are inside the circle of His will.

# Honesty, righteousness and humility - all byproducts of the circle of God's will:

<u>Proverbs 16:7-11</u>: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. <sup>8</sup>Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice. <sup>9</sup>The mind of man plans his way; But the LORD directs his steps. <sup>10</sup>A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment. <sup>11</sup>A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; all the weights of the bag are His concern.

# Moses telling Joshua - follow God (stay within the circle of His will) and you will lead the people to blessing!

<u>Deuteronomy 31:6-8</u>: (NASB) <sup>6</sup>Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. <sup>7</sup>Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. <sup>8</sup>The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

# The role of a good conscience towards others in staying within the circle of God's will:

1 Corinthians 10:28-33: (NASB) <sup>28</sup>But if anyone says to you, This is meat sacrificed to idols, do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; <sup>29</sup>I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? <sup>30</sup>If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? <sup>31</sup>Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. <sup>32</sup>Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; <sup>33</sup>just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

<u>Joshua 24:15</u>: (NASB) Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.

#### A great recipe for understanding the borders of the circle of God's will:

Philippians 2:3-11: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; <sup>4</sup>do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>For this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth



and under the earth,  $^{11}$ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Do not plant your dreams in the field of indecision, where nothing ever grows but the weeds of "what-if." — Dodinsky