

Overview

The MYC Teaching Programme

1. Main Talks

These plenary sessions will help us think through our topic from the “big picture”

Monday afternoon	<i>Gospel-driven guidance</i>
Monday night	<i>God’s plan for all things</i>
Tuesday night	<i>God’s plan for your life</i>
Wednesday night	<i>God’s word to you</i>
Thursday night	<i>God’s work in you</i>

2. Morning sessions

These sessions are designed to help give us a “global focus” as we are encouraged by what God is doing throughout His world. They will also include some time for personal devotion and reflection

3. Workshops

These staff-led workshops will develop your ability to “think theologically” by exploring related topics and aspects of the Christian life.

Note: ‘FOCUS on Jesus’ OR ‘Finding your place in God’s story’ workshop is compulsory for first-timers (but all are welcome!)

see page 70 for more details on each workshop + locations

4. Review Groups

These student-led small groups will help you get to know a few other ESers really well and have a chance to debrief generally

5. Question Times

Self-explanatory! An MYC favourite ...

Talk One

Gospel-driven guidance

1. What's the “story” of your life?



1.1. Testing the air we breathe ...

=> I'm entitled to “the good life”



=> I'm afraid of being left behind

=> “How I feel” determines “what is right”

1.2. So when it comes to decision-making ...

2. An added Christian complication: “why do YOU want to find God’s will for your life?”

- I want to justify my actions



“God would tell me, “George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan.” And I did. And then God would tell me, “George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.” And I did. And now, again, I feel God’s words coming to me: “Go get the Palestinians their state and get the Israelis their security and get peace in the Middle East.” And by God I’m gonna do it.” (George W. Bush, US President 01-09)

- I’m afraid of God



- I’m afraid I’ll let God down

“Guidance is a word that for many Christian people evokes both fascination and fear. The fascination is felt because Christians do in fact want to be divinely guided and know that there are many places in the Bible where guidance is promised to faithful believers. The fear arises because they suspect that it is hard to get guidance right, and they anticipate disaster should they get it wrong.” (Packer & Nystrom, *Guard Us, Guide Us*, p.13)

- I want to live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way

Col 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- Other
- All of the above

3. The critical starting question: “does God have a detailed and discoverable plan for my life?”

3.1. God’s “will of _____” (aka His _____ will)

Hab 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Acts 4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Eph 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

3.2. God’s “will of _____” (aka His _____ will)

1 Tim 2:3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Thess 4:3 It is God’s will that you be sanctified

1 Thess 5:16 Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

3.3. God’s “will of _____” (aka a _____ & _____ plan for my life)



“So here’s the real heart of the matter: Does God have a secret will of direction that He expects us to figure out before we do anything? And the answer is no ... He does not burden us with the task of divining His will of direction for our lives ahead of time ... God does have a specific plan for our lives, but it is not one that He expects us to figure out before we make a decision.” (Kevin De Young, *Just Do Something*, p.22)

Q. So is De Young right?

“The conventional approach to discerning the will of God . . . betrays a false and negative view of God. It implies that God for some reason “hides” his will and thus forces us to look for it, as if God were playing the celestial equivalent of “hide-and-seek” with us. According to this way of thinking, God hides his will, and we must go searching for it. In the process, he appears to delight in making things difficult for us. He prefers hiding over being found, frustrating us over making us joyful.” (J Sittser, *The Will of God*, p.25)

“At some point, everyone abandons the traditional view’s approach to making decisions. That may sound like a bold statement, but you can check it yourself quite simply with this little test: during the past week, in what percentage of the decisions that you made did you have certainty of knowing God’s individual will in advance? . . . In the small seemingly unimportant decisions, specific guidance does not seem to materialize. Those sincere Christians who have conscientiously attempted to seek God’s direction for every minute decision have either given up after a few hours, or ended up in some mystical fringe group.” (Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, p.120)

“It is our contention that the idea of an individual will of God for every detail of a person’s life is not found in Scripture. If we are right, the most startling ramification is that many believers are investing a great deal of time and energy searching for something that is non-existent.” (Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, pp.82-83)



Mt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care.³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

When the bible talks about “God’s will” ...

4. Gospel-driven guidance

Guidance = “God, tell me what I should do with my life”

Gospel = “God, remind me what you’re doing in your world”

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Matt 6:9 This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’



Mt 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

5. Where to, from here ...

- Talk 1: Gospel-driven guidance
- Talk 2: God's plan for all things: overcoming anxiety
- Talk 3: God's plan for your life: responding to suffering
- Talk 4: God's word to you: so what about those fleeces?
- Talk 5: God's work in you: a new heart, marriage and vocation

What I've learned (and my response)

*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty, Hold me with Thy pow'rful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more, Feed me till I want no more.
(William Williams 1717-91)*

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good. (Ps 25:4-7)

Talk Two

God's plan for all things

1. What God is doing in His world

Eph 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. **With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.**

¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

1.1. see what God has done for us (v3)

1.2. see who does the “choosing” (v4)

1.3. see God's plan for "all things" (v10)

Php 2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Q. Is this God's sovereign will or moral will?

Rev 5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" ¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Q. Does "forever and ever" sound boring to you?

Guidance = "God, tell me what I should do with my life"

Gospel = "God, remind me what you're doing in your world"

- God is sovereign, and nothing I do (or don't do) will stop Jesus Christ from being exalted forever

2. If Jesus Christ is going to be exalted forever and ever ...

2.1. Start praising God now



Reaching the 35000:

2.2. Repent and believe the gospel

Mk 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Q. How does God’s sovereign will intersect with His moral will?

Reaching the 35000:

*What can we do in God’s work/To prosper and increase
The Kingdom of the Living God/The reign of the Prince of Peace
What can we do to hasten the time/The time that will surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God/As the waters cover the sea.*

Arthur Ainger (1841-1919)

2.3. “Don’t be anxious about anything ...”

Php 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

=> ask God to change not our circumstances but us (our character and our convictions)

James 4:13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them. 5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ² Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you. ⁷ Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. ⁹ Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Q. Should we ask, “how can I be most effective for God?”

“Incidentally, let us beware of replacing “gifts” with “strategy” in our thinking. We love to plan our lives, to ask *and answer* the question, “Where will I be of most use to Christ?” It is a fine question. But only the Lord knows the answer. And it is probably not the answer of our strategizing, in which we are in control. We like to plan a life of maximal “effectiveness”; but this is not in our power.” (C Ash, “How do I know if Preaching is for me?”)

1 Pet 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Reaching the 35000:

What I've learned (and my response)

*I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
When, at His bidding, every storm is stilled,
Or who can say how great the jubilation
When all the hearts of men with love are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
And myriad, myriad human voices sing,
And earth to Heaven, and Heaven to earth, will answer:
At last the Savior, Savior of the world is King!*
William Y Fullerton (1857-1932)

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Eph 1:15-19)

Talk Three

God's plan for your life

1. From cosmic and universal to personal and individual

Eph 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

1.1. Our deadly problem (vv1-3)

3 different but important definitions of sin

- a.
- b.
- c.

Rev 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹ “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”



1.2. God's gracious solution (vv4-10)

Q. WHY would God save us?

A1. (in terms of His motive): "Because of His great love for us" (v4)

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Q. So how can I better feel God's love?

A1. get a deeper grasp of your unworthiness

Eph 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions ...

A2. get a deeper grasp of the cost of our salvation

Eph 5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.



"My memory is nearly gone, but I remember 2 things: that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great saviour" (John Newton)

Guidance = "God, tell me what I should do with my life"

Gospel = "God, remind me what you're doing in your world"

- God loves me more than I can possibly imagine or know

Q. WHY would God save us ...?

A2. (In terms of His purpose): so we might be raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (vv6-7)

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Deut 5:8 “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.



Q. WHY would God save us ...?

A3. (In terms of our conduct): so we might do good works (v10)

- not just “save _____ ” but “save _____ ”

=> we are “God’s workmanship”

2. If God loves me like His child ...

2.1. He even uses suffering for my good (Rom 8:18)

Rom 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

i. All Christians expect to suffer

Q1. What's the "suffering" which Paul is referring to in Rom 8:18?

2 Tim 3:10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

McCrimble Research (2016): (on "total belief blockers"): "What will stop someone who is "open to change" from exploring Christianity?"

Lowest response (18%): _____

Highest response (33%): _____

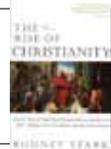
Q2. So "why would God want me to suffer" NOW?

"If God opens the door for you to do something you know is good or necessary, be thankful for the opportunity. But other than that, don't assume that the relative ease or difficulty of a new situation is God's way of telling you to do one thing or the other. Remember, God's will for your life is your sanctification, and God tends to use discomfort and trials more than comfort and ease to make us holy." (Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something*, pp.76-7)

ii. Our present sufferings “are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us”

iii. “Consider” means you have to make a choice

Reaching the 35000:



Q. Can we discern God’s plan retrospectively, with 20:20 hindsight?



2.2. He disciplines me for my good (Heb 12:10)

Heb 12:7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

a. no-one disciplines other people’s kids

b. parents discipline differently according to the maturity of the child

2.3. He will never ever ever short-change me (Rom 8:32)

Rom 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What I've learned (and my response)

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!*
Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph 3:14-21)

Talk Four

God's word to you

1. God promises to speak to us through His Word

1.1. God speaks through Scripture

2 Tim 3:10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

not just “saved _____” (vv14-15) but also “saved _____” (vv16-17)

Q. What do you think of instruction manuals?



Guidance = “God, tell me what I should do with my life”

Gospel = “God, remind me what you’re doing in your world”

- God speaks and His word contains everything we need for salvation and to do the good works He’s prepared in advance for us to do

Reaching the 35000:

2 Pet 3:15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

1.2. Scripture points to Jesus

Jn 5:39 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Heb 1:1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.



as unique as you are

2. But can't God speak "a new word" to us today?

Q. What about those often-quoted biblical situations where God speaks directly to His people (apart from Scripture)?

3 important qualifications:

- i.
- ii.
- iii.

2.1. Laying out a fleece (Gideon)

Judges 6:7 When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of Midian, ⁸ he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁹ I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.” ¹¹ The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. ¹² When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” ¹³ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.” ¹⁴ The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” ¹⁵ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” ¹⁶ The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.” ¹⁷ Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. ¹⁸ Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the Lord said, “I will wait until you return.” ¹⁹ Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought

them out and offered them to him under the oak. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. ²¹ Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared. ²² When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!” ²³ But the Lord said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.” ²⁴ So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites . . . ²⁵ Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. ²⁶ Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. ²⁷ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them. ²⁸ Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— ²⁹ look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece & all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” ³⁰ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew - a bowlful of water. ³¹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry & let the ground be covered with dew.” ³² That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

Q. What should we learn from Gideon?

Judges 8:22 The Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us—you, your son and your grandson—because you have saved us from the hand of Midian.”²³ But Gideon told them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.”²⁴ And he said, “I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder.” (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.)²⁵ They answered, “We’ll be glad to give them.” So they spread out a garment, and each of them threw a ring from his plunder onto it.²⁶ The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels, not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels’ necks.²⁷ Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

2.2. Asking for wisdom (Solomon)

1 Ki 3:4 The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.⁵ At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”⁶ Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.”⁷ “Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.”⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.¹¹ So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice,¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.¹³ Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.¹⁴ And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”¹⁵ Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

Q. What should we learn from Solomon?

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

2.3. Casting lots (Matthias)

Acts 1:15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)¹⁶ and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”¹⁸ (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.¹⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)²⁰ “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms: “‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’ and, “‘May another take his place of leadership.’²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us,²² beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.”²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

Q. What should we learn from the choosing of Matthias?

i.

ii.

iii.

“There are no examples of explicitly seeking or finding God’s will after Acts 1:24-26 ... there are dreams, visions, and revelations after this, but never in the context of explicitly seeking God’s will.” (Waltke, *Finding God’s Will*, p.53)

2.4. What God CAN do vs what God PROMISES to do

“God CAN speak to us through signs and wonders and direct intervention, but He PROMISES to speak to us through His word”

i. How do I know that “Jesus loves me?”

ii. Which method is more reliable?

iii. Does God care about my life?

“Something is incredibly wrong when the words we hear outside Scripture are more powerful and more affecting to us than the inspired word of God.” (J Piper, “The Morning I heard the Voice of God”)

iv. WHY do we secretly want God to speak to us directly (apart from through Scripture)?

- We don't want to have to explain our actions to others
- It's much easier
- It feels more “spiritual” and “impressive”
- It will impress unbelievers and bring them to Christ

“One of the lessons from the life of Jesus is that people will not turn to God simply because they see a miracle. Instead, they will simply ask for another miracle. So God leaves the miraculous for those few great moments when a miracle is the best way to alter the course of history. Please do not misunderstand me: I do believe in a God who can perform miracles, even in our own day. But I don't find that miracles are the course of events for Christian direction, so I think “laying out the fleece” is generally the lazy man's way to discern the will of God. It requires no work, little discipline, and almost no character development. God has a different program of guidance.” (Waltke, *Finding the Will of God*, p.51)

v. What about the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in Acts?

Jn 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

vi. If the way God PROMISES to speak is through Scripture, His word must be our final authority

The ES motto: “Be Like the Bereans”

Acts 17:11 Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

1 Cor 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

ES/AFES Doctrinal Basis, Pt 1

The divine inspiration and infallibility of Holy Scripture as originally given and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

“When we have rejected the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, we allow Christians to depend on things other than the Bible as their guide to matters of life and faith. In particular, people have begun to rely on mysticism, upon ways of supposedly knowing God apart from the Bible. They look inward for *intrinsic* wisdom rather than outward to the bible for its *extrinsic* wisdom. They forsake biblical reason in favour of feelings, voices, visions or other subjective means of supposedly knowing God. This is a deadly error, for spiritual discernment must be founded upon God’s objective revelation of himself in Scripture.” (T Challies, *Spiritual Discernment*, p.47)

Ps 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

3. How to listen to God's word ...

3.1. Read your bible

"90 percent of God's will for *my* life is the same as 90 percent of God's will for *your* life. If it was portrayed in a Venn diagram, the 2 circles would be practically sitting on top of each other ... so don't skip the essentials" (K Vaters, "Finding God's will for your life is easier than you think")

Scripture contains "essential principles about our character, not specific directions for individual circumstances"

Q. WHY do we want to skip the "essential principles" and look for "specific rules and regulations?"

rhabdomancy = the belief that "even the direction of dropped arrows could not be chalked up to mere chance" (Waltke, p.31)



Reaching the 35000:

3.2. Memorize Scripture

Matt 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” ⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” ⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Q. Which memory verses will YOU commit to this week?

=>

=>

=>

=>

=>

3.3. Seek out wisdom

Prov 26:4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. ⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

Prov 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

What I've learned (and my response)

*God is speaking – by his Spirit
Speaking to our hearts again;
In the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
One sure faith is standing fast:
God abides, his word unchanging
God the first and God the last.
GW Briggs (1875-1959)*

Ps 19:7 The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. ¹⁰ They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. ¹¹ By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Talk Five

God's work in you

1. The problem with instruction manuals

Heb 6:11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. ¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: ¹⁶ "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." ¹⁷ Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." ¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

"God's guidance is more like a compass than a map. We are not given the fine detail of every decision on every day for the rest of our lives ... At every point along the journey, no matter where we are or what we are doing, we can consult the compass to see which direction to head. That direction is always towards righteousness and holiness and becoming like Christ." (Jensen & Payne, *Guidance and the Voice of God*, p.97)

Eph 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Guidance = "God, tell me what I should do with my life"

Gospel = "God, remind me what you're doing in your world"

- God is at work in me, changing me, empowering me, conforming me to Christ, and He WILL finish His work in me

2. A new (and transformed) heart



“God’s primary work in our hearts is to shape our convictions and our character, not to change our specific circumstances”

2.1. God’s most basic will for your life: your holification

1 Thess 4:3 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

“But specific step-by-step instruction is not usually how God operates. His way is to show us His holiness, declare us holy in Christ, then exhort us to grow in holiness in daily life. That’s God’s will of desire for you ... He wants you to buy a house that will make you holy. If you marry, He wants you to get a job that will help you grow in holiness. (Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something*, p.56)



Reaching the 35000:

2.2. The refining of your motives: wanting to please God (not needing to appease Him)

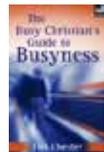
Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Q1. Do you know why you do what you do?

“What the heart loves, the will does, and the mind justifies” (Thomas Cranmer)

Q. **Why** am I “so busy?”

- Because I worry about having enough to survive
- Because I’m trying to make the most of what this short life has to offer
- Because I feel like I’m indispensable
- Because I care too much about what other people think about me
- Because I think God will be more pleased with me



Q2. Have you asked others who know you well for their perspective?

“it’s easier to sin in private”

Prov 27:6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

“We need people to point out to us all the relevant facts for making our decision, some of which we may have overlooked. We need people to help us make sure we are abreast of all the interests our decision must serve, and to remind us of those concerns we may have failed to take into account. We need people who know us well to tell us, with loving honesty, whether we are being realistic about our own abilities and inabilities, and whether we are actually up to the task that we contemplate taking on. We need people to help us explore our own motives, including self-serving motives that are there but which we are tempted to gloss over. God means us to seek and find much of the help we need here within the fellowship of the living, breathing, many-faceted, multi-talented local body of Christ.” (Packer & Nystrom, *Guard Us, Guide Us*, p.144)

“If we say, “God told me to do this” or “God’s leading me here”, this puts our decisions out of reach from criticisms or concerns. We should choose some different terminology. “I prayed about it, and this seems best” or “It seems like the Lord is leading” would be a more helpful way of communicating our dependence on God. We don’t want “God told me so” or “God laid it on my heart” or “It’s God’s will” or worse yet “God told me that He wants you to do such and such” to be conversation stoppers that remove accountability in decision making.” (Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something*, p.47)

Q3. Have you prayed specifically and deliberately that God might purify your motives?

“I’m praying about this decision or that decision”

Ps 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Ps 86:11 Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

Phil 1:9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

2.3. The evidence of gospel-shaped character: thankfulness

1 Thess 5:16 Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Reaching the 35000:

My personal thankfulness plan for Semester 2, 2017	
Frequency	Action

3. Applying the gospel to guidance: marriage and ministry

The information contained on this web site is general in nature and does not take into account your personal situation. You should consider whether the information is appropriate to your needs, and where appropriate, seek professional advice from a financial adviser.

3.1. (From Talk 1) the gospel is about God's action first and foremost, not ours

Gen 2:18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

3.2. (From Talk 2) the gospel is that God is sovereign, and nothing I do or don't do will stop Jesus Christ from being exalted forever and ever

i.

Mt 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

ii.

Mt 22:29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

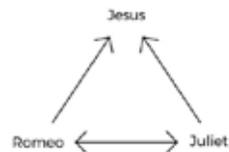
3.3. (From Talk 3) the gospel is that God loves me more than I can possibly imagine or know

1 Cor 7:1 Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”² But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.⁵ Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.⁶ I say this as a concession, not as a command.⁷ I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

3.4. (From Talk 4) the gospel is that God speaks and His word contains everything we need for salvation and to do the good works He’s prepared in advance for us to do

i. God’s most basic will for your life: your holification

Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body.³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.



If your husband should take the command given to husbands in Ephesians 5 seriously, his greatest concern for you will not be that you have everything you want, but that Christ be your greatest desire. After all, your devotion to Christ is his highest responsibility. It might mean that instead of cowering in fear as he normally does, he might confront your sin. He may call you to conformity to Christ in places you did not expect. For certain it will mean your husband will fear Christ and not your reactions. He will weigh his decisions in light of Christ's glory and not your preference or his. (Byron & Robin Yawn, *What every woman wishes her father had told her*)

a. there is an immense freedom in who you choose to marry

=> there is no such thing as “the one”

“God does not have one person selected for us to marry whom we must “find”. Instead, there are many people we could marry, if we choose to marry at all ... The “one” will God has for us consists of a commitment to put him first in everything.” (J Sittser, *The Will of God*, p.35)

=> “compatibility” is at best a secondary factor

“Pray less that God would show you who is the right husband or wife and pray more to be the right kind of husband or wife. If everyone was praying to be the right spouse, it wouldn't matter nearly so much who is the “right” spouse. Dump your list of 17 things you need in a wife and make yourself a list of 17 things you need to be as a husband.” (Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something*, p.104)

b. there is an even greater freedom in NOT marrying

1 Cor 7:29 What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not;³⁰ those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep;³¹ those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.³² I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord.³³ But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—³⁴ and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband.³⁵ I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

Q. What does it mean to “please the Lord” in 1 Cor 7?

1 Pet 3:1 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

ii. The refining of your motives: wanting to please God (not needing to appease Him)

Q. (For those who want to get married): WHY do you want to get married?

Q. (For those who'd prefer to remain single): WHY do you want to remain single to serve the Lord?

Q. (For everyone): do you dream more about marriage than “eternal things”?

1 Cor 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

On “motives” and “vocation” ...

Q1. Why do you want a particular vocation?

Q2. Have you seriously considered a vocation “in ministry”?

The pathway to vocational ministry ...

- Get started now (ie don't wait for later)

- If you're moving towards ministry, don't date anyone unless they're also heading that way

- Talk to a staffworker about doing a 2-year Ministry Apprenticeship

- Commit to doing a Grad Dip in Theology before you turn 30

- If you yourself don't go, plan to send others

iii. the evidence of gospel-shaped character: thankfulness

4. When God's will is on earth as it is in heaven ...

“This is why conformity to the will of God is never perfect in this life. Even if the performance outwardly regarded seems perfect, the motivation, the state, and the desire of one's heart is never as strong in its God-centredness, never as passionate in its purpose of bringing God honour and glory, as it should be and will be in heaven when God's work of grace is finished in us.” (Packer & Nystrom, *Guard Us, Guide Us*, p.65)

What I've learned (and my response)

*Finish then thy new creation, Pure and spotless let us be,
Let us see thy great salvation, Perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory, Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, Lost in wonder, love and praise.*
C. Wesley (1707 - 1788)

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued you from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1:9-14)

Recommended Reading

The Essentials

The New Bible Commentary and New Bible Dictionary (IVP: Leicester)

- the standard one-volume work which covers every book and theological term in the bible!

W A Elwell (ed), *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984)

- the standard alphabetical one-volume work which covers most aspects of Christian theology

G Bray, *God is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012)

- excellent one-volume work from a thoroughly reformed and evangelical perspective. Easy to read (believe it or not!)

M Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011)

- another excellent one-volume work from a reformed, evangelical perspective

B Milne, *Know the Truth: A handbook of Christian belief* (Leicester: IVP, 1982)

- standard (short!) one-volume work which covers all major Christian doctrines

G Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Leicester: IVP, 1991)

- short but profound book proposing an integrating theme throughout the bible

V Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Nottingham, IVP, 2009)

- simple, easy-to-read, essential for any Christian serious about reading any bit of the bible in proper context

D A Carson, *For the Love of God Vols 1 & 2* (Leicester: IVP, 1998)

- if you're serious about reading the whole bible, these 2 books follow Murray M'Cheyne's 1-year plan. Its strength is it encourages you to read your bible more than the notes!

J I Packer, *Knowing God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973, repr. 1975-91)

- John Stott was one of the earliest reviewers and was frustrated in his attempts to finish the book because it kept moving him to prayer: "The truth he handles fires the heart. At least, it fired mine, and compelled me to turn aside to worship and to pray"

D A Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Baker, 2002)

- a brilliant and compelling summons to prayer based on Paul's prayers

P Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* (Col Springs: Navpress, 2009)

- outstanding: will make you want to pray, and help you actually pray!

J Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986)

- perhaps the single most influential book amongst Western evangelicals in the last 30 years. Section on the implications of the atonement are worth the price of the book!

T Keller, *The Reason for God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008)

- one of the best books on apologetics; written by a pastor (not just a theoretician)

L Brown, *Shining like stars: the power of the gospel in the world's universities* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006)

- the best book for university students to inspire you not to waste your life

Topic Specific

K DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2009)

- a short and engaging book designed to help Christians embrace the freedom we have in Christ. It's a bit bombastic at times (particularly when urging men to "grow up, get married, make babies") but as good a book as you'll find on the topic.

P Jensen & T Payne, *Guidance the Voice of God* (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 1997)

- based on a series of talks given at UNSW MYC in the 1980s, it offers a coherent big-picture theological framework for understanding how God guides His people today. There are some things you'll disagree with as being a bit out-there, but its great strength is in focussing us on God's work in His world, not our choices!

B Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995)

- an excellent book which shows to devastating effect how many practices that Christians employ to "find God's will" are really just cultish paganism! The second half of the book contains 6 helpful and practical suggestions as part of "God's program of guidance".

G Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View* (Portland: Multnomah, 1980)

- "an oldie but a goodie"! The most substantial book on the list: Friesen convincingly shows how the "traditional view" of God's will (ie that God has an individual plan for every person's life, like a "bullseye" we must hit) is unbiblical and pastorally devastating. A number of ethical case studies round out the book.

J Piper, *Don't waste your life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003)

- this is one of Piper's classics: it sprung out of a series of talks he gave at the Passion conference, calling on the youth of this generation to not dedicate their lives to "collecting shells"

J Sittser, *The Will of God as a Way of Life: How to make every decision with peace & confidence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004)

- one of the few books to explore how suffering and God's will intersect - Jerry's wife, mother and daughter were killed by a drunk driver, leaving him to raise the 3 other young children on his own; this is in many ways his personal story about why he learned to focus less on "how to make decisions" and more on "what God is like," and how His character changes our own

T Challies, *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007)

- an interesting and engaging book about discernment", with many great insights and illustrations. His chapter on "the practice of discernment" as he works through the various steps in working through a particular issue ("is it right for me to forgive myself for my past failings") is an excellent example of "how-to"

J I Packer & Carolyn Nystrom, *Guard Us, Guide Us: Divine Leading in Life's Decisions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008)

- helpful, intermediate-level book which covers most important aspects and includes helpful suggestions about how to move forward in decision-making

Topic-specific articles

John Piper, "*The Morning I heard the Voice of God*", (downloaded from www.desiringgod.org on 9 Jun 17)

Karl Vaters, "*Finding God's will for your life is easier than you think*", (downloaded from www.christianitytoday.com on 31 Dec 16)

Michael Horton, "*How to Discover Your Calling*", (downloaded from www.wscal.edu on 17 Dec 14)

Christopher Ash, "*How do I know if Preaching is for me?*" (London: Proclamation Trust, 2007)