



Facing the Reasonable Questions of a Skeptical Culture

GOD'S WILL: READING THE TEA LEAVES

Have you ever tried explaining to an unbeliever or skeptic how you determined to move forward in a particularly difficult situation? We can sound extremely odd. We tend to come across as elite and super-spiritual. We talk a big game about how God directs our decisions and lives. Obviously, this is true. God did predestine what will happen both universally and personally. But to a skeptic, finding God's will can sound a lot like shaking the magic, or in this case spiritual, eight ball. So how should we make a biblical decision? What criteria should we use?

Allow me to share a true situation I heard about recently (names changed to protect the parties involved). This story demonstrates the confusion many believers can experience and how crazy Christians can sound to a skeptical world.

Bob liked Sue. They met at college, had several classes together and had instant chemistry. From the outside they looked to be a perfect match. Bob began to pray about whether he should date Sue. But as he prayed and thought about the idea he just didn't feel "at peace." Something didn't sit right. He wanted to pursue Sue, but he couldn't shake the uneasiness. He wasn't sure if it was God's will for his life, so he decided against it.

Bob then sat down with Joe, another friend from college who knew them both. Joe was rooting for the relationship to continue. He thought they would be great together. Joe

was an unbeliever. He had talked about the Gospel and Christianity with Bob on many occasions, but he was still "on the fence." When Bob told Joe he was not going to pursue Sue further, Joe was surprised. They both agreed that the relationship made perfect sense, so Joe pressed for more information. The only reason Bob could give for not dating Sue was "I'm not at peace with it and I don't think it's God's will for me right now." Joe was confused. "God's will for your life! What does that even mean?"

Joe's bewilderment was reasonable. Christians can sound extremely odd to a skeptical world. We seem as if we have a better way of making decisions. As if we have the upper hand by having access to God. But that's not the case. Our decision-making abilities are not better, stronger, or more reliable just because we're Christians. We can see unbelievers making wise decisions just like we see believers making unwise decisions. Our spiritual relationship doesn't affect our decision-making abilities. So the question then is, what is the difference? What makes us different than the world around us?

It all comes down to the standards we use and how we evaluate our choices. As believers we get to evaluate life's decisions with a different standard. I heard it said many times growing up that we get to think about things "in light of eternity." Our life, thoughts, and soul do not stop when we enter the ground. Eternity is waiting for us. This changes

how we assess decisions. All the same standards the world uses still apply: "Is this the best career move?" "Is this the best decision for my kids?" "Will this benefit my family?" and "Should I make this commitment at this time?" But we get to ask one more question: "As a child of God, does my heavenly Father desire that I do this?" We get to look towards the new heavens and new earth and begin to evaluate our life's decisions now with eternity in mind.

Consider the following verses:

Matthew 6:19-24

Matthew 10:26-33

Discussion Questions

Think of a hard decision you have had to make. How did you go about evaluating your choices? Looking back, can you see that tough decision working out for your good?

As believers, how do we evaluate our decisions differently than the world around us?

Understanding that feelings can lie to us, was Bob more spiritual because he chose not to date Sue?

As believers, should we trust our feelings more than an unbeliever should?

Have you experienced God using failure, a mistake, or even sin for His benefit or glory? In the end, did it make you reconsider how you view the original failure, mistake, or sin?