



Episode 3-22: Biblical Decision Making

Resources:

Books

[Decision, Decisions - Dave Swavely](#)

Podcasts

[Principles and Methods - Joyful Journey Podcast](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Hello, this is Janet once again back with Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hey, friends.

Janet: And today's episode we're gonna be talking about biblical decision making. Something that I think we do, we make decisions all day long, but I'm not sure that many of us would be confident in how we do that.

Jocelyn: And some people are so worked up about their decision making that they get stuck.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And they can't make any decision. And some people just make decisions in a lot of ways that might be unbiblical. One of the reasons I think it's important to talk about is that there's no such thing as a small decision.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Each decision leads to a future decision. So all decisions are important.

Janet: Well, now I'm paralyzed, Jocelyn. I'm afraid to make the wrong one.



Jocelyn: That's a quote from a book that I read. So don't think that wisdom came from my brain. I was reading a book on this called Decisions Decision by Dave Swavley, and in the preface he says this, All of our choices are threads in the fabric of our future. That's why you need to learn how to make good decisions. In fact, you need to learn it so well that you'll be able to make the best choice immediately and instinctively, because often you will have very little time for extended deliberation.

Janet: Interesting.

Jocelyn: And I think that's helpful.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: So, we don't wanna make decisions just based on what effects they're gonna have, especially for Christians like Second Corinthians 5:9 says, we have a goal. We have a goal in our decisions, and that is to please the Lord. First Corinthians 10:31 and second Corinthians 5:10, they tell us that God is gonna hold us accountable for every single decision that we make, and he disciplines us in love when we make the wrong ones, and he blesses us when we follow the principles of his word. So ultimately, the way we make decisions is important because it has ramifications beyond this life and on into eternity. And when you think about that, it can paralyze you even more, I guess, it's like, well, thanks. It doesn't only matter

Janet: I'm now terrified. It'll matter forever.

Jocelyn: Why don't you read for us, Janet, Matthew 6:19 through 21.

Janet: Sure. Don't store up for yourselves Treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves. Treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal for where your treasure is there, your heart will be also.

Jocelyn: Just think about all the decisions that are involved in applying a passage like that. You know, like...

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Don't store up this. Do store up that. Think about eternity, not about temporal stuff. So there's lots of decisions in anyone's life, but every decision has eternal impact. And so we need to be thinking about the importance of our decisions. And Mark 7:21 says, our decisions are determined by what's in our heart, and the result of our decisions will also affect what's in our heart.

Janet: Yeah.



Jocelyn: So the way you make decisions is a central part of your personal relationship with God. So it's important to think about.

Janet: So what do you think about, There's a variety of ways that people make decisions. What are some ways that maybe are common but that we should avoid?

Jocelyn: Great question. So we're gonna talk about biblical decision making by saying, here's how to not make decisions.

Janet: Can I first just say everything you're about to hear? I would probably be able to say there's been a time or two at least where I've done all of these things.

Jocelyn: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

Janet: And some people listening are gonna be thinking, I thought I was supposed to do it that way.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So we get that and that's why we want to talk about it. 'cause we would love to help you to be more confident about right ways.

Jocelyn: Yes. Yeah. So the first way how to not make a decision is to use selfish or sinful motives. And that's wrong because that is a way of the world. And, really what you're doing is just looking at, for you.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: You're looking at for number one and your primary question is, when I have to make a decision, what is best for me? And that is really just a needs theology. Our needs must be met before we can reach out to others. I remember when I went to my first psychology class when I was at Purdue. We learned this exact concept as a right way of thinking.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Like you can't make decisions for others until your own personal needs have been met first. So take care of yourself first so that you can take care of others. It's,

Janet: and now compare that to John 13.

Jocelyn: Yeah. It's totally unbiblical.

Janet: And Jesus at the last supper. Yeah. It's like who said I will do it all. Yeah.



Jocelyn: Yeah. And it, one of the reasons that it's bad is 'cause it's not considering what God wants and it's not considering what's best for other people. It's just focusing on what I can gain from this decision.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So we need to watch out for worldly motives like First John 2:16 says, and then Ephesians 5:8 through 10. It tells us carefully determine what pleases the Lord. We're not supposed to carefully determine what I want.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I mean, I'm pretty good at telling you what I want. I don't even have to think hard.

Janet: I don't even have to think hard.

Jocelyn: But if your primary focus is on yourself instead of the glory of God and the good, but others, you're definitely not gonna make good decisions, at least good in the long term.

Janet: So on that, I think that's really practical. 'cause I think first of all, people are gonna hear that and go, well, duh, I'm not supposed to make sinful decisions. I frequently hear this. I know that I'm being selfish, blah, blah, blah, blah. But what do you think I should do?

Jocelyn: Yeah. Not be selfish

Janet: and I'll say the first thing you have to do is get that log outta your eye. Or you cannot see clearly to make a good decision. So if you're not dealing with those selfish desires and repenting, you can't even tell yourself, I know it's there, but maybe I'll still have wisdom to make a good decision. I have to get the log out first.

Jocelyn: Yeah, totally. So the second way, how to not make a decision is to use superficial or whimsical methods. And what I mean by that is you're like, I don't know what to do, so I'm just gonna choose one of them. I'm not gonna agonize about it. I'm not gonna overthink it. I'm just gonna pick an option and go with it. Like, people flip a coin, do eenie meenie miny mo.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: And the reason that, I mean, this is very appealing. I wanna choose that way.

Janet: Oh, it would be so much easier.

Jocelyn: I had to make some super hard decisions this summer about my job, and I just wanted to do this. I was like, someone flip a coin and tell me what to do.



Janet: Yes. Skywriting.

Jocelyn: Right. The reason it's appealing is because it takes the onus of responsibility off of you. So you leave it up to fate and then if something goes wrong, well, it's not my problem. I didn't choose it. It chose me. Like, so one of the ways that Christians sometimes do this is by the flip point method of reading the Bible. Like, I need God's wisdom. What does God say? So you can flip and point. Which is really, really unwise because you could put your finger on a verse that is completely not God's will for what should be happening in your life.

Janet: Right, that's nothing to do with it.

Jocelyn: And just because it came from the Bible doesn't mean that that's what you should do.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Ephesians 5:15 through 17, are you willing to read that for us, Janet?

Janet: Sure.

Jocelyn: That passage teaches us that it's really not in God's will for us to lead a kind of a flippant life like that we're not supposed to be just superficial in the way that we live.

Janet: Pay careful attention then to how you live, not as unwise people, but as wise making the most of the time because the days are evil. So don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Jocelyn: That's so helpful, isn't it? It's foolish to make life decisions using chance. And here's why. God gave us a brain and he gave us his wisdom, and he wants us to use both of them.

Janet: You know, one thing we do have to at least acknowledge is that the scripture does talk about instances where people cast lots or in the Old Testament, the priest would have what they called the Urim and Thummim and he would use that to determine God's will. And they're in the Old Testament that is part of what God chose to use. Now we have the completed word of God.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: We have the Bible and Jesus never taught us to do that. We are to follow the principles that He's already given us.

Jocelyn: So especially now, new Testament believers are never commanded to use chance to make decisions.

Janet: That's right.



Jocelyn: Although we may have seen that happening in scripture either prescribed by the Lord by God with the Israelites using the Urim and Thummim. Or even just recorded instances where people did cast lots.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: But just because it's recorded does not mean it's prescriptive in the New Testament.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: A third method that is not a good way to make decisions is special revelation. And you know, I, bring this up tentatively because this is a prevalent method of making decisions in some quarters of Christianity today.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So what I mean by that is that someone believes God literally physically spoke to me in an audible way, or God sent a representative to convey his message to me like an angel appeared to me and told me what to do. And there are Christians who would not believe the same way that we do on this topic. I would like to be gracious.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: The bottom line is that, In special revelation, you believe that God is using some method other than the Bible to tell us something, and like what they received from God or his representative was something more personal and more specific than the commands and principles of scripture. So again, it's true that God did speak to humans in that way in the past. We can see it all over the Bible. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah. The reason it's different now is they didn't have the full written revelation of God like we do. God was still revealing truth to them and the canon of scripture wasn't complete. But now the canon of scripture is complete. God has revealed to us everything he wants us to know and reassuringly everything we need to know in order to live godly lives. And we can find that in the pages of the scripture.

Janet: Yeah, and I love how, I mean, he's told us that in a variety of ways. Hebrews one, I love this, where God addresses that long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. It's done. He spoke by his son.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And then we see in, think it's second Peter, that we have all we need.

Jocelyn: Yes. We don't need special revelation, Yes.



Janet: For life and godliness. Yep. So, God has made it clear that we now have all that we need.

Jocelyn: One quote from the book that I studied on this, that was really helpful to me was this. God does speak to us today, and he does so practically, personally, and always quite eloquently, but he does so through the written word of God, made understandable in our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit of God. And that is the only way he speaks today.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: A fourth way to not make decisions is to use supernatural signs, and that's really related to what we just talked about, special revelation, but it's a little different in that God sends a miraculous sign to show us what to do. It's like kind of like the equivalent of God speaking to the person,

Janet: but we're looking at a circumstance maybe,

Jocelyn: But we're, right, we're looking at a circumstance and specifically what it's talking about is that something is happening supernaturally.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So outside of the normal nature of things, So special revelation would be like saying, God said to me, go to the right, and a supernatural sign would be like something happening, pointing as an indicator that you should turn right.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: It's just a little shade different, but ultimately the source is extra biblical, which means I needed something more than the scriptures and a lot of people use this example, and I think if they understood the context, they would realize it is not a great example. So a famous Bible example is when Gideon put out the fleece, actually twice in Judges 6:36 through 40, instead of just believing what God had said. So in that time, God spoke, but what God had said is that Gideon was gonna deliver Israel from the Midianites if he would just obey God's commands. And so the fleece was either God will make my fleece, my sheepskin, all wet with a dew supernaturally when everything else was dry or the other way around.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Like God would make it dry when everything else. Both. Yeah. So he asked for both sides of it, but the reason he did that is 'cause he was scared. And he lacked the faith that God was gonna do what he had said he was gonna do.



Janet: And I think about that and if we think about, we said in other episodes when you read the scriptures, it's about God, man and God's plan. What do we learn about God from that? How gracious he is?

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: That he condescended to help a man weaken faith? Yes. What do we learn about this man? He was weak.

Jocelyn: He was weak.

Janet: can I relate? Yeah. So I look at that, this was not intended to teach biblical decision making.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: But it does show us the character of a gracious God.

Jocelyn: So just the other day someone said to me, so I put my fleece out, like that was a good thing. And I was like, Do you know, that's not a good example.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: That's like Cain saying, am I my brother's keeper? You are actually.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Don't be quoting a murderer, right? So when someone talks about using a fleece to make decisions, that is not a good way to do it. and the reason that there are problems with this is that that approach can be a disguise for our own sinfulness, or even just not thinking through it carefully. If you have received clarity from God's word, what your job is to do is to just trust it and obey it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And sometimes we want a supernatural sign 'cause God has clearly spoken against something and we really, we don't wanna obey it. We want to do.

Janet: We would like an exception.

Jocelyn: We would like an exception.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: So here's an example. I really wanna commit adultery with this hot guy at work. If God makes all the green leaves on the tree and my front yard turn brown overnight, it's a sign he's okay with it. Why is this wrong, Janet?

Janet: Because I've heard from God and he's not okay with it.

Jocelyn: He's not pro adultery.

Janet: He says it all over in his word.

Jocelyn: So you're asking for a supernatural sign, and often it's connected with a desire to not have to obey the Bible. So I need something extra. And also we believe that God doesn't use supernatural signs like that anymore. He did use supernatural signs in the scripture to indicate a couple of things, and one of them was the uniqueness of someone or something who was speaking for God verbally or through the writings of scripture, like it was meant to validate them.

Janet: Yes, it authenticated their message.

Jocelyn: Yes. But now that scripture is complete, there is no more need for supernatural signs.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: So here's a couple of methods about decision making that we should be wary about. They're not necessarily wrong, but we have to be really, really careful about how we use them. And the first one is discovering God's will. This one contains truth, but it's often misapplied. I hear this all the time. I'm just trying to find the will of God about this situation. I just wanna do whatever God's will is, which is commendable.

Janet: Absolutely.

Jocelyn: We want to do the will of God. We want to please God. But the reason this one gets a little blurry is 'cause they misunderstand what the Bible means by the will of God. So this is gonna be a little highfalutin theology. Bear with me. 'cause It will make it.

Janet: It matters.

Jocelyn: It matters. So let's discuss what the will of God means, quote unquote will of God. So the first thing it means is the sovereign will of God, which is sometimes called the secret or decree of will of God. And that basically means. God's pre-ordained purposes like he has planned from before the creation of the world, that this event will occur in the universe or in our lives. And the reason it's called the secret will of God. Can you guess why?

Janet: It's a secret?



Jocelyn: It's a secret. It's 'cause we can't, we cannot know ahead of time what God has planned will happen, except for times where prophecies were recorded in the scripture. That's make sure that's clear.

Janet: That's right. We believe the word.

Jocelyn: Isaiah 46:9 through 11 says His sovereign will is exhaustive and comprehensive, and it includes details as little as where a bird will fly, and even choices of individual people. It includes things like natural disasters and even the bad things that happen to people. One of my goals at some point is that we can do a recording of an episode on the providence of God.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Which really talks about this topic. It's very difficult to think about. Because it's just uncomfortable.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: It's uncomfortable to think that God knows even when people will sin. But Ephesians 1:11 summarizes it well he chose us in advance. There's things that he chose in advance. And the only, the literal only way that we can know the sovereign will of God is we can look backward and see that God has allowed something to happen. here's the thing. You cannot disobey the sovereign will of God. It's impossible.

Janet: God's plans will not be thwarted.

Jocelyn: It will not be thwarted. And so I think sometimes when people are looking to find God's will, what they want to know is what has God already decided will happen so that I can get on board with it. When we don't need to know what God has decided will happen in order to know how to make wise decisions.

Janet: right.

Jocelyn: We can know what the sovereign will of God is when we look back and see like this. The sovereign will of God was that I marry Brian 'cause I look back and I did marry him in fact.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: The sovereign will of God was that I have two daughters. I didn't have to think how many children should I have. The sovereign will of God was you will have two daughters. 'cause I look backward in my timeline and that's what he has allowed to happen. So the second kind of the will of God is called the moral will of God, which is sometimes called the revealed will of God. So this is not what he has planned to occur, but what he commands and what brings him



pleasure, it's the moral will expresses what should occur and what should occur is not always what does occur.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: So the will of God made known to men throughout the written word of God can be found in a whole bunch of passages like Psalm 40:8, Romans 2:17 and 18, Ephesians 5:17. But the moral will of God is something we can know. We can understand it ahead of time, and how do we know the moral will of God? We can look in the Bible and read that God has declared something is right and good for us. So you can't disobey the sovereign will of God. But you can disobey the moral will of God.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So let's talk about how people sometimes get in trouble making decisions by quote unquote, knowing the will of God. Sometimes I think we're trying to figure out what God is sovereignly decided will happen instead of just researching what God says should happen morally.

Janet: And let me give you an example. 'cause That's exactly right. And when you mentioned, you know God's sovereign will was that you married Brian.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: 'cause you're married and I have no reason to think it wasn't his moral will, but they're not always the same.

Jocelyn: No, they're not.

Janet: So I look at back when I was getting married, before I got married, no one wants to marry the quote unquote wrong person.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Well, how will I know? And I can remember 'cause I'd been, I was 28, so I was a little bit older and I can remember praying and saying, based on what I know from your word, Brent is the right kind of person.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: And here is additional wisdom, I've talked to people who didn't have rose colored glasses and want to marry him to find out what they believed of his character. I've seen him with a, so it's, I believe biblical decision-making that me marrying Brent was a God-honoring decision the



day that we married. I even said to the Lord, we got married at night. I believe this decision honors you. If it's not what you want, I know you can still stop it.

Jocelyn: Yes. Supernaturally yes. In any way.

Janet: So, But it was right for me to pursue it because it was within his moral will for me to pursue it. I didn't know whether or not it was his sovereign will till after we said I do.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Then I knew it was not only his moral will, but it was his sovereign will. But I'm not responsible for the other one.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Only the moral will. So I could with confidence, say, I believe he's the right kind. If he's not who you want me to marry, I know you can stop it. I also can be confident that this is within your moral will.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And so I can proceed confidently. But I won't know until after.

Jocelyn: And what's so interesting is I just said like the sovereign will of God was that I marry Brian, but you could have made a case that it was not the moral will of God. 'cause we were not living for the Lord and I, my number one way of making decisions was selfish or sinful motives.

Janet: And in God's good providence, he even worked through that.

Jocelyn: He even worked through that. So it was his sovereign will, but you could make a case that it was not his moral will because we did not love the Lord. We were not thinking about how to honor God. I was really, seriously only thinking about myself when we were going forward with plans. I was not a very self-sacrificial person in any way, but I can look back and say, Hey, it was God's sovereign will because look, it happened.

Janet: Here we are.

Jocelyn: And God has redeemed it.

Janet: Oh yes.

Jocelyn: It's beautiful and precious. So we should make decisions within both the limits and the freedom of God's revealed moral will. And what that means is limits definitely narrows down our choices. Like I can't do what God has forbidden, or what he said is evil.



Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So there's limits, but there's also freedom. There's not only one single right choice, there are lots of right choices and you have the freedom to choose from them, which I just really appreciate about God.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: He doesn't say in the Bible. Janet May only marry Brent, right? It said Janet May marry any godly man who is gonna lead her to follow his will better and to love him better. But it wasn't limited to just only the one person.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: Like there are many people, it could have been the moral will of God contains both commands and principles, but it often doesn't give us specific details. And we've done other podcast recordings about principles versus commands and how to think through that,

Janet: But I think it's uncomfortable.

Jocelyn: It is uncomfortable. The will of God, quote unquote, the will of God is not some precise personalized plan that you have to discover so you don't mess up God.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Which is very helpful to hear.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: The will of God is that you live according to his word, and there's often really huge freedom within the written, revealed, moral will of God when you're making decisions. Which is scary.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: It is scary 'cause you just wanna make the one right decision and don't make any bad decisions. But it's also so freeing to trust God. Like he's not gonna let you mess up his plan.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: It's not mess upable. Another method that we need to just be wary of is giving feelings and impressions and circumstances and counsel and desires too much authority. So sometimes Christians rely on God to give them like this certain feeling of peace or whatever, and it might be a method where you're hoping God will speak directly to us, but it includes like feeling like God



is calling me to do this, or God led me to, or I feel that God wants me to, or seeing things like open and closed doors or relying on the council of others to make the decision for us.

Janet: I think that's really important. 'cause I hear that with peace a lot.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Well, I have peace about this decision and I think, you know, if you look in scripture, I can't think of one time where I'm told peace is a biblical decision making tool.

Jocelyn: No, no, absolutely not.

Janet: So I should be careful and open and close doors. How do I know whether the door is open as a temptation from Satan?

Jocelyn: Exactly.

Janet: Or if it's closed and God wants me to kick it down. Like I don't know.

Jocelyn: Yeah, exactly. So what that means often is they had a strong impression or a feeling that they interpret as the disclosure of divine will, and Often really godly people don't actually mean, I believe God's revealing some new truth to me. But that is what that statement, kind of conveys is like he personally showed through these inner promptings or signs or feelings of peace or whatever what his will for my decision making is. So why is that dangerous?

Janet: You know, I think. It's more or less dangerous, depending on how tethered the person is to scripture. I have some precious people that we've talked to that would say, I know that this impression is from God, and when asked why, they'll say, because it's consistent with his word. I'm like, Oh, so it's really the word.

Jocelyn: You really are landing on the word. Yeah.

Janet: But I got this impression, you know, how do I know that that impression was not to take me a different direction? Or was not Satan putting an impression in? Or if I got an impression of a certain people group, does that mean God wants me to be missionary or does he want me to pray for them?

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Or does he want me to support a missionary or

Jocelyn: make that for supper or, yeah, like it could be anything.

Janet: Who knows? So to say, my anchor is the word of God.



Jocelyn: Right?

Janet: Otherwise, I could end up going places and really believe it's from the Lord, and it may not even be tethered description.

Jocelyn: And one, one reason that is difficult is when people make decisions using their feelings or impressions, and then it gets really, really tough then.

Janet: The doubts.

Jocelyn: It causes doubts

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: That are really difficult for their faith. And so the problem with using things like feelings or impressions or even circumstances, even the counsel or desires or listening to God through prayer, is when those things are given authority.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: In the decision making process. So like you just mentioned, someone could say, I have a strong feeling about this. And the reason they listen to it is because it matches the authority of scripture. But we're not, To give anything but God's word authority in our decision making. And the reason it's dangerous is because all of those things are subjective.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And like I've had very strong impressions about doing sinful things. Just because I had a strong impression about it doesn't mean I should then go do it. It was sinful. And so my feelings are very subjective, and scripture is black and white. It's objective. The commands of God stay the same for every single person who read them. They never change. And one of the reasons I love God's word is 'cause it's constant. When I say God told me or God revealed to me, the only valid context that I can use that in is when I'm reading God's word.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So I can't trust a feeling or an impression to be connected to the rightness or wrongness of a decision unless my conscience is really well trained by God's word. And that's just too subjective for me.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: I need to use my conscience trained by God's word to rely on God's word.



Janet: Yeah. So I can say I have this impression or thought or nudge or whatever.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: I don't know exactly why I have it, and I go to the word.

Jocelyn: I check it out that way,

Janet: and I'm not going to say God can't use that. What I can say is he's promised to use his word. That's where I'm gonna land.

Jocelyn: And the whole open door, closed door thing is really difficult for me as a counselor because just 'cause a door is open does not mean I should walk through it.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Who knows how that door got opened or why it's opened. Matthew 7:13 through 14 says, enter the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

Janet: And it's open.

Jocelyn: It's open, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those that find it are few. So I can see how someone says God allowed circumstances to happen in a way that what I thought was a godly plan was able to happen, and it seems like those are open doors, but often when God wants us to do something, it is hard and fraught with challenges

Janet: and I kick doors down

Jocelyn: and you have to kick doors down. it's also possible to seek counsel and to do that in a wrong way. So I, just wanna caveat this, like, I'm not saying never seek counsel, but I'm saying you could,

Janet: we are commanded to seek counsel,

Jocelyn: right? You could seek too little counsel or counsel from too few sources, or you could seek counsel where you know it's gonna be skewed.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So you could lean too heavily on counsel and you could expect too much from it. Like, You just want them to make the decision for you.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: It should help you think biblically so you can make a good decision.

Jocelyn: Yes. So the final one I wanted to kind of warn you of in this setting is relying on feelings of peace about a decision. And the reason it's in the second category, it's not outright wrong, but God does talk about peace being a part of our life in Philippians 4:7, and lots of other places. But the context of that passage is that our hearts and minds will be guarded with peace when we handle anxiety the correct way. So if you're anxious about making a decision and you apply Philippians four, correctly, you can expect to have God's peace guarding your heart and mind, even when you have to make a really controversial decision.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: But you're gonna probably still feel bad sometimes doing the right thing, but your heart and mind is gonna be guarded by God's peace. So having feelings of God's peace. That passage that is not the context of the passage for making decisions, that is the context of a passage for handling anxiety. So it is true. The Holy Spirit could bring something to mind or make an impression on your soul, but that's never gonna conflict with God's revealed will. And your ability to be tuned into that is gonna depend on how much your conscience has been trained by God's word. So you just have to be really cautious about. Using impressions 'cause it could just be our selfish thoughts, like we just don't know. So we're never commanded to tune into our inner thoughts or feelings or impressions and circumstances to make decisions, we are commanded to study scripture and to cultivate wisdom and discernment.

Janet: You know, you mentioned earlier that part of the reason that we might even want to flip a coin is. We don't wanna be responsible for the decision.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And so this is really, would go along with that one, but this is gonna sound odd, but I have talked to at least three people recently who use submission as a way to avoid feeling the weight of a decision.

Jocelyn: That's challenging,

Janet: which is interesting. And I can understand that we are commanded to submit to our authorities. That is good and right we do a whole session on it. You can listen to that episode, but when a person's been given the weight of a decision, We can even use, I want to submit as a way to convince myself it's scriptural when really I just don't want the weight of the decision.

Jocelyn: You just don't wanna make the decision.



Janet: When it's my decision to make. and this has happened, in all kinds of different circumstances, and I think it's just a reminder. I need to know my own heart. This is where counsel could be helpful. Don't go to them saying, what should I do, but help me think through my thoughts where they could say, that's not a submission issue. you need to make this decision in a way that would honor the Lord, trusting his sovereign will. You can't touch, and if what you're doing is within his moral will, you've already pleased him. He freedom. So again, knowing our motives is crucial.

Jocelyn: Yeah. So let's talk about how to make decisions biblically, and there are a couple of prerequisites the first one is just to walk in the spirit.

Janet: What does that mean?

Jocelyn: I know obviously it implies that you're born again. 'cause if you're not born again, you're dead and blind, but walking in the spirit will help you evaluate if your life is headed in a godly direction, like Philippians 3:12 through 14 says that passage says to press toward a goal. Like the goal is godliness It also implies that you haven't arrived and that you're in a process.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: And it implies that you're taking one step at a time. So confessing sin and having an attitude of just being willing to do whatever God wants you to do will really be helpful. So one of the questions you can ask yourself as you walk in the spirit is, am I willing to obey whatever I find that God wants me to do in the scripture? So I'm not trying to craft it to turn out a certain way. Whatever God says in the Bible, I will be willing to do it.

Janet: And I would add to that because I think walking in the spirit, we see it in scripture. We are to walk in the spirit. And I think then we get all mystical about that.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: How do I know if I'm walking in the spirit? Well, I think a few ways. One is, are you exhibiting the fruit of the spirit?

Jocelyn: Yeah, definitely.

Janet: 'cause that's what we're told in the same passage. But also, are you already doing. What you know God has commanded. Because if I have a track record of walking in the spirit, it will mean I have a track record of when the scriptures say something I have been doing this.

Jocelyn: Yes.



Janet: And if I haven't been living that way, I should not expect that I will suddenly have this wisdom for this decision.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: That should be how I've been living.

Jocelyn: I often pray that God would help me to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and one of the jobs of the Holy Spirit is to remind me of what the scripture says.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And so when

Janet: he gives us the grace to obey it,

Jocelyn: when I am reminded of what scripture says, my job is to obey it. So when I think of walking in the spirit, of being submissive to the spirit, I think when the Holy Spirit reminds me of scripture passages, I don't be like, yeah, but. Like,

Janet: I'm working on other areas right now.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I'm like, okay,

Janet: I need to do that.

Jocelyn: I, need to obey. Another prerequisite is that we recognize the sovereignty of God, and let me just tell you, this concept was very comforting to me as I learned to make decisions as a believer, as we make choices in life, you have to recognize that God's sovereignly controls everything, even the options you have in this choice. Yeah. And the way it's gonna end up, and the results

Janet: which crazy.

Jocelyn: And it's, blows my mind,

Janet: but I don't have to be able to figure it out. But it's true.

Jocelyn: Right? So I can have the freedom to make choices, but I don't get to decide how those choices end up affecting my life. My choices don't have more power than God's sovereignty.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Which is very comforting. I cannot possibly mess God's plan up. it helps if I make decisions and plans with a strong sense of if, if the Lord wills. And I, realized a couple of years



ago, like I need to say Lord willing more often than I do because sometimes I'm like, this is what I will be doing. And I'm like, why was God not on board? Yeah.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So as I make decisions, I'm thinking God's sovereignty gives me hope. I can't mess up the plan.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: God is using everything for good, even my own decisions and I can trust him.

Janet: Yeah. And I can make a God-honoring plan within his moral will and know that I've pleased him in that. And then if he changes it in his sovereign will. I can please him in how I respond to that.

Jocelyn: Exactly. Yeah. It's also gonna make you really happy. As you settle into God's really good control over you, you're gonna have way less reasons to be anxious. Yeah. So Romans 11:33 says, oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge? How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways, it must be concluded. God is doing something amazing in your life. You are responsible for choices, but you cannot mess up God's sovereign plan for you and praise God. What he decides is always for our good. We also need to have the prerequisite of praying for wisdom, not praying for direct revelation, but just praying that we would have God's wisdom. I would understand his word better.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So that I can see how to apply it into my practical life. And that's just gonna help you to see like, hey, he loves me. He gave me his word to give me a good life. And so when I'm using it to make decisions, it's a something to be happy about.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So let's talk about the principles of biblical decision making. The first one is just saturate yourself in scripture in order to be wise. Second Timothy 3:16 and 17. And second Peter 1:3 say, it's just really, really important that scripture be what you're thinking about.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: God doesn't speak to every issue, but he does teach us everything we need to know about how to make good decisions. there is just a really cool quote. I'll read a little portion of it. From the book that I read, decisions, decisions, it says The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its



doctrine is holy. Its precepts binding. Its histories are true, its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise. Believe it to be safe and practice it to be holy. It's just this awesome quote.

Janet: Love it.

Jocelyn: That says the word of God is what you need. The more you're soaking in the word of God, the more easy it will be for you to make decisions that honor God. Another quote from that book is from Jay Adams, and it says, the Bible is called God's Law or Torah. The word Torah comes from a figure that means To thrust out the finger in order to point the way. So it says it all. Scripture is God's way of guidance. Love it. So wisdom is just knowing what the word says and having an ability to apply it in your actual life. So we can know stuff about God, that's knowledge. But to apply what God says, that's wisdom.

Janet: Oh, I love that. And the more my mind is oriented to God and his ways, the more inclined I am to wise decision making. It makes me think of the quote you said at the beginning when we don't always have time.

Jocelyn: Yep.

Janet: If I've been growing in this, I am going to want what he wants, and I'm gonna look at things through a biblical lens with the big picture in mind, and my decisions will reflect that.

Jocelyn: So the second part of the principles is just to seek wise, balanced, mature, and godly counsel to make sure you're not missing blind spots, not to have them make your decision.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: But just to make sure they trained by God's wisdom, not given to extremes tested over time and consistent with God's character. They're just helping you see bigger than you might be seen on that topic,

Janet: which I think is really valuable for when I'm asking. I know that's what I'm asking for, not what should I do, but also when people, ' people ask me frequently, what do you think I should do? And you know what? I have a lot of thoughts.

Jocelyn: You always have opinions.

Janet: I have thoughts. I know exactly what I think you should do, but that's not the best way. So for those of us being asked, even if they ask you that, if I want to be mature and godly in my counsel, I will not tell them do this unless the scripture say.

Jocelyn: You should do. Unless its black and white.



Janet: You should not commit adultery. I'm going to tell you that. But otherwise, am I helping them? What's going on in your heart? You know, you have a tendency, is your idol affecting you? So I'm helping them think big picture.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So that they can be confident in their decision. So I think that as the one asking, I should ask for that and as the one giving it, that's what I should give.

Jocelyn: I've been learning a lot with my now adult children.

Janet: Adult children. You know, you learn a lot, don't you?

Jocelyn: I know, I do. I, this is.

Janet: Me too.

Jocelyn: This has, I've tried to make this my first answer. When they say, what do you think I should do? I say, What do you think you should do?

Janet: And they're like, ma, you should tell me.

Jocelyn: So I feel like we're finally at the process of biblical decision making. And you're gonna hear it and you're gonna be like, that's it. That's it. Yeah. What a letdown. You built up to this big point and okay, here's what you do. The process of biblical decision making is to examine what the scripture says about that topic. So is there a passage that speaks directly to it? And if there is your answer is to obey it.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: The Bible has instant and ultimate authority in our lives, so you can be confident if God has said something about this, the best thing for you to do is to obey it. But there's other, things you can consider. Like are there principles that apply to this topic? What does the Bible say about my motives in this matter?

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And is my conscience clear about it? second part of the process, think carefully through multiple righteous choices that you have the freedom to choose between. In most situations, it's not like there's gonna be a bunch of wrong and right choices to consider In most situations, it's just gonna be a lot of righteous choices to choose between.

Janet: Yep.



Jocelyn: And so you have incredible freedom within the revealed will of God to make choices. Enjoy that freedom. Just decide what is best for you. God reveals all the guidelines you need to know to make good decisions. And in many cases, he grows our christlikeness through the deciding process.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: As we use his wisdom and evaluate our desires. So the Bible teaches us that whatever choice we make, as long as there's nothing unscriptural about it. It will be pleasing to God and a part of his plan for our lives,

Janet: which I think surfaces is my goal to please God or is it to make the decision that will be most comfortable for me.

Jocelyn: Yes. Yes.

Janet: If it's to please God, I can do it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: If it's to know what the outcome that it's gonna be the most comfortable or the easiest. I'm asking for something I can't know, and it's also revealing my heart.

Jocelyn: Absolutely. One Corinthians six and 10 also talk about using our liberties and freedoms to serve God and others and to not serve yourself. So there's that one little caveat. You do have incredible freedom, but we are commanded to restrict our freedoms to serve other people.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: So it's not, again, it's not a self-centered and selfish motive. The third part of the process is just to ask yourself what is wise and what is loving. One Corinthians 10:23 says, all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. And one Corinthians 16:14 says, let all that you do be done in love. So there's from a practical point of view, like this is the nitty gritty where I spend a lot of my time when I'm helping people. There are lots of tools you can use to think through choices.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Like you can do a pros and cons list. You can do a choices and consequences examination. You can get all the information you can, and if you can't get information, then you can apply the holding principle. You can seek counsel, you can pray. All the tools are there just to help you think what is wise, what's the application of scripture and what is loving?



Janet: My husband has said many times, and I think there's a lot of truth, that if you're at that part, and you're trying to think, okay, I know now that these are not wrong options. So within these options, what would be wise here? What would be loving? And you're completely paralyzed. Not always. Frequently, you don't have enough information.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: So instead of just spinning what information might help me know that. And I may need to get more information and that's where council might help me.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: 'cause it might be like, well, do you know this? Do you know this? Do you know? Oh. And a lot of things and then it gets clearer.

Jocelyn: I think our paralysis sometimes is rooted in fear. Like yes, we don't know enough Right. To know how to think about that situation accurately.

Janet: And it could be just fear, 'cause I don't know the future, but a lot of times it's fear 'cause I just don't know enough.

Jocelyn: Yeah. So in the event that you've got multiple right choices to choose from, this is where you have the freedom to just ask yourself, what do I actually want to do what appeals to me

Janet: do I like the red car or the blue car?

Jocelyn: I know God's directing each of us to do his will, but the cool thing is that God is simultaneously actually making us desire to do his will when we're walking in step of the Holy Spirit.

Janet: Amazing.

Jocelyn: I love Philippians 2:13, for it's God who works in us both to will and to work according to his good pleasure. That is so comforting.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: He is working inside of me to want to do the very things he wants me to do. So our desire shouldn't be given authority, but they should be considered in a case where there's not a commandment on that topic. God wants us to enjoy life. He is the source of all joy and he allows our righteous decisions to also bring us joy. So Psalm 16:11, you don't have to choose what you hate, just 'cause you think it's gonna be the most godly choice. God's choices what is consistent with his will does not equal your discomfort and unease and hatred, like you don't have to eat the vegetables because you think it's the most healthy. Like people do that like they do what they



think is yuckiest because it's gonna be best for them. God doesn't do decisions like that. Well, obviously the one that I hate the most is the one that's the most Godly.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: No, God gives us incredible freedom to make choices that are consistent with his will. So take into consideration the way God made you and what connects with you, what your strengths and weaknesses are and what your interests are. God has a vast amount of freedom within his moral, revealed Will,

Janet: and I will give a caveat to that. Because for those people living out of their idolatry.

Jocelyn: Oh yeah.

Janet: God's will is very uncomfortable. And it seems miserable. Because it's not about me, it's about God. So I think recognizing this is what you said at the end of the process, we've already dealt with that heart.

Jocelyn: At the end. Yes.

Janet: 'cause if I don't deal with the heart that says, I need to know that whatever happens, nothing bad will hurt me.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Then God's way may not be attractive to me,

Jocelyn: yes. When I At least not attractive yet.

Janet: Yes. But when I've recognized his way is better.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: He loves me better. My idolatry is what's killing me. When I can get to that point, and then I think, okay, among these options that all bring glory to God, they're all wise from what I can tell. they were all ways to love God and love others. I get to just do what I want.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: It's is pretty cool.

Jocelyn: It's so exciting. it's just great to be reminded of the first quote that we read. There's no such thing as a small decision. each decision leads to a future decision. So all decisions are



important. All of our choices are threads and the fabric of our future. That's why we need to learn how to make good decisions.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: And I think one of the reasons I wanted to talk about this is that I have someone that I love that is a big part of my life, who was paralyzed by decision making for decades.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: I just don't wanna see people, the people of God living in that paralyzed way.

Janet: They don't have to stay there.

Jocelyn: You don't have to stay there. And that's not how God wants your life to look like you're constantly wondering if you've made the wrong decision and if he's mad at you, and if other people are mad at you. And that's not freedom. God freed us from sin to be free to live within His will, in His revealed will. So I just would really love for people to be able to think through how to make decisions in a way that is helpful and not enslaving in their future.

Janet: Excellent. And if they want more on it, the book that we mentioned, Dave Swavely book Decisions Decisions would be another resource that we would recommend.

Jocelyn: Yep. It's a great resource.

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