

The Gatekeepers of Calling

intro

Col 1.9-12

- In seeking to discern the will of God, we need to talk not just about the 'how', but also the 'who'.
- What personal factors exist that can enable me to better discern God's will? How do I become more discerning? How do I get postured to hear the voice of God?

▶ prerequisites ... the beautiful letdown

- what the guidance counselor does with your 'passion for pediatrics'.
- what God says about your 'desire to know his will.'
- both of them have established gatekeepers to keep you on track.
- the process may not always be fun, but it trains & prepares us for the day we get to 'live out' the passion stirring inside of us.

humility: the learning environment

God's wisdom makes children of us all

"The foolishness of God is wiser than men." –Apostle Paul

- The critical assumption: God knows more than we do.
- When we listen to kids 'theorize' about life, we're probably hearing something of what we can sound like when we interact with God.

▶ three categories of people

- people who have an idea of what God is calling them to in a category.
- people who don't.
- people who *think* they do, but are in for a surprise.

gatekeeper 01: sonship

Prov 9.10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

- The first question, not surprisingly, is the God-question.
- God is the bottom, the center, and the goal of all things.

Col 1:16-18 “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

- The person who recognizes this and lives His life pursuing the ultimate call to glorify and enjoy God is what we call a *Christian*.

Rom 8.14-17

- Practically, this activity of the Holy Spirit is utterly essential for our stability.
- This ‘witness’ instills confidence, reminds us of provision, and promises guidance.

▶ Are you a Christian?

gatekeeper 02: wisdom

Prov 4.7-9

Eph 5.15-17 (also Col 1.9-10; Phil 1.9-11)

- Paul’s exhortation: don’t live an unexamined life.
- Wisdom hems us in, and gives us boundaries.

“What is wisdom? ... The word can be used in different ways, but I believe that wisdom is the moral skill to understand and apply the commandments of God to situations and people. It is the ability to connect the principle to the application. It particularizes and personalizes the will, priorities, and preferences of God... Wisdom is not intelligence or a vast store of factual information. It is not cleverness at obtaining one’s goals. It is the ability to apply in life the character and purposes of God.... In that sense, attaining it is the highest goal in life (Prov 3.13-15; 4.7-9)” –James C. Petty, *Step By Step*, p.144

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“From a biblical perspective, wisdom is ... miraculous. In this marvelous work, God progressively transforms sinners to think like himself, with God’s priorities, sensitivities, agenda, and love.” –James C. Petty, *Step By Step*, p.149

Prov 14.8 “The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.”

bloopers, blunders, & wisdom out-takes

- God's will for us is that we learn from His Word and from the experience and wisdom of others and not 'try our own hand and see what happens.'
- Wisdom urges patience and prudence.

Prov 14.15 "A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps."

Prov 22.3 "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it."

Prov 12:15 "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice."

Prov 14:12 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

- Wisdom doesn't offer shortcuts. It is *not* microwavable.

gatekeeper 03: submission

Jn 7.17 "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

- God does not give discernment for 'consideration', but for action.

▶ **Submission grows best ...**

- in the soil of humility.
- fertilized & watered by a growing confidence in the sovereignty of God.
- warmed in the sunlight of the truth that God is for us.

Is. 43.5 "Fear not: for I am with you."

Matt 7:9-11 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

▶ **But what if the son, in his ignorance, asks for the snake?**

- we beg God to do 'x', not realizing that we are asking for a 'snake'. And God, in His goodness, denies it to us.

- A heart of submission chooses to do God's will b4 knowing all the specifics.

gatekeeper 4: faith

Acts 20.22-24

"Faith means believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse." – Phillip Yancey

- Faith calls us to a life of adventure, not a scripted drama that we've pre-read and pre-approved.

"Whatever You have for me ... *as long as ...*"

vs.

"I'm ready to ride. Where we goin?!"

- 100% certainty is a myth that dies hard ... Faith invites us over the ledge.
- There comes a time when to do anything but **act** in faith is disobedience.

"Many people believe they must be 100% certain of God's will before they make a decision. I can understand their thinking. After all, if you are facing a life-changing decision – a potential marriage, a cross-country move, a new career, which college to attend, whether or not to begin chemotherapy – you'd like to know in advance beyond any doubt that you are doing what God wants you to do. There are two problems with this point of view. First, sometimes we think we know God's will with 100% certainty only to find out later that we were mistaken. The other problem – which is more common for most believers – is that in our search for certainty about God's will, we end up paralyzed by an inability to make up our minds.... Did Noah know all about the Flood? No, but he built the ark anyway. Did Abraham have a road map? No, but he left Ur of the Chaldees anyway." –Ray Pritchard, *Discovering God's Will For Your Life*, p.42-43

John 20.24-29 "Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my

hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- The good news is that in the midst of all of this, we are hemmed in by the sovereign goodness of God who, though He allows us at times to make foolish decisions and reap the consequences, will eventually see to it that "all things work together for good" and that we are, on that final day, fully "conformed to the image of His Son"! [brings us right back to our ULTIMATE CALL!]