

Lesson 22: Decision Making and Gray Areas

Introduction:

Assumptions:

1. In your _____ you want to make good decisions that glorify God.
2. The Bible doesn't speak _____ to your issue.
3. You're willing to _____, if necessary.

I. What is God's Will for My Life?

Theologians refer to two wills within God, which come from careful _____:

God's _____ will.

God's _____ will.

A. _____

2 Peter 3:9: *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not **wishing** that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

B. _____

Ephesians 5:17-18: *Therefore do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...*

C. _____

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4: *For **this is the will of God**, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor...*

D. _____

1 Peter 2:13-15: *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For **this is the will of God**, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.*

- E. _____
Luke 12:47: *And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.*
- F. _____
2 Corinthians 8:5: *and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by **the will of God** to us.*
- G. _____
Romans 12:1-2: *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is **the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- H. _____
1 Peter 4:19: *Therefore let those who suffer **according to God's will** entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*
- I. _____
1 Thessalonians 5:18: *... give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Psalm 37:4 *"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."*

II. How do I make decisions on things not addressed directly in Scripture?

A. Ten methods and motives to be cautious of:

1. Drawing straws, coin flips, rock-paper-scissors
2. Seeking after signs ("a song came on")
3. Waiting on the Lord
4. Open and closed doors
5. Conscience
6. Counsel and advice from others
7. Peaceful feeling
8. Fasting
9. Being called or "made for this"
10. Arbitrary, haphazard

B. Ten helpful questions to ask:**1. What is the most _____ thing to do?**

1 Corinthians 13:1, 13: *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal... So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

2. What is most _____ to God?

2 Corinthians 5:9: *So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

3. Can I legitimately _____ God for this?

Colossians 3:17: *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

4. _____ ?

1 John 2:6: *whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

5. Will this _____ or _____ my spiritual growth? (or in my family, friends, etc.)

1 Corinthians 6:12a: *"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful.*

6. Is this something that will/might _____ me?

1 Corinthians 6:12b: *"All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.*

7. Will it cause another brother to _____?

1 Corinthians 8:13: *Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. (cf. also Rom 15:1-2; 1 Cor 10:33)*

8. Which is the most effective for God's _____, and for His _____?

1 Corinthians 10:31: *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

9. Which is the best use of the _____ God has given me?

Matthew 25:14-30: Parable of the Talents

10. Which promotes the most _____ in the body of Christ?

Ephesians 4:1-3: *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

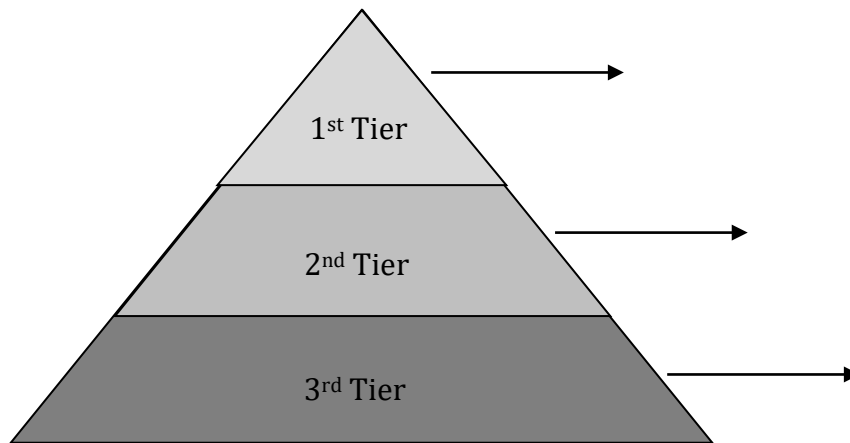
III. **What Part Does my Conscience Play?**

A. **What is the conscience? (Rom 14; 1 Cor 8-10)**

1. Misconceptions:
2. Definition: the inward sense of what I believe to be _____ and _____.
3. See Appendix A
 - a. What it can be:
 - b. What it can do:

B. **How does it relate to objective right and wrong?**

1. The conscience is reserved for determining right and wrong in a given situation, not _____.
2. It is utilized when you determine how to put commands and principles into _____.
3. It is based on moral standards that you hold as you seek to apply Scripture to 2nd and 3rd tier issues.



C. Can it ever be incorrect?

1. _____. No one's moral standards perfectly align with God's moral standards.
2. At times, your conscience will _____ or _____ you when it shouldn't (Rom 2:15).

D. Can it be calibrated? If so, how?

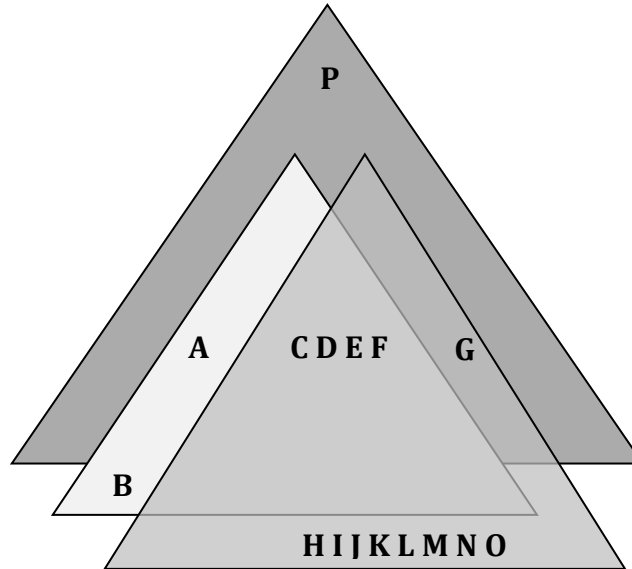
1. Yes. Just as a scale or watch can be misleading, and must be recalibrated to a perfect standard, so must our consciences be calibrated to the perfect standard of _____.
2. Every soft heart that _____ and _____ sits under the teaching/preaching of the Word will naturally begin to be calibrated.

E. What does the Bible mean when it says that someone has a weak conscience?

1. What "weak" *does not* mean:
2. What "strong" *does not* mean:
3. What "weak" *does* mean:
...resulting in more rules (less freedom).
4. What "strong" *does* mean:
...resulting in less rules (more freedom).

5. While a strong conscience is obviously more desirable, both can _____ glorify God with what they have at their disposal (knowledge of the Word, opportunities in life, etc.).

F. How do I interact with someone else's conscience?



1. _____ your own conscience when you are fully persuaded it is right (Rom 14:5, 14, 23).
2. _____ your conscience to God's will, always being willing to calibrate it if it's off.
3. _____ others who differ without despising, judging, or forcing them to conform to your views.

Appendix A

συνείδησις (syneidēsis): translated as 'conscience' in NT occurs 30x:

- 2x in Acts
- 20x in Paul's letters
- 5x in Hebrews
- 3x in 1 Peter

Note also the words appearing with 'conscience' in these verses (*italicized*).

1. **Acts 23:1** "And looking intently at the council, Paul said 'Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all *good conscience* up to this day."

2. **Acts 24:16** "So I always take pains to have a *clear conscience* toward both God and man."

3. **Romans 2:15** "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their *conscience* also *bears witness*, and their conflicting thoughts *accuse* or even *excuse* them."

4. **Romans 9:1** "I am speaking the truth in Christ - I am not lying; my *conscience bears me witness* in the Holy Spirit."

5. **Romans 13:5** "Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also *for the sake of conscience*."

6. **1 Corinthians 8:7** "However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their *conscience*, being *weak*, is *defiled*."

7. **1 Corinthians 8:10** "For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be *encouraged*, if his *conscience* is *weak*, to eat food offered to idols?"

8. **1 Corinthians 8:12** "Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ."

9-10. **1 Corinthians 10:25, 27** "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question *on the ground of conscience*...If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question *on the ground of conscience*."

11-13. **1 Corinthians 10:28-29** "But if someone says you, 'This has been offered in sacrifice,' then do not eat it, *for the sake of* the one who informed you, and for the sake of

conscience - I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be *determined* by someone else's conscience?"

14. **2 Corinthians 1:12** "For our boast is this, the *testimony* of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you."

15. **2 Corinthians 4:2** "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would *commend ourselves* to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."

16. **2 Corinthians 5:11** "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is *known* also to your conscience."

17. **1 Timothy 1:5** "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a *good conscience* and a sincere faith."

18. **1 Timothy 1:19** "...holding faith and a *good conscience*. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith."

19. **1 Timothy 3:9** "They must hold the mystery of the faith with a *clear conscience*."

20. **1 Timothy 4:2** "... through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are *seared*."

21. **2 Timothy 1:3** "I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a *clear conscience*, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day."

22. **Titus 1:15** "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are *defiled*."

23. **Hebrews 9:9b** "According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot *perfect* the conscience the worshiper."

24. **Hebrews 9:14** "... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, *purify* our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. "

25. **Hebrews 10:2** "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer *have* any consciousness of sins?"

(This is the first of two times in the New Testament that *syneidēsis* means merely "consciousness" (in the sense of "awareness") rather than moral consciousness" or "conscience.")

26. **Hebrews 10:22** "... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an *evil conscience* and our bodies washed with pure water."

27. **Hebrews 13:18** "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a *clear conscience*, desiring to act honorably in all things."

28. **1 Peter 2:19** "For this is a gracious thing, when, *mindful* [NIV: 'conscious'] of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly."

(The second of the two times in the New Testament that *syneidēsis* means merely "consciousness" (in the sense of "awareness") rather than "moral consciousness" or "conscience.")

29. **1 Peter 3:16** "...having a *good conscience*, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

30. **1 Peter 3:21** "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a *good conscience*, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Recommended Books:

- Christopher Ash, *Discovering the Joy of a Clear Conscience*
- Andrew Naselli & JD Crowley, *Conscience*
- Kevin DeYoung, *The Art of Turning*
- William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise on the Conscience*