

*What am I  
supposed to do?*

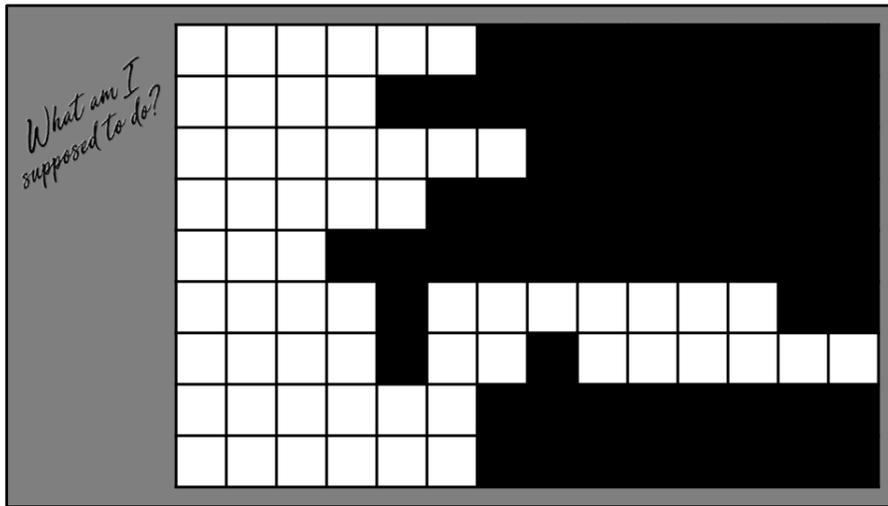
PRACTICAL, PERSONAL, BIBLICAL ETHICS

1

**READ SLIDE**

- That's the question often asked of me.
- Sometimes people know what to do but they don't know how.
- But other times folks really just don't know what God's will is.

**TR: And what they want is clarity.**



2

**For many it feels like a crossword puzzle that includes words that they never use . . .**

**-- . . . or words they've never even heard of.**

**-- This summer, during my opportunities to preach, spread through June, early July, and August, we will be seeking answers to that question . . .**

**-- "What am I supposed to do?"**

**-- We'll deal with end of life issues, beginning of life issues, healthcare issues.**

**-- We'll explore questions about the sabbath and other OT laws.**

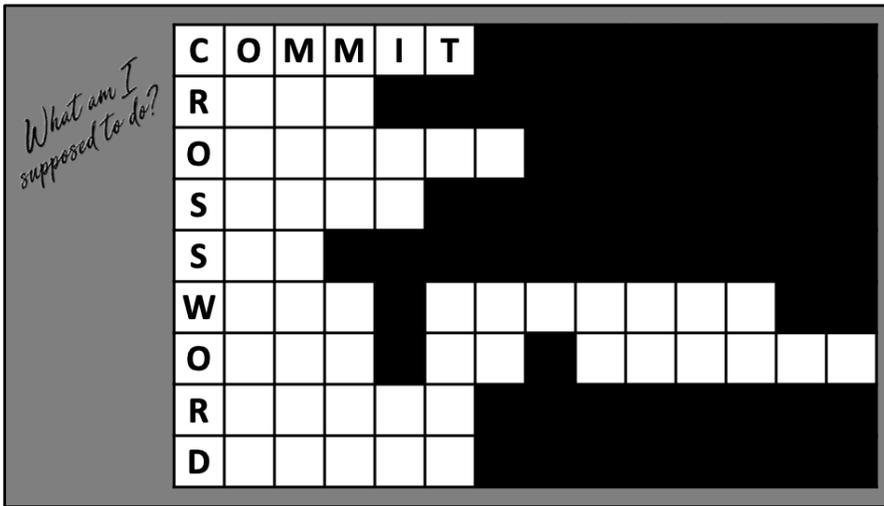
**-- We'll tackle sexual and gender issues.**

**-- We'll give you a chance to submit your honest questions.**

**TR: Today, we start with the most basic question of practical ethics . . . answering the question . . . What am I supposed to do?**

**. . .**





4

## COMMIT

**TR: If we really want the will of God, we must first accept that the overall message of the Bible is that we turn to God through Jesus.**

**2 Peter 3:8-9**

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup>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.**

*ESV*

5

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: God wants us all to reach repentance. It is the “desired will of God” that we not perish but receive the salvation offered to us.**

*What am I supposed to do?*

**C O M M I T**

**the desired  
will of God**

**COMMIT ourselves  
to God and His will  
by turning away from our sin  
and trusting Jesus Christ's work  
through His life, death,  
resurrection, ascension, and  
coming again for our salvation.**

6

**Seeking clarity on the will of God begins by . . . READ SLIDE  
-- If we are unwilling to make this first step, then we really can't  
make any progress in understanding What God wants us to do in  
other specific situations.**

**TR: The second word is . . .**



**Romans 8:28**

**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**

*ESV*

8

**But resting in God's sovereignty.**

**-- For those who have taken step one, COMMIT, we can know that we have been called according to God's purpose.**

**-- Therefore, we can REST in knowing that God is great enough to cause ALL things to work together.**

**TR: This is what theologians call the "decreed will of God."**

*What am I supposed to do?*

R E S T

*the decreed  
will of God*

**REST** in the assurance  
that God, who gave us Jesus,  
will give us all we need for life  
and godliness.

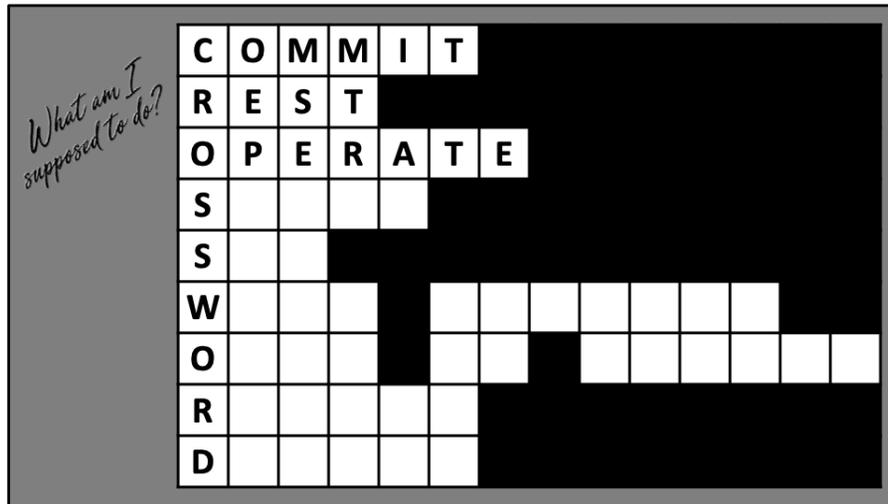
**Don't panic but trust  
in His sovereign control.**

9

**Instead of anxiety and fear, mixed with worry and concern, we  
can . . . READ SLIDE**

- EX: "God takes care of His little idiots. And I'm the chief idiot."**
- Not running people down, but acknowledging that there is so  
much we don't know, can't know, don't want to know.**

**TR: The third word on the CROSSWORD path is . . .**



10

## OPERATE

- This phrasing comes from the little booklet I wrote about “How to Live as a Christian.”
- That booklet uses the A E I O U acronym to help us remember that need the Holy Spirit’s filling every day.
- The letters stand for: Affirm, Expect, Inspect, Operate, and Use.

TR: Operate in the Spirit in the Scriptures would be presented as “filled with the Spirit”.

**Ephesians 5:15-18**

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, **but be filled with the Spirit,**

*ESV*

11

**READ SLIDE**

-- Elsewhere it is described as walking in the Spirit OR keeping in step with the Spirit

TR: After making the once and forever decision of COMMIT-ting our lives to Christ, we must then daily REST in God's watch-care and . . .

*What am I supposed to do?*

O P E R A T E

*the daily  
will of God*

**OPERATE**  
in the power of the Holy Spirit  
by being filled with the Spirit.  
The Spirit's filling is crucial  
to our being "sanctified"  
(made holy).

12

... choose to ... **READ SLIDE**

-- This is part of the "daily will of God" for us as Jesus' disciples.

**TR: The pathway to knowing what we are supposed to do ... that is, what God would have us do ... then takes us to the fourth word ...**



**2 Timothy 2:15**

**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.**

*ESV*

14

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: A chapter later we are told why we need to handle the word of truth well . . .**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

*ESV*

15

**Because . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- If we want to be complete and equipped, we must study God's Word, His written revelation to us.**

**TR: This is how we gain clarity on the moral will of God.**

*What am I supposed to do?*

**S T U D Y**

**STUDY** the **moral will of God**,  
as revealed in the inspired Word of  
God, the Bible.

Most decisions in life have a strong  
moral component to them and it is  
this foundation of study that will  
help you make the right choices.

16

**We are to . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: But it is not enough to know what the Bible says on some topic. The next two words provide a path that keeps us from becoming like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, whom He criticized so strongly.**



**1 Corinthians 2:14**

The natural person does **not accept the things of the Spirit of God**, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

*ESV*

18

Those who haven't committed themselves in faith to Jesus are "natural people."

-- That's not a good thing, not something like "organic" or "authentic."

-- But the contrast is with someone who is "spiritual."

-- Let's read verses 14-16 . . . READ SLIDE

TR: (Verse 15)

**1 Corinthians 2:15-16**

The spiritual person judges all things,  
but is himself to be judged by no one.  
<sup>16</sup>"For who has understood the mind  
of the Lord so as to instruct him?" **But  
we have the mind of Christ.**

*ESV*

19

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: So, to SIT means . . .**

*What am I supposed to do?*

S I T

**SIT**  
and seek the Spirit's help  
to welcome the truth  
of God's Word  
into your life.

20

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: I said that there are two steps that keep us from being hypocrites who cannot know and do the will of God.**



**James 1:22-24**

But **be doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup>For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

*ESV*

22

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: (verse 25)**

**James 1:25**

**But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but **a doer who acts**, he will be blessed in his doing.**

*ESV*

23

**READ SLIDE**

**-- How silly to be someone who looks in the mirror and sees that their hair is all messed up or that they have a milk moustache. and then does nothing about it.**

**TR: After we have studied God's Word and sat under the Spirit's leadership to know how it applies to today, we must . . .**

*What am I supposed to do?*

W O R D    A P P L I E D

Make sure that  
God's WORD is APPLIED  
so that you are not hindering  
your fellowship with God  
through disobedience.  
Practical application of the  
truth will answer many of your  
questions in decision making.

24

## READ SLIDE

- We need to “do the next right thing.”
- Why would the Lord show us the seventh right thing to do when we won't do “the next right thing?”

TR: Failure to do what He has made clear hinders our fellowship with God. I'm not talking about doing the wrong things, that obviously breaks fellowship.

**James 4:17**

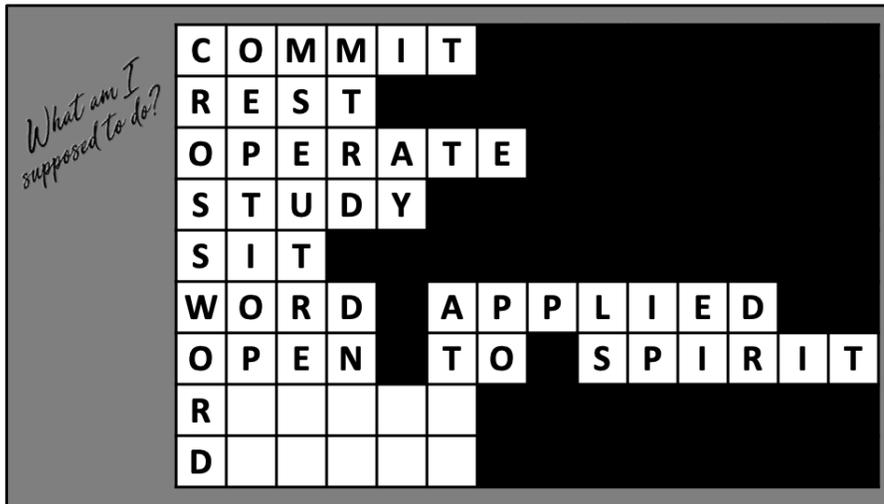
**So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.**

*ESV*

25

**I'm talking about when we know the right thing to do and don't do it . . . that is sin as well.**

**TR: This impacts the next step . . .**



**. . . being open to the Spirit.**

**-- When we don't apply what God has made clear to us in His Word, then we sin.**

**-- Sin breaks the fellowship with have with the Spirit.**

**-- Yet many of us imagine that it really doesn't have an impact and we continue to be open to the Spirit's leading, setting ourselves up to be fooled by the devil or our sinful flesh.**

**-- LIKE many marriages that just ignore "small problems" and imagine that losing even a bit of the judgment of charity doesn't matter . . . so we imagine that our "little sins" don't impact our ability to walk in step with the Spirit.**

**-- Wherever we got off the freeway of God's will, is the same exit that we have to get back on.**

**-- If we imagine that we just change churches or spouses and move on . . . we are sadly mistaken.**

**TR: To be OPEN TO the SPIRIT we must understand . . .**

*What am I supposed to do?*

O P E N   T O   S P I R I T

In the uncertain areas  
(which the Bible does not  
directly address),  
we must be  
**OPEN** to the **SPIRIT**  
to lead us.

27

## **READ SLIDE**

-- If the Bible addresses something, the Spirit Who inspired the Bible, will not contradict that.

**TR: But open to the Spirit means we realize that God . . .**

*What am I supposed to do?*

**O P E N   T O   S P I R I T**

He often reveals His will in times of prayer, fasting, and waiting upon Him (individually and with other believers). We must weigh what we believe is His leading with the teaching of God's Word.

28

**READ SLIDE**

- This leading of the Spirit does not have the same definitive authority, especially for the actions of others, as does God's Word, the Bible.
- That's why we must weigh this leading against the Word.

**TR: But we must not freeze the Holy Spirit out of our lives. As is portrayed throughout the book of Acts, the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit is why it was better that Jesus ascend to heaven.**

**Acts 13:2**

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

*ESV*

29

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Three chapters later . . .**

**Acts 16:6-7**

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been **forbidden by the Holy Spirit** to speak the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup>And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.**

*ESV*

30

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: And later again . . .**

**Acts 20:22-23**

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, **constrained by the Spirit**, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup>except that **the Holy Spirit testifies to me** in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

*ESV*

31

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Being open to the Spirit can be a bit tricky.**



**1 Thessalonians 5:19-22**

**Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise prophecies, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast what is good. <sup>22</sup>Abstain from every form of evil.**

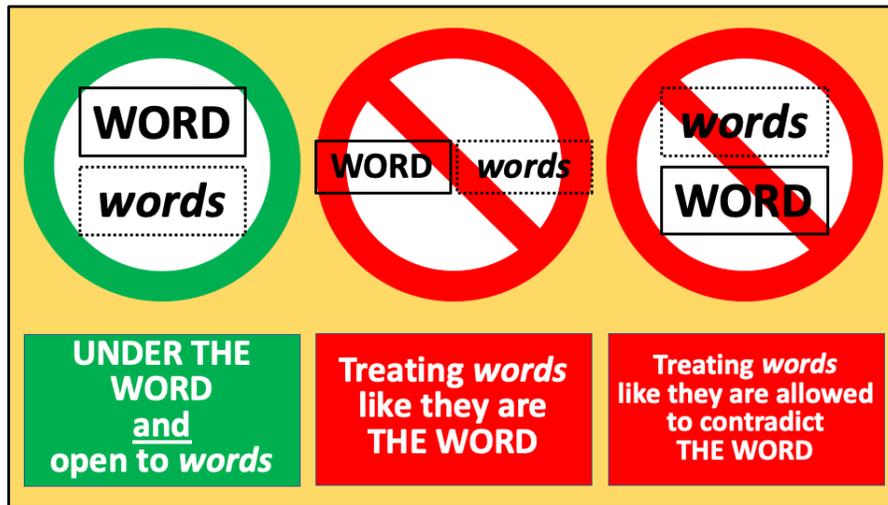
ESV

33

**READ SLIDE**

- Prophecies in the NT are the spontaneous words given to a gifted believer to share with others for their “upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation,” as 1 Cor. 14 says.
- It is “cleaner” and “simpler” to just say all such “words” have ceased. But that means we have “despised prophecies”, rendered in the New American Standard Translation as “prophetic utterances.”

**TR: Those who have been at Trinity Fellowship for a while hopefully will recognize these three circles.**



These give a picture of how we are to treat the **WORD**, the capital W, and the *words*, the small case W.

-- The **Word** is to be obeyed, the *words* are to be weighed.

-- We must “test everything.” And we test them against the written **Word** of God.

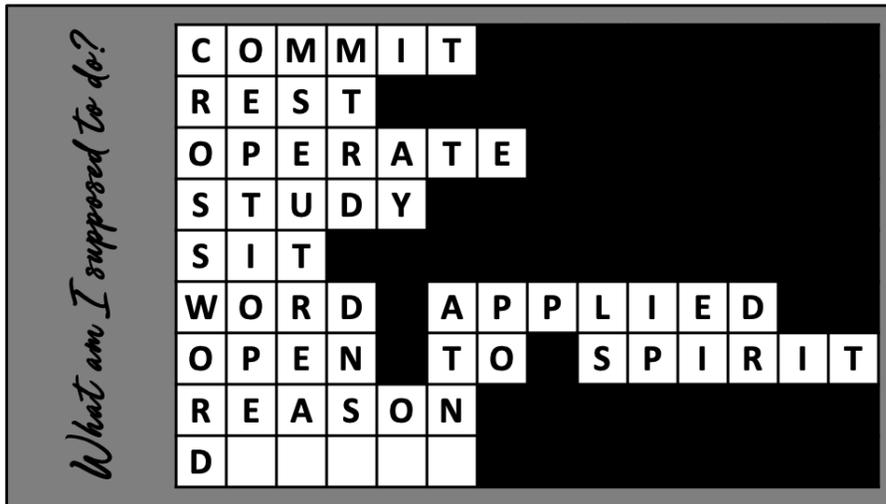
-- **REVIEW SLIDE**

-- If God’s **Word** and God’s Spirit gave us specific directions in every decision, we would stop here.

-- But , sometimes the **Word** has no clear application to our specific question about what we are supposed to do.

-- And, sometimes there doesn’t seem to be a clear leading of the Holy Spirit.

**TR:** That doesn’t mean we are stuck.



**Because the step of REASON is still available to us.**

**-- While some want to skip right over the Holy Spirit's leading, I believe we should come through all the previous steps to the step of REASON.**

**-- As we are filled with the Spirit, the OPERATE step, and STUDY, SIT and consider applications and then make sure they are APPLIED . . . listening for the Spirit within our spirits and through brothers and sisters in Christ . . . we can be assured that our MINDS ARE RENEWED enough to REASON out a decision that will honor God.**

**-- Romans 12 tells us that we are "transformed by the renewing of our minds."**

**TR: That doesn't mean we exercise REASON all on our own . . . we ask God for the wisdom needed to take all we have gathered, as James tells us . . .**

James 1:5-6

**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God,** who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. <sup>6</sup>But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

ESV

36

**READ SLIDE**

**-- We must ask and we must ask in faith, trusting God.**

**TR: This step of REASON . . .**

*What am I supposed to do?*

**R E A S O N**

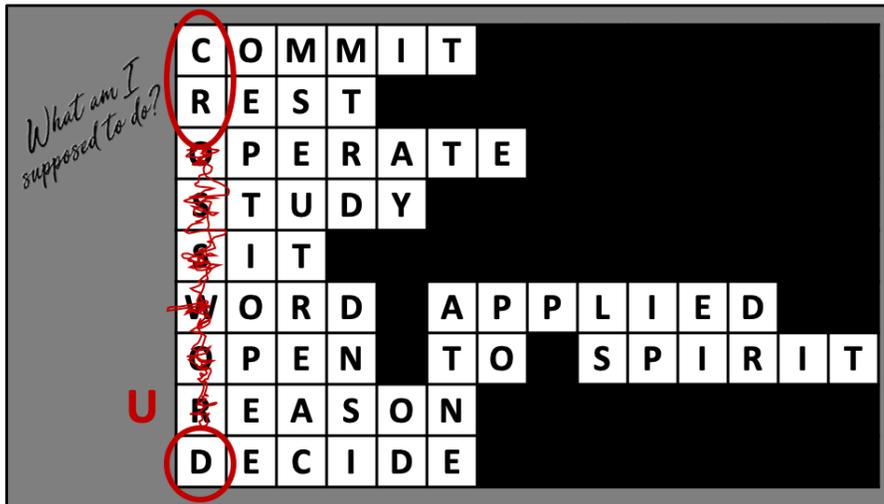
The step of REASON remembers that God expects us to use all the resources He has given, including our ability to weigh decisions. This is done with dependence upon the Spirit through asking for wisdom from God.

37

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: The last letter of the CROSSWORD is D.**





... jump from COMMIT and REST to the “U” of whatever makes sense to “U” and then to DECIDE ... ending up with C ... R ... U ... D. CRUD.

TR: But, I believe this pathway of decision making can help us come to the point where we can ...

*What am I supposed to do?*

**D E C I D E**

As you go through these steps  
you can DECIDE because you  
know God is not hiding His will  
from you and has given you all  
you need to follow Him.  
Your decision can always be  
to “wait.”

40

**... DECIDE.**

**-- READ SLIDE**

**-- When should we wait? When we have a serious lack of peace or a check in the spirit, as others call it.**

**-- But we shouldn't hesitate on the little choices, especially those with “escape hatches” (unlike getting married).**

**TR: In summary ...**

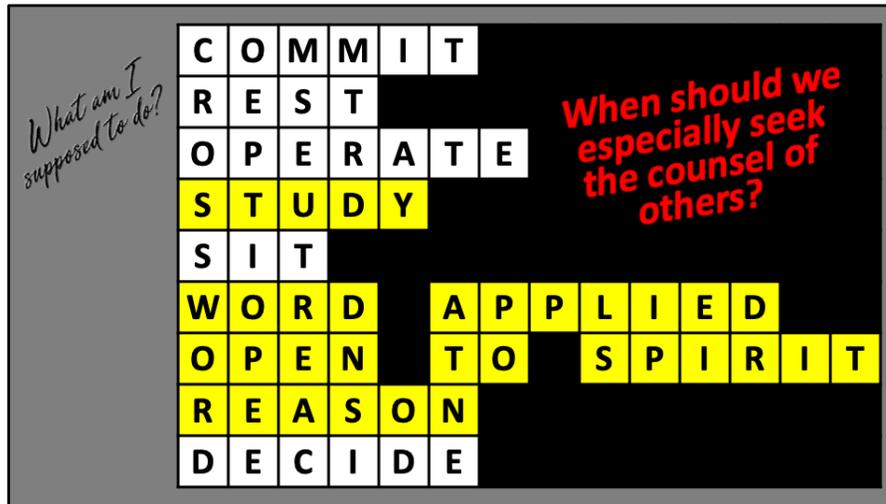
*What am I supposed to do?*

A person who has **committed** themselves to Christ, **rests** in the providence of God's control, **operates** through the filling of the Holy Spirit, **studies** the Bible well, **sits** and reflects on the applications the Spirit prompts, faithfully makes sure the **Word is applied**, remains **open to the Spirit's leading**, and is willing to use **reason while praying for wisdom**, can go ahead and confidently **decide**.

41

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Having said all that, can I add a few more thoughts?**



42

## READ SLIDE

**TR: It is wise to humbly seek counsel in these four areas or steps in the process.**

When should we  
especially seek the  
counsel of others?

S T U D Y

**Counsel is needed in our study**

since we are not experts  
in God's Word.

And even if we are serious  
students, we can have biases that  
keep us from seeing the truth.

43

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: We also should be open to counsel and seek it . . .**

When should we  
especially seek the  
counsel of others?

W O R D   A P P L I E D

**Counsel is needed in our  
application of God's Word**

since we can be deceived by our  
old nature, the devil, or the  
world into a dangerous hypocrisy.  
We need the accountability of  
brothers and sisters in Christ.

44

## READ SLIDE

- This is why small groups and meaningful life-on-life relationships are so important.
- Who do you have who will challenge you when you've become a hearer and not a doer of the Word?

TR: We need the input of others when we seek to be . . .

When should we  
especially seek the  
counsel of others?

O P E N   T O   S P I R I T

**Counsel from other believers  
is needed when we seek the  
Spirit's leading**  
since we are told we will not  
have all the spiritual gifts  
ourselves.

45

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: And we need others when we . . .**

When should we especially seek the counsel of others?

R E A S O N

**Counsel from other believers is needed when we seek wisdom.**

Such dependence on others is commanded. It also makes sense since some have the spiritual gift of wisdom.

46

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: A second question or additional thought is . . .**

*What am I supposed to do?*

C	O	M	M	I	T								
R	E	S	T										
O	P	E	R	A	T	E							
S	T	U	D	Y									
S	I	T											
W	O	R	D		A	P	P	L	I	E	D		
O	P	E	N		T	O		S	P	I	R	I	T
R	E	A	S	O	N								
D	E	C	I	D	E								

*What should we remember as we seek the Spirit's leading and wisdom?*

47

## READ SLIDE

**TR: There are some things that I've said so many times because they are so easily forgotten.**

## **3 Practical Principles**

48

**They are . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: First . . .**

**1 Corinthians 4:6**

I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us **not to go beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

*ESV*

49

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: In humility we must remember . . .**

**Don't make absolute what the  
Bible doesn't make absolute!**

50

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Related to that . . . we must remember that when we deem through the **CROSSWORD** of decision making for our lives that something is . . .**

**Don't make absolute what the Bible doesn't make absolute!**

**Unwise in our eyes  
is not necessarily sinful  
in God's eyes.**

51

**READ SLIDE**

- If the Bible doesn't clearly and absolutely label something as "sinful," we must be careful we don't either.
- Parents, this is especially helpful when our children become teenagers.
- They may push back and say, "Where in the Bible does it say that?"
- And, perhaps we don't have a clear text to show them. We can then tell them they are under our authority while under our roof and therefore they should submit to our understanding of what is wise. But we will not make absolute what the Bible doesn't so that the choice is theirs when they leave the home (physically and financially).

**TR: Some of us will struggle because we are sensitive to something as being wrong, even though the Bible does not address it. We must remember . . .**

**Don't make absolute what the  
Bible doesn't make absolute!**

**Unwise in our eyes  
is not necessarily sinful  
in God's eyes.**

**It is not safe to violate our  
consciences. If we cannot do  
something out of faith,  
it is sin FOR US.**

52

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Romans tells us . . .**

Romans 14:23

But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. **For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.**

ESV

53

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Today you will receive a summary of this CROSSWORD, as well as materials to review for next Sunday's teaching on bio-ethics. But, I don't want to leave you with just a head full of information.**

**SEVEN QUESTIONS THAT CAN SAVE A RELATIONSHIP**

54

**I want to remind you of a study we did a couple of summers ago, entitled . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: For the Christian, the first questions are not, “Is what they did wrong? Or was I in the wrong?” The first questions take us to the heart of the matter.**

**SEVEN QUESTIONS THAT CAN SAVE A RELATIONSHIP**

**Do you want what God wants?**

**Do you know what God wants?**

**Do you STILL want what God wants?**

**Do you own your part of the mess?**

**Do you give grace for the others' parts of the mess?**

**Do you speak the truth in love?**

**Do you wash feet?**

55

**READ SLIDE (first three questions).**

-- When faced with the question, "What am I supposed to do?" I answer, "Do you want what God wants?"

-- Most people say, "What does God want?"

-- They leave themselves in the position of judge over what's "right for them."

-- The entire **CROSSWORD** is about us letting God be God.

-- He said it is "right for you" to **COMMIT** to Jesus, to **REST** in His sovereign love, to daily **OPERATE** in the Spirit's filling, to **STUDY**, **SIT** and consider, and the make sure the **WORD** is **APPLIED**.

-- It is "right for you" to remain **OPEN TO** the **SPIRIT**, weighing everything against God's Word.

-- Having done all this, asking for wisdom to use your Holy Spirit sanctified **REASON** to go ahead and **DECIDE**.

-- "Do you want what God wants?"