

## Prompts v. Prudence and Prayer

- I. Wisdom calls us to be prudent. **PRO 8:12; 13:16; 14:15; 22:3.**
- A. prudent: Of persons (rarely of inferior animals): Sagacious in adapting means to ends; careful to follow the most politic and profitable course; having or exercising sound judgement in practical affairs; circumspect, discreet, worldly-wise.
- B. In making choices of action, we know we are on solid ground when Scripture clearly gives command. **PSA 119:86, 104, 128.**
1. There is no room for doubt that all men everywhere should repent. **ACT 17:30.**
  2. There is no room for doubt that God should be our first love and that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. **MAT 22:36-40.**
  3. Nine of the original ten commandments (the seventh-day Sabbath command being dropped) are basically “no-brainers.”
- C. Black-and-white matters are one thing, but what about grey or indifferent matters where there is not a plain command from Scripture? This study is a warning against assigning divine guidance to things other than Scripture and giving those things priority over wisdom and prudence based on Scripture.
- II. Consider some extra-scriptural prompts that believers might rely on in making decisions.
- A. Impressions.
1. These are inward impulses, urges or other subjective sensations which, if given too much significance, become our “scripture.” And, if it’s scripture, it must be heeded.
    - a. There is a half-truth to this model under certain conditions.
    - b. A child of God with the law of God written in his inward man by grace, and who has been reasonably instructed from Scripture, has a predisposition to knowing what is right, good and prudent.
    - c. He may not have or recall a specific command or precept that addresses a choice when a choice must be made, but his conscience may be sounding alarms that should be considered. **1TI 1:19.**
    - d. In such situations, the impulse or impression he has is not entirely subjective since he has been affected by the new birth and basic scriptural knowledge.
    - e. However, this model can be abused and made an “easy-out” substitute for proper investigation of a matter to which wisdom and prudence should be applied.
  2. Impressions are usually emotional experiences: “I just *felt* God was leading me.”
  3. Emotions can be influenced by many things: God, Satan, health, medication, diet, hormones, fatigue, lust, news, music, others' feelings, anticipation, dread, upbringing, loneliness, etc.
    - a. How does one determine the actual cause of the feeling, and why should it be assumed that the feeling must be from God?
    - b. Since impressions are emotion-based and emotions are variously influenced, impressions are not a reliable guide in godly decision-making.
  4. If an impression does not violate Scripture, then it is not sinful and that impression may (not *must*) be followed.
    - a. Mind that this is a case of revealed truth judging the impression, not an impression judging the truth. This is very important!
    - b. It may even be wise to follow that impression since you are apt to do your best when you are *inclined* to do something, and doing one's best in a good thing is a Biblical principle. **ROM 12:11; COL 3:23.**

5. “Did God give me this impression?”
  - a. That God gave the impression directly cannot be known for sure nor does it need to be known.
  - b. God could directly impart it or it could come about from upbringing, instruction, personal ambition, etc.
  - c. If the impression is a good thing, then it ultimately comes from God whether directly or indirectly through means of abilities He has imparted and circumstances He has permitted. **JAM 1:17.**

B. Circumstances.

1. Circumstances are the pros and cons of a given decision, things like means available, time available, people available, cost, opportunities, etc.
2. Be wary of inquiring what God is trying to tell you by the circumstances. Remember that God is *not trying* to tell you anything new beyond His given revelation in Scripture.
  - a. He has already told you in His word what He wants to say.
  - b. God may providentially direct circumstances in your life that, when processed through the grid of Scripture, will be conducive to a good decision. But the determinant here is not circumstances, it is knowledge and wisdom.
3. For circumstances to provide direction, they must be interpreted. This is where the subjective element enters since multiple interpretations can be made of the circumstance. For example, what about where you are hindered from doing something?
  - a. You might think God is trying to tell you that He doesn't approve of it.
  - b. You might think God is testing you to see if you will persevere.
  - c. You might think God doesn't want you to do it now but later.
  - d. You might even think that Satan is hindering you and, since you are to *resist the devil* (**JAM 4:7**), you **MUST** push ahead at all cost.
4. Relying on circumstances alone to determine good or evil is not only unreliable, it is downright pagan. **ACT 28:3-6.**
5. Among circumstances are open doors (opportunities).
  - a. Do open doors specify what God wants done, or are they opportunities God permits wherein we must decide to avail ourselves of them or not?
  - b. Open doors are not always pathways to good. Think of Jonah. **JON 1:1-3.**
  - c. Scripture speaks of open doors which were opportunities for gospel ministry. **ACT 14:27; 1CO 16:5-9; 2CO 2:12-13; COL 4:3.**
  - d. At Ephesus, Paul took advantage of an open door and *decided* that it was expedient to stay there a while. **1CO 16:5-9.**
  - e. At Troas, Paul left that open door to search for Titus. **2CO 2:12-13.**
    - (1) He was awaiting word from Titus as to how the Corinthians had responded to his first epistle in which he had sternly upbraided them.
    - (2) In Macedonia, Paul met up with Titus who brought him the good news about Corinth's positive response. **2CO 7:5-7.**
    - (3) Paul here judged it spiritually expedient to make sure of the work at Corinth before starting a new work.
    - (4) If an open door is God signaling a “MUST DO,” then to leave such an opportunity for any reason would be sin.
  - f. Paul didn't need a sign to tell him to preach the gospel since God had already clearly commanded him to do so (**ACT 26:16-18**). All he needed

- was an opportunity *wherever* that might happen to be.
- g. Paul purposed to come to Rome but was not permitted to do so. That door was closed. **ROM 1:9-15.**
    - (1) He didn't assume that was a sign from God that his plan was bad.
    - (2) He accepted that he was hindered for the present and would try again later.
  - f. A prayer for an open door should be viewed as a prayer for *opportunity* rather than a prayer for *guidance and compulsion*. It is up to the individual to judge the spiritual expediency of the opportunity.
6. Circumstances are not messengers telling us God's will; they are rather factors to be weighed in making decisions.
- a. Scripture determines right or wrong, not circumstances.
  - b. Scripture's wisdom applied to circumstances is what tends to a favorable outcome for which God may be thanked.
- C. Personal peace.
- 1. There are various causes of a lack of peace.
    - a. One may be violating Scripture or conscience. If so, it is not the lack of peace determining the wrong, but rather the Scripture.
    - b. It may be because of health conditions, medications, exhaustion, concerns, deadlines, uncertainties, fears, new experiences, major decisions, etc.
      - (1) In such cases, the lack of peace does not determine what one should do or not do.
      - (2) Should a minister fail to call for needed church discipline because of potential repurcussions which make for a sleepless night before doing it?
      - (3) Should someone not get baptized because he fears to speak before the church or doesn't have every single question answered? Is this lack of peace a message from God to not obey His gospel?
      - (4) Often it is *after* we do the right thing that we find the peace which was lacking beforehand. **ISA 32:17; MAT 11:28-30.**
  - 2. Does **COL 3:15** teach that we should let peace in our hearts decide issues?
    - a. It must be noted that there is a counterfeit peace which can rule one's heart. **JOH 14:27 c/w LUK 11:21.**
      - (1) The men of Laish were at peace with their shameful living. **JDG 18:7.**
      - (2) Ignorance of truth or a seared conscience can produce a corrupt internal peace. **EPH 4:18-19.**
    - b. The context of **COL 3:15** is peace among brethren in the church. We are not to harbor hostility against one another in our hearts. Rather, the peace of God is to rule in our hearts because we have been called to peace in one body.
    - c. Peace is something to be acquired through obedience to God's revealed will rather than being something that determines God's will! **PHIL 4:6-9.**
      - (1) As that peace is attained through obedience, it can then rule in our hearts.
      - (2) That peace will control how we respond to situations and to our brethren and promote harmony in the church. **PSA 119:165.**
    - d. A lack of peace may prompt you to examine yourself whether you are in the will of God but lack of peace does not determine that: God's word does.

- e. Whereas one's emotional condition does not *determine* right, it is a factor to be considered in decision-making.
- (1) If one is not emotionally stable enough to handle certain tasks and situations, he should avoid them.
  - (2) Obviously, the person who falls apart under pressure would not be a good leader.
  - (3) Remember that faith builds confidence and strength (**HEB 11:34**) and prayers in this regard are very appropriate. **EPH 3:14-21.**