

# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

James 1:5-8  
Lesson #2  
Trials and Wisdom  
03/07/2021



**“I’m not too heavy  
just too short.”**



**“Count it all joy”  
(the sign of an optimist)**

Lyle Schaller

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**“I don’t need more information, I need certainty.”**

The need for certainty can lead to wisdom  
**but it can also lead to fear and fantasy.**

*1 Corinthians 8*

“1 Now concerning food sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. **Knowledge makes one conceited**, but **love** edifies *people*. 2 If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; 3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.”

*Proverbs 2:6*

“For the Lord given **wisdom**;  
from His mouth comes **knowledge**  
and **understanding**.”

**Knowledge + Understanding = Wisdom**



Lyle Schaller

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**A popular response**

**Just follow the Bible!**

**God said it, I believe it, that settles it!**

*Proverbs 26:4*

“Answer not a fool  
according to his folly  
lest you be like unto  
him.”

*Proverbs 26:5*

“Answer a fool  
according to his folly  
lest he be wise in his  
own conceit.”



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**How can I know God’s Will?  
(a traditional view)**

Usually our heart gets set on what we want  
and we turn to God to make it happen.

1. Get **right** with God.
2. Pray for the desires of your **heart**.
3. Look for confirmation in **Scripture**.
4. Expect guidance through unusual **signs**.
5. Expect inner **peace** with your decision.
6. Expect your decision to bear **fruit**.



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## Context

### James 1

“2 Consider it all **joy**, my brothers *and sisters*, when you encounter various **trials**, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be **perfect** and complete, lacking in nothing.”

## How do we discern God's will under “various trials”?

repress,  
remove,  
resist,  
relax,



*rejoice*

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## Trials call for **Wisdom**.

### James 1

“2 Consider it all joy, my brothers *and sisters*, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* **perfect** result, so that you may be **perfect** and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 But if any of you lacks **wisdom**, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 *being* a double-minded man, **unstable** in all his ways.”

**Wisdom is an internal management of external matters and material.**

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## Questions related to knowing God's will

1. Is God's sovereign control comprehensive or occasional?
2. Is our relationship with God dynamic & synergistic or controlled and rule driven?
3. Is there a perfect will or plan that we must find if we are to be fully blessed in this life?



4. Does God's Spirit anoint external signs and circumstances or internal renewal of heart and mind?

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## How did the early church respond?

### Acts 15

“7 And after there had been **much debate**, . . . 28 For **it seemed good** to the Holy Spirit and to us. . . . 15 And with this the words of the Prophets agree, **just as it is written**, (Amos 9:12)”

### 1 Corinthians 6:1-6

“Is it so, that there is not among you **one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren**, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?”

### 1 Corinthians 7:39-40

“A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, **she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my opinion** she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.”

**Wisdom is a dynamic multi resources responsibility, not a passive search for signs or feelings.**

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**Observation #1** - After Pentecost, there is no mention of prayer for special revelation, a Biblical rule (proof text) for guidance, or turning to a strong-man leader for all the answers.

**Observation #2** - There is a sensitivity to both general and special revelation.

## GENERAL REVELATION

Reasonable mind



Five Senses

## SPECIAL REVELATION

Renewed mind



Spirit

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**Wisdom is managing revealed information so as to understand and apply it to life.**

### Ephesians 5:15-16

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as **wise**, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

### Colossians 4:5

“Conduct yourselves with **wisdom** toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.”

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**Observation #3** - The real conflict is not with those who differ with us but with the challenge of God's imperfect people finding wisdom within an imperfect world.



12

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13

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"In the end, dear friend, it is always between us and God, not between us and them."

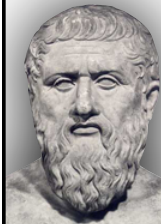


Mother Teresa

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**Observation #4** We too often seek to be "in the right" as opposed to "in the light."

Scientists  
Parents  
Nations  
Prosecutors  
Police  
Psychiatrists  
Husbands & wives  
Pastors  
Judges  
Politicians  
Churches



Plato

"We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."

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**Observation #5** Be careful when you claim to have heard directly from God because that shuts down all dialogue or drives the stakes in any debate way up.



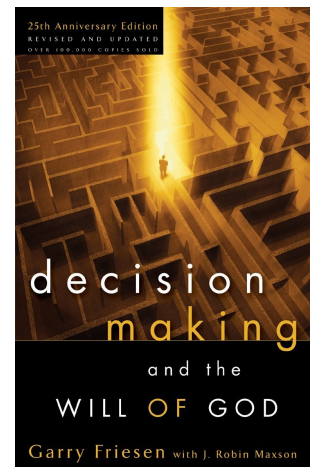
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*James 1:5*

"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."



Gary Friesen



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### Hebrews 8

“<sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>11</sup> And **they will not teach, each one his fellow citizen,** and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. . . . <sup>13</sup> When He said, “**A new covenant,**” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever **is becoming obsolete** and growing old is about to disappear.”

The **New Covenant** initiated with the inner gift of Christ’s Spirit replaces the **Old Covenant** with its emphasis on outward rules.

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This is illustrated in decisions made **before Pentecost.**

### Acts 1

(discerning a replacement for Judas) “<sup>24</sup> And **they prayed**, and said, “Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen <sup>25</sup> to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” <sup>26</sup> And **they drew lots** for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

The **emphasis is on external** rules and special signs or prophets to reveal God’s will.

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### 2 Corinthians 3:6

“who also make us adequate as servants of a **new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit;**”

### John 16

“<sup>13</sup> But **when he, the Spirit of truth,** comes he will **guide you into all the truth;** . . . <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take of mine and will disclose it to you.”

### 1 John 2:27

“And *as for* you, the anointing which you received from Him remains in you, and **you have no need for anyone to teach you;** but as His anointing teaches you about all things,”

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### Examples of Wisdom in decision making

1. **Marriage** — *1 Cor. 7:39* “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is **free to be married to whom she wishes**, only in the Lord.”
2. **Giving** — *2 Cor. 8:13* “For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but **by way of equality**”
3. **Sabbath** — *Rom. 14:5* “One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be **fully convinced in his own mind.**”

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### Acts 6:2-4

“And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. **But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom,** whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.’”

### 1 Corinthians 16:3-4

“And when I arrive, **whomever you may approve,** I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and **if it is fitting for me** to go also, they will go with me.”

### Philippians 2:25-26

“But **I thought it necessary** to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.”

### 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

“Therefore when we could endure it no longer, **we thought it best** to be left behind at Athens alone; and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.”

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### Help for making mature decisions.

1. The indwelling Spirit of Christ equips us to **wisely respond to life’s circumstances.**

*1 Cor. 1:33* “But by His (God’s) doing you are in Christ Jesus, **who became to us wisdom from God,**”

- The **Word of the Cross** assures us that we are loved, accepted, and not alone.
- The **Way of the Cross** gives us models to follow in Jesus and his Apostles.
- The **Body of Christ** provides a broad context of counsel, assurance, and support.
- The **Image of God** creates a moral conscience of human dignity and common sense.

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## 2. God's will is a COMPASS more than a road map.

- God's will has to do with our direction and destination than with every detailed decision.

1 Cor. 7:39 "she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."



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## 3. Facing in the right DIRECTION makes it easier to find the path.

- Strategic (macro) decisions set the stage for good tactical (micro) decisions.
- We must take our baptism seriously.



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## 4. Staying in OUR place keeps us in the race.

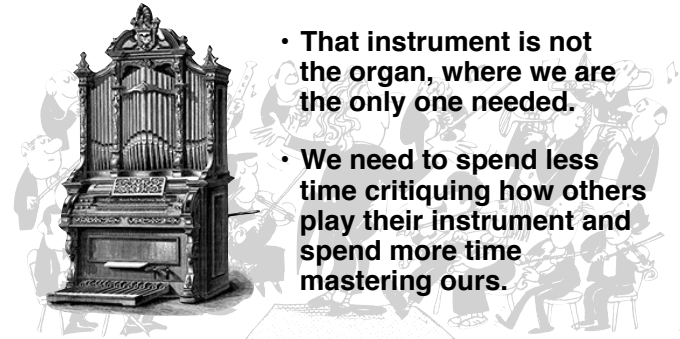
- We must not take responsibility for things we can't control or are none of our business.
- We are not the composer, or conductor. But we do have a part and an instrument.



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## 4. Staying in OUR place keeps us in the race.

- We must not take responsibility for things we can't control or are none of our business.
- We are not the composer, or director. We have an instrument & a specific part.



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## Rules of engagement for Christians

1. Take **responsibility** only for things we can control, like our response to circumstances.
2. Work and pray for that which will **not perish** - godly character and gracious community.

The main thing  
is to keep the main thing,  
the main thing.

We should pray for God's  
will and plan not ours.

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## Rules of engagement for Christians

1. Take responsibility only for things we can control, like our response to circumstances.
2. Work and pray for that which will not perish - godly character and gracious community.
3. Greet all circumstances with gratitude as an **opportunity** to develop / demonstrate character.

The peace we seek is found by  
giving more attention to changing  
our responses than to changing  
our circumstances.

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### *Rules of engagement for Christians*

1. Take responsibility only for things we can control, like our response to circumstances.
2. Work and pray for that which will not perish - godly character and gracious community.
3. Greet all circumstances with gratitude as an opportunity to develop / demonstrate character.
4. In facing life's circumstances fear not - **love deeply, proceed wisely, and walk by faith.**

*Seek peace and make peace.*

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### *Rules of engagement for Christians*

1. Take **responsibility** only for things we can control, like our response to circumstances.
2. Work and pray for that which will **not perish** - godly character and gracious community.
3. Greet all circumstances with gratitude as an **opportunity** to develop / demonstrate character.
4. In facing life's circumstances **fear not - love deeply, proceed wisely, and walk by faith.**
5. Take your baptism seriously and **joyfully** knowing that God expects you to be dead to the flesh and ready to bear his cross as a light to the world.

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