

# How Do I Know...The Right Decision?

September 30, 2018

Ephesians 6:10-18 (Armor of God)

Today, we are continuing our series, "How Do I Know?" We're focused on understanding what God's will is in the everyday details of our lives. We started the series talking about how we can be confident that Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life when our society has so many different religious and spiritual influences. Last week we talked about how we can be sure to accomplish God's will in our lives during our time on earth. And today we're talking about making right decisions – God's way.

Our decisions determine our behavior and our future. In order to follow God's unique, good plan for our lives, we have to make decisions after decision in line with what God wants or we're just doing our own thing and hoping God blesses it. So, how can we understand God's will and make decisions accordingly. How can we know when the decisions we make line up with God's will in our lives?

Let's start by talking a bit about making decisions. Decision-making is described in one management research journal as a "*series of steps, starting with information output and analysis and culminating in resolution, namely a selection from several available alternatives.*" That sounds so formal. Words that usually come to mind when we consider decisions are: sound, rational, deliberate, organized, accurate, final...

So, think about some of the choices we make every day:

- Will we snooze through the alarm or get up on time?
- Will we choose the blue shirt or the brown one?
- Will we have a hot breakfast, a muffin/bagel, a coffee, a juice, or nothing?
- Will we take the shortcut to work or drive the long way?
- Will we bring lunch or buy out--again?

These are all very basic and boring, and yet they are the types of decisions we make all day long. We may not think that these types of decisions are a big deal--so big that we need to be praying about it and seeking God's will, right. I mean, who cares how you get to work as long as you get there--and on time! And who can even remember what they had for breakfast or lunch once it's over?

One of the reasons we can't remember most of the decisions we make is because we make so many of them each day without even knowing it! Estimates are that adults make about 35,000 decisions every day, and that children make about 3,000 decision per day. According to [Cornell University](#), about 225 of those decisions are about food alone. A lot of them are subconscious decisions that we're not even aware we're making.

Because we have to make so many split-second decisions all day, every day, our brain looks for shortcuts to help us decide. These "shortcuts" also help our brains not to become overloaded from processing, but we all have our limits, especially when the decisions are coming quickly and consistently day after day. It can lead to a situation called decision fatigue: when we are tired of

making decisions! As we make decisions over time, research shows that the quality of our decisions gets lower and lower because of decision fatigue.

With so many decisions to make, we can see why we need God's help and guidance. Breakfast is one thing, but when the decision is a major one in life, we can easily understand why depending on God is the only way to make the right choice. *Should I marry the person I'm dating? Should I get married at all? What about children? How many children? What about my career? Should I go into the military? Into the ministry full time? Should I start a business? What about financial investments? What happens if I lose everything I have? What happens if the return is bigger than expected! Should I put Mom in a home? Should I move Dad out of his house? Is it time to take Gran off life support?* Some of these choices are gut-wrenching and have life-altering implications.

Do we want to make these decisions without being clear about the direction that God is giving us? As the Bible would say, God forbid! When we're making those conscious, intentional, deliberate-type decisions, the Word has great advice on how to proceed. For example,

- [James 1:5](#) says that we can ask for wisdom to make the right decisions, knowing that God will give it to us and will in no way hold it against us for asking
- We can pray that God's will be done, like Jesus did in [Luke 22 and Matthew 6](#) that God's will be done, always, in whatever our situation or our decision is
- We can trust what the [Psalms say](#) and believe that God will lead us and teach us and counsel us in the way we should go

Those are things we can do when we are making a conscious, intentional decision—especially those that are larger and more significant in our lives. But what about all of the thousands and thousands of split-second decisions we make on a daily basis--decisions we don't even realize that we're making? Our passage today from Ephesians 6 gives us an idea of how to be spiritually protected, prepared and assured for each day. We can use this spiritual preparation to help us be sure that we are making more of our daily decisions in ways that are aligned with the will of God.

### **Ephesians 6:10-18 (NLT): *The Whole Armor of God***

*<sup>10</sup> A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. <sup>15</sup> For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. <sup>17</sup> Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

When the apostle Paul wrote to the churches around Ephesus, his hope was that believers would follow the word of God in their relationships and would use prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the evil that threatened them in their day to day lives.

Verses 10-12 remind us that the goal is to be strong in the Lord and not in our own ways or strength. We are to rely on the power of the Lord and not our own power. We may think that we have everything we need and that we're ready to make good decisions and to do the right thing. The truth is that we are not fighting against people or against things we can see, touch, or sense in our decisions. Remember, we are making thousands of decisions each day that we don't even know we are making. There is always a battle in the background that we're not aware of. One wrong decision on one day can impact lives forever. We may not even be thinking when we make this fateful decision. There are too many examples of this in the news or even in our own lives to count.

Verse 11 says put on all of God's armor. We're not to put on our own armor. We might say, "*I'm well-educated*" or "*I stay out of trouble*" or "*I keep it simple--I don't even bother making too many decisions!*" Whatever we tell ourselves to make ourselves think we have it all together to make good decisions is us putting on our own armor. **To know that we are making God-honoring decisions, we need to put on God's spiritual armor.** We know then that we'll be standing firm--firmly in the will of God.

What's it mean to "put on our armor?" First, it means deciding to do so! [Author Debb McDaniel](#) says that each piece of armor can represent one tool or piece of protection that we need in order to make Godly decisions.

Verse 14 describes the belt of truth. In Roman times, a belt for a soldier would be used for two purposes: to hold the soldier's clothing together and out of the way so that he could fight, and to hold other tools and weapons such as a sword. A belt is at the center. It holds things together. It is unifying. Like a belt, we can surround ourselves with God's truths so that our decisions will flow from our growing relationship with God.

The breastplate covers the vital organs—those that are needed for life. If an enemy is looking for a crack in your armor, he's likely to look here first. The breastplate of righteousness can represent the condition of our heart. The [Psalmist](#) says "*create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a loyal spirit in me.*" Righteousness is about right-standing with God, which is based on where our heart is. [Proverbs 21:2](#) reminds us that we are always right in our own eyes but that the Lord weighs, considers, and looks at our hearts—what we really think, believe, and feel and what our real priorities and desires are. A lot of our decision-making comes from what is in our hearts, not what is in our heads! It is important for us to ask for God's protection over our hearts.

The spiritual armor in verse 15 are our shoes. When we make a conscious decision, particularly an important one, the first way we judge whether or not it was a good one is by how much peace we have about it. It is impossible to make proper decisions when we are plagued with doubts and insecurities. These are spiritual tools that the enemy uses to distract and limit us. The spiritual armor on our feet gives us security--solid footing--in the word of God--the gospel. Our firm footing is on Christ, the solid rock. We should always consider how our decisions, great and small, can help share more of God's love and truth with those around us.

**Our decisions, great and small, can help share more of God's love and truth with those around us.**

The shield spiritually represents our faith and certainty in Christ. In war, the shield would protect warriors from arrows that had been set on fire. The enemy would shoot flaming arrows designed to burn soldiers' bodies. We can get easily "burned" when we make decisions from places of fear, doubt, or insecurity. These types of poor decisions come when we don't have faith in our position in Christ, our relationship in God, what the word of God says, or when our relationship with God is not strong. It is important that we constantly work to build our faith in Christ and remove doubt.

Faith-building starts with our thoughts and what's happening in our minds. The helmet in verse 17 represents salvation and sound thinking. If a soldier has a head injury, it can be life threatening. Our head is "command central" for our bodies, and our thoughts are command central for the decisions we make. [James Chapter 1](#) says that we can ask God for wisdom but it also says that we cannot be unsettled in our thoughts if we expect God to give us the wisdom we need. To combat uncertainty, the [Bible](#) declares that we can make the decision to teach our thoughts to obey Christ and we can decide to allow God to change the way that we think.

The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. It is our offensive weapon against the enemy and against making poor decisions. What we get on Sunday morning is just a sampling of how powerful God's word can be when we understand it, speak it, and apply it to our lives. God's word is alive, and powerful, and sharp—it cuts through all of the external noise and down to what's important. God's word is an essential tool to help us know when we are making the right decisions.

**The whole armor of God has to be put on through**

- **Prayer**
- **Right Motives**
- **Trust in God.**

Verse 18 says to pray in the Spirit: with right motives and a hope and trust in God as our Source. We should align our prayers with God's way in order to make good decisions.

This "arming" prayer takes some time and some intentional focus. For example, is there a tool in our belt that needs sharpening? How is our heart condition in those areas where decision-making is hard? Where have we been "burned" before, and how might that be hurting our decisions now?

When we take the steps required to spiritually put on the armor of God each day through prayer and study, we can be confident of God's guidance and protection over us in our decisions-making. Ultimately, it is God who fights our battles for us, including the everyday battle to make good decisions with Godly impact.

