

Knowing What To Do

March 10, 2019 ~ Marching Orders ~ 1 Corinthians 2.1-16

“Knowing What To Do”

- The title of today’s message can be understood in many ways
- “**KNOW**” is a word with many definitions ~ variations of meaning
 1. “to have information” / “I know the answer”
 2. “to have understanding” / “I know what you mean”
 3. “to be familiar with” / “I know Jim very well.”
 4. “to feel certain” / “I know I returned that library book”
 5. “to recognize” / “I know a bargain when I see one”
- I’m using the word “know” in the 4th sense / “to feel certain”

Sermon Series ~ “What To Do”

- Today’s message is the 1st of a 5-part series
- Originally intended for March – Gary suggested “**Marching Orders**”
- The phrase “**What To Do**” is central to the series
 1. “**Knowing What To Do**” / Be reasonably certain of a goal or direction
 2. “**Wanting What To Do**” / Align our hearts with chosen goal or direction
 3. “**Planning What To Do**” / Direct our thoughts | actions towards goal
 4. “**Choosing What To Do**” / Avoid distractions ~ Stay focused
 5. “**Do Do Do**” / Hold ourselves accountable for progress ~ No excuses
- Head / Heart / Head / Heart / Hands
- Goal to transition from fretful “**What To Do**” to confident “**Marching Orders**”

Session Roles

- No doubt that Phil could (perhaps has) present on this topic thoroughly
- Gary and I recognize that Phil always brings a “**meat dish**” to DCC
- We bring a side dish, salad, or a dessert (Gary brings those...)
- God put this on my heart two months ago / prior to 2 big life changes
- 1st I knew of (*RIF from UP imminent*) / 2nd I didn’t (*death of Tabitha’s father*)

“Knowing” What To Do

- Today’s message is “**Knowing What To Do**” / Being confident in the what
- Part of our confidence may come from other 4 definitions (review)
- But total confidence comes from somewhere else also
- That’s what we want... But how do we get it?

Xition: How can we be confident in what we’re to do?

Decision Making #1 – “Is it Ethically Allowed?”

- What we’re talking about is the process by which we make decisions
- The Bible is filled with examples of good and bad decisions
- The first bad decision we find is that of Eve in the Garden
 - **Read Gen 3.1-6** ~ “Now the serpent .. and he ate.”
 - Eve’s decision making process is clearly presented to us in **v6**
 - She never considered the ethics of the decision / “Am I allowed?”
- We can judge Eve harshly in this yet many Christians do the same thing
- **III: Tony Bastine** ~ Deacon’s advice “God wants you to be happy”
- **1st Question:** “Is it allowed?”

Decision Making #2 – “Is it Morally Right?”

- Another bad decision we see shortly afterwards involves Abram
 - **Read Gen 12.10-12** ~ “Now there was .. all that he had.”
 - God spoke to Abram in Haran then appeared to him in Shechem
 - Yet Abram chose deception to address his fears in Egypt
- Deception is not always morally wrong – **Judges 4** tells of Jael killing Sisera
 - Deborah and Barak sing a song celebrating Jael’s act in **Judges 5**
- “What makes Abram’s deception morally deficient?”
 1. Abram acted out of personal fear / Jael courageously overcame fear
 2. Abram acted out of self-interest / Jael acted out of civic duty
 3. Abram didn’t appear to consult God at all – his plan lacked faith
- **2nd Question:** “Is it right?”

Decision Making #3 – “Is It Worth the Risk?”

- Judah in **Gen 38** gave no thought to risks / left his signet, cord and staff
 - He leaves off the search for harlot saying, “lest we be shamed” (**v23**)
- Jesus alludes to such decisions as common sense in **Luke 14**
 - **Read Lk 14.31-32** ~ “Or what king .. conditions of peace.”
- **3rd Question:** “Is it worth the risk?”

Decision Making #4 – “Am I (Are We) Prepared for This?”

- In the same discourse Jesus spoke of someone “intending to build a tower”
 - **Read Lk 14.28-30** ~ “For which of .. able to finish”
- The lesson is one of resources and preparedness
- **4th Question:** “Am I prepared for this?” / “Is it beyond my abilities?”
 - **III: Outlaw Josey Wales** – “A man’s got to know his limitations.”
- Recap the 4 questions thus far . . .

Xition: Our 5th question relates to time or timing . . .

Decision Making #5 – “By When Must a Decision be Made?”

- Some of us are prone to rush into decisions . . .
- Every married couple has to work this process out
 - Male headship doesn't mean wives don't participate in decision making
 - Husbands ought to include wives in the process
- Long ago Tabitha and I lived in the East Bay of California
 - We married in 1986 / We bought a condo, cat, and car in 1987
 - We had a daughter in 1988 / I took a job with NASA but wasn't happy
- **III: Hawaii Vacation 1991** – Fresh pineapple stands
 - **III: Big Ideas** – remote ball for cats / child security / nursery noise light
- Haste may reflect our passions & emotions more than our plans
- **5th Question:** “By when must a decision be made?”

Decision Making #6 – “Am I Thinking Objectively?”

- All decision making is an opaque mixture of objective & subjective reasoning
 - Subjective refers to personal perspectives, feelings, or emotions
 - Objective is the supposed elimination of all of that
 - **III: Dragnet** - Objectivity is Joe Friday's phrase – “Just the facts ma'am.”
- We're trained to believe the best reasoning is objective / Probably true
- But we're tempted to make any subjective reasoning appear objective
 - Books & articles on marketing state that all buying decisions are subjective
 - They insist pros and cons lists are just objective ruses to justify wants
- **6th Question:** “Am I Being Honest With Myself (and Others)?”

Decision Making #7 – “Has God Led Me to This?”

- Belief in the sovereignty of God is something Presbyterians believe
 - Even liberal Presbyterians I know advocate for election & predestination
- We know God uses us (*everyone & everything*) in His plans – “His Story”
 - **Rom 8.28** ~ “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
- It's practically impossible for us to predict even small future events
- Yet we have access to details of our past – “But do we mine that data?”
- Years ago Phil produced a diagram based on past experiences – big arrow
 - He and Kathy shared that at the elder's retreat in January
 - This analysis has given Phil much greater appreciation for God's plan
- **7th Question:** “Has God led me to this?”

Xition: Let me share a current example of God's leading in my life . . .

Personal Example of God's Leading

- **III: My UP Experience** ~ Fall of 2017 (wanted greater responsibility)
 - Each attempt to gain responsibility resulted in a loss of it
 - As I reflected on prior 16 months I thought that God wanted me out of UP
 - I was shocked / I thought it was absurd to leave before full retirement
- But upon reflection I believed God wanted me out of UP
- Yet this also correlated with my personal wants / so I was suspicious

Decision Making #8 – “Is God With Me in This?”

- Through Christmas and early January I was wrestling with this issue
 - But I was reluctant to share it with Tabitha / Upsetting
- I'd already decided on this 5-part series by this time / emailed idea to Gary
- After Elder's Summit wanted to share with Tabitha but sought moment
- Met with AVP Jan 22nd / Met with Phil and Gary just afterwards
- Promised Phil I'd reconsider my motives in choosing to leave
- Next day (Jan 23rd) God reaffirmed decision
- Committed to sharing news with Tabitha Friday or Saturday
- Thursday afternoon (24th) received word that her father had passed away
- **8th Question: “Is God With Me in This?”**

1 Cor 2 – Knowing God

- For months we've been reading / reviewing / discussing Knowing God book
- **Read 1 Cor 2.9-12** ~ “But as it is .. given to us by God.”
- I'd always thought of **v9** as being a future event
 - Yet **v10** and **v12** clearly place it in the past and present
 - The word “**know**” appears 3 times in these 3 verses
 - It appears twice more in the remaining 4 verses

Directed by God's Voice

- **Read Isaiah 30.18,21** ~ “Therefore the Lord .. turn to the left.”
- **Is 28.23** ~ “Give ear and hear My voice, Listen and hear My speech.”
- **Is 30.30** ~ “The Lord will cause His glorious voice to be heard.”

Psalm 119.105 ~ “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”
The light of the lamp extends only so far down the path . . .

Jude 24-25 ~ "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

Knowing What To Do - Handout

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1. What are the 5 variant definitions of the word “know”?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

2. What are the key words to the 5-part sermon series?

- a. _____

3. Eight questions to ask when making decisions:

- a. Is it ethically allowed?
- b. Is it morally right?
- c. Is it worth the risk?
- d. Am I (*are we*) prepared for this?
- e. By when must a decision be made?
- f. Am I thinking objectively?
- g. Has God led me to this (*past*)?
- h. Is God with me in this (*present*)?