

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Let's Make It Work!**

## **God's Absolutes**

**(The Grid of God's Purpose and Priorities)**

**1118-A**

**Series: The Will of God**



**DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.**  
**INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO**

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# Let's Make It Work

Credibility! That's the word being circulated in today's society, as the missing ingredient in the lives of people who claim to be worthy of respect.

Credibility! That's what the world asks of certain key people in the investment business who are being accused of using privileged information for their own welfare, contrary to the laws that govern such conduct.

Credibility! That word has become the headline for every news story about famous religious personalities who, while being accused of every sin imaginable, are referred to as having lost their credibility!

What that simply means is that, in the eyes of some, they have lost their right to be believed, because they may not be what they claim to be. But, Beloved, before we throw too many stones, credibility is the key issue in your witness and mine in the marketplace in which we live, as well. So often we represent ourselves to be more than we really are, or we fail to represent God to be who He really is, until those around us no longer know what to believe, so they believe nothing.

The world is confused. They hear the message, and they like what they hear. Then they see us, and they hate what they see. We, then, must bear the responsibility for the gap between what we say and what we do.

In no arena of life is this problem more pronounced than in the area of decision-making. As Christians who claim to have God directing our every step, we bellow in public that "God led us to do that," or "God told us to do this," only to fall on our faces, then subtly imply that, "Well, even God makes mistakes." No, Beloved, God does not make mistakes. We do. And one of the mistakes we make is making our "feelings" about God's will public in an unbelieving world, rather than

simply communicating confidence in the sovereignty of our precious God. We portray God as the superintendent of a heavenly welfare program, who is waiting to bail us out when we ask for a job, or we need some money, or we ask to get well. And then when it is not His will to do what we are proposing, or at least not in the way we are proposing, we make some off-the-wall excuse for Him, communicate our "Praise the Lord anyway" theology, and press on. No wonder the world is confused.

Our God is sovereign. Nothing is outside His power. Nothing is outside His knowledge. He can do anything He chooses, but He is not bound to do anything we choose. Finding God's will, then, is not a matter of praying Him into our corner, but rather of finding, through the unchanging absolutes of His Word, what it is He wants us to do.

That is what we have been studying these past few weeks: how to find, through the absolutes of Scripture, the perfect will of God. In our last lesson, we looked at a few of those absolutes, and the corresponding principles they produced.

1- We looked first at the absolute of promotion or success found in Psalm 75:6,7. We found it to be a reflection of the nature of a God who is omniscient. Because He knows everything, He alone knows who to lift up, and who to put down. He knows which believers can handle success, and which ones can't. He knows our hearts. So it isn't our task to politic for a promotion, or to publicize our talents, or to desire success at the expense of another. Should we need to do so, in order to get what we're praying about, our decision is already made.

2- Then we looked at the absolute of the temple of God found in I Corinthians 3:16. It's an absolute based on the fact that God is Spirit. It surfaced principle after principle that confirmed that we cannot run from God. So if we are unconsciously making a decision to reduce the heat God has placed in our lives to change us, we'd better sit still and let Him finish His precious work. It also taught us that God will never leave us or forsake us, for He is in us. Therefore, we never make a decision based on the fact that if we go where

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we think we are being called, we'll be lonely. We cannot be truly lonely with God living in us. The principles of adultery and unequal yoking also surface directly in Scripture from this absolute. We are the temple of the Living God, therefore, we cannot join ourselves together with those who are not of God without ultimately suffering the consequences. So, if we are struggling over a partnership or a relationship with unbelievers, we need not fret. The decision is already made.

3- We looked at the absolute of God's comfort found in I Corinthians 1 the first few verses. It's an unchanging reality based on the mercy of God. We learned how to pray when the sky is falling. We also learned that our ministries will one day be the result of God's comfort in times of trouble. Therefore, if our decision is to take the easy way out, we have decided, in many cases, to avoid God's best.

4- We looked finally at the absolute that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (II Corinthians 15:58). It's an absolute based on God's faithfulness, and we discovered the principles of treasures, of rewards, of jealousy, of sowing and reaping, of planting and watering. These principles made it clear that our decisions must be made in our ministries, for example, based on whether or not we are being faithful to the Living Word of God, rather than whether or not we are seeing results or numbers. In fact, I believe Satan often produces results in a ministry to lead us off course and to lead us to try to do God's will using the world's methods, ignoring the fact that God's ways are so much higher.

So we determined that the foundation for all Christian decision-making is the foundation of God's absolutes, absolutes that spring from God's nature, thus producing principles that teach us how "to make the right decision every time." That's what Proverbs 2:9 tells us God's Word will do. Because Proverbs is a book of principles, here's a suggestion. When you read Proverbs from now on, every time you come across a principle (which will be almost every verse) try to find the absolute behind each principle, and then look for that aspect of God's nature behind each absolute, and you will begin to build a superstructure upon which to make wise decisions.

Today's study is designed to take this concept of absolutes, and place over it now a grid that allows us to see the overall plan and purpose of God in all decisions, a purpose which allows us to apply the absolutes and make it work in practical, everyday situations. We will go on in the next few lessons and look at how to pray for the will of God, how to act on the will of God, and what to do once you have. Our lesson outline is:

- I- The Purpose
- II- The Priorities
- III- The Practical

### THE PURPOSE

Why are you alive, anyway? Why has God created you? Why has God saved you? We need to remind ourselves at the outset that in order to determine the will of God, we must always remember the purpose of God for every choice we make. (Back to our definition of the will of God from Matthew 6:10.)

*The will of God is the individual plan of God for you that will best bring in the Kingdom of God, and thus accrue the most glory to God.*

You and I have only one reason for existing: to glorify God! That is why we were born (Isaiah 43:7): to glorify God. That is why we were reborn (John 17:10): to glorify God. That is why we are tested (I Peter 4:14): to glorify God. Everything that comes into our lives comes into our lives for one basic purpose—not to give us enjoyment, not to use our talents or gifts, not to amplify our spirituality, not to give God a helping hand—to bring glory to God. So that is the purpose of God for our lives. Therefore, any decision we are called upon to make, must be made in the light of that one fact! We must ask ourselves at the outset of every decision-making session, “*What choice will bring the most Glory to God?*”

When Jesus was preparing to return to the Father, He gave this account of His work on earth.

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. (John 17:4 NKJV)

Jesus had one reason for existing on planet earth. So do we, to glorify God!

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So there is our one and only basic premise for decision-making: "What will most glorify God?" If taking that job (or not taking that job), or buying that house (or not buying that house) will most glorify God, Beloved, the decision is made.

For this cause were we born, Beloved,  
For this cause do earth's paths we trod,  
For only one reason do we exist,  
We exist to *glorify God!*

So we have a basic measuring stick against which to measure every choice we make in life...and the absolutes of Scripture are the markers on that eternal yardstick.

### THE PRIORITIES

If the purpose of God in every decision we make is to glorify God, then we must set about to establish some priorities to accomplish that. In other words, we must find out what it takes to glorify God; and whenever there is a choice, automatically make choices in the order of their importance. We were, remember, looking at a hypothetical family (the Ed Wilson family), and a decision they are trying to make about taking another job in another part of the country. It's a job that offers great career opportunities and the kind of challenge that Ed always looks for. We will also, as we go, consider how these principles apply to such basic decisions as relationships, ministries, and financial decisions. These seem to be the four major areas of decision-making for Christians: career, relationships, ministries, and finances... and they seem to often appear in that order. Let's imagine that you are that family, and that you have a major decision to make: do we accept that promotion or not? Remember, you want to do whatever will most glorify God. How can you know?

1- Well, first we have to consider the primary factor in the decision-making process. Paul told us there was one driving factor in his life that determined how he made all of his decisions in Philippians 3:8-10. He said, here is why I exist:

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection,  
and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to  
His death, (Philippians 3:10 NKJV)

Paul is saying that if everything else had to be stripped away from his life, his prestige, his acceptance, his success, it wouldn't matter. In fact, if he were to end up rotting in a Roman prison, rather than standing in a synagogue exercising his authority, it wouldn't matter to him; he counted all of that as refuse, that He might know Christ. So Beloved, whether the decision involves how you spend your time, your money, or your influence, where you spend your time, your money, or your influence, or even if you spend your time, your money, or your influence, if it means diminishing your walk with Christ even one iota (be it by moral compromise, wrong relationships, or the absence of time to be with Him), fret no more over that decision. You say, "Well, it may well harm my walk with God," but Paul is saying, end of discussion. Issue closed. You say, "But that job will double my income, and I'll have more to give away." God isn't concerned with what you have to give away, Beloved, that all comes from Him anyway. God is concerned with one thing...that you know Him, in all of His power, in all of His majesty, in all of His reality. And anything that diminishes that is second best. If the decision is still not made, move on.

2- The second question to ask is this: "What choice will best allow God to form His character in you?" Want a good yardstick for determining God's will? (Here is where we depart 180° from the world's philosophy and counsel.) Make a list of your character weaknesses, and ask yourself, "Which of these choices will best allow God to develop that quality in me?" You say, "I need patience." Then make the decision that will force you to be tested. It is the "testing of your faith that produces patience." (James 1:3 NKJV). You say, "I need humility." Then make the choice that will be least likely to exalt your strengths and your talents (Luke 14:11). "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God" (I Peter 5:6a NKJV). You say, "I detest authority." Then put yourself under someone who is cruel, unjust, and likely to place undue pressure on you to respond, and stay there until God is finished shaping you into a submissive saint (I Peter 2:13,14). You say, "I need to learn to be more content with what I have." Then put yourself in the place where you will be forced to do so (I Timothy 6:6). No, those are not the



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world's criteria for making choices. That, Beloved, is all the more reason we know they are God's! Is your decision still not made? Move on:

3- The third basic priority in the decision-making process is "What will most honor our commitments to those for whom we are responsible?" For most of us, that involves primarily our families: our children, our spouses, or in some cases, our parents. First, our eternal commitment is to know God. Secondly, our eternal purpose is to let God become Himself in us. And thirdly, our earthly commitments that are to be eternally binding. A man's commitment to his wife is "in sickness, in health, till death do us part." It is a binding agreement in heaven, made on earth. So if there is a choice to be made and that choice would perhaps increase your visibility, even guarantee you success, but decreases your effectiveness with your family, be careful. We have a binding responsibility to consider them before our own well-being. And wives, that's true of you as well. If you have a career opportunity that will in any way diminish your effectiveness as a wife or as a mother, you are stepping out into a field loaded with spiritual landmines.

4- The next consideration, and it's often the most overlooked, would be: "What decision will most honor our commitments to those to whom we are responsible?" If you left that job now, would you have honored the commitment you made to your present employer? (Not in your eyes, in his.) Would you be demonstrating the Godly quality of loyalty? Of faithfulness? Would you be illustrating God's sovereignty in timing, by waiting until your present employer freed you from your commitment to him before you considered another job? Our God is a faithful God. He keeps His Word no matter what! He in us will do no less.

5- Once you have considered these things, be sure you have considered the principle of mission-field placement and the will of God. Ask yourself: "Which choice would best place me on the mission field of planet earth where I could best be used to reach those God has been equipping me to reach?" Your witness is the result of the grace God has given you as you have been tested thus far (II Corinthians 1:3,4). Being in

the best place to use that witness is eminently more important than how much money you make, how happy you are, how comfortable you are, how much security you have. Jesus had no money, no place to lay His head, no security in His ministry, and no security with the religious establishment. In fact, viewed from the vantage point of today's standards of religious "success", His ministry was a total failure. He wasn't in it for success. He was in it to glorify the Father. So are you. So am I. Wherever He wants to put us, is where we need to be.

Only when these five criteria have been considered, ought we to even look at the basic issues the world uses in making decisions. (Such as more money or more security.) Do we really need more money? Can we really handle more money? Certainly not at the expense of the five great priorities for glorifying God! Yes, it is true we are to provide for our families; to do less makes us worse than infidels. But provide in the scriptural sense is a word that bears no resemblance to what you and I consider provision. God Himself only promised His children food and clothing and that, in whatever measure He deemed appropriate. Don't lay a guilt trip on one of His children to do more. Those who can work but won't, are subject even to discipline by the church. That goes without saying. But to sacrifice your walk with Christ, or what God is trying to do in your life, or your family's spiritual growth, or your witness to those in authority over you, or the ministry God has prepared where He wants to send you, under the guise of needing to provide "things" for your family, because others have them, is the devil's lie. Don't buy it.

So that is our singular purpose in decision-making: to glorify God.

And those are our basic priorities in doing so:

- 1- To be where we can know Him more intimately
- 2- To be where we can be sandpapered into His likeness more perfectly.
- 3- To be responsive to those for whom we are responsible.
- 4- To be responsible to those to whom we are responsible.
- 5- To be available to go where we are most needed to use

the message of our lives that God has given us as He has applied grace to our own spiritual pilgrimage.

### THE PRACTICAL

Now with those thoughts in mind, let's make some decisions. We'll look at some illustrations, some explanations, and some answers:

First, Ed Wilson. (We've left this poor guy waiting for weeks now, wondering if he was going to move, stay put, or quit and get a job at a gas station.) Let's move in on his problem:

If you remember, Ed has a job. A good one. But he has been offered a chance to leave that job, move 2,000 miles across the country to a "better opportunity" and a big move up the career ladder. It will mean much more money, much more responsibility, and much more chance for advancement. His family, you recall, is not too keen on the idea. His pastor questioned whether or not Ed was spiritually ready for that much pressure or that much success. But most of his counsel was positive. And he "felt" a "peace" about it. Not only that, but God, he said, "miraculously opened the door." In other words, he hadn't sought the job.

Now let's hold up this decision against the grid of the purpose and priorities of God.

1- To most glorify God, Ed must be in the place to best know God.

He has been enrolled in a Bible study training program for a year. This new job, however, will cause him to travel during the week, and he will have to forfeit that. His pastor concluded that as a young Christian, he is just beginning to grow. He is meeting regularly with another guy in the church who is teaching him to have fellowship with God, and gain victory over besetting sins. He can grow anywhere. That's true. But he is not yet mature enough, according to those in authority over him, to leave that somewhat protected environment. So that's a big negative. But Ed is not convinced. He thinks he can find some other way to grow, and after all, the pressure will force him to walk with God. Right? Not necessarily, but let's move on.

2- To glorify God, Ed must go where his weaknesses can be turned to strengths, not where his strengths can be exalted. This job is a great honor. Ed does not need a great honor. He has a problem with pride. He always wants to be the first to do the most and be the best. His drive to succeed is honorable, but it is a spiritual deterrent. If Ed were honest, his three great needs in life are humility, submission, and faithfulness. But Ed has rationalized that God needs his talents in this new job, and that he will become more faithful, as soon as he has the right kind of authority to respond to. Ed is ignoring an absolute. "The powers [authorities] that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). God placed Ed under that boss he now has, who is such a perfectionist. He can remove that pressure, or so he thinks, by moving. He overlooked another absolute, didn't he? "The Temple of God" absolute. So Ed is still leaning towards going.

3- Ed loves his family. He takes the kids fishing, sends his wife valentine cards, and buys them all the latest gadgets. But he's one of those "macho" men who came into the kingdom and found to their delight, that women were to submit to their own husbands. He hadn't yet come to understand what "submit" means, and he didn't understand fully what "loving her as Christ loved the church" meant, but in general, he liked the idea. What he missed, however, was that while she was to submit to his final authority, she was one of the key elements in God's network of leading his life. Her sensitivity, her love for him, and her understanding of spiritual things made her his best source of counsel. Not only that, but if she felt uncomfortable about going, and there was any doubt at all, that should have settled the issue. She saw in him potential problems that Satan would exploit in this new job. She saw the time with the children diminishing to nothing, the time with growing Christians giving way to pressurized relationships with people who would try to lead him astray, a pressure he wasn't ready for. So she quietly urged him to consider saying, "No." His answer was, "I'm the one God has charged with this decision. Pray for me." Believe me, she was.

4- Ed's present job and present employer have been good to him. They took him with no experience, trained him,

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and gave him a salary beyond what he ever hoped for. They looked to him, for he was the only Christian at his level in the company. Were they to be approached about his leaving, they would have felt betrayed, disappointed, and used. Ed didn't tell them, for fear they would put pressure on him to stay, or would fire him for considering the change. So he never placed himself under their authority to let God give him direction as to whether or not this move was of Him and so that God could work in that boss's heart if He so chose, and could release Ed with a clear testimony.

The the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord...He turns it wherever He wishes. (Proverbs 21:1 NKJV)

But Ed didn't buy that.

5- Finally, Ed was starting a Bible study where he was now working, and had just begun discipling one of the guys in his office. God seemed to have sent him to that company, as He would send rain to a dry desert. There were no believers there, and the field was ripe unto harvest. To leave now would be to walk away from a group of people who were coming alive spiritually, in order to better himself economically. When confronted with these issues, Ed hung his head and said, "But all those are things that affect other people. What about me?"

Ed, you weren't born to please you. You were born to glorify God. And you weren't redeemed to become successful; you were redeemed to glorify God. What would best glorify God, Ed? The place where you would best know God, best be conformed to His image, best respond to your family, best show responsibility to your present boss, and best be on the mission field where God in His sovereignty has sent you. "But I feel so good about it," Ed responds. Sure you do, Ed. It's what you have always wanted. But is it what God has always wanted for you? He knows your heart, Ed. Promotion doesn't come from man; real promotion comes from God. Satan saw to it that you "felt right about it", Ed, to lead you to trust your feelings instead of the absolutes of Scripture. And your counsel? Well, most of them sensed what you wanted to hear, and told it to you. But the ones who knew you best, your wife and your pastor, the two you were most accountable

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to and for, saw God's hand and said, "No." That's why in a "multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 24:6b). Most of us keep going till we find someone who tells us what we want to hear and then consider that counsel "to be of God." Bad move.

Ed's final argument was that God "opened the door." If you have to violate God's best to go through a door, Satan opened it. God allowed it, not to tempt you—God cannot tempt you (James 1:13) but to test you (Romans 12:2), so you can prove what the good and acceptable will of God is. That's Ed Wilson's story. And the decision is up to him. If he uses the common trilogy of counsel, leading, and open doors, he'll go. If he stops and looks at the absolutes of Scripture in the light of the purpose of God as it is revealed in the priorities of God, he won't touch that job with a ten-foot pole.

Now apply that same yardstick to the decisions that are facing you. Whether or not to buy that house. Whether or not to take that promotion. Whether or not to borrow that money. Whether or not to form that partnership. Whether or not to make that investment. Whether or not to marry that person. Whether or not to say "Yes," to that ministry. Whether or not to join that organization. Whether or not to flee that marriage, or that job, or that responsibility. Ed's absolutes may have been more obvious than yours, I don't know. Or yours may be crystal clear compared to his. The key is waiting on God until it is clear. If those around you are demanding decisions before God makes it clear, Beloved, don't yield to their pressures. God owns the clock, and if it's His will, it'll wait for His Word. Always.

Proverbs 2:9 is right. We can make wise decisions every time. We can examine the absolutes of Scripture in the light of God's character, and lay them over the grid of the purpose, and the priorities of the Christian life, until we find what will be most likely to bring in the kingdom, and make God's will to be done, on earth as it is in heaven. And we can know what is His good, and acceptable, and perfect will. Once we know it, we can do it.

So, let's make it work. Let's not just be hearers of the

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Word, agreeing in principle, then leaving here to go out and move based on feelings and open doors, the way we may have in the past. Let's make it work. Let's pour the Scriptures into our lives until its absolutes are such a part of our being that the minute a decision appears on the horizon, the Holy Spirit can recall to our minds that absolute that stems from His nature and those principles that pour from His Word, until we, indeed, make the right decision every time.

The right decision is the one that will bring the most glory to God. And isn't that what we really want? Isn't that why we were born? Then, let's make decisions God's way, Beloved. Let's make it work!

Let's pray,

*Our gracious and loving God,*

*Oh, how we thank You for Your Word, the solid rock in a world of shifting sands, the authority that never changes, the absolutes that will not let us down, the reality in a world that has lost sight of reality.*

*Teach us this week, our Father, to take whatever time we have been spending pouring Your Word into our lives and multiply it that we might have that foundation within us that cannot be shaken.*

*And then, Father, when we have decisions to make, may we make those decisions not in the light of how we feel about it, not in the light of the circumstances that surround us, but in the light of Your unchanging perfect plan for our lives. And may we make the decision that will bring the most glory to You.*

*In Jesus name,*

*Amen*

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