Fil-Am Community Church
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Key Verse Proverbs 1:1-7

**GOD’S GUIDELINES FOR DECISION-MAKING**

"The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance— for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline."  Proverbs 1:1-7 (NIV)

Good morning! It’s Sunday once again and all Christians in America are gathered this morning like us to worship and celebrate Jesus. Jesus is the reason why we’re here. He deserves all our praises and adoration. Amen? And tonight, people all across America will also be gathered in their homes to worship the Super Bowl. Oops, I mean, to celebrate Super Bowl. Don’t get me wrong. Nothing wrong about watching Super Bowl. I’ll be watching it myself. It is when someone gets his priorities mixed-up that it becomes wrong. Like paying thousands of dollars to watch it when you really don’t have that money. I heard yesterday on the radio that the farthest seat in the stadium cost over $3000. And that’s the farthest seat. Imagine just how much the nearest seat cost. That’s why some writers are calling out Americans’ idolatrous obsession of the sport. For us Christians, church comes first, football second, or third, or fourth. Amen.

Anyway, I read that football is now considered to be America’s favorite pastime. As a Filipino, it wasn’t my favorite until I came to the States. I remember
years ago. I was in Hawaii undergoing missionary training with YWAM. It was January 1992. I don’t know anything about football but I have a football poster of the New York Jets hanging on the wall of my bedroom.

I don’t remember anymore how I got it. Probably it was given to me by my cousin in California. So, everyone who came into my room and saw the poster thought I was a fan of the Jets. And they would talk to me about football and all I said was “yes”, “uh-huh”, or I simply nodded my head. Then, the big day came. It was the 26th of January. It was 6:00 pm. There was a commotion outside. I heard some trainees shouting “Bills”, “Bills”, and others were shouting “Redskins”, “Redskins”. A couple of them came to my room and said, “Rolly, let’s watch the game. You’re rooting for the Redskins, right?” I said, “Sure.” I didn’t even know who the Redskins were. I thought, “Maybe they are watching a John Wayne movie.” To make a long story short, all of the students were so noisy and loud, laughing, teasing each other, making fun of each other while watching the game in the living room. As for me, I just went along with them and pretended to be having fun, too, while I tried to makes heads and tails of what I was seeing on TV. At the time, I didn’t care who won. But who won? The Redskins. And that, folks, was my unceremonial introduction to the world of American football. But whoever thought I’d be hooked to it as well?

Which brings us to our topic this morning, “God’s Guidelines for Decision-Making”. You see, life is like football. In order to win in football, your decision-making must be sound and, ideally, impeccable. Coaches must be able to make the right calls. Just one wrong decision could be disastrous and cost you the game. Like in last year’s Super Bowl. In the waning seconds of the game, the Seattle Seahawks were just a yard away from repeating as champions. But the Seahawks decided on a pass play instead of a rushing play. They paid dearly because the pass was intercepted by the New England Patriots and the Seahawks lost the game. The
decision to pass was heavily criticized. One sports figure even called it the worst
decision ever in football history.

What went wrong? I guess the Seahawks coach somehow failed to follow football
coaching guidelines. He veered away from the guidelines and tried something he
thought, in his own mind, was better. And so, his team didn’t get to the point where
they wanted to be.

We, too, can lose our bearings, get lost in the journey, not arrive in our
destination if we don’t follow God’s guidelines, if we make decisions based on what
is right in our own minds.

This is the last part in our series on “Where Do I Go From Here?” We’ve been
looking at how to know God’s will and how to do God’s will. This morning, I’m
going to share with you some basic guidelines from the Word of God that will help
us in our decision-making.

When it comes to making decisions, many of you, perhaps, like me, have
made some decisions that you regretted. Why do we make bad decisions? Why do
we keep making bad decisions?

There are three basic reasons why we make bad decisions. The Basis for Most
Bad Decisions are these:
1. Following your feelings

The most common basis for bad decision making is just following your feelings.
People tell us all the time, "Just follow your feelings, just go with your gut, just
follow your feelings." That is just the opposite of what you should do because your
feelings are all over the place. Your emotions are up and down and they're not
consistent, and so if you follow your feelings, you'll definitely get off God's path for
your life. The problem is our feelings mislead us.

If you follow your feelings, then it's going to get you into all kinds of trouble
because many of the decisions that are the best decisions we could ever make don't feel right at first. They don't feel natural at first. If you just follow your feelings, it’ll definitely lead you down the wrong path.

People even call it gut feeling. I have a gut feeling something’s bad is going to happen. I don’t know why we have to base it on our gut. I feel my gut and it’s getting bigger and bigger and it’s not a good feeling. That’s why you don’t follow your feelings. They're unreliable. If you only made decisions based on your feelings you wouldn't be here at church today because it’s so cold and you probably didn't feel like getting up, but you did. Don’t rely on your feelings.

The second basis for making bad decisions is

2. Letting circumstances decide

You can't rely on circumstances because they're always changing as well. There was a time in the Book of Acts where the Apostle Paul was in prison and he was being sent to Rome. They put him on a ship and God spoke to him and told him that if they set sail the ship was going to wreck. So he tells the captain, “Hey, God told me that if we set sail today then we're going to go into a storm and it's going to end in a disaster.” The captain who was a well-seasoned sailor said, "That's ridiculous. The weather is perfect today for sailing. I'm not going to listen to you and your God.” So they set sail and sure enough they sailed right into a terrible storm, and the ship was wrecked upon the rocks and destroyed. That's because the weather changed. Circumstances change. So, don't rely on circumstances.

Another basis for bad decision making is

3. Looking to popular opinion

You see, you can't rely on conventional wisdom and popular opinion because it’s always changing. People are fickle. If you run with the crowd, you'll be running down the wrong path for sure. Nowadays, people value Oprah’s opinion or Dr. Phil’s opinion on many matters in life. But we know their opinions mostly are their
own opinions and they’re not better than the opinion of the person next to you. Feelings, circumstances, opinions, these are the basis for most bad decisions. What then is the basis for good decisions?

The only solid basis for good decision making is divine wisdom because that never changes. Divine wisdom. God wants to give every one of us divine wisdom.

There was a time in the Old Testament where Solomon became king in place of his father, David. Solomon was a young man, very inexperienced in leadership and one night he was having a dream and God came to him in the dream and said, “Solomon, I'm going to give you anything you want, one thing, anything. Whatever it is, you name the one thing you want most and I'll give it to you instantly.” Now, what if God came to you and He said, “I want to give you one thing, anything you want, you name it, you have it. What is the one thing you want most?” I mean that would be a tough decision, wouldn't it? I mean I can think of a thousand things. Would it be health? Would it be wealth? Would it be prosperity? Some preachers say that those are the things God promises you – health, wealth and prosperity. Don’t believe that. Anyway, would it be fame? Would it be a bigger body? Would it be hair? Do you know what Solomon picked? Divine wisdom. And God was so pleased with his request that he said, "Solomon, I'm going to give you what you asked for, divine wisdom, and you're going to be the wisest man who ever lived, but I'm also going to give you what you didn't ask for. I'm going to give you success and honor and prestige and fame and a long life. I'm going to give you all these other things that you didn't ask for because divine wisdom is the one thing that changes everything else."

In fact, the word for success in the Hebrew, the root of that word for success literally means the ability to make wise decisions. Well, what is divine wisdom? It's not intellect. I mean you can have a really high IQ and still make dumb decisions. We see that every day. It's not about being smart. It's not about education as
important as that is. It's not even about common sense; it goes beyond that. In short, it is not human wisdom.

Let me give you a biblical definition of divine wisdom. Divine wisdom is the God-given ability to make decisions from a divine and eternal perspective. The God-given ability to make decisions from a divine and eternal perspective. It is God-given because it doesn't come naturally. It comes supernaturally. It's a gift from God; and like all of God's gifts, we don't earn it or deserve it but God wants to give every one of us divine wisdom, that ability to make decisions from a divine and eternal perspective. God wants to give you that kind of wisdom. Also, underline eternal perspective in that definition because here's the key. God wants to give you an eternal perspective where you see the big picture. Any problem that comes your way, you see the big picture. Any situation or issue you're facing, you see the big picture and what's important. God wants to give you that kind of eternal perspective.

Several years ago I was driving with my family and we were going to Bear Mountain in California. We were on one of those two lane roads winding through the mountains that was really only one lane but there were two lanes of traffic, and I remember every time I came to a bend in that road, I would slow down and lose all my momentum because I didn't know if an eighteen wheeler would be coming around the other side. And I thought to myself, "Wouldn't it be great, just imagine, I had a helicopter, someone up there in a helicopter overviewing the whole mountain and they could see way ahead and they could radio down to me. 'Rolly, don't lose momentum. Keep going. There's nothing coming. You can go around this bend or hey, you need to slow down. There's an eighteen wheeler coming up two or three curves down.'" I mean that would be great. You would never lose your momentum, and you would know what's coming. That's the way God is. He's not limited by time and space. He's in the past, present and future all at the same time, and He wants to
give you that overview, that eternal perspective so that you can make decisions not based on the moment but based on His eternal purpose, and that's how you gain momentum with divine wisdom.

Now, let’s look at the benefits of divine wisdom.

First it says

1. Insight. In verse 2 it says, “for understanding words of insight"

   Divine wisdom gives you insight to see things on a deeper level, to look deeper into an issue, to look underneath the surface of a problem. When you have divine wisdom, you have this insight to look beneath the surface of a situation to see the root cause, what's really happening. God gives you the insight to say, "Wait a minute. Something else is going on here. Something deeper is happening here. This problem could be the very thing that God uses in my life so I'm going to give it to Him, and I'm going to trust Him with it.”

   For example, when you're having conflict in a relationship, you need divine wisdom to give you insight into the conflict because if not, you'll just be arguing over surface issues, and most married couples argue over the same things over and over again and they never get anywhere and make any progress in the conflict. If you don't have insight to see that the root cause of conflict is always hurt, insecurity or frustration and if you don't have that insight, then you'll just be arguing thinking these surface things are the reason and they're not. And so, it's so important in relationships to have divine wisdom so that you can really see what's happening and have the insight to deal with it.

2. Foresight

   Divine wisdom also gives you foresight. That's the ability to see where the path leads before you take a step onto the path. It says in verse 5, “let the discerning get guidance." Foresight is being able to discern what will happen in the future. But it doesn’t mean prophecy or prediction. It is like after getting all the facts, you are
able to determine the best course of action. In chess, for example, you have to have keen foresight to win. You have to think many moves ahead. You gain this foresight by studying the position of the pieces on the board and even studying the past games of your opponent.

Foresight comes with divine wisdom. God wants us to make decisions based on how our decisions will impact our lives and the lives of others. A good example of someone who had keen foresight was Mordechai, the cousin of Esther in the Bible. When King Xerxes of Persia was looking for a woman to replace his wife, the former queen, Mordechai had the foresight to have Esther apply for the position, so to speak. She was chosen. And then, Mordechai also had the foresight to instruct Esther not to reveal her nationality or background. In the end, Esther was used by God to save the Jews from sure annihilation in the hands of the Persians.

3. Hindsight

This may be the most important benefit of divine wisdom. It's the ability to look back and learn from our mistakes. In verse 3 it says, "for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life." Let me focus on disciplined. You see, we learn wisdom from God's discipline. When we make a wrong choice, a bad decision, we go down a wrong path and we start feeling pain. That's God discipline because He loves us. He does it out of love for us because He doesn't want us to go to the end of that path. And if you're going through a lot of pain right now, you want to ask, "Am I going through all this pain because of a choice I made?" You see, sometimes you go through pain and difficulty because you're following God's path or maybe you have taken a different path, but in any case, if you have divine wisdom, you have the foresight to see and say, "Wait a minute. If I just hang in there, the miracle is just around the bend. It's tough right now but I know that God has a purpose in this problem because there's no problem without a purpose for a Christ follower." God's love comes through discipline sometimes. Because he wants you to grow and become mature in your
decision making.

Now, if divine wisdom gives me insight, foresight and hindsight, how do I get divine wisdom? Well it's listed in verse 7 of Chapter 1 and again in Proverbs 9:10. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

That's the key. That's how it all starts. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now we're not talking about being scared of God. When we think of the fear of the Lord, usually we think of being really scared, being really afraid of God, and I know a lot of people are afraid of God today. I know that because they're afraid of pastors. I walk into a party and it kills the party. It's like, "Whoa, Pastor Rolly, oh, so glad you came. Wow. Hey, can you wait outside for just a minute. I've got to do a little clean up in here." So if people are scared of little old pastors, I know that they're scared of God but you don't have to be scared of God. You don't have to be afraid of God. That's why Christ came as a baby at Christmas. No one's afraid of a baby. He wanted you to know, "Don't be afraid of me; I want to have a relationship with you." So the fear of the Lord doesn't mean being scared or afraid; what it literally means is to be in awe and reverence for God alone, to be in awe and reverence for Christ alone. It's awe and reverence. The most overused word in the English language is what? Awesome. And the next is Whatever. That's awesome. Whatever. Well, we need to give some awe to God because He's the only one that deserves our awe.

(English is funny sometimes. Because we have the word awesome and awful. Awesome is just some awe. But awful is full of awe. I’m confused about which one to use sometimes)

So, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And this wisdom helps you to decide which comes first in your life. You see, many people today have their priorities mixed up. They exchange the spiritual for the material. They desire the temporary rather than the eternal. They long for things that don’t matter instead of things that matter in life.
So, divine wisdom teaches me (What Divine Wisdom Teaches Me) to focus on the things of God by

1. Giving God the first part of the week

That means being faithful in coming to church to meet with God. Some may say, “I’m just so busy. I’m so swamped. We don't have time to really be involved in church. Don't have time.” That's not putting God in His rightful place of reverence and awe. He'll still love you the same but you'll miss out on the blessings.

I remember the story of this guy who woke up really grumpy one Sunday morning. He went downstairs and saw his wife who was already having coffee and invited him to join her. She noticed how haggard he looked and she said, “Bob, it’s Sunday. Get dressed and take that scowl off your face. We’re going to church.”

“Sorry, sweetheart. I don’t feel like going. I’m tired.”

“But we have to go, Bob. You know that.”

“Give me one good reason I should go,” Bob said.

And his wife said, “You’re the pastor.”

The Bible says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

It’s saying that it is in gatherings of believers like in the church where you can receive encouragement and comfort, not only from the sermon, but also from the fellowship. God knows we need a shot in the arm to boost our spiritual energy to start the week. He cares about you. But more than anything else, coming to church, whatever your feeling is, as long as you’re able, is saying, “Lord, you are first in my life.” Wherever you may be, even if you’re on vacation, strive to go to a place where you can worship God.

If that’s not practical, worship him with your family or friends where you may be
staying. Give God the first part of your week.

And then, divine wisdom also teaches me this.

2. Giving God the first part of everyday.

Psalm 5:3 says, “Each morning I will look to You in Heaven and lay my request before You praying earnestly.”

What’s the first thing our hands reach for the moment we wake up? The Bible? I hope so. But in this fast-paced, high-tech world, we want to get updated right away, and instead of the Bible, we reach for what? Our phones. To check Facebook. I know. Been there, still doing it. I’m guilty. I have to discipline myself. Some say, I reach for my phone because I have a Bible app. But there’s too much temptation. Because all around the Bible app is FB, and Twitter, and Instagram, and Candy Crush. That’s why it’s nice to have beside your bed, the plain, old-fashioned, physical Bible.

Do you know that Facebook can be addicting? Some of you are nodding your heads. You’re guilty. A few years back we have friends who visited us. They are a husband and wife. The wife confessed that there was a time she was so enamored by Farmville that that’s what’s on her mind day and night. She would even wake up in the middle of the night just to check out her farm. She didn’t want to miss any gifts or supplies her BFF’s have sent her. This went on for several months until she realized what was happening to her and she decided once and for all to remove her account. Then, after a while, she reactivated it and lo and behold, the first thing she saw was an invitation to Farmville. There’s just a lot of temptations and distractions out there that can take our focus away from the Word of God.

But folks, hear me, if there’s anything I want you to get addicted to, it’s the Bible. Be addicted to God’s Word. The way you hunger for Facebook, or a TV program like “Ang Probinsyano”, hunger for God’s Word in the same way.

The problem is, though we may be hungry, we procrastinate. We put it off and
attend to other things we think are more important. But honestly, there is nothing in this world that should be as urgent, as important or as enjoyable to you as spending time with God at the beginning of each day. That’s when you become more like God. That’s where you gain the strength to get through the day.

Give God the first part of the week, the first part of the day and then the third thing

3. Giving God the first consideration in every decision I make.

Every single decision. Have you ever made a big decision without praying about it? Sometimes, it’s because the deal is amazing! It’s on sale. 50% off. We easily fall prey to slick advertising. Until we find out it’s just fluff inside the shiny veneer. I remember one time when I was new here in the States, and I was excited, I bought a car, and I didn't pray about it. Maybe I did but didn’t wait for God’s answer. I couldn’t pass off a great deal. It was an amazing deal, but that car was a lemon. It was the worst deal I ever made. Until I learned the principle of divine stewardship instead of ownership, that you don't own anything, it's all God's. You just temporarily are using it, and I figured that out and I said, "God, your car is a lemon. What are you going to do with your car?" And then He faithfully reminded me that I can't blame Him because I didn't even pray about it. God says, "It's not my fault. You got that car. That's your car." And I kept trying to give it back to God. He wouldn't take it. So, before we buy anything we always pray about it. Pray for it before you pay for it. I mean God cares about every little decision. Give Him first consideration in every decision.

Here's what's amazing. When you start making little decisions with divine wisdom, it's a ripple effect that changes everything – your life, the lives of people around you, and it changes generations. It's amazing. God never asks you to take a big, blind leap of faith.

He always asks you to take one little step of faith, and when you take one little step,
sometimes that one little step can change generations, the ripple effect that ripples through generations. I've seen so many people who made a faith commitment to Christ, and they came to Christ and they took a step onto the path of wisdom and then their kids started growing up, learning about Christ and they fell in love with Christ, and now I see grandkids that are following Jesus. The legacies are amazing. It's amazing, just one little step.

So what is the divine decision God wants you to take today? One little step. Just one little step. It makes all the difference.

Let’s all bow our heads and close our eyes. After all is done, the one greatest decision you’ll ever make is to give to God, not only the first part of your life, but the whole part of your life. That means making a commitment to God to follow him, to do his will in your life. And the very first thing is to make sure that you have a living, intimate, and personal relationship with his son Jesus Christ. In a little while, we’re going to have the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper tells us that Jesus Christ died for your sins. Probably, you have done or are doing things that you’re ashamed of. And you want to get rid of that guilt. Jesus can take away that guilt. All you need to do is to ask forgiveness for your sins.