RELATE
CHURCH

Your Journey With Christ · Discipleship · Lesson 13 of 27

Knowing God's Will

Relate Church • Foundations for a Growing Faith

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

PROVERBS 3:5

Introduction

Sometimes it may seem to you that God's will is hidden behind a locked door. Is this really true? Is God keeping His plans from you because they are a hidden secret? Or does He want you follow Him as He leads you step by step?

Proverbs 3:5-7 encourages us to:

> [5] *Trust in the LORD with all your heart*
> *and lean not on your own understanding;*
> [6] *in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*
> [7] *Do not be wise in your own eyes;*
> *fear the LORD and shun evil.*
>
> **Proverbs 3:5-7 NIV**

The key to knowing God's will is understanding His heart for you and developing a good relationship with Him.

> *The will of God is not like a magic package let down from heaven by a string. The will of God is far more like a scroll that unrolls every day…. The will of God is something to be discerned and to be lived out every day of our lives. It is not something to be grasped as a package once for all. Our call, therefore, is basically not to follow a plan or a blueprint, or to go to a place or take up a work, but rather to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. —Paul Little, Affirming the Will of God*

God's Will is Already Revealed

As a follower of Jesus, He expects us to walk wisely and to understand what His will is.

> [15] *Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,* [16] *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* [17] *On account of this, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*
>
> **Ephesians 5:15-17 LSB**

God promises to give you instruction and to teach you in the way you go. He will be watchful of you. He knows what is best for you. He wants you to come near to Him.

> [8] *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;*
> *I will guide you with My eye.*
> [9] *Do not be like the horse or like the mule,*

Which have no understanding,
Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,
Else they will not come near you.

Psalm 32:8-9 NKJV

God's will is for you to be set apart for His holy purposes. Becoming more dedicated to God and set apart for Him is a process.

[3] *For this is God's will, your sanctification: …*

1 Thessalonians 4:3 CSB

Look at the attitude of the psalmist toward God's will in Psalm 40:8.

[8] *I delight to do your will, my God,*
and your instruction is deep within me."

Psalm 40:8 CSB

The actions in the verses below help produce the attitude in verse 8.

[9] *I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly;*
see, I do not keep my mouth closed —
as you know, LORD.
[10] *I did not hide your righteousness in my heart;*
I spoke about your faithfulness and salvation;
I did not conceal your constant love and truth
from the great assembly.

Psalm 40:9-10 CSB

Who is your source of strength to do God's will? The Lord Jesus Christ.

[5] *"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."*

John 15:5 CSB

[13] *For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.*

Philippians 2:13 CSB

Turning to the Word of God

There are many times in life that we must make decisions on issues that Scriptures do not provide specific instructions for. When these issues arise, we must apply principles of decision making that are contained in Scripture.

People have tried many methods to determine what God wants them to do.

- Fleeces (asking God for a supernatural sign)
- Fasting (giving up food to seek out God)
- Flipping coins (leaving it up to the toss)
- Feeling (obeying only their feelings)
- Floundering (fishing everywhere for answers)
- Defaulting (letting events decide)
- Dipping (reading random Bible passages)
- Delegating (letting others decide for them)
- Dreaming (asking for a vision or a voice)
- Sitting (procrastinating)
- Sliding (taking the course of least resistance)
- Thinking (using logic in spite of feelings)

Have you tried any of these? What was the result?

The Lord's sheep know His voice, and they follow Him. See John 10.

Goals From Scripture

God has given us specific commandments that help us make decisions. If a particular course of action is inconsistent with the Bible, then you know it is not His will for you. Some of God's objectives for you are listed below.

First, seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

> [33] *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*
>
> **Matthew 6:33 NKJV**

Love God and love others.

> [37] *Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' [38] This is the first and greatest commandment. [39] And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*
>
> **Matthew 22:37-39 NIV**

Relationship reconciliation.

> [20] *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV**

Holy conduct.

> [15] *But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; …*
>
> **1 Peter 1:15 CSB**

Growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

> [18] *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.*
>
> **2 Peter 3:18 CSB**

Search the Scriptures for further insight and wisdom, then honestly ask yourself the questions below to help you decide your course of action.

- Am I putting God's desire ahead of my own?
- Will this help me love God and others more?
- Will this help me fulfill the Great Commission?
- Will this help me lead a more holy and compassionate life?
- Will this increase my intimacy with and worship of God?

Answering these questions honestly will help you make a decision in accordance with God's Word.

Use the verses below to develop your own questions that will help you discern God's will.

> [12] *"Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me," but I will not be mastered by anything.*

1 Corinthians 6:12 CSB

[19] *Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,* [20] *for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 CSB

[9] *But be careful that this right of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak.*

1 Corinthians 8:9 CSB

[31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.*

1 Corinthians 10:31 CSB

[7] *Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap,* [8] *because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.*

Galatians 6:7-8 CSB

Following Jesus is more like a pathway than a tightrope. We need to follow the ways of Jesus—love, humility, honoring the Father—and listen to Him in prayer for specific guidance. Sometimes God is silent: As our Father, He wants us to grow through decision making. Sometimes God is very directive: He guides us through His Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. This is how we grow to be strong and yielded people who honor and love God and serve others in humility.

Obeying God

If you refuse to obey God in what He has already shown you, why should He give you further direction? Obedience to the known will of God is important in receiving additional guidance.

You gain an understanding of God's will by receiving His instruction.

[31] *The instruction of his God is in his heart;*
his steps do not falter.

Psalm 37:31 CSB

[105] *Your word is a lamp for my feet*
and a light on my path.

Psalm 119:105 CSB

[130] *The revelation of your words brings light*
and gives understanding to the inexperienced.

Psalm 119:130 CSB

You can understand God's will by experiencing His love as you trust Him and by receiving His direction as you appeal to Him.

[8] *Let me experience*
your faithful love in the morning,
for I trust in you.
Reveal to me the way I should go
because I appeal to you.

Psalm 143:8 CSB

[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, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.* [7] *For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,* [8] *being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

James 1:5-8 LSB

Psalm 25:4-5 is a prayer of David concerning God's direction for him. Write this prayer in your own words and use it as a prayer for yourself.

[4] *Show me Your ways, O LORD;*
Teach me Your paths.
[5] *Lead me in Your truth and teach me,*
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Psalm 25:4-5 NKJV

The conditions for finding God's will are given in Romans 12:1-2.

> [1] *Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.* [2] *Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*
>
> **Romans 12:1-2 CSB**

The Holy Spirit does His part as you seek direction from God.

> [13] *But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.* [14] *He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.*
>
> **John 16:13-14 LSB**

Sometimes the Lord wants you to wait before He reveals His will to you. Why do you think it is like this?

> [18] *Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you;*
> *therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.*
> *For the LORD is a God of justice.*
> *Blessed are all who wait for him!*
>
> **Isaiah 30:18 NIV**

Receiving and Walking in God's Leading

Many difficulties in determining the Lord's will are overcome when you are truly ready to do whatever His will may be.

You may not always know all the possible alternatives in determining what to do. But you can gather additional information and insight through other believers.

> [22] *Plans fail when there is no counsel,*
> *but with many advisers they succeed.*
>
> **Proverbs 15:22 CSB**

Counsel should be obtained from believers who are committed to the will of God and who know you well. If possible, talk with other believers who have previously made decisions in matters you are presently experiencing.

Notice the principle Jesus used in answering those who were questioning Him.

> [17] *If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know about the teaching, whether it is of God or I speak from Myself.*
>
> **John 7:17 LSB**

How does this apply to knowing God's will?

When you know what God wants you to do, it is vital to do it with the proper attitude.

> [6] *not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, …*
>
> **Ephesians 6:6 NKJV**

Other factors can help you discern God's leading.

> [1] *Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.*
>
> **Romans 13:1 NASB95**

> [15] *Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,* [16] *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* [17] *On account of this, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*
>
> **Ephesians 5:15-17 LSB**

> [15] *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.* [16] *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God.* [17] *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*
>
> **Colossians 3:15-17 LSB**

> *"As we have seen, Christ's call means that we are to come after Him. The essence of that call involves the direction of our lives." —Dr. Joseph Stowell, Following Christ*

Solid Decision Making Principles

Does the decision have a Scriptural/spiritual objective or goal?

- Yes
- No
- Neutral

Obey the Word

What Scripture references relate to the decision?

Does the decision require obedience to something the Scriptures clearly state?

Pray

Has this decision involved praying and waiting upon the Lord for His direction? Or are you trying to help God decide what is best for you?

Receive and Act Upon God's Leading

When the Lord directs you, receive His Words and act upon them.

Consider Viable Options

Are there various and/or viable options involved in making this decision?

Options Advantages Disadvantages

Obeying God's Voice Requires Action

Am I truly willing to do whatever God wants me to do?

Am I willing to obey Him even when it is something I do not want to do but I will do anyway just because God said to do it because I love Him? Remember Abraham and Isaac. Remember Jesus.

Receive Wisdom and Counsel From Other Believers

Am I willing to discuss the issue with other believers?

Have I received counsel from other believers?

Do Not Lean on Your Own Understanding

What false desires or hidden motives might I have?

Do Not Fear

What fears do I have about the way God might lead me? Do I feel fearful about making this decision? Do I feel negative pressure to make a decision?

The Lord's Peace

With what decision do I sense the Lord's peace?

Growth Opportunity

What circumstances relating to this decision will promote my spiritual growth?

Memory Verse

> [13] *…for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*
>
> **Philippians 2:13 NIV**

Go back to Jeremiah 29:11 and Ephesians 2:10. Based on God's love, goodness, and desires for you, what are your hopes for the future? What do you think is the good work God may have prepared for you to do?

Points to Remember

- God has clearly revealed His purposes, values, and goals for us.
- In making decisions, seeking God above our own wants is necessary to discern God's specific desires for us.
- A willingness and openness to follow God comes before discovering a specific path.
- Asking good questions (such as those in this chapter) as we come before God is a helpful process.

Things to Ponder

During Jeremiah's time, God allowed the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar to conquer his people and take them to Babylon as captives. They struggled to understand how exile could be God's will for them. Read God's explanation of His will in Jeremiah 29:4-14.

- Verse 10 states how long were they to wait before God would rescue them.
- Verses 5-7 states how they were told to live while in Babylon.
- Verse 11 is what God said about His plan and will for them.
- Verses 12-14 is God's promises to them if they would seek Him while they are in captivity.

What do you discover about God's will from this story?

The following information is not a formula for deciding God's will in specific situations; it further illustrates areas to consider.

COMMITMENT: Romans 12:1

- Commitment not only to Christ's Lordship but also to what He will reveal as His path.
- We cannot say, "God, show me Your will, and if I like it, I will do it." (see Luke 6:46: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?")

COMMANDS (God's Word reveals His will): Psalm 119:105

- Precepts that clearly state His will in many situations.
- Principles that show God's value system and approach.
- Promises in Scripture that offer direction in some instances.

COUNSEL: Proverbs 12:15; 15:22

- Someone speaking into your life and you speaking into the life of another; gaining and giving trust.
- Guards against "blindness," subjectivity, and oversight.
- Guidelines on seeking wise counsel:
  - The **person**: Is the person capable in the area of your decision? Has the person demonstrated a heart for God? Is the person somewhat familiar or very familiar with you?
  - The **process**: Don't "shop around" in order to find counsel that agrees with you.
  - The **product**: Don't make a decision based only on what someone else says.

CIRCUMSTANCES: Philippians 1:12-13

- When God closed doors for Paul, other doors always opened. But an open door is not necessarily God's will just because it is open.
- Providential circumstances are provided by God at His discretion. We cannot back God into a corner by requiring Him to clarify His will through circumstances.
- God has given Satan limited control over circumstances (Job 1-2). The key for discerning which circumstances are from God is to follow closely to Him.
- This includes how God created you: your gifts, abilities, and heart burdens. He wants you to live based on His unique design for you.

CALMNESS: Colossians 3:15

- In praying over issues, there can be an inner sense of calmness regarding what is best.
- Must be based on an assurance that God is leading, not on fleshly desire for an easy path to walk or on fleshly appeal (Proverbs 3:5-7)