

Discovering God's Will

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Dr. George Truitt, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, said, "*To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge, and then to do the will of God is the greatest achievement.*"

How can someone determine God's will? How can someone determine and understand what God wants for them?

Many people want to determine what the LORD wants for them in a specific situation, but we must first understand God's overall will, which applies to all people.

If there truly is a Creator God and He is sovereign and in charge of His universe, we should seek to know what He wants.

The words "will of God" can be found in one form or another twenty different times in the New Testament.

There are **two** kinds of God's will:

1. God's **ultimate**, determined, sovereign, or decreed will.

These are things that the LORD has already decided will happen, and no one can change or resist His decision.

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. NKJV

Some of the examples of God's determined will are: the family you were born into, the time and place of your birth, your unique design, gifts, and abilities, and other things.

Our perspective of events is limited because we are finite beings, and so what we may perceive as wrong or indifferent, the Lord knows what He is doing because He is infinite.

A Christian's role is to **trust** the Lord's sovereignty even when we don't understand all of the details.

The second kind of God's will is...

2. God's **permissive** will.

With God's permissive will, He allows us to make choices, even sinful choices that are not the LORD's best choices for our lives.

When we choose things that are not best for us, we will experience **consequences** for those choices.

Where people can get confused is when they mistake God's sovereignty and His foreknowledge for things that will happen.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. NKJV

In the ***Book of 1 Kings***, the LORD, in His permissive will, allowed the Israelites to name Saul as king, even though He told Samuel the evil that would happen from having Saul as a king.

The LORD allows us choices of what to eat, how we spend our time, whom we marry, and so many other things.

Some of our choices that are sinful can have major consequences.

We should know that even as the LORD allows us to do things within His permissive will, He still is all-powerful and in **control**.

Let's discuss some things about God's will.

- God's will is for people to **know** Jesus and to be saved.

You cannot know God's will until you first know God personally. Salvation is not just **part** of God's will for you; it is just the beginning of His will for your life.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. NKJV

1 John 4:13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

1 John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. NKJV

- God's will is for a Christian to be **filled** with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, NKJV

To be “***filled***” with the Holy Spirit means to be **controlled** by or guided by Him.

The contrast of ***being filled*** with the Holy Spirit is being controlled by alcohol, which controls someone’s behavior destructively. The Holy Spirit controls behavior in a holy way.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not speaking of quantity. It has been said that we don’t need more of the Spirit; the Spirit needs more of me. Each day, we should yield our lives and our will to the Holy Spirit’s control.

- God’s will is for a Christian to be **submissive**.

Christians should not only be submissive to the LORD, but they should also submit to the authorities that are placed over them.

Christians are to submit to human leaders/rulers, as long as the directives given do not **contradict** the Word of God.

Submitting to the Lord involves submitting to the authorities He has put in place, obeying Him in the small things, keeping your word, respecting others, and showing kindness to others.

1 Peter 2:13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,

1 Peter 2:14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.

1 Peter 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. NKJV

Submission isn't a weakness; it's **worship**. Submission is trusting that God is in control, even when we don't agree with those in authority over us.

We can break down the word submission by saying, since the LORD is in charge and has given us the mission to serve Him, submission is a **sub**-mission of the total mission from God.

Submitting to the Lord begins in daily obedience.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Romans 13:2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Romans 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. NKJV

- God's will is for a Christian to be **sanctified** = to be set apart for His purpose.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NKJV

The word 'holy' is similar to the word sanctified, and it means set apart for sacred use, something dedicated to the Lord for His work, spiritual purity, dedication, and total commitment.

In Christ, we realize the only way we achieve **righteousness** is by what He did for us, not by what we can do for Him.

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. NKJV

Sanctification for the Christian has a **two-fold** truth. There is a present position in Christ, and there is also growing in sanctification, day by day, walking in Christ.

If you are truly in Christ, you are sanctified (set apart) by the washing away of your sins that comes by faith in Christ.

Jesus said in ***Acts 26:17, "I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,***

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' NKJV

If you are truly in Christ, you are being sanctified as you **grow** in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, NKJV

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

1 Thessalonians 4:4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1 Thessalonians 4:5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; NKJV

Growing in sanctification includes purity in mind and body, growing holiness in character, and **purposefully** living differently from the world around you.

We must remember that holiness isn't perfection; it's living our lives heading in Christ's direction more and more as we mature.

Holiness is not about *being* flawless; it's about being surrendered.

If we ask the Lord to cleanse our hearts and strengthen our desire to follow Him, we can walk closely with the Lord.

We will not have close fellowship with Him while living contrary to His commands.

- God's will is for a Christian to be **thankful**.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing,

1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit. NKJV

We are to be thankful in all things, **not** for all things.

We are not thankful for certain painful situations, or for the death of a loved one, but we can be thankful during different situations, because we have a lot to be thankful for.

Thankfulness reminds us that the Lord is still in control, no matter what is happening around us.

Thankfulness shifts your focus from thinking about things that are wrong to eternal things.

Thankfulness turns worry into worship.

It is a difficult truth; however, we need to learn to thank the Lord and trust His purpose beyond our pain, because when we choose gratitude, we are walking in the center of God's will.

If you live in the will of God, He will lead you and reveal to you the rest in His timing.

When it comes to making decisions, we can glean some practical steps from the Disciples who were waiting in the Upper Room for the Holy Spirit.

Read *Acts 1:12-26*

1. The Disciples **obeyed** by waiting for the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? NKJV

The LORD's love is not given to us because of our performance, but if we truly love the Lord, that love should compel us to obey and live for Him!

Our obedience to the Lord and His call in our lives brings blessings to us because we are doing things the way the LORD calls us to do them.

The LORD knows what is best for us, and doing things His way will always lead to blessings.

The reason faithfulness and obedience are so important to the child of God is that we trust Him. The LORD knows the future, so He tells us what actions on our part lead to His abundant life.

Obedience and faithfulness happen as we rest in the Lord and trust what He says is true, and those show our love response!

2. The Disciples were in **unity**, prayer, and fellowship as they waited for the promise from the Father.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, NKJV

Saint Augustine said, “*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.*”

The enemy’s goal is to divide and conquer the Church.

Paul said his desire was for Christians to be **unified** with the essentials of the faith, while their *conduct* was *worthy of the Gospel*.

Fellowship means sharing things in common, so Christians have the same Spirit, and therefore we should be like-minded.

Believers are to be in **unity** with each other, as we are led by the Holy Spirit’s comfort, fellowship, tenderness, compassion, love, and purpose, while discovering our motivation for our actions.

And *prayer*. The first thing we should understand about prayer is that prayer is not the way to get God to do things our way.

Prayer is the way to get us to do the **LORD’s will** here on earth, as prayer aligns our will with God’s will, as we submit to Him.

3. The Disciples also studied the **Scriptures** and desired to do God's will.

The Word of God must be the thing we use to receive our guidance for conduct and truth within our lives personally and for the life of our Church corporately.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

How do I discover God's will for my life?

First, the will of the Father is that you accept the payment Jesus made by taking the Cross, to forgive your sin and give you eternal life. Jesus fulfilled His destiny to give us eternal life.

The LORD's will is not lost, hidden, or even tough to discern.

2 Peter 1:3 tells us that Jesus has given us all we need in order to live godly in this life.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The problem with living sacrifices on the Altar is that they tend to climb off the Altar from time to time. Paul said, "Go back, and continually place ourselves on the Altar of God."

We need to place ourselves on the Altar, not only daily, but we also need to examine our walk and willingly place ourselves on the Altar, moment by moment!

This is the Spirit-filled Walk of a believer, to die to self and to live for Christ, moment by moment.

When you come to Christ and accept His Salvation, He cleanses you by His shed blood.

You aren't holy and acceptable because, after faith, you have lived a sinless life. You are holy and acceptable because God the Father sees Jesus Christ living in you.

Finally, “*that you may prove or know*” what the acceptable and perfect will of God is. The NIV says, “*Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...*”

You will always remain in the center of God's will as you give yourself as a “*living sacrifice*” unto Him. Just hang out with the Shepherd, and no one can snatch you out of His hand (**John 10**).

Augustine, “*Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and then do whatever you want*”. If we love the Lord with our whole heart, the things we want to do will be at the center of His will!

Here are some practical questions for you to ask yourself while discerning God's will for your life...

Is your decision consistent with the Word of God?

Have I been still and listened for the quiet voice of God? (in circumstances, through other people, in meditation times, and especially in prayer)

Is this a wise decision? What are the future consequences? Does the Holy Spirit bear witness with your conscience?

Do I have complete peace about this choice?

Does this decision fit who I am as a believer, and maintain a good Christian witness?

Does this plan fit God's overall plan for my life? Will this choice honor God? He is Lord and Master!

After discerning the LORD's call, do you seek wise counsel?

Finally, don't make decisions based on emotions or human rationale; make all decisions based upon the will of the Lord. Be still and wait to hear His still small voice!

4. The Disciples used their common sense and did what they could to **rely** on God, as they waited.

The LORD has gifted all of His believers with some discernment.

After testing all things and asking all of the other questions about the LORD's will in this decision, use the common sense He has gifted you with.

- God's will is not always **mystical**.

Too often, we think God's will is mysterious — like a hidden code we have to crack. But Scripture shows God's will is often **practical**.

The Jerusalem council didn't get an angelic visit. They listened, discussed, and used wisdom guided by the Spirit. And they decided: "*It seemed good.*"

When you walk closely with God, **you don't have to fear missing His will**.

The Holy Spirit doesn't replace our judgment — He refines it.

Acts 15:22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

Acts 15:23 They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

Acts 15:24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" — to whom we gave no such commandment —

Acts 15:25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Acts 15:26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 15:27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.

*Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:
NKJV*

In *Acts 15:28*, the Spirit didn't dictate every word; He guided their process. Sometimes we wait for signs, but God is waiting for us to grow in maturity.

A mature believer doesn't just react to feelings — they weigh things prayerfully and wisely.

So, how do you walk in that kind of wisdom? Through a habit of stopping, looking, and listening.

Before you rush into a decision, take time to **STOP** — pause and pray.

Ask questions like: “Is this decision consistent with God's Word? Does it glorify Him? Does it bring peace?”

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. NKJV

We should then pay attention to what's happening around us, because the Lord often works through circumstances.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps. NKJV

We should listen for the quiet prompting of the Spirit and the counsel of wise people. The narrative of Elijah is an example.

1 Kings 19:11 Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind, an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

1 Kings 19:12 and after the earthquake, a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. NKJV

Remember, the Lord often speaks through others who walk with Him, so listen for godly advice from mature Christians.

If we **surrender** to the Lord, He will direct our steps, even at times when we don't realize it. ***Psalm 37:23***

Psalm 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. NKJV

As we surrender and listen to the Lord, we can act and plan in confidence, trusting the Spirit is at work in our thinking, our planning, and will give us peace as our minds are focused on HIM.

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. NKJV

Because the Spirit of God lives inside of us, sometimes walking in God's will means doing what seems good, trusting Him, and asking Him to close the door of opportunity, if we are wrong.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? NKJV

Revelation 3:7 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts, and no one opens". NKJV

When our heart is right with the Lord, our mind is being renewed by His Spirit, and we listen to His voice, to what "is good" and acceptable to Him, He will change our mind according to His plan. (again, see ***Romans 12:1-2***)

Additional scripture passages: ***2 Peter 3:9, Ephesians 6:1, 1 Corinthians 6:15, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 5:8, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Galatians 2:10, Ephesians 6:4, Psalm 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17, Hebrews 10:25, Acts 1:8, Colossians 3:2, Philippians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 13, James 2:1-10, Ephesians 5:15-18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 1 Peter 2:13-15, 1 Peter 4:12-19***