

FIRMLY ROOTED | THE WILL OF GOD

WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD FOR ME, AND HOW WILL I RECOGNIZE IT?

Finding the will of God for our lives can often be difficult and confusing. It may be something as simple as "Should I buy this car?" or as important as "Should I take this job?" or "Should I go into the ministry?" These are serious questions, and it is important to have God's input when making these decisions. God has an interest in our lives. He is concerned about our well-being and our future. More importantly, He has a wonderful plan for our lives.

Before we begin learning God's will, it is important to understand that we must do God's work one step at a time. If we do not take the first step, God usually will not show us the second step. Too often, we seek God's direction for a major decision but fail to take the small steps He has already shown us. We must be obedient in the small things before we can expect God to direct us in the big ones.

In this lesson, we will explore and define God's will. We will also look at how you can discover His will for your life.

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WILL FOR US?

Sometimes people become confused when we talk about finding God's will for our lives. Many times, people over-spiritualize finding God's will; they make it difficult or set out on a quest to solve this great mystery in their lives. I find that the will of God is not so much about discovering what it is as about making a series of right choices in life, one at a time. When trying to discover God's will, you must look at the character of God as being that of a loving Father. God is not trying to withhold information from you so that you stumble around in darkness and make a complete mess of your life. God loves us and desires to reveal truth to our hearts; God's very nature is to be a giver, but we must do our part and seek it out.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! Matt 7:7-11

Sometimes people look for this mysterious plan God has for their lives, hoping it isn't some horrible fate that would force them to do something they don't want to do. God created us for a purpose.

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." Rev 4:11

What is God's will for mankind? There is a difference between God's will and His plan for your life. God's will is the same for every person. We can see this clearly stated in the Word of God, but His plans for our lives are for each one of us individually. Even though His will and His plan for your life are separate, they are intertwined, and you can't fulfill one without the other.

We know what the Word says concerning God's will, but here are a few aspects of His will for you to think about:

1. God desires that all men be saved. *2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4*
2. God desires that all men be spirit-filled, *Acts 2: 4, Eph. 5:17*
3. We are to be thankful in all things. *1Thes. 5:18*
4. We are to be holy and set apart for service (sanctified). *1Thes.4:1-7, Roms12:1-2, 2Cor. 6:16-18, 1 Thes. 5:22*
5. We must be submissive servants. *Eph 6:5-8, 2Cor. 8:3-5, 1Peter 2:13-15*
6. We are to use our faith. *Mark 11:23-24, Heb 11:6*
7. We are to be conformed into the image of Christ. *Rom 8:28, John 17:20-23, Eph 4:13-15, Phil 2:5*

How can I establish God's plan in my life? God gives us free choice in life; he made each one of us individually, each with special talents and gifts. God desires to use **you**, not some plastic, spiritual version of you, but the real you. He desires you to be happy and able to use the unique qualities that define you as a person. One of the first places to discover God's plan for your life is on the inside of you, the desires of your heart. I am not speaking of a want list of all the things you would like to have in life, but rather of the things that give you value and bring you joy.

The will and plan of God begin with a desire in your heart; even if it is just to know His will, it starts with desire. God is more interested in you being the type of person that He desires rather than you working to be the kind of person you think He wants. We need to learn to be what He wants us to be, and He will show us the kind of person He wants us to be.

So how do I begin? As with everything with God, it all starts with your choice. You need to choose God's will and plan for your own life above every other choice. We see in the life of Jesus that He chose the will of His Father over His own desires.

*For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.
John 6:38*

What is the will? The Greek word is "ethelo," which means to prefer, to choose, to be inclined to, to delight in, and to determine.

Your will, mind, and emotions are the part of you that make up your soul. It is the part of you that makes you an individual. It is what we exercise when we make choices. God gave each of us free will when He created us. God wanted you to have freedom of choice. He didn't want a preprogrammed robot that He could control.

God doesn't want to control us, but He does want us to have the very best in life, which is His will, but the choice is ours. Jesus had a will, and He chose God's plan for His life.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Phil 2:5-13

What are the benefits of choosing God's will? Having the heart and the thoughts of God concerning your life will bring tremendous benefits.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jer 29:11

My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. Prov 3:1-2

Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law. When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. Prov 4:1-6

God has good things in store for those who follow His plans and heed His words. He promises that He will protect, provide, guide, and prosper you. God is concerned with all aspects of your life, not just one part. He wants you to be blessed in every area of your life.

When you begin to choose the will of God for your life, you will be in a position where you can be useful to God. God can use you in a greater capacity for a couple of reasons.

The first being that as you walk in His will, you will experience firsthand God taking care of all your needs, wants, and desires. You put yourself in a position where God can bless you the most. If your needs are taken care of, you are not so “self” centered, and you can become “God” centered.

The second way that God can use you in a greater capacity is that when you choose to walk in God’s will, you will be living a life of obedience. God can work in your life on a greater level because you are walking in obedience and keeping your life pure before Him.

How can I hear God’s voice? Many people have asked the question, “How can I hear from God? How can I know for sure that I am hearing from God?” Some expect to hear a booming voice, others to have a dramatic vision. Although God can use these things, they are not the most common ways that He communicates with His children. So how does God communicate with us? Again, we need to look to the Scriptures for these answers. There are two primary ways that God will speak to you: the first is His Word, and the second is the inward witness:

1.) God speaks through His Word. We can receive clear direction from the written Word of God for many areas in our lives.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105.

God gives clear direction for our lives in His Word. We can see in the Bible what will please God and what will bring his blessing. We can also see the things that will short-circuit our faith or even hinder our prayers. His Word is first and foremost, the source from which believers begin to understand God’s plan and will for their lives.

2.) God speaks through the inward witness. The Bible says that God will speak to our spirit man through the Holy Spirit. We are 3-part beings made in the image and likeness of God. You are a spirit - the real you, the part of you that got born again. You have a soul - your mind, will, and emotions- this part needs to be daily renewed. You live in a body - your physical man, the house you live in.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Rom 8:14; The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God Rom 8:16; The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the inner depths of his heart. Proverbs 20:27.

God will speak to your spirit man through the Holy Spirit. We call this the inward witness, an inward knowing, a gut feeling, or the voice of our conscience. To make His voice even clearer and more distinct, continue to renew your mind according to the Word and pursue holiness, it will make His voice easier to recognize. If you learn to recognize His voice in the little things of life, when it comes to the bigger issues, you will be certain of His direction.

What about the circumstances? Are problems and circumstances an indication that I am out of the will of God? **NO**, you cannot trust circumstances to dictate God’s plan and purpose.

We live by faith, not by sight 2 Cor 5:7; Things are not always as they appear, and they are subject to change.

...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:18;

God's children are led by the Spirit, not by the things we see, how we feel, or by people's opinions. We base our beliefs on the Word, which is unchangeable and permanent.

So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom 10:17

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. Matt 24:35

What about suffering, pain, and tragedies? Do they indicate that a person is not in the will of God? Again, we must look at the character of God. We understand that God is a loving Father and He desires good things for His children. To make an immediate assumption as to whether you are in the will of God according to these circumstances would be inaccurate. Begin by checking your heart. Is there any sin in your life? Is there an area of your life where you are walking in disobedience? If so, repent and get it right, and do not give the enemy a foothold in your life.

Do not give place to the devil. Eph 4:27

We know that God is good and will never bring any kind of harm into your life to teach you something or to get your attention.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:13-15

However, we have free will to make choices, and if we choose things contrary to His will, He will allow us to do so, but we will reap the consequences of those choices. God will allow what you allow.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP YOU WALK IN THE WILL OF GOD

1. Be a doer of the word. (*James 1:22*) Do the things you know to do from the Word. Walk in love, put God first, forgive others, guard your mouth, maintain a pure thought life, believe His Word, give, trust, obey the laws of the land, speak the Word, and live from your heart.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Gal 5:16

2. Walk in obedience. Obedience is the key to establishing the will of God. Many people want God to give them more direction when they have not been obedient to what God has already shown them.

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Luke 16:10

3. When uncertain about making choices in life, look to the inward witness for a check. Depend more and more on His voice in your life.

4. **Stick to what you do know.** At times when you don't know what to do, stick to what you do know. Think in line with the character of God, also how your decision will affect the future course of your life, not just the here and now. How will it affect others in your life?

5. **Use all your resources.** Use everything that is available to you. Speak to close friends or family members, speak to a Pastor or spiritual leader, go to the Word and see if you're being consistent with God's heart, and use common sense. Some things take time. It might be God's plan, but it might not be the right time, so use the time to prepare yourself.

OUR CHOICES

Your will is probably one of the biggest factors hindering God from working in your life. Your will must be set aside before God can take full control of your life. We have been given free will to react to people and circumstances in our lives. You must make up your mind ahead of time as to how to react and what your response will be in various situations. What will you do when you are waiting in line, when someone gossips, when someone yells at you, when you are facing temptation, when you are hurt by someone? Our choices and reactions adjust our attitude, and when we change our attitude, we will change our behavior. Good choices for your life:

- "I choose God's will for my life."
- "I choose to rejoice & be thankful."
- "I choose to serve."
- "I choose to be happy today."
- "I choose to submit to my husband/ love my wife."
- "I choose to think good thoughts about myself today."
- "I choose to worship God in spirit and in truth."
- "I choose to be humble today."
- "I choose to forgive."
- "I choose to promote others."
- "I choose to pray for those who hurt me."
- "I choose to be prosperous."
- "I choose to do it God's way."

Choices are set before us each day, and they are our choices to make. God gave man free will, and when we don't exercise our will, we forfeit some of our freedom. Our choices determine the direction of our lives, our behavior, who we are, and what we will do, and they make *us* responsible. What are you choosing for your life?

THOUGHTS ON THE WILL OF GOD

God is God. Because He is God, He is worthy of my trust and obedience. I will find rest nowhere but in His holy will, a will that is unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what He is up to. *Elisabeth Elliot*

To wait open-endedly is an enormously radical attitude toward life, and so is trusting that something will happen to us that is far beyond our imaginings. So, too, is giving up control over our future and letting God define our lives, trusting that God molds us according to His love rather than our fear. The spiritual life is a life in which we wait, actively present to the moment, trusting that new things will happen to us, new things that are far beyond our own imagination, fantasy, or prediction. That, indeed, is a very radical stance toward life in a world preoccupied with control. *Henri J. M. Nouwen*

Dependence upon God makes heroes of ordinary people like you and me! *Bruce Wilkinson*

The beautiful thing about this adventure called faith is that we can count on Him never to lead us astray. *Charles R. Swindoll*

POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS OF GOD'S WILL

- I can find God's will for my life without reading my Bible.
- Circumstances are a sure way to determine the will of God.
- God will put pain in your life to guide you.
- Because it's what you want, it must be God's will.
- God's timing is always the same as ours.
- God's will is a mystery and God tries to keep His plan from us.
- You will always understand what God is doing.

From this lesson, you should know that these misconceptions are wrong and why.

MEMORY VERSES

...that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 1 Peter 4:2

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever 1 John 2:17

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 6:37

...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, Gal 1:4

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: Heb 10:36

QUESTIONS

Please answer the following questions:

1) Can you name something you can do to begin to follow God's will for your life?

2) Can you list 2 aspects of God's will for mankind?

3) Can you explain how to hear God's voice?
