

IDENTIFYING GOD'S WILL

“So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). Many believers desire to do God's will, but they struggle because they don't know what God's will is for their lives. ***“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”*** (Romans 12:2).

God's will can be divided into His **general will** (the good and acceptable will) and His **specific will** (the perfect will). His general will is always clear. We find His **general will** clearly revealed in Scripture. It is the determining of God's specific will that is most stressful for the majority of believers.

One thing is absolutely assured: no one has perfect insight into God's will. The soundest, most mature believers can and do make mistakes about God's will. In determining God's **specific will** there are some absolutes that never change:

- God does have a plan for your life (Jeremiah 29:11).
- God's specific will is that we have a relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:3-4).
- God promises to give us wisdom if we ask Him; and believe that He will give it (James 1:5). Romans 12:1-2 gives prerequisites that we must honour Him before God's will is revealed.
- God doesn't use burning bushes much any more to communicate with His people, but He does communicate through burning hearts. That is, hearts that are in tune to His Word and hearts that love and worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

So how do we get to know God's will? Because Psalm 32:8 promises God's guidance while seeking His will, we must immerse ourselves in prayer and in the study of God's Word, in order to make decisions that are compatible with God's **specific will**. However, every decision must meet at least two criteria: First, it must be compatible with God's Word (Psalm 119:105). Second, it must be compatible with our personal convictions.

Some decisions are objective enough to be eliminated on the basis of direct contradiction to God's Word (Proverbs 8:10). Namely, God will not lead in a direction that will violate His principles. For example, He would not lead you into a situation where you would incur a large debt through borrowing (Psalm 37:21; Romans 13:8). So many times people believe God is leading them into an area, and He may be, but they lunge forward without getting His specific direction.

Each decision also must be compatible with personal convictions. Paul wrote, ***“The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves”*** (Romans 14:22). Christians are held to the highest standard, which requires constant inspiration from the Holy Spirit (John 16:13) in order to keep their direction straight. This means that Christians are accountable if they defile their consciences by doing something they believe is wrong. This belief must be based on a firm conviction from God.

Even with the best discernment, it is possible to do things that are out of God's will. The key is not to let pride get in the way but rather, admit wrong and then submit to God's new directive. God has given each of us gifts, abilities, and talents to use in His service.

If a believer isn't gifted in a certain area, chances are God will probably not call him or her to serve in that area (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:11-13). When deciding between alternatives, after which earnest prayer has been made, many times the option that best fits into God's will and direction will be confirmed by an inner peace (Isaiah 32:17).

Many Christians make decisions on major issues based on what is called the "open door" philosophy. In other words, God would never let anyone do something wrong, and therefore, if the door is open, we should go through it. This is often called the "open mine shaft" philosophy because a lot of believers stumble down open shafts thinking God wouldn't let them fail. Too many people make decisions based on the "open door" philosophy: If God does not block it, it must be okay. Unfortunately, Satan can also open doors, many of which lead to destruction.

Only by staying in God's Word, seeking strong godly counsel, and maintaining inner peace can we avoid traps regarding His will. If a believer finds himself or herself outside of God's will and is experiencing a lack of peace, he or she must be willing to abandon everything and seek God's path again. ***"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead"*** (Philippians 3:13). Remember, according to Psalms 32:8-9 God doesn't want to lead you with a bridle like a horse or a mule that has to be reigned in. He wants to lead you intelligently, by the Holy Spirit, according to His Word.

On a practical note, here are seven steps you may wish to follow to identify the will of God for you:

1. **Be in harmony with God's Word and Law**

Psalms 40:81; "I delight to do your will, your law is within my heart."
Psalm 119:105, "His Word is to be a Lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path."

2. **Be willing to do God's will**

Jesus is your example. He came to do His Father's will (John 6 :38). If you are willing God will show you (John 7:17). You shouldn't be planning your own life. You should be trying to do God's will (James 4:13-15).

3. **Fervent faithful prayer for guidance**

Ask in faith, not wavering (James 1:5-6). Effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous avails much (James 5:16). You can have confidence that if you ask according to God's will, He will hear you (1 John 5:14).

4. **Do what lies nearest to you first!**

God has many things to tell us, but we can't bear them now. Do what you can do and what you know to be correct, right now. Then He will show you what to do next (John 16:12). Proverbs 3:6 says, "*In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.*" Luke 16:10 tells you to be faithful in the least first and God will give you more.

5. **Choose the option that will bring the most Glory to God?**

1 Peter 4:11, "*That God in ALL things might be glorified!*" The decisions you make in your daily life indicate whose side you are on.

6. **Seek Christian Counsel**

Be careful who you counsel with. Paul wrote at the end of time there would be many who had a form of Godliness (2Timothy 3:5,7,8) and many false teachers. A good Christian counsellor should point you to a

"Thus says the Lord". Proverbs 11:14 says, *"There is safety in a multitude of counsellors."* Psalms 1: 1-2 says, *"Don't follow the counsel of the ungodly."*

7. **Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit**

Even though you go through adversity and affliction, God will talk to you. You will hear a voice behind you as you turn to the right or left. God will show you, "This is the way, walk in it." That still small voice that makes you feel so comfortable is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. I Kings 19:11-12 tells us that God doesn't speak to us in an earthquake or fire, but in a still small voice.

Remember, as you move forward in faith watch Him remove the obstacles, however, He often requires you to move first. Why? This reveals the state of your Faith.