

## HOW TO KNOW GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

Unlike other courses of study, theology is inherently personal and relational. Knowing the will of God is intimately connected with knowing God Himself. The secret of success in the Christian life is not information but relationship, personal trust and commitment to Christ. Knowledge of Scripture texts, even verbatim, is useless unless the life is surrendered to God. To know God's will for your life presupposes submission to God and faith in God's Word.

When we already know, we don't need to ask:

- An issue of right or wrong, e.g. – if you have to be dishonest . . .
- A clear Scriptural principle or teaching – God will not contradict Himself
- A choice between pride and humility
- If you are in disobedience to what God has already told you

(When Abraham left home and family for a strange place):

“Abraham could not explain the leadings of Providence; he had not realized his expectations; but he held fast the promise, ‘I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.’ With earnest prayer he considered how to preserve the life of his people and his flocks, but he would not allow circumstances to shake his faith in God's word.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 129

“By faith Moses was enabled to press through difficulties and to overcome obstacles which seemed almost unsurmountable. It was his implicit faith in God that made Moses what he was . . . when he was willing to obey Heaven's commands, whether they seemed to human reason proper or not, then the Lord could work mightily through him.” *Signs of the Times*, 7/12/1905

(Do not assume that God will lead in harmony with your natural temperament):

“For forty years Jeremiah was to stand before the nation as a witness for truth and righteousness. In a time of unparalleled apostasy he was to exemplify in life

and character the worship of the only true God . . . Naturally of a timid and shrinking disposition, Jeremiah longed for the peace and quiet of a life of retirement, where he need not witness the continued impenitence of his beloved nation.” *Conflict and Courage*, 237

1. Surrender Your Own Will in the Matter - (John 5: 30)

Jesus is the ultimate example of the surrendered life. In all things He subordinated His will to the will of the Father. He never acted for personal advantage or spoke in defense of His “rights” or “entitlements.” The glory of the Christian life is the freedom to give up one’s personal rights for the sake of the love of God and His divine will.

If you want to know God’s will in a particular matter, begin by surrendering your own will in the matter. Admit that you have a preference then determine to give up your personal preference as God directs. When you are able to honestly resign yourself to the least desirable of the possible options, you are ready to listen to God.

Take care here; it is easy to misconstrue your own voice for God’s voice. Depending on temperament, you may be inclined toward an extreme interpretation. A pessimistic person may be more susceptible to a negative interpretation, supposing God to be One who tells us things we do not want to hear. On the other hand, an optimistic temperament may be inclined to receive only a positive directive. God’s answer may turn out to be a third alternative you had not even thought of.

“The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God and being clothed with humility . . . is not an easy attainment . . . The soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in knowledge and true holiness.

The holy life and character of Christ is a faithful example. His confidence in His heavenly Father was unlimited. His obedience and submission were

unreserved and perfect . . . He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. In all things He submitted Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” *Testimonies vol. 3 pp. 106,107:*

## 2. Pray About the Matter - (Matthew 7:7,8)

Ask God to reveal His will in ways you are able to understand. Be sensitive to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Be diligent in prayer, remembering that one of its purposes is to bring our hearts into harmony with God so that we may receive His answer to our prayer.

Selected Messages I, p. 329:

“Let those who desire the blessing of God knock, and wait at the throne of mercy, with firm assurance, saying, ‘for thou, O Lord, hast said, for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.’ The Lord longs to have those who seek after God believe in Him who is able to do all things.”

## 3. Search the Scriptures - (Psalm 119:105)

A lamp illuminates the immediate surroundings; a light shines into the darkness ahead and shows us how to proceed. The Word of God is both a lamp and a light. Sometimes the answer to your question will be found in the exact words of a text. Sometimes the answer will lie in a Biblical principle. Remember, God never directs us contrary to His Word or His revealed will.

## 4. Look for the Providential Circumstance - (Genesis 24:10–14)

There may be a situation, beyond your control but natural to your circumstances, that God can use to indicate His will. Do not contrive some bizarre test for God. Be led by inspiration as God directs you. One commentary on Gen. 24 is:

“It is our wisdom to follow providence, but folly to force it. By earnest human effort Eliezer makes his appointments, and these are not only recognized by God, but become avenues for discovering the divine mind . . . provided you are maintaining a personal relationship with God.” - *Not Knowing Where*, O. Chambers, p. 155

#### 5. Consult Godly Friends or Family - (Proverbs 11:14)

Do not make the mistake of thinking that in order to act with integrity you must always act alone. This is especially important when making decisions of the heart. Your own emotions may blind you to important considerations, which an emotionally uninvolved person may clearly see. Don't be stubborn; take advantage of the wisdom of the persons the Lord has placed in your life.

On the other hand, this counsel has limitations because we are susceptible to the weakness of trying to please people instead of God.

“Never let someone else determine God's will for your life. No one else can understand God's unique call on your life as clearly as you. So many waste years trying in vain to please others when they would be far more productive living as God designed them to live. This doesn't mean we go off half-cocked or without advice, but in the end, as Romans 14 says, each of us must face God individually.” - Briner & Pritchard [The Leadership Lessons of Jesus](#), p.11

#### 6. Exercise Patience - (Psalm 27:14; Habakkuk 2:3)

One of the hardest things for us to do is wait on the Lord. Yet patience is a required discipline for all who would be followers of Christ. As long as God's will remains unclear, remain where you are. It may be that His will for you is to make no changes. Or it may be that you are not yet ready to receive what God intends to give. The real test of faith comes when there is a delay.

God acts in His own time and expects us to wait patiently for Him. Remember two important things:

- 1) God's view is infinitely larger than our own.
- 2) God is interested in more than just the immediate decision. There are greater things at stake than the particular thing you are asking, things you know not of.<sup>1</sup>
- 3) Apparent delay is the test of faith that brings us closer to God when we wait patiently without murmuring.

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<sup>1</sup> My Utmost, September 12

“When God brings a time of waiting, and appears to be unresponsive, don't fill it with busyness, just wait. The time of waiting may come to teach you the meaning of sanctification – or it may come after the process of sanctification has begun to teach you what service means. Never run before God gives you His direction. If you have the slightest doubt, then He is not guiding. Wherever there is doubt – wait.” *My Utmost*, January

Patriarchs & Prophets p. 687:

“There are many who become restless when they cannot know the definite outcome of affairs. They cannot endure uncertainty, and in their impatience they refuse to wait to see the salvation of God. Apprehended evils drive them nearly distracted. They give way to their rebellious feelings and run hither and thither in passionate grief, seeking intelligence concerning that which has not been revealed. If they would but trust God and watch unto prayer, they would find divine consolation. Their spirit would be calmed by communion with God.”

#### 7. When God speaks, be decisive - (Hebrew 11:8)

Once God has clearly revealed His will in the matter, decide without delay. Do not consult others once the will of God has been made clear to you. Do not hesitate because it seems you will lose out by following the Lord. Trust in God and believe His promise that if you “*seek first His kingdom and His righteousness . . . all these things will be given to you as well.*” (Matt. 6:33) NIV.

Ask the Lord to confirm your decision as you carry it out, by opening the doors before you. You will gain confidence as you see circumstances arranged to enable you to do God's will. Your faith in God will deepen and your commitment to God will strengthen.