

THE WILL OF GOD FOR DUMMIES

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When it comes to finding and doing the will of God, we all begin as dummies. That's why we need a Savior!

We often ask, "How can I know God's will for my life?" That's the first evidence that we really need help, because "knowing" the will of God is not even the point. The world, the flesh, and the devil put far too much emphasis on knowledge.

Knowledge is Overrated

Knowledge is good and important, but it is not the greatest good or the most important thing. Otherwise, God would have said, "By knowledge you shall be saved."

Many people think God did say, "Knowledge of the truth shall set you free." But He did not. What He said was, "*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:32). Many institutions of higher learning have those same words engraved on their walls, as if truth yielded its riches to intellectual study or scientific investigation. Yet, in many of them, truth is not even presented or welcomed.

We are set free by that which is *outside* of ourselves. We are set free by the truth, once we recognize it and receive it, not by our knowledge, even our knowledge of truth. The truth is not an abstraction, a philosophy, a didactic; the truth is a Person. Jesus Christ said, "*I am the truth*" (John 14:6). Then He said, "*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" And, "*If the Son sets you free, you are truly free*" (John 8:36).

We are inclined to gather information from the Bible and then set off to live our lives for God — without His direct involvement, as if to prove ourselves worthy of salvation by our righteous knowledge and deeds.

It is not the knowledge of facts or figures or principles or practices that guides the Christian; it is a Person. Jesus said, "*You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life*" (John 5:39-40). He also said, "*I am the Good Shepherd. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*" (John 10:14, 27)

Our imagination plays tricks on us. Because we have observed or learned certain things, we think it is all the same as if we had done them. I have heard more than one young person tell me from the passenger seat of my car, and without ever having actually sat behind the steering wheel themselves, that they already knew how to drive! Observation alone is not enough. James warned, "*Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves*" (James 1:22).

So, you see, listening to God's word or knowing God's word is insufficient by itself. *Doing* the will of God is what counts. All of that to say, if you have been asking to *know* the will of God, you have been asking the wrong question! This is why those who have been asking for knowledge (certainty) cannot find a solid answer. For some, regrettably, it becomes their excuse for sitting on the sidelines and doing nothing.

Finish the Task

What was the last thing you heard the Spirit of God tell you to do? Have you done it yet? Really? Fully? And when you did it, what did you discover about God? Because everything God asks you to do also reveals more of Him to the world (and to you). And if you haven't fulfilled it yet, it is useless to ask for more to do. You must finish the first task before you can start another.

What Do You Want?

Begin by asking yourself, "Do I want *to do* the will of God (not just *know* it)?" Jesus said, "Anyone who *wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own*" (John 7:17). In other words, He reveals His truth to those who are ready to act on it.

This is why the crowds who came to listen to Him were fed with stories, but only His disciples, those who had committed to follow Him, received the explanations.

Here, then, are seven steps for finding and doing God's will in your life.

1. Are you willing to do whatever He tells you? Have you obeyed what He has already told you?

Explore those things that make you hesitate or vacillate. Is there something that you think may be more important? What are you afraid of? As you uncover those stumbling blocks, ask the Lord to strengthen you and give you confidence in Him and courage to tell Him, "Here I am; send me." Work on it until your will is yielded to Him.

God prefers obedience to sacrifice, and faithfulness to fickleness. False starts and repeated stops can be forgiven, but ultimately you will have to resume what you had quit until it is complete. You cannot skip the lessons you don't like to get to the ones you prefer. Make up your mind to finish the last step.

2. Are you becoming the person God wants you to be?

Jesus is far more interested in the kind of person you are than in what you do or where you go. So, the first and most vital aspect of doing God's will is to invite the Holy Spirit to shape your life and character to be like Jesus. God is far more concerned that you have a Christ-like character than whether you have brains, beauty, talent, health, or popularity. He wants you to follow Him in the steps of faith that mold you into a man or woman of God, demonstrating faithfulness to God in your present circumstance.

*"¹¹ For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. ¹² And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live **in this evil world** with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, ¹³ while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed."* (Titus 2:11-13)

3. Have you received supernatural revelation?

How wonderful it would be if God would speak audibly to you and tell you what to do with your life! Sometimes, He does that. Consider Abraham (Genesis 12), or Moses (Exodus 3), or Isaiah (Isaiah 6), or Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1), or the Apostle Paul (Acts 9). However, overwhelming supernatural revelation appears, in Scripture as well as life, to be the exception rather than the rule.

Those who received such a calling also experienced enormous difficulties. Abraham wandered for 25 years, Moses fled to the desert for 40 years, Isaiah preached to dwindling crowds, Ezekiel was mocked by his contemporaries, and Paul suffered beatings, imprisonment and martyrdom.

The reason one receives a supernatural revelation is that they will be called to bear heavier burdens than others. The overwhelming call is what provides the stability for the difficulties that lie ahead. God's grace is always sufficient.

4. What impressions come to your heart as you worship?

The early Christians experienced the leading of the Holy Spirit through reading God's Word (Acts 1:20), through prayer (Acts 10:9), through community seasons of worship (Acts 13:1-3) and through visions (Acts 16:9).

When you pray — not just a casual “now I lay me down to sleep” prayer — but when you pray earnestly, do you sense the presence of the Holy Spirit? And is there anything that He may be prompting you to do? When you open God's Word, does a verse seem to leap out at you and offer some direction? When you are lifting your voice in worship and prayer with others, do some thoughts begin to arise, impressing you about what decisions you should make?

Keep your heart open as you pray, as you read God's Word, as you worship with others — be open to hear what the Holy Spirit might want to put in your heart.

5. What do your Christian family members, mentors and friends encourage you to consider?

The Lord has placed people in your life for a purpose. They know you and understand your character, gifts and talent. Part of discerning the will of God is listening to their counsel.

That's how Timothy found God's will for his life. Timothy never had the kind of overwhelming revelation that his mentor, the Apostle Paul, had. Timothy lived in a little town tucked away in a high plateau, off the beaten track — a place called Lystra. But, Paul found him there, and invited Timothy to join him in ministry. God knows your address, too.

The fact is that you must have the agreement and confirmation of others in order to fulfill God's will for your life. Their perspective rounds out your own. For example, you will never marry the person of your dreams unless he or she agrees and confirms that it is God's will!

6. What circumstances are you going through that may provide direction?

Often, it is the very circumstance that we did not want or expect that brings us into a position to hear the voice of God and do His will.

The New Testament writer, Luke, would never have had opportunity to interview the eyewitnesses of Jesus, except that an assassination attempt on Paul's life forced the apostle to re-route his travel itinerary so that he came to Philippi, where he picked up Luke and took him along to Israel.

Yes, God is working through the circumstances of your life — they are more than co-incidents — they are God-incidents! *“God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them”* (Romans 8:28).

7. What do you want to do for God? Is it what you ought to do?

Jesus said we are to seek His kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). When you do that, your heart will be in the right place and the Lord may leave some decisions up to you.

The Apostle Paul found that out at the beginning of his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36), when he made a decision to revisit the churches he had founded on his first journey. This time, unlike the beginning of the first journey, there is no record of “The Holy Spirit said...” (Acts 13:2). Paul’s decision was rational, and God worked with him.

So, ask yourself, “What do I want to do with my life? What do I really get enthused about? What are my strengths, my talents? How have my experiences prepared me?” If the Lord gives you the desires of your heart, then you must have some desires to begin with!

After you have asked those questions, then consider: “Is this what I ought to do?” If the “I want” and “I ought” line up, then you may have powerful direction for the decisions to make. Your own choices can be God’s way of guiding you! As you make your own plans the Lord will orchestrate your steps (Proverbs 16:9, 20:24).

Remember, your objective is not to fully know, but to trust and do. The path of faith always includes some uncertainty; think of it as the gap through which God will show up.

George Wood, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, has said, “God does not disclose all your tomorrows in today’s time frame.” Stay tuned each day to the Holy Spirit so that He may guide you. Asking yourself these seven questions will help you gain the confidence in God’s purpose to pursue what He has shown you with your whole heart.