

## Tips For Knowing God's Will

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

God's promise concerning guidance and knowing His will is repeatedly mentioned in the Bible. Psalm 32:8 declares, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide *even* unto death." Psalm 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory." Below are some Bible tips for knowing God's will. These important tips will help you to know God's will for your everyday living as well as the more detailed areas of your life. Keep in mind that you must remember to follow the general will of God for your life before you can know the specific details of God's will for your life. This study helps us to determine both the general and specific will of God for our lives.

**SURRENDER TO GOD** - Rom. 12:1-2 commands, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." There are three key areas related to surrender to God. The first is a yielded body, the second a separated life, and the third a transformed mind. These three areas relate to sanctification in the Christian life which means we are willing to set ourselves apart for God's purpose and use. First, there is the life of yielding our body and life to God which is explained as being "a living sacrifice to God." When you yield yourself totally to God and place yourself on the altar, it becomes an act of your will and you say, "God, I want to place every area of my life under your control." The sacrificial life will naturally involve a body that is "holy, acceptable unto God" (sanctification). Sanctification is when I dedicate my body and life to God.

Second, there is the life of separation. Separation is when I choose to not partake of sinful ideas and living. This is explained as refusing to be "conformed to this world" and refers to basic holiness in one's heart and life. Third, there is the area of a transformed mind (changing the way we think). Instead of being a *conformer* molded to the world the Christian must be a *transformer* ("transformed by the renewing of your mind"). This means that you must change your way of living by renovating your thinking process, bringing your thoughts in line with God's eternal truth or Word.

When our life and mind are controlled by God and His Word, the blessed result will be this: “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). In other words, when we are surrender our life to God through yielding to Him and His way (sanctification), separating our life from evil things, and transforming our mind or thinking patterns to reflect truth, it’s only then that we can know or discern God’s perfect will in our Christian life (“that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God” - Rom. 12:2). A Christian cannot “prove” or discern what God’s holy will is for his life, or even God’s specific will in certain situations, unless he is surrendered to God through yielding, separation, and transformed thinking. The cross life is critical when it comes to knowing God’s will for your life. Jesus taught in Matthew 16:24 that a person must “deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

This is an important step in determining God’s will for your life. A Christian cannot discern any facet of God’s will (“What is holy and right?”, “What does God want for my life?”) when he is living in open rebellion and has his thinking blurred by worldly and sinful living (Heb. 3:13). This is why there must be confession and nonconformity to the world (1 John 2:15-17). The point is this; God’s people must be practicing God’s general will of surrender, which involves yielding oneself to God, separating from the world, and conforming one’s thinking to God’s truth, if they are going to be able to discern God’s true leading and guidance for their lives. When we fail to surrender or submit our lives to God’s holy pattern, we cannot receive His divine guidance.

**Remember:** God’s general will of surrender and submission precedes knowing His specific will for our lives, which involves receiving guidance for important decisions and everyday living.

A surrendered believer will be willing to do God’s will even before he knows what it is. In John 7:17 Jesus said, “If any man will **do** his will, he shall **know** of the doctrine ...” Please note the order. We must first be willing to do God’s will if we are going to know what God wants to teach us or how He wants to direct our lives. This is an important principle to reflect upon. Unless we have a serious desire to actually obey God’s will, He will not reveal it to us. We must say to God, “I am willing Lord to do just exactly what you want me to do.” We must be serious about obeying God’s will for our lives. We are not to seek God’s will like we would pick and choose food at a smorgasbord or cafeteria. We must approach God’s will as servants and followers

who are listening for His orders (“Lord, what would you have me to do” – Acts 9:6). The blessing only comes when we are willing and ready to do God’s will. Isaiah 1:19, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.”

Walter Knight told of an old Scottish woman who went from home to home across the countryside selling thread, buttons, and shoestrings. When she came to an unmarked crossroad, she would toss a stick into the air and go in the direction the stick pointed when it landed. One day, however, she was seen tossing the stick up several times. “Why do you toss the stick more than once?” someone asked. “Because,” replied the woman, “it keeps pointing to the left, and I want to take the road on the right.” She then dutifully kept throwing the stick into the air until it pointed the way she wanted to go!

#### **Application Questions:**

- Am I knowingly surrendered and obedient to God in every area of my life?
- Are you willing to place your life under God’s total control?
- Are you willing to surrender some specific sin to God and confess it:
- Are you prepared to surrender yourself, your time, your future, and any personal goals or plans that you might have which might not be God’s will for your life?
- Are you willing to do God’s will even before I know what it is?
- Can you say, “I’ll go where you want me to go dear Lord?”
- Can you say, “I’ll do what you want me to do dear Lord?”

**SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD** – Proverbs 3:5-6 declares: “**Trust in the Lord** (*possess faith in God - that He can guide your life in His own sovereign way*) **with all thine heart** (*with everything that you have - your emotions, thoughts, and will*); and **lean not unto thine own understanding** (*human reasoning, self-deception, exaltation of your own ideas*). **In all thy ways acknowledge him** (*agree with His sovereign plan and purpose for your life – His right to work in your life in whatever way He pleases*), **and he shall direct thy paths** (*reveal his will and help us to understand and accept his will for our lives*).” In short, we must live by faith, believing that God has a perfect plan and purpose for our life (“trust in the Lord”), forgetting about our own plans and ideas (“lean not unto thine own understanding”), and committing our hearts and lives to the sovereign working of God’s purpose for our lives (“acknowledge him”).

We must recognize that God has a specific will and providential plan for our lives, accept it by faith, agree with it, and be willing to do things God's way. Without *trusting* in God for direction and *agreeing* with God's will for our life, we will never know God's will.

Faith takes place when we learn to "trust in the Lord" by resting (Ps. 37:7) in His providential or sovereign plan for our lives and committing (Ps. 37:7) our way or path unto Him. When we do this, we will learn the secret of not leaning or resting upon our "own understating" (vs. 6), or thinking that we know what is best for our lives. We will not be "wise in thine own eyes" (Prov. 3:7). Instead, as we walk by faith in God, we will "acknowledge him" or recognize His absolute right to bring His providential purpose to fruition in our lives. To "acknowledge him" means that we *agree* that God's sovereign plan and purpose is best for our lives, that He knows what He is doing, and that we want to follow whatever this plan might be.

When we agree with God, we are *conforming* to His plan, *committing* ourselves to understanding His providential purpose, and *confidently* resting in His plan for our lives. When we do this the proverb promises that God "will direct thy paths" ("make straight our paths"). This means that God will give us guidance and bring us to the appointed goal and destination He has for our lives. The expression "straight paths" promotes the idea of clearing away obstacles, removing barriers, or creating a smooth path for a person to walk upon and signifies that God will open up the path before us, revealing His will and purpose for our lives, through unmistakable conviction and assurance that we are to move in a certain direction.

Walking by faith, believing that God has a sovereign purpose for our lives, and agreeing to adjust your life to this purpose is very important, so we can determine God's guidance, or know His will for our lives. In times of illness we might ask, "Does God want me to get better or to remain in my present condition?" In times when important decisions must be made we might ask, "Does God want me to take this job or look elsewhere?" or "Does God want me to attend this college or another college?" When the believer is willing to "acknowledge him" (God), he agrees with God's sovereign plan for his life, and will say as Christ said, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Only when the believer comes to grips with God's sovereign plan and prayerfully submits to it can He know God's guidance. Yes, God has a purpose for our lives. We

must simply walk by faith in God, acknowledge or recognize His right to bring His purpose to pass in our lives, and be willing to live by it. It's then that God promises to open up the path before us and guide us by revealing His will to our minds and hearts. Romans 8:28 says this about God's sovereign purpose: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose."

The believer must learn to live by faith in God ("trust in the Lord"). God knows what He is doing and what is best for our lives and God will guide our lives according to His plan or purpose. But there is more than just *faith*. We must learn to *forsake* our own ideas or turn away from our own thoughts and feelings ("lean not unto thine own understanding"). Why? It's because God says in Isaiah 55:9 "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways." God wants us to walk by faith, forsake our own plans and ideas, and then we must *face* God's plan by learning to "acknowledge" (confess, admit, agree) that God has a sovereign purpose for our lives that we must commit to and rest in as His people. In other words, only when we rest in God's sovereign purpose for our lives and commit ourselves to understanding this purpose can we truly know God's will and guidance ("he shall direct thy paths"). Someone said: "It is better to ask the Lord to direct your paths than to correct your mistakes." How very true!

### **Application Questions**

- Do you really believe God has a sovereign plan for your life?
- Do you believe God's purpose is best for your life?
- Are you committed to following God's will?
- Are you really trusting in God to lead and guide your life?
- Are you following your own understanding or reasoning about some specific situation or decision?

**COMMUNION WITH GOD** - 1 John 1:6-9 says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him (God), and walk in darkness (sin), we lie, and do not the truth (we are not walking in accordance with God's will): But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light (walk in God's holy will for our lives), we have fellowship one with another (God and the believer fellowshiping together), and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The Bible emphasizes that God's children must walk in communion or fellowship with Him by seeking to live a holy life. They must be an "If we doer" and not merely an "if we say" who putting a religious front but who is not really walking with God. Believers must always strive to "walk in the light" of God's holiness so they can "have fellowship one with another" (communion between the believer with God). Known sin in our lives keeps us from walking with the Lord and allowing God to speak or communicate with us. The Bible says that "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). The abiding life is a life of fellowship with God that promises the blessing of answered prayer and guidance (John 15:7). God can speak to our hearts and direct our lives when we are not fellowshiping with Him on a daily basis.

To state it simply, we cannot know God's will when we are not in communion with God. Communing with God is a prerequisite to receiving guidance from God. Walking with God is a prerequisite to knowing the will of God in relationship to everyday living and the many decisions that we must face in life. Let us remember that sin not only breaks our fellowship with God (1 John 1:6) but also deceives us ("we deceive ourselves" - 1 John 1:8) about the spiritual path that God intends for us to walk. Hebrews 3:13 speaks about "the deceitfulness of sin." Sin is very deceptive and can skew our understanding regarding the path God intends for us to travel. In fact, sin can take us down an altogether different path that God never intended us to walk. Beware of the deceptiveness of sin in your own life. Perhaps this is why John Wesley once said: "Do not hastily ascribe things to God." Make sure that you are walking with God so that you walk in the right way.

### **Application Questions**

- Is there any known sin in your life that is keeping you from fellowshiping with God on a daily basis?
- Are you having personal devotions with God and allowing Him to minister and speak to your heart?
- When was the last time you prayed to the Lord and enjoyed His presence?

When we are walking close to the Lord, we can claim this promise: "And the Lord shall guide thee continually" (Isaiah 58:11).

**WORD OF GOD** - Psalm 119:15, "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways." Psalm 119:32, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Isaiah 48:17-18, "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

These verses, and many more, remind us how we receive guidance through the Scriptures. The Bible reveals God's will to us by giving us guidance on how to live and make proper decisions that conform to God's will. This is true in regard to our general holy living and also the specific and more detailed decisions that we need to make concerning our lives. The Lord gives us commands, principles, and important directions from his Word that enable us to move in the right path and make proper decisions, so that we might follow God's will for our lives in every decision that we make. Psalm 40:8 says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart." Psalm 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:130, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Finding God's guidance is always associated with His Word.

The Bible guides the believer by revealing His will to us, so we in return can follow it and enjoy God's greatest blessing for our lives (Psalm 1:2-3; Joshua 1:8; 1 Tim. 4:15). God's guidance can only occur in the believer's life when the Bible is teaching him and correcting his steps (2 Tim. 3:16). Psalm 119:59 says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Proper instruction and correction from God's Word will allow us to live in accordance with God's will and keep us from making decisions that will adversely affect our lives.

Often the general or specific commands of the Bible and the principles of God's Word give *direct answers* to us about a certain course of action, about amusements we need to avoid, or some decision that needs to be made (1 John 2:15-17; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 6:18; James 4:17; Eph. 4:32; James 4:11). The Scriptures will tell us in unmistakable terms whether or not we should move in a certain direction or make a certain decision. Other times the Scriptures are used to *gradually confirm*

*decisions* that we need to make as we devotionally meditate on God's Word (Psalm 119:78, 148).

Alan Redpath tells how God used the Word to lead him out of the business world and into the ministry. First, he wrote on a piece of paper all of his reasons for staying in business. Then he wrote all of his reasons for entering the ministry. He took that paper with him each morning as he met with God, desiring only to do what God directed. As he studied the Word day by day, God began to give him verses that answered his arguments for staying in business. It took more than a year, but eventually God eliminated every one of those arguments and left him with only the reasons for entering the ministry. He made his decision on the basis of God's priorities for his life as they were revealed through the Word. Studying and meditating on the Bible reveals God's will to our hearts, even the more detailed parts of God's will related to our lives.

God has His own way of communicating with His people as they devotionally meditate on His truth. God speaks to us through the Word and helps us to formulate decisions that connect with His will for our lives, even in relationship to buying a new home, going to the mission field, making a family decision, or attending a certain church. He uses many portions of His Word to communicate His will to our lives even for the specific decisions that we must face and make in life. In short, God speaks to us in His "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12) as we meditate on His Word and helps us to confirm decisions as we listen to God's voice through His Word. Open your Bible and allow God to minister and speak to your heart. The Bible is a "light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). "In a still small voice, He speaks to me, through His Holy Scriptures changes me, when I need His tender leading, His Word will guide my way." This is a wonderful reality that many Christians overlook in determining God's specific will for their lives.

Maxwell Coder gives this important advice: "There is no doubt that God has often brought a certain verse to the attention of one of His children in an unusual and almost miraculous manner, for a special need, but the Word was never intended to be consulted in a superstitious manner." G Christian Weiss has wisely concluded: "There can never be any guidance contrary to the Word; there will seldom be guidance apart from the Word. Divine guidance must either come through, or in perfect harmony with, the written Word of God. Anything else is not divine guidance."



When living the Christian life and seeking God's guidance, we must always make sure that we do not directly violate God's Word in some manner (Ps. 101:3; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18; 1 Pet. 2:13-15; Eph. 4:26; 6:5-7; Col. 3:8-9; Heb. 13:17; James 4:11). Whenever we need to have a specific answer from the Lord, we should always ask ourselves the questions: "What does God's Word have to say about a certain matter? Is this action in harmony with the Bible? Are there *any guiding principles* from Scripture that will help me to make a Biblically-based decision (Rom. 15:4)? What Scriptural guidelines would apply to the situation and decision that I must make?" The Word of God has something to say about everything in life.

God will use His Word to bring confirmation to your heart. God speaks to us through His Word and directs our lives by His truth (Ps. 119:9-10, 16, 33-35, 40, 59, 105). As we meditate on the Scriptures the Lord can impress certain Bible passages upon our hearts and minds, which give us guidance about some particular course of action to take in life. Our devotion with the Lord in His Word can have a strong influence in guiding our pattern of thinking and living.

**Caution:** God never leads or guides contrary to His Word whereas Satan tempts us to move away from truth (Gen. 3:1). Satan is a liar (John 8:44) and will try to steer us away from the truth, from what is right and according to God's perfect will. The Evil One wants to steal the seed of God's truth away from our hearts (Luke 8:12). The devil also uses the old nature to tempt us and draw us away from God's intended path for our lives (James 1:14). Someone said: "The flesh is the worm on the devil's hook." A marriage, friendship, or business proposition may seem "just like the right thing to do" but when it runs contrary to truth and keeps us from doing what is right, then you have believed Satan's lie. Someone once said: "Half our troubles come from wanting our own way. The other half generally comes from being allowed to have our way!"

Sometimes when God allows us to have something we want, we find that in the end that we don't really want it (Psalm 106:15). This is why we need to follow God's guidance and will for our lives. Then too, a certain action may be justifiable, if we convince ourselves that it is, but when it clearly sidesteps important Biblical commands, principles, and guidelines, then we are making a wrong decision. True guidance is never contrary to plain truth and duty. Psalm 25:9-10, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths (guiding paths) of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."

### Application Questions

- Have I really taken time to consider what God’s Word has to say about a certain decision or course of action?
- Does my decision or action contradict or violate God’s Word in some way? Be honest and open in your examination.
- Could it be that Satan or the old nature has clouded your decision and direction in life?
- Have I been devotionally meditating in the Scriptures, allowing God to communicate with me through His Word?
- Have I been applying my Bible meditation to my situation and decision that I must make?

**SPIRIT OF GOD** – The Holy Spirit guides us in the truth of God’s Word, which enables us to make decisions in the will of God. John 16:13, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” The Holy Spirit brings truth to our mind and hearts, so that we can be guided in the way of truth, and this way, follow God’s will for our lives. It’s equally true that Holy Spirit also gives us direction or guidance for the many personal decisions that we must make in life as He impresses upon our hearts a right course of action or decision that we must make. In other words, the Bible repeatedly confirms that the Holy Spirit impresses conviction upon our heart regarding certain actions to take and decisions we must make in life.

Here are some examples. Acts 8:29, “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Acts 11:12, “And the Spirit bade me go with them (through conviction and guidance), nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house.” Acts 13:2, “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said (through inner conviction and guidance), Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Acts 16:6-7, “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost (through His guidance and confirmation in their heart) to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not” (gave them guidance and stopped them from going). Acts 20:22-23, “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit (under the Spirit’ guidance and direction) unto Jerusalem, not

knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.”

The inner working of the Spirit’s conviction and leading upon our hearts is a vital ministry for all New Testament believers (2 Cor. 3:3). God promises that He will lead us by His Spirit in the area of sanctification and holiness (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; Luke 4:1). We need to obey the inward direction, leading, and impelling (drive or urge) of the Spirit upon our hearts and lives these days. But this will not happen if we are not walking in the Spirit and filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Our life is to revolve around the Spirit’s ministry, but if we have quenched the Spirit’s work in our lives through sin, then we have put out the fire (1 Thess. 5:19) and His leading ministry. God still speaks to His servants through the ministry of the Spirit in that “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12).

“Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me,  
Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me.  
Melt me, mould me, Fill me, use me,  
Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me.”

**Caution:** Your thoughts can come from God (Matt. 16:16-17), Satan (Matt. 16:22-23; James 3:14-15), sin (Heb. 3:13; Jer. 17:9), or from yourself (Matt. 16:17 – “flesh and blood”; Isaiah 55:8). Therefore, the believer is capable of experiencing self-deception, sin’s deception, and Satan’s deception. All of these *inner impressions* are seeking to lead us away from God’s perfect will for our lives. The only way to counteract all of the false inner impressions is to know the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) and be led by the Spirit of truth instead of error (1 John 4:6). Certain inner impressions may be coming from the old nature (Gal. 5:17) which in return corrupts our heart and brings deception into our minds. Jeremiah 17:9 reveals that “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

To quickly conclude, “I am following my heart” is not a wise conclusion. Impressions may have their source or origin from “another spirit” that is not the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 11:4), which is nothing more than a seducing spirit of the last days (1 Tim. 4:1). Wrong impressions can come from the devil himself (Acts 5:3) who shoots wrong thoughts into our minds attempting to mislead and misdirect us away from God’s will (Eph. 6:18). Satan tries to beguile, seduce, or deceive our minds with sin, blatant error, lies, half-truths, and false witnesses (2 Cor. 11:3).

It's equally true that our deception and misdirection in life is due to willful ignorance (Gal. 6:3; 1 Cor. 14:38). We are deceived because we want to be deceived. We have the ability to rationalize our behavior to appease our conscience even when it is contrary to God's will. In addition, emotional mood swings may get in the way of God's true guidance. Feelings and emotions may tend to lead us astray from the will of God for our lives. Many times emotions are elevated above Biblical truth and holiness or at least placed along side of it. But emotions must be tested by truth (Rom. 4:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 17:17) and guided by that which is holy (the Bible), since we are called upon to be holy "in all conversation (manner) of living" – even the area of our emotional responses (1 Pet. 1:15). So, inward impressions can come from many other sources other than the Holy Spirit.

There are at least three practical tests to help us determine where the inner leading or impression in our hearts is coming from.

- The true inner urge or leading must be in agreement with Scripture (John 17:17; Ps. 40:8).
- The true inner urge or leading will ask nothing irrational, bizarre, vulgar, or worldly in nature (Gal. 5:22-23).
- The true inner urging or leading will be persistent (it does not fluctuate).

It was not until the fourth call that Samuel knew it was the Lord's voice calling him to service (see 1 Samuel 3:1-10). The Spirit's inner voice or leading will persist to make Himself known to us and not waiver in His leading or direction.

"Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,  
Ever near the Christian's side,  
Gently lead us by the hand,  
Pilgrims in a desert land.  
Wear souls fore'er rejoice,  
While they hear the sweetest voice,  
Whisp'ring softly, "Wanderer, come!  
Follow me, I'll guide thee home."

### **Application Questions**

- Do I have the true internal compelling of the Holy Spirit regarding some decision or course of action that I am ready to take in life?

- Have I really been sensitive to the Spirit's inner guidance and leading?
- Is it possible that self, sin, and even Satan has entered the picture to try and cloud your thinking and understanding?
- Are you willing to reevaluate your decision and course of action, knowing how inner impressions can be deceiving?
- Have your feelings got in the way of the Spirit's leading?
- Have you made up your mind before the Spirit could direct your life?

**BURDEN OF GOD** (Isa. 13:1; 14:28; Jer. 23:33-34, 36, 38; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 9:1; 12:1; Mal. 1:1). These Bible reference repeatedly talk about the burden of God that was placed upon the hearts of His people. A burden is a conviction, desire, and inward compelling that comes from God, which is designed to direct a person to accomplish God's purpose for his life. When God's servants in the Old Testament had a message to give to the people it was called a "burden." These burdens were no doubt the result of the inner work of God upon the hearts of His servants. Sometimes an overwhelming burden will confirm God's will for our lives. When our heart becomes heavy about taking some course of action, we might be experiencing the inner burden of God. Nehemiah said, "And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy..." (Neh. 7:5). God certainly can stir our hearts with His burdens, and in so doing, He can be directing our life to commit to some specific path or action.

- Has God been placing a specific burden upon your heart to accomplish something or move in a certain direction?
- Can you identify what kind of burden it is?
- What direction is God's burden taking you at this time?

**Remember:** All true burdens from the Lord will never violate any clear Bible principles, nor will they direct you to do something irrational and bizarre. The burdens of God, which guide our lives, will always align with the truth of Scripture and what is righteous and holy (Rom. 12:1-2). However, we must recognize that God does burden the hearts of His people in order to lead and direct them in the path that He has ordained for their lives.

A one-legged school teacher from Scotland came to J. Hudson Taylor to offer himself for service in China. "With only one leg, why do you think of going as a missionary?" Asked Taylor. "I do not see those with two legs going," replied George

Scott. He was accepted. Why? It's because God had burdened his heart to go.

**MAN OF GOD** – Psalm 37:23 says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.” This is a wonderful promise. God promises to guide our lives when we are a good man, or man of God, which means we are reflecting God's righteousness and living like God. 1 Timothy 6:11 speaks about the man of God: “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” If we practice being a man of God, then we can know or discern God's will for our lives. When we practice living a righteous life, we are promised to have our steps directed by the lord and know God's blessed guidance and direction for our lives.

Many times we actually think God is leading us, when in reality, we are leading ourselves. This is because we have not been the kind of godly person (man of God) that He wants us to be, and usually make decisions based upon our personal or fleshly desires, instead of God's desires. In short, we are to be living the good life, or the godly life, if we want God's direction. God wants to “order” or direct your steps, if you practice living like God in your inward passions, desires, and as you practice living out Christian virtues.

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” This means we need to be living a good and godly life, if we expect to discover God's guidance and will for our lives. We need to be like Abraham's servant, who said, “I being in the way, the LORD led me.” (Gen. 24:27). We need to be walking the right path, following what we know God wants us to do, and then He will reveal his additional will to our lives. This is what God promised to Abraham. He commanded him, “Get thee out of thy country ... unto a land that I will show thee” (Gen. 15:1). The steps of a good and godly man will be ordered or directed by God. So, stay godly and God will progressively (not all at once) and continually reveal His will to your life.

Someone once remarked:

“The stops of a good man are also ordered by the Lord.”

In other words, sometimes, God guides our lives by placing “stop signs” in front of us. God has a way of making His will known to us in this way as well. God sometimes confirms His will by saying “no” to some direction or path that we have been praying about. God directs the *steps* of a good man but also the *stops* of the good man. Both the steps (“I have set before thee an open door” - Rev. 3:8) as well as the stops

("were forbidden of the Holy Ghost" - Acts 16:6) fall under the umbrella of God's guidance and will for our lives.

### **Application Questions**

- Are there some things you need to flee in order to be the man of God that God wants you to be?
- Are you ready to root out those things that are keeping you from receiving God's guidance?
- Is God guiding you to take a specific course of action?
- Has God closed the door on some course of action?
- Are you willing to accept the closed door?

**PRIORITIES OF GOD** - Jesus taught in Matthew 6:33, "seek ye first the kingdom of God." What part of this don't we understand? When we are seeking God's will, we must always remember the importance of spiritual priorities. The *secular* should never crowd out the *sacred* (Matt. 6:24). Many times Christians try to discern the will of God without contemplating their need to keep their spiritual priorities in order, such as faithful church attendance, serving the Lord through the use of their spiritual gifts, living righteously, demonstrating Christian character and staying close to God through personal devotions. Jesus taught in Luke 10:42, "But one thing is needful" which was to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to His Word. God's will never sidestep spiritual priorities for Christian living. First things first!

The first things are the most important things, whereas the lesser things are not nearly as important. We must remember that *there is always time to do God's will for our lives*. When you try to discern God's will, without having your own spiritual priorities right, you are headed toward trouble. Take the time to get your own spiritual life and priorities in order before you make any decision. Take time to be holy. You cannot expect to be guided by God when your priorities are out of order. Put the spiritual before the secular, the spiritual before self, and keep your focus on eternal things. It's only then that God can guide your life. If we are not seeking first the kingdom of God, then we might as well not be seeking God's will for our life.

### **Application Questions**

- Do you have your spiritual priorities in order? Be honest!
- Is the secular way of living crowding out the sacred way of living?
- Have you put the lesser things before the first things?
- In what ways can you rearrange your priorities?



**PRAYER DIRECTED TO GOD** - Psalm 25:4, "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths." Psalm 86:11, "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name." Colossians 1:9, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

These Bible prayers reveal that God expects His children to pray and ask Him to reveal His will to their personal lives. Of course, God's children receive answers to those prayers which align with His perfect will for their lives. 1 John 5:14 says, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." Prayer and discovering God's will for our life is linked together. The reason is obvious; it's through prayer that we can find out what God's will is for our life. As we ask in accordance with God's will, we can expect to find answers from God. But the point is this. We must be asking about God's will during our time of praying and desiring to know and live in God's perfect will for our lives. Prayer and the will of God are inseparable. Meditative prayer helps us to bring our wills into harmony with His will, giving us the confidence "that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."

Dr. John Walvoord put it well when he said: "Prayer is much like a check to be countersigned by two parties. I sign the check and send it up to heaven. If Jesus Christ also signs it, it does not matter how large it is -- it'll be honored."

The poet Adam Baum wrote:  
"Pray on, when rough and dark your pathway,  
And you cannot see the light;  
When every spark of hope has vanished,  
And bright day has turned to night.  
Pray on, for God doth surely hear you,  
Noting well each sad request;  
Pray then in faith, truly believing  
That He always gives what's best."

God's people are called upon to persistently pray and keep asking the Lord for guidance and direction in life. Jesus encourages us to pray in this way. Luke 11:9, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." In other words, ask for guidance, seek the Lord's



direction for your life, and you will have it! We are to pray, seeking His guidance, and share with God our compassionate desire to know His will for our daily lives and the future. Constant communication with God through prayer is necessary and vital if we truly want to know God's plan and purpose for our lives.

Charles Spurgeon used to say:

“Prayer pulls the rope down below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give only an occasional jerk at the rope. But he who communicates with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously with all his might”

**Don't Forget:** God sometimes answers our prayers in a *direct* way (Jer. 33:3; James 5:17-18), a *delayed* way (Eccl. 3:11), a *different* way (2 Cor. 12:8-10; Luke 22:42), and He sometimes *denies* our prayer requests (1 Kings 19:4; 2 Cor. 12:8). It takes faith to accept the manner in which God decides to answer our prayers. However, let us not forget that praying in faith is part of the way to discovering God's will for our lives.

### **Application Questions**

- Do you have a strong prayer life with God? Be honest!
- Are you serious about asking God for guidance and direction?
- When was the last time you really asked God to reveal His will to you regarding some change in life or redirection?
- Have you been committed to talking to God about it?
- Will you accept “No” as an answer from God?
- Are you willing to wait for God's answer?
- Can you accept a different answer that He might give to you?

**CIRCUMSTANCES OF GOD** (Gen. 24:10-15 = finding a lifelong mate; 45:5-9; 50:19-20 = Joseph's experience; 1 Cor. 16:7-9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Rev. 3:7 - open and closed doors; Numbers 22:22, 23, 24, 26, 32, 34 = Balaam's strange experiences which came from the Lord; Jonah 1:17 = Jonah being swallowed by the great fish!). These verses and various incidents reveal that the works of God's circumstantial providence over our lives can become another road marker and source, which God gives to us, to show and ultimately confirm His will for our lives.

Circumstances may affect the direction of a believer's life in at least three ways: By *confirming* the path to take, by *changing* our course in life, or by *challenging* our direction in life.

Abram Gish said:

"Circumstances *confirm* the will of God, but alone they do not *indicate* the will of God."

Adoniram Judson headed for India, expecting to be a missionary there, but when he arrived, he was not permitted to land. So he disembarked at the next port where the ship docked, Rangoon, Burma, in which country he spent his life in remarkable pioneer missionary work. God had closed one door but opened another in His time. On the other hand, Balaam could not discern that God was trying to stop him from traveling in a wrong direction or path. The Scriptures repeatedly record that the angel of the LORD had "stood in the way" to stop Balaam from traveling in a wrong direction (Numbers 22:22, 23, 24, 26, 32, 34). Balaam's donkey perceived this before Balaam did! Sometimes we don't want to be confused with the facts. God sometimes says, "No!" to the direction that we are moving in life and He wants to redirect us.

**Caution:** Beware that the devil does not set you up with his own set of circumstances to *disobey* the Lord (Jonah 1:3; 1 Cor. 16:9) and cloud your judgment regarding the correct path to take (2 Cor. 11:3). As in Jonah's case, Satan has a way of sometimes making circumstances *favorable* so that a certain decision or course of action might seem right, when in reality it is wrong. When Jonah was fleeing from God's will, the devil provided a ship that was sailing to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). Sometimes the adversary makes sure that there is another path available to escape God's will. There is a another path that may run parallel with the true road, just long enough, to give a Christian pilgrim a false assurance that he is, after all, doing the will of God.

Bob Mumford wrote:

"The devil attacks many people by causing them to lose sight of their initial leading and become vulnerable to circumstances and impulses. Once we know where God is guiding, no matter what happens – hard times, suffering, poverty – we can *know* we are where God wants us."

For instance, the frightful circumstances that befell the disciples (Mark 4:35-38) might have led them to believe that they were doing something outside of the will of God in a storm-tossed boat. But they had the *initial confirmation* of Jesus who said, "Let us pass over unto the other side." This is why we need to keep going even when the times get tough. If we know that God has confirmed His will to us in a clear way, then we should stick with the initial confirmation until God leads and directs us otherwise. Frightening circumstances should not lead us away from the initial confirmation. We need to stay on the ship through the stormy sea, knowing that God is on our side, and that He will continue to lead and direct us through the storm.

We need to remind ourselves that unfavorable circumstances do not necessarily mean that we are outside the will of the Lord. Likewise, we have found out in Jonah's case, that favorable circumstances are not necessarily a sign of being in the will of God. Open doors or favorable circumstances can come from God (Rev. 3:8) or Satan (Jonah 1:1-3), and the same is true about closed doors (1 Cor. 16:9). This is why we need to always use the Word of God, the Spirit of God, the wisdom of God, and the peace of God to be the key indicators and determining factors that help us determine God's will for our lives.

George Mueller wrote:

"I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit."

When through meditation in the Word and prayer, we have God's peace and wisdom about some decision, God may then choose to add a circumstance to confirm what we already know to be true. However, we don't start with circumstances in order to discover God's will; we begin with prayer and meditation in God's Word. If God so chooses, He may confirm His will with some kind of outward evidence or circumstance. However, this is not always the case ("And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was no open vision*" - 1 Sam. 3:1). Do not become obsessed with outward circumstances or always expect some type of outward and visible confirmation. What is most important is that you are following the inward confirmation in your heart and are reassured of the right path based upon God's truth (2 Tim. 3:14).

Let's consider the subjective nature of a *closed* circumstantial door. If the great missionary explorer David Livingstone had taken all the seemingly hurdles or closed

doors in front of him as a sign from God to turn back, the great mission field of Africa probably would have not been open to the Gospel during his lifetime. Satan sometimes places challenges before us, and God wants us to see if we can overcome these hurdles, by clinging to the truth of His Word and expressing continual faith in Him.

Consider also the subjective nature of *open* doors. Many who witness these alleged, circumstantial opened doors, and claim to have the leading of the Lord, may actually be following the leading of either self, sin, Satan or a combination of these three factors. Our decisions should never be based on clever coincidences. If you dream of an airplane and then are awakened by a cell phone call from an old friend who lives in California, this does not mean that God wants you to take a trip to California. If a fellow gets a letter from a girl after praying about a lifelong mate, this does not mean that she is necessarily the right one. These are simultaneous experiences but not necessarily the Lord's leading or guidance. We need to carefully weigh through the circumstantial evidence and make sure God is behind it.

Some Christians look for unusual circumstantial signs expecting God to lead them by these signs. One fellow prayed, "Lord, if it is Your will, may the light at the next corner stay green till I get there." Another person asked the Lord for guidance by making his phone ring at 9:20 P.M. This is tempting God and the commandment of God says that we are not to tempt the Lord (Deut. 6:16). These kinds of tricks are the same kind of thing that Gideon tried in his own day, when he put out a fleece before God, asking Him to do something to confirm His will to him (Judges 6:11-40). The problem was this; God has already confirmed His will without the fleece (the outward circumstance). God promised: "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour (Judges 6:12) and "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (Judges 6:14). Many people try to play the same kind of games that Gideon did with his fleece, in order to avoid coming to grips with the real issue, which is commitment to God and doing what God has already called them to do.

Charles Coleman said:

"A good initial rule to remember is that circumstantial guidance should be supported and confirmed by some other means of divine direction before it is accepted as valid."

The Word of God and the Spirit of God are the primary ways of God's leading and direction (Acts 16:7; 21:4; 2 Tim. 3:16). If God chooses to use circumstances, they become the last piece of the puzzle to fall into place. Dr. F. B. Meyer has given some practical advice on discerning God's leading. He wrote, "When I was crossing the Irish Channel one starless night, I stood on the deck by the captain and asked him, 'How do you know where the harbor is on such a dark night as this?' He said, 'You see those three lights? All of them must line up together as one, and when we see them so unite, we know the exact position of the harbor's mouth.' When we want to know God's will, there are three things which always concur: the inward impulse, the Word of God, and the trend of the circumstances--God in the heart, impelling you forward; God in His Book, corroborating whatever He says in the heart; and God in circumstances, indicating His will. Never start until these three things agree."

### **Applications Questions**

- Have you already confirmed God's will by some other Biblical means before looking at circumstances?
- If you have already sensed God's true leading in a particular matter, has there been any circumstances, which might add confirmation concerning God's will?
- Has something occurred that would finalize the decision or direction that God wants you to take?
- Have you been following a rabbit trail?

**SERVANTS OF GOD** - Proverbs 11:14, "Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety." Proverbs 12:15, "The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise." Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." 1 Kings 12:6, "And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?"

God's people can receive direction or guidance from other Christians who are filled with wisdom and living for the Lord. We receive wisdom and guidance through the godly advice of well-weathered and well-seasoned saints. The Bible says that "king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men" (2 Chron. 10:13) and paid a price when ignoring it. Many of God's dear saints (including godly parents) have been through many storms and can give us godly advice in relation to living a separated

and victorious life. They can give us wise counsel regarding different paths, directions, and the important decisions we are making in life. Counsel and advice is important in discerning God's will for our life. Do not ignore this factor when it comes to determining God's will for your life.

**Caution:** Make sure that you are following godly counsel and not the twisted and distorted counsel of ungodly people. Psalm 1:1 declares: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." We are not to become the helpless victims of the opinions of others and the bad advice of other people (1 Kings 12:8). We must still think for ourselves and seek God's spiritual guidance and individual will for our lives. Ultimately God will confirm His specific will to you and not to other people. You will know the will of God for your own life. Nevertheless, godly advice is very valuable and helpful as we seek God's will about specific situations and directions in life.

Dr. Paul Little commented:

"I get very suspicious of people who come with very pious and spiritual language, telling me that God has led them to do some wild, outlandish thing, and nobody else had gotten the message."

#### **Application Questions**

- Have you talked to other godly Christians about the direction or decision that you need to make?
- Have you listened to their thoughts, advice, and input concerning the course that you want to take?
- Have you taken to heart some of their suggestions?

**WISDOM OF GOD** - James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." God promises to give wisdom to those who ask. Proverbs 3:13 says, "Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding." Proverbs 4:7 adds: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

As we pray, we can seek God's wisdom concerning His plan or will in specific areas related to our lives. The wisdom that God gives to us is from above and not from this world below. It is sensual and devilish (James 3:15-17). God's wisdom will guide

us in the right path and keep us from making bad choices in life. The world's wisdom (1 Cor. 3:19) is riddled with carnality and will lead us to a path of misery and woe. We need wisdom so that we will not waste the opportunities to do and follow God's will for our life.

A gifted church secretary was going through several great trials. She had a stroke, her husband had gone blind, and eventually her husband had to be taken to the hospital, where everyone knew he would die. The pastor saw her in church one Sunday and said to her: "I'm asking God to help you and strengthen you." "I appreciate that," she said, "but pray about one more thing. Pray that I'll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!" This godly woman wanted God's wisdom so she would do and follow the will of God as she passed through these various trials. She wanted to manifest a testimony that would reflect God's will for her life, as she passed through these difficulties, and be willing to follow God's wisdom for the future, so she might be directed in the will of God, while passing through the many changes that she faced.

### **Application Questions**

- Have you been faithfully asking God for wisdom so that you might discern His will for your life?
- Do you really desire to possess God's wisdom as you move throughout life?
- Have you consulted the world's wisdom about a certain course of action?
- Is the wisdom that you are seeking devilish or demonic?
- Have you been deceived?

**MIND OF GOD** – 1 Corinthians 2:15-16 says, "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." Because "we have the mind of Christ" through God's life and nature residing within our spirit (2 Pet. 1:4), we can now look at things in this life from our Lord's perspective (a spiritual perspective). This means that we can see life the way it really is intended to be without being fooled by the world's false assessments and diagnosis. The world has a set of perverted values, which runs contrary to God's mind. The mind of God gives us a new awareness and understanding about life in general, what is important, eternal, and how truth relates to our decisions in life.

The natural man (1 Cor. 2:14) cannot perceive how truth relates to His life since he does not have God's mind or inner spiritual aid to help him assess life and understand spiritual values and truth. The mind of God originates from the new nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4) and promises to give the believer general guidance and understanding in life about spiritual things (Rom. 7:22) and spiritual direction for living. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will (change your desire to God's desire) and to do of *his* good pleasure" (prompt you to do God's will for your life). God's new life and nature residing within us allows us to make decisions about "all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). In other words, the mind and nature of God operating within us, leads and directs our lives in the will of God.

Here is the wonderful promise. God's children can possess a sound or disciplined mind (2 Tim. 1:7), which is the mind controlled by God's life and new nature, so they can make proper decisions in life. Having God's mind about specific decisions and directions which we take in life is very important. The mind of God promises specific direction, help, assistance, and guidance. When we follow the inner promptings of the new nature within us, instead of the promptings of the sin nature, we can be sure that we will follow God's will for our life. Make sure you have God's mind on every matter!

A Native-American Christian went to a missionary for counsel. He was very much troubled by the spiritual conflict going on within his heart. He wanted to do what God wanted him to do, but he was frequently disobeying God. He found that he was prone to do evil things, even as he did before he became a Christian. The native described this conflict within himself as a dogfight. He said to the missionary, "It is as though I have a black dog and a white dog inside me fighting each other constantly."

The black dog, he explained, represented evil and the white dog represented good. The missionary asked him, "Which dog wins the fight within you?" After several moments of silence, the native said, "The dog that wins is the one I feed and the dog that loses is the one I starve."

### **Application Questions**

- At this point in your life, are you sure that your decision or course of action is something that God wants you to do?



- Do you have any doubts about doing it?
- Is your decision conducive to what the new nature is prompting you to do?
- Does it reflect godliness or the old way of life?
- Which nature have you been feeding when it comes to making your decisions?

**PEACE OF GOD** - Philippians 4:6-7, “Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The text says that “in every thing by prayer and supplication” we are to let our requests be made known to God. This includes praying about the will of God and wanting to know the will of God for our lives. As we pray to God and depend upon Him to show us His will for our lives, we can experience His inner peace or emotional tranquility concerning the decisions we must make and the directions that we need to go in life. God’s peace will “rule” or umpire our hearts and give direction to our lives.

God gives an inner peace that is related to accepting and following His sovereign plans and purposes for our lives. Acts 16:25, “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” Acts 12:6, “And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.” When Christians need to make choices, the peace that Christ produces in their hearts, should be a determining factor. God’s inward rest and assurance that He gives regarding a specific action or decision is another means that God uses to discern His will for our life.

When we obey the will of God, we have His inward assurance and peace; but when we step out of His will (even unintentionally), we lose His peace. We must also beware of a false peace. Jonah deliberately disobeyed God, yet he was able to go to sleep in the cargo area of a ship during a storm (Jonah 1:5) We sometimes say, “I have peace about it” but this is not sufficient evidence that we are always in the will of God. We must also pray, surrender to God’s will, and seek His guidance in the Scriptures. The peace of heart *alone* may not always be the peace of God. It may be a scapegoat to get our own way.

**Remember:** If you feel confused and unsure about making a decision, or taking a certain course of action, then don't do it. Romans 14:23 reminds us: "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." When in doubt - don't!

### **Application Questions**

- Do you have a true sense of inner peace about the decision you want to make?
- Do you have inward rest about the course of action that you are about to take?
- Is there any doubt in your mind?
- Are you unsettled about it?

**PATIENCE OF GOD** - James 1:4 says, "let patience have her perfect work." We have all heard the prayer, "Lord, please make patient and do it right now." We often make poor decisions because we make them too quickly. Many times we want to know God's will now, but God may have some lessons that He wants us to learn before revealing His will to our lives. One of these lessons is patience. Thus, we can often discern God's will after we learn the much-needed lesson of patience.

G. Christian Weiss said:

"It is much safer to wait with God than to go forward simply in human willfulness."

This is very important. Many Christians launch off without patiently seeking God's will for their lives. On more than one occasion the Psalmist cried out, "How long, O Lord?" (Ps. 13:1-2; 6:3. 35:17; 62:3; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 82:2; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3). As a general rule, we can agree with the maxim, "Haste makes waste!" You must allow God's Spirit to manifest His fruit of patience in your life so you will not run ahead of the will of God (Gal. 5:22-23). When it comes to major life-changing determinations, you should reflect at length upon a possible decision, and allow God time either to confirm or negate the decision. Through the patience of God, we can eventually find or determine God's will for our lives.

When Naomi saw that her daughter-in-law Ruth had done all she could in her situation with their nearest kinsman, Boaz, she gave her this advice in Ruth 3:18: "... Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day." So Ruth waited. The result was marriage to Boaz, who was in the line of Christ (Matt. 1:5). Many times we must learn to be patient, wait, and let God work in a given situation (Isa. 40:31). Instead

of running ahead of God to discover His will, we must often wait to discover His will in certain situations.

The great preacher F. B. Meyer gave some sound advice on what to do in a crisis. He wrote, "Never act in panic ... When you are most eager to act is the time when you will make the most pitiable mistakes. Do not say in your heart what you will or will not do, but wait upon God until he makes known His way. So long as that way is hidden, it is clear that there is no need of action, and that He accounts Himself responsible for all results of keeping you where you are."

**Remember:** God isn't in a hurry!

### **Application Questions**

- Are you willing to wait on God to determine His will?
- Are you making a quick decision that may impact your life, friends, and family in an adverse way?
- Have you been patiently waiting for God's direction?

**DELAYS OF GOD** - Exodus 3:1, "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb." Genesis 41:46, "And Joseph *was* thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt."

Sometimes God sends delays into our lives which are designed to be part of His present purpose for our lives. And it's these delays that can become a steppingstone to the next stage of God's will that He has for our lives. We must learn to accept the delays that God sends our way. The "stops-lights" guide you as much as the "go-lights" do. The Lord had Moses care for sheep for 40 years on the "backside of the desert" (Ex. 3:1) before he deemed him mature enough to lead His people out of Egypt. This was one of God's divine delays to prepare Moses for an important work. God invested a total of eighty years (Ex. 7:7) preparing Moses for forty years of service in the wilderness wanderings (Acts 7:35-36). It also took God thirty years to get Joseph ready for the position of prime minister in Egypt (Gen. 41:46).

**Don't Forget:** God's *delays* are not necessarily God's *denials*. They sometimes are part of His overall plan and purpose for our life, which can be a steppingstone to the next phase of our life. God's will is often revealed progressively and not all at

once. Step by step, little by little, God opens the doors and reveals His perfect will to our lives. We need to learn the important of God's delays and see them as being part of His will for our lives.

Warren Wiersbe once said:

"The best thing you and I can do is to stop looking at our watches and calendars and simply look by faith into the face of God and let him have his way – in his time."

### **Application Questions**

- Are you willing to follow God's timetable?
- Are you ready to accept God's delays?
- Are you moving ahead of God?

**STILLNESS OF GOD** - Psalm 46:10 states: "Be still, and know that I *am* God." Exodus 14:13, "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."

God's people must learn the secret of stillness and quietness as they seek God's will for their lives. There is a desperate need to just "be still" (relax) in the presence of God, allow God to work in our hearts and the situation at hand, and confirm His will in His own way and time. God has a way of working and weaving together His perfect plan for our life. Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose."

As stated previously, in the quietness of life, we must remember that God still speaks in a still small voice (1 Kings 19:12). Stillness or quietness requires confident trust in God's power to show you His will and guide your life. God says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). Just relax and let God have His way. Being still or relaxed involves resting in God's sovereign plan and allowing God to work out His plan for our lives. It involves a quiet inner confidence and rest in God to guide us and give to us what is best.

"Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side;  
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;  
leave to thy God to order and provide;

In ev'ry change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heav'nly Friend  
thro' thorny ways leads to a joyful end."

### **Application Questions**

- Have you been still in God's presence, listening to His voice and direction?
- Are you willing to relax and allow God to have His way in your life?
- Have you given God time to work out the details of His plan for your life?
- Are you running around like a chicken with its head cut off?

**DESIRES OF GOD** - Psalm 37:4 says this: "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." To "delight" ourselves in the Lord means to simply enjoy His personal presence through understanding His character and ways. In Philippians 3:10 Paul said, "that I may know him" experientially in life. When we have a deepening understanding of who God is and enjoy His presence and ways for our life, it's then that God will implant within our heart the right desires so we can fulfill His will ("he shall give thee the desires of thine heart").

These desires won't be our own *selfish* or carnal desires but the *spiritual* desires that God has placed within our heart. It's these desires that God would want us to follow (Psalm 37:23). His desires implanted within our heart will result in following His will for our daily lives. As we walk with God, He will restructure our ambitions and desires, and guide our lives in His ordained path. God will actually supply us with those desires that coincide with His purpose and program for our lives.

The "desires of thine heart" will always include wholesome and pure desires that honor God (1 Cor. 10:31). God will actually direct our lives by the *spiritual* desires He places within our hearts. However, God can also impress upon our heart *specific* desires that would help us determine His will for our lives. After much prayer and seeking God's face (Ps. 27:8), I must come to the place where I ask myself the questions: "What do I want to do? What desire has God placed upon my heart."

As previously mentioned, sometimes the will of God is revealed to us in a progressive manner, or over a period of time (Gen. 12:1 – "that I will show thee"). We might take years finding out and confirming in our heart the person that God wants us to marry. It might take some time determining the specific direction or vocation God wants us to take in life. However, there are other times we can very

quickly determine God's will for our lives based upon a clear command of Scripture, or some other principles of guidance, which God gives to us. One thing is certain; God promises to guide our lives and reveal His will to us, as His children, whether it's in a gradual or speedy manner.

Psalm 31:3 says,

"For thou *art* my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me."

"He leadeth me: O blessed thought!  
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!  
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,  
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

God's promise is sure: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8).

"Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim thro' this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy pow'rful hand;  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more;  
Feed me till I want no more"

**FREEDOM OF GOD** - 1 Timothy 4:4-5 states: "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

We need to finish this study by reflecting upon something very important and wonderful. Are you ready for this? God's guidance is not needed for every minor detail of our lives. Think about this. Does God have a specific will and purpose for everything that we do? The answer is no. How many times must we brush our teeth during the day? Should we eat fish two times a week and meat only once a week?

God does not necessarily have a will and purpose that relates the normal routines of life. Actually, the Bible teaches that God wants us to make many decisions based upon our liberty or freedom in Christ and these decisions are the natural result of

enjoying and experiencing our freedom in Christ. Our liberty can be viewed as “the open will of God” for our lives which we can all enjoy based upon our liking. It is without any restrictions. God does not limit His will in areas that are amoral and where no Scriptural commands or principles are violated (Romans 14:1-13). God’s freedom is ours to enjoy. We can bask in the sunlight of our Christian liberty and simply enjoy life without trying to figure out the will of God for every minute situation.

Let’s ask some questions that might help us to understand this principle. Does God’s will pertain to such mundane matters of dressing and eating? Yes, and no. If you want to dress immodest the Holy Spirit will guide you to not dress in a suggestive manner (1 Tim. 2:9). But when it comes to dressing modestly, one can choose any color or article of clothing that is in the parameters of modesty, which is a reflection of God’s will. When it comes to eating, the Holy Spirit will begin to convict us, if we gorge ourselves at every meal and become gluttonous (Gal. 5:20-21). On the other hand, the Holy Spirit will not confirm to you whether or not you must eat broccoli twice a week and red beets only once a week. As far as music is concerned, we are commanded to separate from musical rebellion (2 Cor. 6:14-17). However, within the parameters of godly music which reflects God’s character, we are free to choose vocal or instrumental music, acapella music or music with instrumental accompaniment.

God does not guide in areas where no guidance is needed. This is an important principle to remember. Many times there are several decisions we could make and different directions that we could take, regarding neutral things, which are permissible within the boundaries of our Christian freedom.

I once read of a deeply spiritual (though misinformed) missionary who used to pray for special guidance about the most trivial matters. She would even try to decide whether it was God's will that she wash her hair on a given evening. She was right in understanding that God is interested in the mundane affairs of life, but she was wrong in believing that she always needed a special sign or inner voice of confirmation by the Holy Spirit. Obviously she was a mental wreck.

This lady did not realize that the will of God involves living in obedience to God’s Word (1 John 5:3). However, God’s will does not involve every minute decision that we must make in life. It does not include every little detail in our lives. God’s

guidance is not *monotonous* or *mysterious* and something that requires direct inner confirmations about every little decision or move that we make in life. In short, if your hair needs washing, then wash it! It will stink if you don't! If your car needs to be washed, then wash it; it will be dirty if you don't.

Consider the woman, who upon waking in the morning, would wait for inner confirmation to get out of bed and the inner voice of confirmation to dress and which shoe to put on first – the right or the left. Sometimes she would put on both stockings and no shoes and other times shoes without socks. While eating breakfast the inner voice told her that she could not eat but one spoonful of cereal. But when noontime came her common sense and growling stomach revolted against her inner impressions. This kind of fanaticism is unscriptural! The Holy Spirit does not lead in these kinds of erratic ways. Remember, the Holy Spirit never leads us in irrational behavior and living (Gal. 5:22-23).

I have known people who have almost become paralyzed in life because they were always looking for a subjective inner confirmation for every decision that they made in life. Christian friend, what we must do is simply enjoy our freedom or liberty in life. This means we can go choose the type of toothpaste that we would want, what we want for supper, knowing that many decisions we face in life are neutral, and they do not have any bearing on following God's will. You don't have to sit around and pray about every little detail in life in order to determine whether or not it is the will of God. Determine what is neutral and part of our freedom in Christ and enjoy life!

1 Timothy 6:17 says: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." This verse and many more that speak of our Christian freedom (Col. 2:16; 1 Pet. 2:16) inform us that we do not have to pray whether or not we can eat a piece of meat for supper. God said we could eat it. We don't have to pray about the normal things in life that God has already given to us to enjoy and which are for our own benefit, enjoyment, and blessing. God's will cannot be found in areas related to Christian liberty, or neutral matters, since they are areas where we can make decisions based upon our own personal likes and tastes.

This is not to say that we should not pray about small matters ("in everything by prayer" - Phil. 4:6). Sometimes small matters and decisions turn out to be significant



ones. But there comes a point when we must just live life and enjoy the blessings of life that God has given to us, without trying to find an inner confirmation about every detail in life. Many things are neutral and the decisions we make are reflected within the parameters or boundaries of God's freedom and liberty, which He has given to us. God does not care what color tie you wear, or what kind of car you drive – Chevy, Ford, or Honda. Did I miss Toyota?

A. W. Tozer said:

“Except for those things that are specifically commanded or forbidden in the Scriptures, it is God's will that we be free to exercise our own intelligent choice. The shepherd will lead the sheep, but he does not wish to decide which tuft of grass the sheep shall nibble each moment of the day. In almost everything that touches our everyday life on earth, God is pleased when we're pleased. He wills that we be as free as birds to soar and sing our Maker's praise without anxiety. God's choice for us may not be only one but rather any one of a score of possible choices.”

God has not created us to be a puppet dancing on a string waiting for Him to tell us what flavor of ice cream to choose before we can eat the ice cream. The point is this; the Christian does not have to wait for a special sign from God, or some inner confirmation from the Spirit, to be able to enjoy the things that God has already given to him. Just enjoy life and live. God does not care what flavor ice-cream you eat!

As the golfer approached the first tee, a hazardous hole with a green surrounded by water, he debated if he should use his new golf ball. Deciding that the hole was too treacherous, he pulled out an old ball and placed it on the tee. Just then he heard a voice from above say loudly: "Use the new ball!" Frightened, he replaced the old ball with the new one and approached the tee. Now the voice from above shouted: "Take a practice swing!" With this, the golfer stepped backward and took a swing. Feeling more confident, he approached the tee when the voice again rang out: "Use the old ball!" This is a silly story but it drives home the point that God's will is not discoverable in these types of situations. This is because they are situations in which God's guidance is not necessary.

So, how much guidance can a Christian expect to receive from God? We believe in God's *total guidance* for the believer in both spiritual and specific areas of living (Ps. 32:8; 37:23), involving both small and large decisions. However, *no guidance* is

provided by God for the nonspecific and neutral details of common living, since God has already approved and given these things for us to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). Of course, this should not limit the need to thank God for the many common blessings and things that He has already provided for us. We should thank God for our toast in the morning, but not pray if we should eat a piece of toast for breakfast!

**Remember:** God wants to guide your life, but He does not want to weigh down your life. God wants us to enjoy a life lived out in the will of God. However, it's not His intention to place burdens upon our life which run contrary to the nature of His will and purpose for our life. The Bible says that "his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

I hope these short tips on knowing God's will for your life have been helpful.

Proverbs 3:5-6 is worth repeating:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart (this is serious faith in God to direct your life); and lean not unto thine own understanding (this is senseless thinking - you think that you know a better way). In all thy ways acknowledge him (this is surrender to God's will), and he shall direct thy paths."

This is God's promise! When we are yielded to God's way, then He will show us His way for our life. The key is to be honest with yourself and make sure you will do God's will, even before you might know what it is. Be sure that you are ready to follow Him, while acknowledging His lordship over your life. If we want God to guide us, our attitude needs to be right.

Walter Knight told of an old Scottish woman who went from home to home across the countryside selling thread, buttons, and shoestrings. When she came to an unmarked crossroad, she would toss a stick into the air and go in the direction the stick pointed when it landed. One day, however, she was seen tossing the stick up several times. "Why do you toss the stick more than once?" someone asked. "Because," replied the woman, "it keeps pointing to the left, and I want to take the road on the right." She then dutifully kept throwing the stick into the air until it pointed the way she wanted to go!

Don't try and travel your own way in life. You will be disappointed. Your way is difficult and hard (Prov. 13:15). God's will is the best thing for you. Nothing can be better for you. Nothing can be more enjoying and satisfying. This is why it's called "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

Reggie what was being traded. Wolf and Holmgren went after Reggie White, a free agent, who was one of the greatest defensive players in the history of pro football. Every team in the NFL would have liked to have signed White. As an ordained minister, he said he would go where God wanted him to go. Holmgren called White and left a message on his answering machine. "Reggie, this is God," the message said. "I want you to go to Green Bay."

Reggie White was not offended by Holmgren's humor or by Wolf's offer of \$17 million for four years! Brett Favre joined in the pursuit too. He said, "I told him this was a great football town, I told him he could make the difference. I also told him I didn't want him hitting me anymore!"

Christian brother and sister, following God's will is not boring. You are not missing out on life, when you decide to invest in the will of God. Actually, you are going to discover just how wonderful God's blessings are when you follow His will and purpose for your life. You may not get \$17 million but you will be spiritually blessed by God in many ways. So, don't ignore God's will - follow it. Strive to know it and be determined to make it part of your everyday life. Let's close with some reflective thoughts on following God's will for our life.

**\*\* THE WILL OF GOD \*\***

“The will of God will never take you,  
Where the grace of God cannot keep you.  
Where the arms of God cannot support you,  
Where the riches of God cannot supply your needs,  
Where the power of God cannot endow you.

The will of God will never take you,  
Where the spirit of God cannot work through you,  
Where the wisdom of God cannot teach you,  
Where the army of God cannot protect you,  
Where the hands of God cannot mold you.

The will of God will never take you,  
Where the love of God cannot enfold you,  
Where the mercies of God cannot sustain you,

Where the peace of God cannot calm your fears,  
Where the authority of God cannot overrule for you.  
The will of God will never take you,  
Where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears,  
Where the Word of God cannot feed you,  
Where the miracles of God cannot be done for you,  
Where the omnipresence of God cannot find you.”

(Author: Rebekah Nolt)

**\*\* I'll Do Whatever It Takes\*\***

“At times as I go through life, I may stumble,  
But I keep walking, as I renew my mind and stay humble.  
As I follow the Lord and proclaim His Word, I will make mistakes,  
But I am determined to finish my course.  
I'll do whatever it takes.  
I'll do whatever it takes. Lord, I'll do whatever it takes  
To accomplish Your will, to keep standing until  
God calls me home or Christ returns,  
Lord, I'll do whatever it takes.”

**\*\* I Am Willing Lord\*\***

“Sometimes when I am down  
And I don't feel like you are around, Oh Lord.  
Feeling so sorry for me,  
Not knowing that all the while,  
You're working to see.  
If when I'm put through the fire  
I'll come out shining like gold.  
Oh Lord, please don't ever stop working with me  
Till you see I can be all you want me to be.

Often when I ask why  
Teach me then on you to rely, Oh Lord.  
You surely know what is best  
May I learn that in confidence  
And strength I can rest.  
Then leaning fully on you  
My questions fall one by one.  
Dear Lord, please don't ever stop working with me  
Till you see I can be all you want me to be.

I am willing Lord, I am willing Lord  
To be just exactly what you want me to be.”