

03. How Can I Know God's Will for My Life? - Pt.3

“Knowing the Personal Will of God”

(8/6/17)

This morning we're going to finish the series we've entitled, *“How Can I Know God's Will for My Life”*.

As I have said repeatedly since we started this series—this is one of the most, if not *the* most, common question pastors are asked by their congregants.

For this series, I have purposely avoided using a deep and exhaustive theological approach to this subject (which would take several months) opting rather to keep things simple.

And so, with that in mind—I have condensed this study into two main categories for knowing God's will for your life:

I. The General or Scriptural Will of God

II. The Specific or Personal Will of God

Last week we finished looking at the first main point, *“Knowing the General or Scriptural Will of God”*.

As we saw, this point included 5 things that are God's will for every person's life—

- A. It is God's will that you go to heaven when you die
- B. It is God's will that your life has meaning and purpose
- C. It is God's will that you be delivered from destructive behaviors that are destroying your life
- D. It is God's will that you turn your life completely over to Him to be used for His glory
- E. It is God's will that you obey all that He has said so He can bless you all that He desires

As I said last week, when we first announced we were going to do a series that dealt with knowing God's will for our lives—I think most people assumed that meant we were going to tell them how they could know God's *personal* will for their lives—specifics

And then for the first two weeks we taught from the Bible—biblical principles on the subject that dealt with God's will for *everyone's* life.

I'm sure that kind of put many people off—maybe even irritated some of them.

I could just hear them saying to themselves that while these biblical principles are great,

"I need to know God's will when it comes to things like: which job offer should I take; how can I know which person is the one God wants me to marry; where does He want me to live, which house does He want me to buy, what ministry is God calling me into—and the million other decisions that affect my life and walk?"

And while I understand that knowing God's personal will for our lives is important—believe it or not, it is secondary to knowing (and doing) His primary will as He has specified in the pages of Scripture.

And let me just take this one step farther by saying that if you're not serious about doing what God has already revealed in His Word about His will for your life—why should He be serious about revealing to you anything further in the way of His specific or personal will for your life?

And that's one of the main reasons we need to start with God's biblical will for our lives before we can determine His personal will—a moving object is easier to direct than one stuck in the mud thru laziness, moral compromise and or general disobedience.

Psalms 37:23 (NKJV)

²³ The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

A “**good man**” implies a man or woman who is saved and living in obedience to what God has already revealed in His Word—the psalmist is saying, that is the kind of Christian God will guide in the personal steps of His will for their life.

Now let me just say this to start with—when it comes to God's will for our lives I personally don't think that He wants to “micro-manage” our lives.

In other words, I don't think He really cares what we have for breakfast (as long as it's not bad for us), or what we wear to work (as long as it's not immoral)—He leaves those decisions to us.

But I do believe He wants to lead us in matters that will affect our lives in a substantive way.

Peter said that God wants us to cast *all our cares* on Him for He cares about us as His children.

Jesus said that God knows the number of hairs on our heads.

If He cares about us so much that He takes the time to count the exact number of hairs on each of our heads—then don't you think He cares about who you marry, what ministry you get involved in or what job you take?

I say this because there are those Christians who don't believe that God has a personal will for our lives—they believe if we obey the Ten Commandments we can choose whom to marry, what job to take, what ministry to be involved in etc.—God isn't involved in these personal decisions they say.

But that theology contradicts what God's Word says—

Jeremiah 10:23 (NKJV)

²³ O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

Psalms 143:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, For in You do I trust; Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, For I lift up my soul to You.

Ephesians 2:10 (AMP)

¹⁰ For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].

“So then if God does have a personal will for my life how can I find it?”—or in other words, “As I'm living my life and making decisions how can I know what His will is for me?”

F.B. Meyer tells the story of how, one starless night, as he was crossing the Irish Channel that he stood on the deck by the captain and asked him how he could tell where the narrow channel was that led into Holyhead Harbor, the night was so dark that nothing could be seen.

The captain said, *“You see those three lights? They are channel markers. All of them must line up together as one, and when we see them so united, we know the exact position of the harbor's mouth.”*

I'd like to expand that illustration a little into 6 things (markers) for knowing God's will for our lives—not that all of these things have to line up for every decision we face.

However, the more important the decision the more we will want most if not all of these markers to line up so that we discern the will of God for our lives *without running aground*.

II. The Specific or Personal Will of God

A. A definite conviction in your heart

The first principle for knowing the will of God is a definite conviction or a burden in your heart that God *wants* you to take a certain course of action to do something or go somewhere.

We have to be careful here— *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."* (Jer.17:9)

You can't trust impulses or inner voices by themselves—

1. *They might be the imagination of your own heart (Jer.23);*
2. *They might be the devil ("get behind Me Satan"); or*
3. *They might be the still small voice of God (Elijah).*

Conviction in the heart is a good place to start but you need further confirmation from the Holy Spirit when it comes to important decisions.

B. It can't violate the clear commands of God in Scripture

The second principle for knowing the will of God is that—nothing can be the will of God that is contrary to the Word of God—PERIOD!

The God who is leading your life in the present is the same God who inspired the Bible in the past—consequently, nothing can be His will for your life that conflicts with His Word.

One author said,

“He will never lead a husband to leave his wife for a more spiritual woman or a wife to leave her husband for a more spiritual man. It won't happen. That is not God. God will never lead you to cheat on your income tax in order to give more money to the church.”

Several years ago, Cyndi did a woman's retreat where a woman stood up and proclaimed that God had told her to leave her husband and teenage children because they were all unsaved and watching the sitcom “Friends” and she needed to be around more spiritual people.

God's Word commands us to honor our commitment to our spouse and family—abandoning them, no matter how noble or “spiritual” the reason—is NOT God's will!

C. You must stay in close fellowship with the Lord

The third principle is also just as important—it's the principle of staying close to the Lord in your daily life if you want Him to lead you in His individual will for your life.

Psalms 32:8 (NKJV)

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Clearly, if God is to guide us with his ‘eye’—He must first *catch* our eye.

This means that we must look to him regularly throughout the day, as well as through periods of personal Bible reading and devotion.

There are many Christians who go through their entire day without thinking about or talking to God at all.

If you want God to lead your personal life then you have to bring Him into your personal life.

D. Always check your motive in making any important decision—is *Jesus* at the center of it or is *self* at the center of it?

What is your motive for taking that big promotion—is it to use your new position to be a brighter more visible witness for Jesus—or was the prestige and higher salary the driving motivation in your decision?

That doesn’t mean that salary can’t be taken into consideration at all—but for too many it becomes the *only* consideration. (Comment)

“Well I believe God gave me this job to bless me and my family.”—REALLY?

Is working 60, 70 or 80 hours a week (including Sunday) where you have to miss church and maybe even lose your family because you’re never home really God’s will?

I had someone confront me one time after I had taught on learning to be content with whatever God has given you.

He had a very prosperous business and was thinking of quadrupling it and was a little upset with me because he felt that I was, by my teaching, making him feel guilty if he went ahead with his plans. (Finish)

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Charles Stanley—

“God has called us to ask of every invitation, every opportunity, every business transaction, every family decision, this important question: **Is this the wise thing to do?** In light of my present state of mind, in light of the present state of my relationship with my wife or my husband, in light of what's going on at work, in light of what's going on in my life right now, **is this the wise thing for me to do?** In light of where I want to be in the future, in light of the kind of marriage and the kind of family I want to have, in light of where I want to be financially, in light of where I want to be in terms of my career, in light of where I want to be in terms of my ability to serve God, **is this the wise thing to do?** This question will quickly reveal your motive. It will reveal the selfishness in your relationships. It will reveal the greed in your financial decisions.”

E. Do the circumstances indicate that God is leading you?

As you pray about an important decision keep looking for open or closed doors.

1 Corinthians 16:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Colossians 4:3 (NKJV)

³ meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

Acts 16:6-10 (NKJV)

⁶ Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. ⁷ After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. ⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

2 Corinthians 2:12 (NKJV)

¹² Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,

Here Paul ‘bounced off’ a couple of closed doors before he found the open door of God’s will.

An open door would be favorable circumstances suddenly coming across your path where God seems to be saying, “*This is the way walk in it.*” (Isa.30:21)

(Mention our decision to go on the radio and money suddenly coming in the mail)

F. Seek God for some confirmation from the Word

Then, number sixth, look for confirmation of some kind from the Scriptures, something that the Holy Spirit shows you that seems like a clear message from God to your heart individually.

In closing—don’t let others make important life decisions for you—no matter how spiritual you think these folks are.

They can be used by God to *confirm* His will for your life or even to get you *praying* about a certain course of action God may want you to take—but they must never to be allowed to make a decision for you that will affect your life in a substantive way.

And remember, “*He who believes will not make haste*”—in other words, give God time to reveal His will to you.

The devil wants you to make hasty decisions because then he has a better chance of getting you to make wrong decisions where he can then misdirect you away from God's actual will for your life.

As I said at the beginning of this study, all of these markers don't have to line up for every decision, but certainly the more important the decision the more you are going to want to wait for God to give you enough markers so that His will is clear—beyond a reasonable doubt.

I say that because some Christians let the fear of making a mistake paralyze them into inaction where they're afraid to make any important decisions for fear they are going to step out of God's will and bring upon themselves terrible consequences.

Let me assure you that God wants to lead your life more than you want Him to lead it.

Often God *is* giving 'markers' but we're so worried about blowing it and making the wrong decision that we're not going to do anything unless God—"*writes His will in the sky!*"

Sometimes you have to just take a step of faith—"*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD...*"

"Yes, but what if it's not of the Holy Spirit?"

Look, if you step off the path that God is leading you on and you make a 'wrong turn' He will quickly close a door and redirect you.

Remember it isn't those who have a tender heart to know and do God's will that get into trouble, it's those who kick the doors open that God has closed that get into trouble—the rebellious.

And, let's be honest—the reason so many Christians get into trouble and reap serious consequences in their lives isn't because they don't know the will of God—it's because they do know the will of God but refuse to do what He has said.

Ezra 7:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it...

And understand there are times when God is leading you and you don't even know it—so be open to this throughout your day.

Plan your day, go about your business—but be sensitive to God's "*divine appointments*"—people and situations He leads across your path for His purposes.

If you seek to incorporate these principles for discerning God's will for your life faithfully.

And if you will cultivate the heart of Jesus where He said, "*I always do those things that please My Father; and 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work'.*"

Then know this, you will always be led by Him in all you do—

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.