

\$5.00

*Knowing the
Will of*

GOD

*“...that you may stand perfect
and fully assured in all the
will of God.” - Col. 4:12*

By Pastor Stephen Hildebrandt

Knowing God's Will

NOTE TO THE READER

The following study on *Knowing the Will of God* assumes that the reader has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; that is the starting point for knowing God's Will. If you are outside of Christ, the door to knowing His Will is closed to you. Christ alone holds the key. Repent of your sins, throw yourself upon the mercy of God, receive Christ into your heart, and the mysteries of God's Will shall be unveiled to you.

This booklet offers no "microwave technology," quick fixes, or fast answers on knowing God's Will. If this study looks more like an outline for Christian living than an outline for knowing God's Will, that is because knowing and being in God's Will is a way of life not a magic formula. The material herein outlines the basis for a consistent Christian walk according to the Will of God.

Obviously this booklet is not a long dissertation on knowing the Will of God. Rather, it is an accumulation of teaching notes and outlines assembled over many years that have been helpful to me as well as many others. Since the material is mostly in outline form I encourage you to stop and carefully consider each point, by looking up the Scriptures listed and applying them to your own life. In so doing, I pray that the Lord will richly bless you with great wisdom and insight into all His holy Will.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large, sweeping 'S' at the beginning.

The Scripture quotations herein are from
the *New American Standard Version* of the Bible,
copyrighted 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972,
1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation

Copyright © 1995, 2004 Pastor Stephen O. Hildebrandt



Table of Contents

Lesson 1.	Search for Significance	1
Lesson 2.	Two Wrong Views	2
Lesson 3.	Old Testament Discernment	4
Lesson 4.	New Covenant Changes	6
Lesson 5.	Being Versus Doing	8
Lesson 6.	God's Will Personified in Christ	11
Lesson 7.	The Key: Draw Near to God	15
Lesson 8.	God's Unique Plan for Your Life	21
Lesson 9.	What About My Past Mistakes?	26
Lesson 10.	Summary of Principles	30

Appendices

Appendix 1:	God's Decretive and Perceptive Will	33
Appendix 2:	Christ Fulfilled the Old Covenant	34
Appendix 3:	Principles of God's Will in the Psalms	38





*“The Christian faith
engages the profoundest
problems the human
mind can entertain and
solves them completely
and simply by pointing
to the Lamb of God.”*

– A.W. Tozer



1

Lesson 1. Search for Significance

A. God is not arbitrary or capricious.

God NEVER acts without purpose and design; that is, nothing God does is meaningless. Every created thing has a purpose bestowed upon it by God. (READ: Prov. 16:4; Isa. 46:10-11; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:9)

B. Man is the peak of God's Creation.

God has endowed man with a MIND that can comprehend higher knowledge; a WILL which can make moral decisions; EMOTIONS such as love, thankfulness, awe, etc.; and a SPIRIT which God eternally sustains. To no other creature but man has God ever declared, "Come now, let us *reason* together, you and I" (Isaiah 1:18).

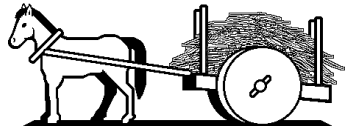
C. Yet man is the only creature with an identity crises.

Man has forgotten who he is – the only creature that experiences a mid-life crisis, depression, suicidal tendencies, etc. The upsurge in modern psychiatry points to the growing problem of man's identity crises. The result has been a myriad of self-help books and therapies. (READ: Rom. 9:20; James 1:22-24)



D. Even animals know their purpose and place in life.

"An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but ... My people do not understand." – Isaiah 1:3



E. The World has NO answers to man's identity crises.

Have modern psychology and psychiatry helped? Is man better off today than in the past? No! The older the human race gets, the worse our identity crises becomes. Clearly, the world has no answers to man's identity crises. (READ: 1 Cor. 2:14)



F. Christianity has answers rooted in God's Word.

God's Word tells me who I am, where I came from, why I am here, and where I am going: within God's Will I walk in God's custom made plan for me. (READ: Genesis 1:26-28, 2:7; Psalm 139)



2

Lesson 2. Two Wrong Views: #1. Fatalism

A. God's Will Cannot be Thwarted (Job 42:2).

The Bible declares, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all" (Psa. 103:19) -- true sovereignty means absolute control. If there is even one maverick molecule in the universe outside of God's control, then God is not truly sovereign (Sproul), but such is not the case. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). God does "whatever [His] hand and [His] purpose predestined to occur" (Acts 4:28), and His "will cannot be thwarted" (Job 42:2).

B. God's Sovereign Will includes Human Involvement.

"You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His Will?'" (Rom. 9:19). If God has predetermined who and what I would be and do, then I am not responsible for my actions -- right? Wrong! God is absolutely sovereign and yet man is fully accountable for all of his words, deeds, thoughts, attitudes, and motives. God's sovereignty and human responsibility are taught side-by-side in Scripture without apology. To stress God's sovereignty and ignore human responsibility (*Fatalism*), or to emphasize man's will above God's Will (*Arminianism*) are two extremes that lead to a philosophy of life that is both unbalance and unbiblical. God not only ordains the end, but also the means to the end, which includes human involvement. (READ: Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28; Phil. 2:12-13)



"The foreordination of God in no degree interferes with the responsibility of man. I have often been asked by persons to reconcile the two truths. My only reply is, 'They need no reconciliation, for they were never at odds.' Why should I try to reconcile two friends? The two facts are parallel lines."

— Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 1834–1892

C. Fatalism Breeds Apathy.

Satan loves to pull Scriptures out of context and twist them to incite rebellion against God: [1] that is what he attempted to do to Jesus in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1-11); [2] that is how false teachers begin each new cult (Mt. 24:24); and [3] that is what fatalism does -- it twists the Scriptural facts concerning God's sovereignty, to incite rebellion in the form of laziness, apathy, irresponsibility, and unfaithfulness -- i.e. the false notion that since God controls everything, I can do nothing -- what will be will be (Prov. 22:13).

Right or Wrong Attitude?

Answer: T = True, F = Fatalistic

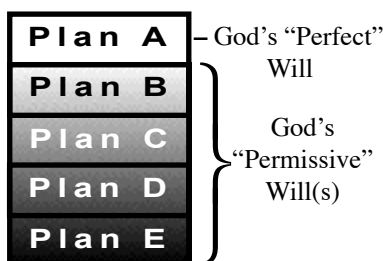
- _____ 1. God is in sovereign control of ALL things.
- _____ 2. God's Will cannot be thwarted.
- _____ 3. God's Will shall be accomplished, irrespective of human involvement.
- _____ 4. If God wants to save my children, then it doesn't matter what kind of parent I am.

1.-T, 2.-T, 3.-F, 4.-F

Wrong Views #2. God has a Selection of Wills

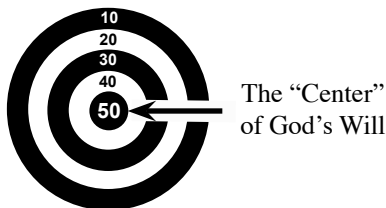
A. Stuck with Second Best.

Another error concerning God's Will is the view that God has a selection of wills. If I miss God's "perfect" will, then I'm stuck with second or third best for the rest of my life.



B. The "Center" of God's Will.

This is a variation of the view above. The goal is to hit the bull's-eye which is the "center" of God's Will. I just keep trying to improve my aim to hit the "center" of the selection of wills God has for me.



C. Negative Effects. *God's Will becomes:*

Antidote

(1) Distant. The Will of God is always "just up ahead" or "out there" somewhere. Consequently, I'm always looking ahead and never living in the now. I'm always looking forward to and dreaming about tomorrow.

Mt. 6:34

(2) Elusive. The Christian life becomes a frantic search for the ever elusive "center" or "perfect" Will of God. This mind-set affects many Christians: e.g. How many Christians would say that, right now, they are in the most perfect Will of God there is and it couldn't get any better?

Heb. 4:10-11

(3) Requires Continual Waiting. Everything is in a state of waiting: "I'm just waiting on God to see what His *real* Will for my life is. Right now I'm on hold. I'm just waiting until that day when..." Because I am always waiting for that which is on the horizon, the result is that I become very bored with what I am doing right now – it's empty, meaningless. Decision-making becomes paralyzed: "I'm waiting to find out what God's 'perfect' Will is, before I do anything."

1 Thess. 5:18

(4) Mysterious or Unusual. Often Christians fail to think of God's Will as that which I should obviously have done. We think God's Will is loaded with mystery. Secretly inside we think, "If I ever did learn the 'perfect' Will of God for my life, I know that God would send me off to smuggle Bibles into Baghdad."

James. 4:17

(5) Legalistic. The *false* conclusion reached is that God withholds the knowledge of His Will from all but a select few who earn it through much sweat and hard work. And so, if I just *do* more for God, then maybe He will show me His 'perfect' Will for my life."

Eph. 5:17-18

3

Lesson 3. Old Testament Discernment

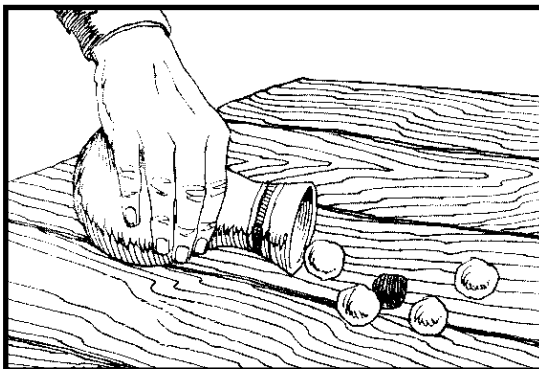
A. Casting Lots.

Proverbs 16:33

"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."

Proverbs 18:18

"The lot puts an end to contentions, and decides between the mighty."



In the Old Testament God's people discerned His Will in various ways; one of them was casting lots. In fact, casting lots to make important decisions was actually commanded by God in the Old Testament (Lev. 16:9, Num. 33:54). The Jews considered that the outcome was determined by the Lord (Prov. 16:33); that is to say, however the lot fell reflected God's Will (1 Sam. 10:20-24, Acts 1:24-26). Lots are memorialized in the Jewish Feast of Purim. "Purim," the Akkadian word for lots, celebrates the frustration of Haman's plan to destroy the Jews in Persia, since Haman had used lots to choose the day of their destruction (Esther 3:7). Finally, the word "lot" came to refer to one's portion in life. The righteous could confess that God was their *lot* (Psalm 16:5), while the *lot* of the wicked was terror and destruction (Isaiah 17:14).

REFERENCES ON CASTING LOTS

- Lev. 16:8-10 - used by the high priest to pick the sacrificial goat.
- Josh. 18:6-10 - used by Joshua to divide the land between the twelve tribes.
- 1 Sam. 10:20f - used by Samuel to choose Saul, Israel's first king.
- 1 Chron. 24 - used by priests to determine Temple service.
- Jonah 1:7 - used by sailors to throw Jonah overboard.
- Matt. 27:35 - used by the soldiers to divide Jesus' garments (cf. Psalm 22:18).
- Acts 1:26 - used by disciples to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot.

Acts 1:26, referenced above, is the very *last time* that lots are mentioned in the Bible. Notice, in the very next chapter of the book of Acts we read that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church (Acts 2). May we conclude that when the Holy Spirit was given, that was the end of lots? Yes, there is a better way now.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some modern day "lots" people use to make decisions?
2. Do these reflect God's will and direction? Why or why not?
3. Can these things be dangerous? If so how?



B. The Urim and Thummim: “Lights and Perfections”.

The Urim and Thummim were two mysterious objects used by the high priest of Israel to discern God’s Will. They are first mentioned in the book of Exodus and were carried by the high priest over his heart in the “breastplate of judgment,” a colorful cloth garment worn by the high priest (Ex. 28:15-30). Moses gave the tribe of Levi special responsibility for the care of the Urim and Thummim (Deut. 33:8) and their use was commanded by God (Num. 27:21). The king of Israel would consult the high priest who would use the Urim and Thummim to discern the Will of God concerning national matters (Ezra 2:63).



REFERENCES

Exodus 28:30
Leviticus 8:8
Numbers 27:21
Deut. 33:8
1 Samuel 28:6
Ezra 2:63
Nehemiah 7:65



LEFT. The High Priest carried the Urim and the Thummim in the cloth breastplate that he wore over his heart.

C. Putting Out a Fleece: The Story of Gideon. (Judges 6)

Gideon employed another interesting method to discern God’s Will. God gave Gideon a direct command to do something: “Go...and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian” (v.14), to which Gideon replied, “Show me a sign that it is Thou who speakest with me” (v.17). The Lord did indeed perform a sign and Gideon knew for sure it was the Lord (v.21-22). However, Gideon’s obedience to the Lord’s command was not immediate. Instead, Gideon tested God to determine if God would truly deliver Israel as He had said (v.36). Gideon seemed to know that doubting God’s word might anger God (v.39) and yet he tested the Lord a second time. The text tells us that God condescended to meet each of Gideon’s tests, without any commentary as to whether such tests were pleasing or displeasing to Him.

QUESTIONS

1. Should we test God (Judges 6:36-40, Mal. 3:10) or not (Deut. 6:16-17, Mt. 4:7)?
2. Should we ask for signs? (Num. 14:22, Judges 6:17, Mt. 12:39)
3. What place should natural or supernatural “signs” or circumstances have in determining God’s Will: (1) primary source, or (2) at most a confirmation? Why?
4. Can some of the conditions we set be faulty? (Jer. 17:9, Prov. 16:2, James 4:3)

D. Summary. *To discern God’s Will under the Old Covenant, one looked for:*

- A confirming SIGN to substantiate a particular course of action or message given.
- Physical PROOF and visible EVIDENCE concerning God’s choice.
- Fulfillment of a CONDITION that had been set.
- An answer through OUTWARD and EXTERNAL means.

4

Lesson 4. New Covenant Changes

A. The Prophets - Bridge between Old & New Covenants.

The Old Covenant was very detailed concerning how Israel was to approach God in order to know and do His Will. There were detailed instructions concerning the tabernacle, the priesthood, animal sacrifices, holy festivals, etc. However, within two millennia, God would inaugurate a New Covenant with His people, completely setting aside previous ritual and sending His Son to reform Israel’s worship. The bridge between the Old and New Covenants were the prophets. They came not only to foretell the future concerning the New Covenant yet to be unveiled, but also to forth-tell God’s displeasure with Israel’s current worship. And so the prophets message was basically twofold:

(1) God disdains only OUTWARD worship.

Concerning Israel’s worship, God complained, “This people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote” (Isa. 29:13, Mt. 15:7-8).

REFERENCES

	<u>B.C.</u>	<u>PROPHET</u>	<u>VERSES</u>	<u>QUOTATION</u>
500 yrs	930	Samuel	15:22	- “to obey is better than sacrifice”
	760	Amos	5:21-22	- “I reject your festivals”
	730	Hosea	6:6	- “I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice”
	720	Isaiah	1:11-14	- “bring your worthless offerings no longer”
	600	Jeremiah	6:20	- “your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me”
	600	Jeremiah	14:12	- “I am not going to accept their burnt offering”
	450	Malachi	1:10	- “do not uselessly kindle fire on My altar”

(2) The New Covenant would deal primarily INWARD.

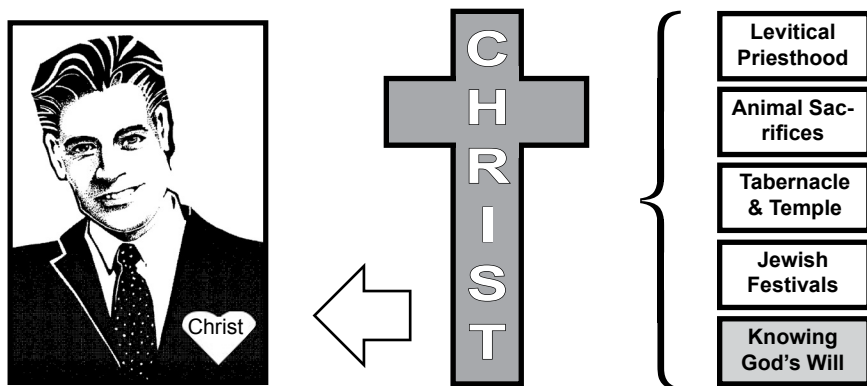
The prophets announced that God would rectify this situation by making a New Covenant with Israel that would be characterized by a *greater fullness* of the Holy Spirit working inwardly upon the hearts of His people.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”
(Read also Jeremiah 32:40, Ezekiel 37:26)

B. We come through Jesus Christ to know God's Will.

Under the New Covenant all things have been summed up in Christ. Christ is the fulfillment of the Levitical priesthood, the tabernacle, the animal sacrifices, and the Jewish festivals (Appendix 2). They were merely symbols, pictures, types and foreshadows of what true worship in Christ now is. I come now not to a particular building or an earthly priest or a special day to seek God's Will, but to Christ Himself.



(1) Christ lives in YOU! “Christ in YOU, the hope of glory!” – Col. 1:27

(2) The Holy Spirit  **INWARDLY**  **Renews, Controls & Guides me.**

MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- NT believers are baptized / filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2; 1 Cor. 12:13)
- But Old Testament saints were filled with the Holy Spirit too. (Ex. 31:3, 35:31; Deut. 34:9; Micah 3:8; Luke 1:15, 1:41, 1:67)
- So what difference did Pentecost make? Example: Peter
 - Peter was a believer before Pentecost. (Mt. 16:15-18)
 - Peter had already received the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)
 - Yet Peter was not fully dominated by the Spirit. (Mt. 26:69-75)
 - Until after Pentecost. (Acts 2:14ff; 4:5-21; 5:17-18, 25, 27-29, 40-42)
- The difference is greater “fullness”. (John 1:16; Eph. 1:23, 3:19, 4:13; See Also Joel 2 & John 3:34, 7:38-39)
- The fullness of the Spirit relates to control. (Eph. 5:17-18)
- The Spirit guides us in God's Will (John 16:13).

5

Lesson 5. Being Versus Doing

A. God’s Will is NOT primarily in terms of DOING.

So how do I discern God’s Will under the New Covenant? Well, we most often think of God’s Will solely in terms of deciding where to go, and what to do, or what not to do; but that was actually the same view that the Pharisees in Jesus’ day held. They emphasized outward doing, but their hearts were far from God (Mt. 15:8, 23:27-28). God is more concerned with the heart (Deut. 6:5, 2 Chron. 16:9), because when our hearts are completely His, then our outward actions will naturally conform to His Will (Mt. 12:33-35; Luke 6:45).

B. God’s Will is primarily in terms of BEING.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

“For this is the WILL OF GOD, your sanctification”

Definition of SANCTIFICATION

The process of: (1) BEING set apart unto God, and (2) BEING made holy.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is GOD’S WILL for you in Christ Jesus”

At first glance, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 above might seem like God’s Will is primarily in terms of DOING certain things, but notice the all-inclusiveness of this verse. Even the Pharisee could perform isolated acts of prayer, thanksgiving, etc. (Mt. 6:5); but it takes a truly joyful heart to rejoice *always*, and a thankful heart of to give thanks *in everything*, etc. And so, in the Bible, God’s Will is not so much in terms of performing or DOING certain isolated acts, but rather a whole new heart and state of BEING.

PHARISEE’S
ISOLATED ACTS
(Mt. 6:1-2, 5)

CHRISTIAN’S
NEW HEART / LIFE
(1 Thess. 5:16-18)

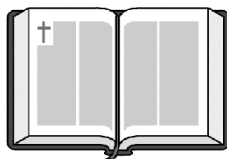
- (1) Acting Happy
- (2) Saying Public Prayers
- (3) Saying Thanks

BEING Joy ful
BEING Prayer ful
BEING Thank ful

← BEING “filled”
with the Holy Spirit
(Eph. 5:17-18)

C. The Pharisees' View of God's Will: a DO list.

"The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'" (Luke 18:11-12)



= GOD'S WILL

**OUTWARD Obedience
to the Law Only**

The Pharisee Formula

Fasting + Tithing, etc. – Swindling, Adultery, etc. = God's Will

D. Jesus' View of God's Will: a BE list.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23-24)

"But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice'" (Matt. 9:13, 12:7).



= GOD'S WILL

E. How does OBEDIENCE fit into God's Will then?

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" – John 14:15

Pharisees' View of Obedience

- DO the minimum required.
- Lifeless, dead works (Heb. 9:14)
- Done only out of obligation.
- Outward only.
- DOING the work of a slave.

Christ's View of Obedience

- BE the maximum God desires.
- Joyful, cheerful (2 Cor. 9:7)
- Done out of love for God.
- Inward too (Mt. 5:21-22, 27-28)
- BEING a loving son (Gal. 4:4-7)

F. Some more “BE” verses.

- BE imitators of God (Eph. 5:1, 1 Cor. 11:1)
- BE holy, for I am holy (Lev. 11:44, 1 Pet. 1:16)
- BE holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4, Eph. 5:27)
- BE renewed in the spirit of your mind (Eph. 4:23)
- BE filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
- BE filled up to all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19)
- BE strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10)
- BE strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1)
- BE strengthened with power through His Spirit (Eph. 3:16)
- BE steadfast, immovable (1 Cor. 15:58)
- BE transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2)
- BE wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil (Rom. 16:19)
- BE patient (1 Thess. 5:14; James 5:7-8)
- BE kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another (Eph. 4:32)
- BE temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love... (Titus 2:2)
- BE devoted to one another in brotherly love (Rom. 12:10)
- BE harmonious ... kindhearted, and humble in spirit (1 Pet. 3:8)
- BE hospitable to one another (1 Pet. 4:9)
- BE thankful (Col. 3:15)

G. Christ must increase, but I must decrease – Jn. 3:30

“ H e m u s t i n c r e a s e . . . ”

**CHRIST
ME**

“ ... b u t I m u s t d e c r e a s e ”



My Life in Christ →

THE WILL OF GOD

“Not my will,
but Thine be done”
(Luke 22:42)

What it means to “decrease”

- 1 Pet. 5:5-6
- Mt. 16:24
- 1 Cor. 15:31
- Rom. 6:11
- Mark 9:35
- Rom. 12:3
- Phil. 2:3-5
- Psalm 51:17

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God...”

6

Lesson 6. God's Will Personified in Christ

A. The WILL OF GOD is His WISDOM on a matter.

God's Will



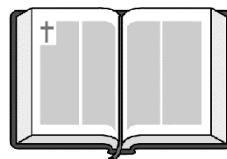
God's Wisdom

Colossians 1:9

"...we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of HIS WILL in all spiritual WISDOM and understanding"

B. God's WISDOM revealed in the BIBLE.

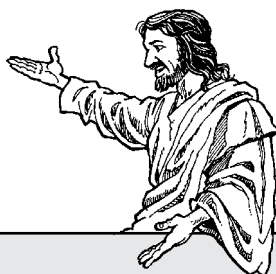
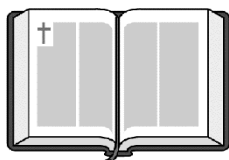
**God's
Wisdom**



Colossians 3:16

"Let the WORD of Christ richly dwell within you, with all WISDOM"

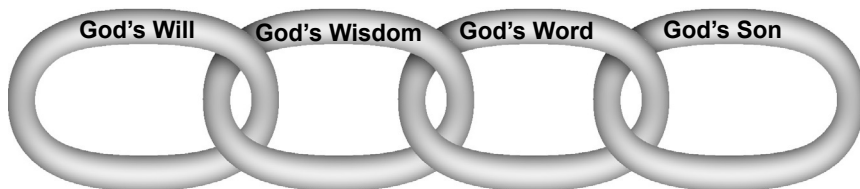
C. The BIBLE points us to CHRIST.



2 Timothy 3:15

"...the SACRED WRITINGS which are able to give you the WISDOM that leads to salvation through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS." (cf. Gal 3:24)

D. GOD'S WILL is inextricably linked to GOD'S SON.



John's reference to Jesus as the "Logōs" (translated "Word", John 1:1,14) ties these together. The Logos is the revealed Wisdom and Will of God to man.

E. The TREASURES of God's Wisdom & Will are IN CHRIST.

Colossians 2:2-3

"...that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30)



*"Oh, the depth
of the riches
both of the
wisdom and
knowledge
of God!"*

– Rom. 11:33

**F. And Jesus Christ,
the Wisdom of God,
lives inside of me!**
(1 Cor. 2:16, Col. 1:27)

***"But we have this treasure
in earthen vessels"*** – 2 Cor. 4:7

i.e. our bodies



"The man who has God for his treasure has all things in One. Many ordinary treasures may be denied him, or if he is allowed to have them, the enjoyment of them will be so tempered that they will never be necessary to his happiness ...for he now has it all in One, and he has it purely, legitimately and forever."

– A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God

G. Christ doesn't just show the way, He is The Way!

God doesn't just give me a map or a set of directions (i.e. the Bible) and then tell me to find my own way, rather He places Himself in me and says, "I am the Way" (John 14:6).

ANALOGY:

**A motorist
on a long
journey
is lost and
out of gas.**

**A person
seeking
to know
the will
of God.**

(1) Ineffective Solution

Give Directions

- Draw him a map
- Tell him to follow it
- Can't understand map
- The map is imperfect
- Still out of gas!

Earthly Religion

- Man-made philosophy
- Forced compliance (legalism)
- No spiritual insight (1 Cor. 2:14)
- False teachings
- No godly desires

problems >

(2) Only Sure Solution

Take Him There

- Give him some gas
- An inerrant map
- Send the map maker along as a guide and travelling companion.

Christianity

- The Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49)
"power from on high"
- The Bible
- Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 1:24

"Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"

\ \ \
the guide the gas the map

H. God’s Will is Jesus Christ living in me in “ALL THINGS”

Philippians 4:11-12

“... I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do ALL THINGS through Him who strengthens me.”

The Will of God is Jesus Christ living in me, in whatever situation I am in. Whether I am surrounded by “humble means” or “prosperity,” or whether I am enjoying “abundance” or “suffering need,” whatever circumstance I am in, the Will of God is Christ living in me. Yes, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” My DOING the Will of God flows from my BEING in Christ and He in me.

So then, as a Christian, I leave the circumstances of my life for God to sovereignly arrange, and I concern myself with living each moment right now to the glory of God. As I do that, I discover that God causes “all things” to work together for good. When the Bible says “all things,” that includes the circumstances that I call “bad” as well as those that I think are “good” (I put these words in quotes because *sometimes* what we call “bad” circumstances turn out for our long-term good, and “good,” pleasurable, or easy circumstances turn out to be detrimental). Instead of running from difficult circumstances, Philippians 4:11-12 above says that Paul “learned” what God wanted him to learn in those difficult times.

WORLDLY VIEW

God’s Will according to Eliphaz, Bildad & Zophar, the “health and wealth” teachers of Job’s day.

“Good” Circumstances

BIBLICAL VIEW

God’s Will according to the Bible

READ

- Gen. 50:20
- Job 2:10
- Psa. 23:4
- Psa. 27:1-3
- Rom. 8:28
- Phil. 4:11-12
- 1 Pet. 4:19

Rom. 8:28 – “God causes ALL THINGS to work together for good”

Difficult or “Bad” Circumstances

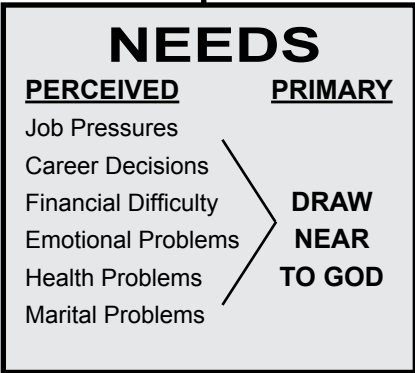
7

Lesson 7. The Key: Draw Near to God

James 4:8 – “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you”

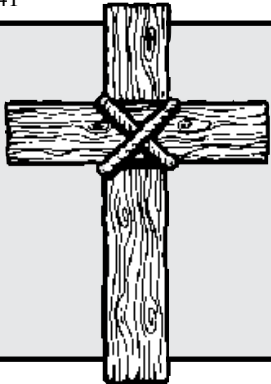
As we have seen, all the treasures of God’s Will are wrapped up in Jesus Christ, who abides in us. Ironical isn’t it – God’s wisdom in Christ dwells in us and yet often we are confused about His Will for our lives. The remedy is to *draw near* to God through Jesus Christ. Just as a bank consolidation loan can consolidate all our debts into one, so too Christ has consolidated all of our needs into one great need: draw near to Him. That now must be your only concern and God promises to take care of all the rest: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Let me say it a different way. Are you currently facing some important decision or difficult situation in your life? The need to find the answer may seem like the greatest need in your life, but it is not. You have a *much greater* need to draw near(er) to God. But someone may say, “Jesus Christ lives *inside* of me, how much nearer can I get?” Drawing near to God has to do with interaction not proximity. Two people may live next door to each other but remain strangers because they never interact. To

draw near to God is to have *fellowship* with Him, but how do we do that? How do we draw near to or have fellowship with God? Now we have come to the heart of our study on knowing God’s Will. The answer to that question is the key that unlocks the door to the Will of God. Furthermore, drawing near to God is not only the answer to knowing God’s Will, but it is the whole Christian life condensed down into its purest form. We draw near to the Lord in very tangible, measured steps, in great part through consistent Bible study, a consistent prayer life, and consistent fellowship in a Bible-teaching church. Without these Christian essentials it is impossible to draw near to God or know His Will. The process of studying, praying, and fellowshiping is God’s Will as much as the answer you are seeking. Finally, the time to begin these activities is not when some great storm or trial or decision is upon you. The wise man builds his house upon the Rock of Jesus Christ long before there is even a storm cloud on the horizon. READ: Mt. 6:24-33, 7:24-27, Psalm 27:4, Luke 10:38-41



“The capacity for Christ’s indwelling is elastic: it increases as the years go by ... we are filled only to the amount of our capacity. There is always more of His fulness as the years unfold ... For the greater the obedience, the greater the discipline, the greater the faith, the fuller and more complete the allegiance to our precious Lord – the more does the heart expand to receive more and more of Jesus.”

– Alan Redpath, Victorious Christian Living

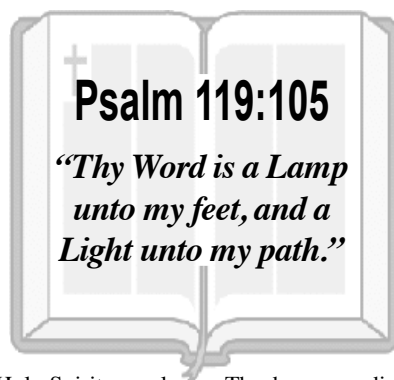


A. Draw Near: Through God's Word.

"The fundamental mode whereby our rational Creator guides His rational creatures is by understanding and application of His written Word. The true way to honor the Holy Spirit as our guide is to honor the Holy Scriptures through which He guides us. The Spirit leads within the limits which the Word sets, not beyond them. "He guideth me in the paths of righteousness" but not anywhere else.

– J. I. Packer, Knowing God

The Bible is God's Word. It is God speaking to man. We cannot know the Will of God apart from the Word of God. God is no longer adding to the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19) – He is not inspiring new revelation in the minds of men as he did in the apostles and prophets (Heb. 1:1-2). Indeed, we need no additional revelation for "we have the prophetic word made more sure" (2 Peter 1:19) already written down in black and white on the pages of the Bible. To seek new or additional revelation beyond the Bible is to devalue the Word of God. It is telling God, "The Bible is not good enough, not complete enough, not clear enough." The Holy Spirit reveals the Will of God to us by guiding us in the Scripture that God has *already* revealed (John 16:13, 14:26). Yes, God has already given us "*everything* pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3) – we need no additional revelation.



Our motivation for reading the Bible should be first of all to know, enjoy, and draw near to our Heavenly Father, and secondly to seek answers to our problems. If we use God's Word only for the latter, we shall lose God in His Word, just as the Pharisees did. God is the "Rewarder of those that diligently seek *Him*" (Heb. 11:6).

Seek God in His Word and the mysteries of His Will shall be your reward (Psalm 37:4). The Bible is spiritual food. Daily devotional reading is of some benefit, but we need more than fast food. We need to feast on God's Word verse-by-verse, meditating on its wonderful principles.

The deeper we dig into the Word of God the more precious jewels of God's Will we shall discover. Draw near to Christ, by saturating your heart and mind with His Word and the treasures of His Will shall be unveiled to you. READ Joshua 1:8, Psalms 119:11, 2 Timothy 2:15

"I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word I lay myself open to great delusion. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them."

– George Muller, Answers to Prayer

PRAYER



B. Draw Near: Through Prayer

God speaks to us through His Word and we speak to Him through prayer. We draw near to God in prayer by shutting out all distractions and communicating with Him. However, a breakdown in our communication with God occurs when we pray *only* when we want or need something (e.g. in regard to this study, when we want to know God's Will concerning an important decision). Even though we may be praying, that

type of "interaction" is not drawing near to God, but using God. We treat God like some kind of cosmic vending machine, and put in a token prayer and expect a candy bar. So the question is – How do you pray? Do you treat God as a friend

or a candy supplier. The essence of prayer is *unhurried conversation* with God. To talk to God reverently, try the A • C • T • S of prayer: A - **Adoration**: Praise God for who He is, by magnifying His names and attributes. Don't just rattle off a list, but carefully consider each name and attribute as you pray. C - **Confession**: Acknowledge and

repent of any unconfessed sin in your life (1 John 1:9). Sin blocks prayer (Psalm 66:18, Prov. 28:9, Isaiah 59:2, 1 Peter 3:7), deadens our hearts to the Spirit's leading and the truth of the Word (1 Thess. 5:19), and stiffens our neck against God's Will for our lives. T - **Thanksgiving**: Thank God for forgiving you and pouring His grace out upon you. Thank Him for His matchless deeds in the past; recount His

previous works of grace. S - **Supplication**: Not until you have done the first three are you ready to petition God for your requests. The key is to pray "without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:16-18, i.e. with all persistence, Luke 11:5-8, 18:1-6) and

ask God for wisdom and direction (Prov. 2:6, James 1:5). Pray [1] in Jesus name (Jn. 14:12-13, 16:24), [2] according to His Will (1 Jn. 5:14-15) i.e. only those things that glorify Him, [3] with the right motives (Jam. 4:3-4), and [4] with unwavering faith (Jam. 1:5-6, Mt. 21:22). READ: Luke 11:5-8, 18:1-6, Eph. 3:20, Rev. 8:3, Dan. 9:17-23.

Jeremiah 33:3

"Call unto me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

"The great point is to never give up until the answer comes. The great fault of the children of God is they do not continue in prayer ... they do not persevere. If they desire anything for God's glory, they should pray until they get it."

– George Muller, Answers to Prayer

C. Draw Near: Through the Local Church

There is no Christianity without Christ. To this statement every true Christian must render a hearty “Amen”. But we must proceed further: The Church is Christ’s body (1 Cor. 12:27), hence there is no Christianity without the Church. “O, but I protest!” says one; “I may have no ties to any church, but I love Christ!” So you say that you love the head, but not the body of Christ –

How can this be?

Has Christ been decapitated? Has the head been severed from the body? Do you not know that the head and the body are one? The man who does not love the Church, does not love Christ, no matter how vigorously he

protests. Another one may say, “But I belong to the whole Church. I do not need to be attached to one particular local body of believers.” But I ask you – can a cell of the body say, “I belong to the body,” but not be attached to any part? No!

Perhaps the most tangible way of all to draw near to the Lord is to draw near to His people. Really it is the same action. Fellowship with God’s people is fellowship with God (Mt. 25:45, 1 John 4:20-21). The result is that, as we pour ourselves into the local church, God unfolds His glorious Will for our lives. Just as the glory of the Lord shone most brightly in tabernacle

fully illuminating the Holy of holies, so also today, the Lord shines brightest in the local church, illuminating His Will for all those that frequent there. “O Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory

Hebrews 10:22-25

22 *Let us DRAW NEAR with a sincere heart...*

23 *Let us hold fast...*

24 *Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,*

25 *Not forsaking our own ASSEMBLING TOGETHER, as is the habit of some...*



dwells” (Psalm 26:8). “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” (Psalm 27:4). READ: Psalm 16:3, 35:18, 82:1, 133:1-3, Mt. 16:18, 18:20, Jn. 13:35, Acts 2:46-47, 1 Cor. 12:12-20, 27

“I know there are some who say, ‘Well, I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to any church.’ Now, why not? ‘Because I can be a Christian without it.’ Are you quite clear about that? You can be as good a Christian by disobedience to your Lord’s commands as by being obedient? There is a brick. What is it made for? To help build a house. It is of no use for that brick to tell you that it is just as good a brick while it is kicking about on the ground as it would be in the house ... I do not believe that you are answering your purpose. You are living contrary to the life which Christ would have you live”

– Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Besides drawing near to God through Christian fellowship, your local church can also provide a great deal of assistance as you seek God's Will for your life, especially in the area of sound Biblical counsel. Scripture tells us, "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed" (Prov. 15:22). That, of course, assumes that one consults *godly* counselors. To this task, the leaders in your church have been called. And so, if you are consistently attending a Christ-centered, Bible-teaching church, as should be the habit of every sincere Christian, then the elders and pastors of your church can be a great help to you, by praying for you and providing wisdom and insight from God's Word. Christian, it is your duty to place yourself in a good church led by godly men that you can trust to provide sound Biblical counsel.

Proverbs 12:15

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel."

Proverbs 13:10

"Through presumption comes nothing but strife, but with those who receive counsel is wisdom."

Proverbs 15:22

"Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed."

Proverbs 19:20

"Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days."

D. Learn to Wait on God's Timing, while Drawing Near.

God may withhold an answer that you are seeking in order to cause you to draw near(er) to Him through *consistent* prayer, Bible reading, and church fellowship. The process of seeking God for direction is perhaps *more* important to God than the answer itself, for He desires intimate fellowship with His people and such fellowship is the chief by-product of waiting on Him. Therefore, since the process of waiting on and seeking God is important to our Lord, then it

ought to be equally loved and not despised by His people. It is our duty then to learn to delight ourselves in the process of waiting

on God for an answer as much as delighting in the answer itself. Cultivate faithfulness and contentment while waiting on God's perfect timing. Let us wait upon the Lord and not delay

God's answer by having Him wait upon us. READ: Psalm 27:14, 37:4, 130:5, 147:11, Isaiah 40:31, Lam. 3:25

"The process of seeking God for direction is perhaps more important to God than the answer itself"

"Never act in a panic, nor allow man to dictate to thee. Calm thyself and be still. Force thyself into the quiet of thy closet until the pulse beats normally and the scare has ceased to disturb. When thou art most eager to act is the time when thou wilt make the most pitiable mistakes. Do not say in thine heart what thou wilt or wilt not do, but wait upon thy 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 the results of keeping thee where thou art."

— F. B. Meyer

Still Confused?

OK, so what do you do when the Bible doesn't give any specific instructions concerning a decision you are facing? Or what if you are *already* living a consistent Christian life -- consistently reading your Bible, praying, and fellowshiping with God's people in your local church, but are still confused about a particular decision you must make -- what then? Has God left you to grope in the dark to try to find His Will? No, Jesus has given us a general principle to cover *every* possible decision in life: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33). That is God's Will for *any* decision you must make. You are to pursue the course of action that will seek first: (1) the kingdom of God, and (2) His righteousness.

Seek Ye First the "Kingdom of God"

- **"Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."** (1 Cor. 10:31)

To seek first the kingdom of God is to seek first and foremost those things that glorify God. Seeking anything above God's glory is sinful; it is falling short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Check your motives for the particular course of action that you are considering (Prov. 16:2). Is your primary motive your own glory, personal advancement, worldly recognition, or personal pleasure (James 4:3), etc.? Ask yourself, "Am I doing this to glorify God?"

- **"Whatever is not from faith is sin."** (Romans 14:23)

Since we are to "do all to the glory of God," then we should not act without being *fully assured* that our actions will glorify Him. Doubt is a clear indicator that a particular path is *not* God's Will. We are not speaking here about doubting God's ability or doubting His promises, both of which are sinful; but rather doubting whether or not you should pursue a particular course of action. If a path that has opened before you be of God, He will equip you with *faith* to walk in it, and each step that you take will be *clearly illuminated*; but you can be sure that a path marked by doubt, darkness, uncertainty, or a guilty conscience is never the Will of God.

Seek Ye First "His Righteousness"

- **"This is the Will of God, your sanctification."** (1 Thess. 4:3)

To seek first God's righteousness is to seek *continual spiritual growth*, first and foremost, for "this is the Will of God, your sanctification." To move from a place of spiritual growth, to another place where such growth is uncertain or absent, is contrary to God's Will. Make your decisions based on what will produce the *most* spiritual growth in your life. Would you characterize the particular course of action you are contemplating as a "a path of righteousness"? If not, then it is not God who is leading you, for "He leads me in the paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:3) and nowhere else. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).

8

Lesson 8. God's Unique Plan for Your Life

A. Worldly Theories of Life.

According to the tenets of secular humanism and modern evolutionary theory, you are just the by-product of a random meeting of two cells, and a meaningless series of chance occurrences, biological probabilities, accidents, and mistakes. This theory suggests that no purpose or plan was involved in how you were made; in other words, no *mind* or intelligence was overseeing the process - hence, it is a *mindless* theory. The motive behind this *theory* is the belief that there is no God (Psalm 14:1, 53:1).

B. Timeless Truths.

But God's Word tells us the *truth* about conception: that you are God's "workmanship" (Eph. 2:10), individually hand-crafted by God in the womb in order to fulfill a specific, unique, one-of-a-kind plan and purpose that He has for you. Yes, God has a specific plan for your life related to how He "wove" you together.

Psalm 139:13-16

*"For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst **weave me in my mother's womb.** I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, and **skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.** Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."*

"weave" – David compares God's work of procreation to weaving a beautiful tapestry. Each thread is hand woven. No two tapestries are exactly alike.

"skillfully wrought" – Hebrew word "raqam" which means to embroider with colors.

"depths of the earth" – poetic language characteristic of the Psalms. Hebrew idiom meaning a dark and hidden place.

OTHER REFERENCES

- Job 10:8 – "Thy hands fashioned and made me altogether"
 Job 31:15 – "Did not He who made me in the womb make him, and the same One fashion us in the womb?"
 Psa. 100:3 – "Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves"
 Psa. 119:73 – "Thy hands made me and fashioned me"
 Isa. 44:2 – "the Lord made you and formed you from the womb"
 Jer. 1:5 – "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you..."
 Gal. 1:15 – "He set me apart, even from my mother's womb"



**Baby,
you're
NO
accident!**

C. Big Question: Why did God make YOU so Uniquely?

So we see, the Bible clearly reveals that procreation is God's handiwork. Furthermore, we observe in the Scriptures and in daily life that God deliberately makes each of us uniquely different. We are like billions *snow flakes*, no two of us are exactly alike (and some are definitely more "flaky" than others). But wouldn't it have been easier for God to just make us a race of clones – one generic man and one generic woman – all with the same looks, same personalities, same tastes, same wants, same desires, same goals, same, same, same ... ? Think about it: no racism, no police lineups, no beauty pageants, etc. So why did God create so much variety within the human race? Why does He take the time to make us all so unique?

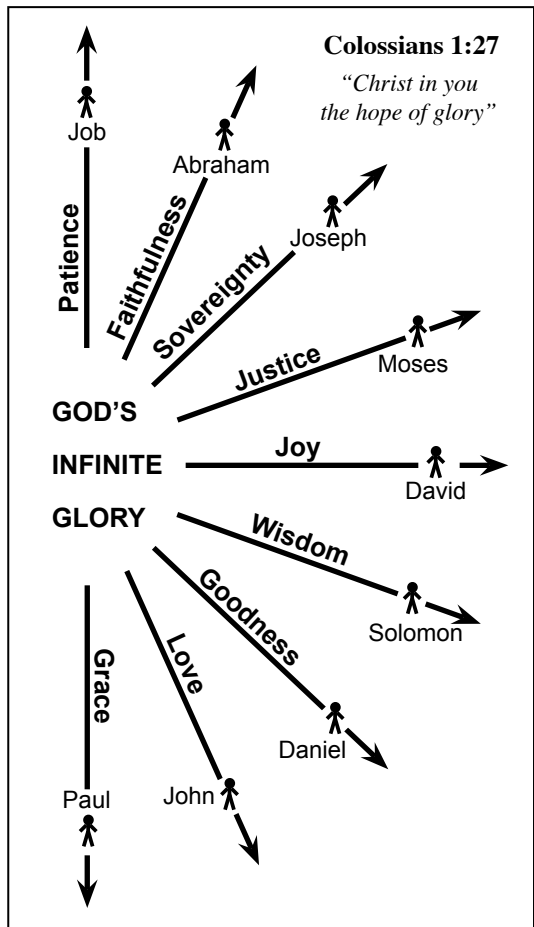


D. The Answer May be Found in God's Glorious Character.

God is *all-glorious* (Psalm 24:7-10, 29:2, 72:19, 148:13, Isaiah 6:3). God's glory is the summation of all His resplendent character and divine attributes. Furthermore, man is created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27, 9:6). However, God is *infinite* (1 Kgs. 8:27, Psalm 139:7-10, Jer. 23:24), and man is finite (Gen. 2:7, Psalm 103:14). Because we are finite, not one of us can contain or express the infinite glory of God, anymore than a thimble can contain the ocean. So, God uniquely fashioned you, just one-of-a-kind, so that one drop of the vast ocean of His glory might uniquely shine through you (Rom. 9:23).



RIGHT. God created you so that some aspect of His infinite glory might uniquely shine through you.



E. Problem: Our God-Created Uniqueness is Corrupted.

Unfortunately, even though God uniquely created you to fulfill a specific purpose and plan, that uniqueness has been corrupted by sin. Your body, so uniquely created to express God's glory, is corrupted by sin. We come into this world distorted and controlled by a self-willed spirit called the *sin nature* (Psalm 51:5). Sin, like a cruel taskmaster, enslaves mankind, strips us of our God-given individuality, and clones us into the image of Satan himself. Like a pirate, sin seizes control, robs us of our God-created uniqueness and personality, and steers a new course for our lives – one ruled and dominated by sin. This is true of all mankind of all times: “Scripture has shut ALL men under sin” (Gal. 3:22). Someone has said, “even thoroughbred dogs have flees”; likewise, even the finest unbeliever is infested with sin. READ: Rom. 3:9-18

“A man by his sin can waste himself, which is to waste that on earth which is most like God. This is man's greatest tragedy, God's greatest grief.”

– A.W. Tozer

F. Back Under Christ's Control.

The sin nature cannot be converted, changed, fixed-up, redeemed, or saved. Trying to improve or fix-up the sin nature is like putting a bandaid on a cancer sore. The world's philosophies, psychologies, self-help programs, and ten-step plans for recovery only treat the symptoms and horrible consequences of sin, and not sin itself which is the root problem. No, the sin nature cannot be fixed; it must be put to death – “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). We must be raised up a “new creature” in Christ (1 Cor. 5:17). The Bible calls that being “born again” (John 3:3, 1 Pet. 1:3, 23), being reborn into the image of God. God must remake us into the image of Christ and it is only there, in Christ, that we discover our true personality and God-created individuality. Apart from Christ we fall short of knowing God's individual and unique plan for our lives. The Greek word for sin is *hamartia* and it means, in part, to “miss the mark.” Before Christ, we *always* missed the mark of God's Will; our arrows would *always* “fall short” of His glory (Rom. 3:23). But now, in Christ, God has made you a sharpened arrow (Isaiah 49:2), to hit the mark of His Will. READ: Gal. 5:16-25, Eph. 4:22-24

“The more we get what we now call ‘ourselves’ out of the way and let Him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become ... He made us. He created – as an author creates characters in a novel – all the different men that you and I were created to be. In that sense our real selves are all waiting for us in Him. It is no good trying to ‘be myself’ without Him. The more I resist Him and try to live on my own, the more I become dominated by my own heredity and upbringing and surroundings and natural desires. In fact what I so proudly call ‘myself’ becomes merely the meeting place for trains of events which I never started and which I cannot stop ... I am not, in my natural state, nearly so much of a person as I like to believe. It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.”

– C. S. Lewis, [Mere Christianity](#)

G. PRESENT the Members of Your Body to Christ.

Romans 6:11-14

- 11 *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*
- 12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,*
- 13 *and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but PRESENT YOURSELVES TO GOD as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*
- 14 *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.*

SUMMARY

1. God has a specific **PLAN** for your life which is linked to how He uniquely created you.
2. That God-created uniqueness was **PERVERTED** by sin. Self-will, not God's will reigned.
3. In Christ, your God created uniqueness is realized as you **PRESENT** the members of your body to God as instruments of righteousness.
4. As you present yourself, you will **PROVE** what God's Will is for your life (v.2).
5. In Christ, God will **PREPARE** you to do His Will by equipping you with faith (v.3), and other gifts (v.6, cf. Heb. 13:20-21).
6. Each member of the body of Christ has a unique and **PARTICULAR** function, related to how each is created and prepared by God (1 Cor. 12:11-27).

Romans 12:1-6

- 1 *I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to PRESENT YOUR BODIES a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*
- 2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be trans-formed by the renewing of your mind, that you may PROVE WHAT THE WILL OF GOD IS, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- 3 *...God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*
- 4 *For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,*
- 5 *so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*
- 6 *And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them ... according to the proportion of his faith;*

H. Lordship - Present Yourself as a Living Sacrifice.

"I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's Will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His Will is."

– George Muller, Answers to Prayer

(1) Two Incompatible Words. Two words in the English language ought never to be spoken together in the same breath by any true Christian; they are: "No, Lord" (cf. Mt. 16:22-23). Those two words are incompatible. If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord of your life, then you cannot deny Him – you cannot say "No" to even His smallest request. The breakdown in many Christians' lives is not that they do not know the Will of God, but rather that they do know it and are unwilling to obey. The very essence of Lordship is obedience – yes, even *joyful* obedience.

(2) Complete Surrender. There can be no declaration of independence in a Christian's life if Jesus is truly Lord. Lordship requires an *unconditional* surrender to the Will of God. It is ridding yourself of all self-will and doing God's Will whatever the cost (Lk. 22:42). Are you willing to do God's Will, whatever it may be? This is the indispensable foundation for knowing the Will of God.

(3) Absolute Trust. Next, Lordship means trusting God enough to commit yourself completely into His care and say, "Lord, do whatever You want to do in my life." Do you trust God that much or does that type of trust frighten you? "Trust in the Lord with *all* your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6).

(4) Die to Your Own Will. Before he was martyred at the hands of the Nazis, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him, 'Come and die.'" And so it is, Christian, if you wish to know God's Will, then you must die to your own (1 Cor. 15:31). You must deny yourself, take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ (Lk. 9:23). There is only room for one on the throne of your heart: either Christ or self. Therefore, "sanctify Christ as *Lord* in your hearts" (1 Peter 3:15).

**JESUS
is
LORD!**

"I cannot conceive it possible for anyone to receive Christ as Savior and yet not to receive Him as Lord. A man who is really saved by grace does not need to be told that he is under solemn obligations to serve Christ. The new life within him tells him that. Instead of regarding it as a burden, he gladly surrenders himself – body, soul, and spirit – to the Lord who has redeemed him, reckoning this to be his reasonable service."

– Charles Haddon Spurgeon

9

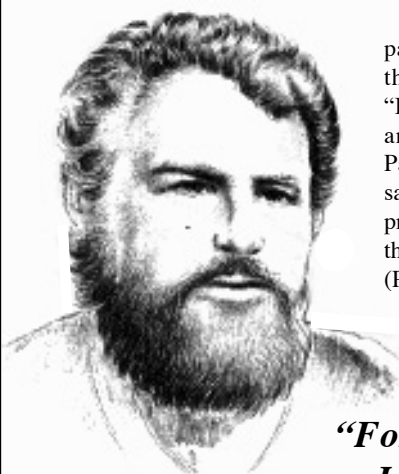
Lesson 9. What About My Past Mistakes?

A. How does God Handle my Failures?

(1) God is Love. God doesn't have love – He is love. Love is not a characteristic that God displays occasionally; it is who He is. Christian, you are loved not because of what you do, but because of who God is. Moreover, His love does not depend on your perfect life; it simply depends on His perfect character. Now, anyone using this as a license to sin has misunderstood God's grace and the Christian life altogether. Indeed, such a person should question if he or she is truly saved! But now, let me ask you a question: Christian, did you do enough today to *earn* God's love? The answer of course is a resounding, "NO!" Nevertheless, "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases" (Lam. 3:22-23), because God is infinite, eternal love toward His people. READ Jer. 31:3, Gal. 2:20, Rom. 5:8, 8:35-39, 1 John 4:8-10, 16-17

(2) God is Omniscient (All-Knowing). Even before God created you, He knew everything you would do and could have done (Jer. 1:5). He knew it of all people, of all times. We cannot shock or surprise God by anything we do, because when God loved you before the world was, He knew everything you would do, and knowing the worst about you, He loved you and saved you anyway. Furthermore, His love has an ultimate plan and purpose. Paul calls this the "manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10). "Manifold" means many-sided or having many aspects. Legalism says, "You blew it and that's it." It sees only one finite plan. But God's manifold wisdom says, "Yes, you blew it. Now be cleansed and see how I am still going to use you in my plan." READ Job 12:13, 37:16, Psa. 139:1-6, Isa. 40:28

How do YOU Handle Failure?



So we see how God handles your past failures, but how do you handle them? Often we look back and say, "If only I hadn't done that..." We lament and throw a *pity party*. The apostle Paul's attitude was quite different. He said, "Forgetting what lies behind ... I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

PAUL

*"Forgetting what lies behind...
I press on toward Christ."*

B. Repentance turns Failure into Fruit.

(1) The Trashiness of Sin.

Paul called his sins *rubbish* (Phil. 3:8). The Greek word he used is “skubala,” which means dung, refuse, or trash. That’s what our sins are. Considering all of Paul’s sins – e.g. the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58-60), persecution of the early church (Acts 8:1-3), pharisaism and religious hypocrisy (Phil. 3:5-6), etc. – we might conclude that all of the trash in Paul’s life would cut him off from ever being in God’s Will, and yet Paul was greatly used by God to carry out a specific plan. How does God do that?

(2) God’s Compost Pile.

God took all the trash of Paul’s life and threw it into His “compost pile” so to speak – that mysterious place in the hidden counsels of God’s Will where He weaves even the sinful acts of men into His perfect plan.

(3) The Fruit of Repentance.

The result was that God took Paul, the ex-heavyweight champion of the Law and made him a living gospel of His grace. The Law says, “No second chance. You’re doomed to second best the rest of your life. You’ve failed and there is no way back into God’s Will. You will always be looking back thinking, ‘If only I hadn’t done that...; if only I had tried harder.’” Whereas the Law leads to despair, God’s grace gives me “good news of a great joy” (Lk. 2:10). God takes the junk of my life and, when I repent and accept His pardon, He puts my sins into His compost pile from which comes the best fruit of my life.

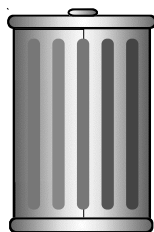
(4) Shall we Continue in Sin?

Someone may say then, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1) May it never be! The kindness and grace of God should lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), rather than continue in slavery to sin. God’s grace is not a license to sin, but is power over it: “Sin shall not be your master, for you are not under Law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).

SIN

REPENTANCE

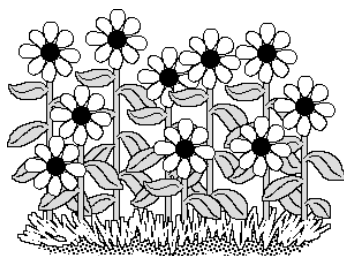
FRUIT



TRASH

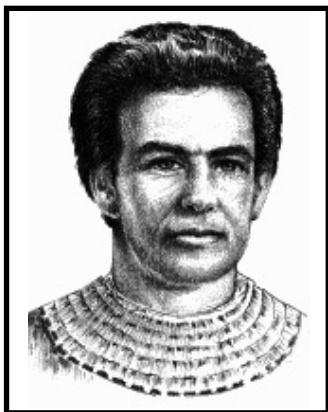


COMPOST PILE

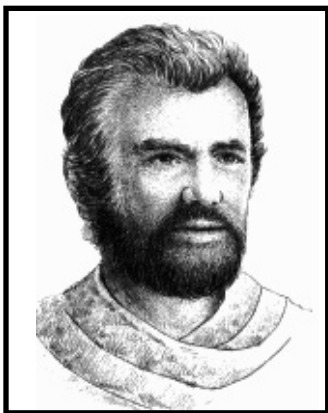


RICH SOIL

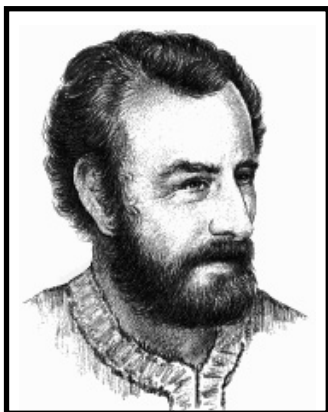
D. God's Will Despite Sin and Human Failure.



(1) Joseph. If only Joseph's brothers hadn't sold him into slavery (Gen. 37:12-28). If only Potiphar's wife had not framed him (Gen. 39). If only the butler hadn't forgotten Joseph in prison (Gen. 40). But God's will cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2) and He weaves even the sinful acts of men (which He still holds them responsible for) into His perfect plan. Recognizing God's sovereign hand upon him, Joseph explained to his brothers, "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God *meant it* for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Gen. 50:20). Yes, "God causes *all things* to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

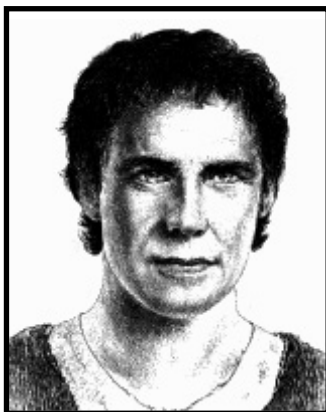


(2) David. When David was about 50 years old and had written half the book of Psalms, he had an affair with Bathsheba and arranged the murder of her husband Uriah (2 Sam. 11). Under the Law there was no second chance, no forgiveness, and no sacrifice for adultery or murder. You were simply taken outside the camp and stoned (Lev. 20:10, 24:17). But through God's gracious plan, Solomon was later born to David and Bathsheba, and God gave him the pet name "Jedidiah," meaning "beloved of the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:24-25). Of all of David's sons, God's chose Solomon to succeed his father on the throne and build the Temple of the Lord (1 Chron 22:9-10). When David repented God wove David's worst mistakes into His plan.



(3) Jonah. When God told Jonah to go to Ninevah (1:2), He already knew that Jonah would rebel. How can God use a guy like that in His plan? God told him to go one way and Jonah went the other (1:3). But God did use Jonah in His plan. God had already planned how He would transport Jonah to Ninevah and give him quite a "fish story" to tell as well (1:17). But notice that Jonah's sins caused the sailors on the ship and himself much pain and heartache (1:4-5), a reminder that sin does have consequences. However, the timing was perfect and God wove all the events into His plan to bring about repentance to the sailors on the ship (1:13-16), the Assyrians (3:5-10), and Jonah (2:1-9). *References are from the book of Jonah.*

(4) Mark. On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas brought along John Mark, but in Pamphylia Mark turned back and went home (Acts 13:13), and so, on their second missionary journey, Paul refused to take Mark (Acts 15:38). How could Mark ever be used by God again, having deserted the ministry and being rejected by the great apostle Paul? But God did use Mark. Mark later traveled with Peter (1 Peter 5:13), recording and arranging many of Peter's memories into the Gospel of Mark, in which Mark uniquely explains, for Roman readers, various Jewish customs and translates many of Jesus' Aramaic expressions into Greek. Mark also ministered in Egypt and established a large church in Alexandria.



(5) Peter. Three times Peter denied even knowing the Lord (Mt. 26:69-75). He was publicly rebuked by Jesus (Mt. 16:21-23) and later by the apostle Paul (Gal. 2:11-14). The Lord even questioned his love (John 21:15-17). How could such a man ever be used in God's Will? Nevertheless, God changed and transformed this impetuous fisherman and used him: (1) to write two epistles of the Bible, (2) to tell his accounts of Christ to Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark, (3) to be an apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7), and a pillar in the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9). Church history records that the man who once denied Christ three times was later crucified upside down because he would not recant of his faith in Christ.



A Chinese jade carver finds a priceless piece of jade with a major flaw. He could try to hide the flaw. Instead he carefully studies it and plans an exquisite carving, making the defect central in a perfect design.

God did this for Joseph's brothers back in Genesis. In malice they sold their brother into a life of slavery in a distant land and almost brought their father to his grave by their lies about it. Through much suffering God brought them to a place of repentance. But he did more. He utilized their very failure to save multitudes of people, including themselves, from death through famine. He took the darkest fragment of their lives and made it central in a beautiful picture of salvation for themselves, for Joseph, for the entire family.

This is what God did at Calvary. He took man's greatest failure, his most shameful atrocity – putting to death the Son of God – and made it central in a perfect picture of salvation. He can do this today for us. He is not pleased when we waste our lives by lamenting our failures or handicaps. He wants us to rely on him to forgive, to overrule, and to transform. – Source Unknown

10

Lesson 10. Summary of Principles

A. Summary of Principles for Determining God's Will.

(1) Be Filled with the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:18) – p.7,10

One of the features of the New Covenant is a greater *fullness* of the Holy Spirit who works inwardly to conform us to the Will of God. We will continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18 - Greek present tense, indicating continuous action), unless the Spirit is quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), through sin and disobedience.

(2) This is the Will of God, your Sanctification. (1 Thess. 4:3) – p.8

We most often think of God's Will in terms of going, doing, and having. Actually, that was the Pharisees' view of God's Will. They emphasized outward doing, but their hearts were far from God (Mt. 15:8, 23:27-28). God is more concerned with the heart (Deut. 6:5; 2 Chron. 16:9), because when our hearts are completely His, then our outward actions will conform to His Will. God's Will is primarily in terms of *being* sanctified and set apart unto Him, from which the Christian's *doing* the Will of God will automatically flow (Mt. 12:33-35; Luke 6:45).

(3) Draw Near to God. (James 4:8) – p.15

Herein lies the Christian's one great need, and God's great desire for His people. It is the essence of the Christian life (Mt. 6:33), greater even than the need to find answers to questions about His Will; but in drawing near to God, the knowledge of God's Will is abundantly supplied. To know God's Will we must first know God, and that comes only through drawing near to Him in very tangible, measured steps:

- **Bible Study: Study to show yourself approved.** (2 Tim. 2:15) – p.16

We cannot know the Will of God apart from the Word of God. Our motivation for reading the Bible should be first of all to know, enjoy, and draw near to our Heavenly Father, and secondly to seek answers to our problems. God is the "Rewarder of those that diligently seek *Him* (Heb. 11:6). Seek God in His Word and He will grant you the mysteries of His Will as a reward. Draw near to Christ, by saturating your heart and mind with His Word and all the treasures of His Will shall be unveiled. The wise man builds his house upon the Rock of Jesus Christ and His Word long before the storm clouds are on the horizon, through consistent daily Bible study; then, when decision-time arrives, he is ready.

- **Prayer: Pray without ceasing.** (1 Thess. 5:16-18) – p.17

A breakdown in our communication with God occurs when we pray only when we want or need something. Such prayer is not drawing near to God, but is using God. To talk reverently to God try the A·C·T·S of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

- **Fellowship: Some Assembly Required.** (Heb. 10:25) – p.18

Fellowship with God's people is perhaps the most tangible expression of fellowship with God (Mt. 25:45; 1 Jn. 4:20-21). God will unfold His Will for your life, as pour yourself into the service and ministries of a good Bible-teaching church.

(4) Seek Godly Counsel at your Church. (Prov. 15:22) – p.19

If you are consistently attending a Christ-centered church, as should be the habit of every sincere Christian, then the elders and pastors of your church can be a great help to you, by praying for you and providing wisdom and insight from God's Word. It is every Christian's duty to place oneself in a good church led by godly men that he or she can trust to provide sound Biblical counsel.

(5) Learn to Wait on God's Timing. (Isa. 40:31) – p.19

The process of seeking God for direction is perhaps *more* important to God than the answer itself, for He desires intimate fellowship with His people and such fellowship is the chief by-product of waiting on Him. Therefore, since the process of waiting on and seeking God is important to our Lord, then it ought to be equally loved and not despised by His people. It is our duty then to learn to delight ourselves in the process of waiting on God for an answer, as much as delighting in the answer itself. Cultivate faithfulness and contentment while waiting on God's perfect timing.

(6) Present yourself as a Living Sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1-2) – p.24

God has a specific plan for your life which is linked to how He uniquely created you. That God-created uniqueness was perverted by sin. Self-will, not God's will reigned. But now, in Christ, your God created uniqueness is realized as you *present* the members of your body to God as instruments of righteousness; and as you present yourself, you will prove what God's Will is for your life. In Christ, God will prepare you to do His Will by equipping you with faith, and other gifts. Each member of the body of Christ has a unique and particular function, related to how each is created and prepared by God.

(7) Sanctify Christ as *Lord* in your Hearts. (1 Pet. 3:15) – p.25

If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord of your life, then you cannot say "No" to His Will. The breakdown in many Christians' lives is not that they do not know God's Will, but rather that they do know it and are unwilling to obey. Lordship is an unconditional surrender to the Will of God. It is denying yourself, taking up the cross, and following Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23). It is being totally abandoned to the Will of God. It is ridding one's self of all self-will and doing God's Will whatever the cost. Are you willing to do God's Will, whatever it may be? This is the indispensable foundation for knowing the Will of God.

(8) Repent when You Blow it and Press on. (Phil. 3:13-14) – p.26-29

Christian, you cannot shock or surprise God by anything that you do, because when God loved you before the world was, He knew everything you would do; and knowing the worst about you, He loved you and saved you anyway. Furthermore, His love has an ultimate plan and purpose. Paul calls this the "manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10). Legalism says, "You blew it and that's it." It sees only one finite plan. But God's manifold wisdom says, "Yes, you blew it. Now be cleansed and see how I am still going to use you in my plan." When you make mistakes, humble yourself, confess your sins, repent, and press on toward Christ in the Will of God.

* See Appendix 3, Principles of God's Will in the Psalms.

B. Final Caution: Two Faulty Criteria.

“There is nothing so deluding as feelings. Christians cannot live by feelings.”

– Charles Haddon Spurgeon

(1) “Inner Peace” is NOT the Best Criteria.

Feelings are a poor indicator of God’s Will and a Christian must never be guided by them, otherwise we have nothing better than the world’s “If it feels good do it!” attitude. The fact that I am happy about a particular course of action does not mean that it is God’s Will. Feelings of “inner peace” are not something that a Christian experiences occasionally when he makes a right choice, but rather an abiding fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) in a heart abiding in Christ (Isa. 26:3, Phil. 4:6-9). Therefore, since peace is to be experienced *all the time* in a Christian’s life (Eph. 5:18 - Greek: “keep on being filled with the Spirit”), it cannot be a criteria for making decisions. Certainly, we will feel anxiety and not peace if we make sinful choices, but we have a much clearer voice than feelings to tell us if something is sinful or not: the Word of God. READ: Prov. 3:5-6, 14:12; Jer. 17:9

“Religious feelings may and do vary so greatly from person to person, or even in the same person they may vary so widely from one time to the next, that it is never safe to trust them.”

– A. W. Tozer

(2) Let Providential Circumstances Only Confirm.

How do you know if various obstacles are from God to stop you from pursuing a particular course of action or Satanic hindrances to be overcome by faith? Even if all circumstances point in a particular direction, does that mean it is God’s Will? Certainly not! Circumstances of life are an unclear determination of God’s Will and must never be used as our *primary* means of discerning the Will of God. Even if all circumstances point to a particular course of action, if that action is contrary to the God’s Word, the Bible must be obeyed and circumstances ignored. Beware Christian, because a heart intent on having its own way will often seek out and find confirming signs by interpreting any favorable event or circumstance as being from God. READ Num. 14:11,22; Mark 8:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:7

Concerning guidance by miraculous signs or circumstances, “When God guided by means of the pillar of cloud and fire, by the star of Bethlehem, by visitation of angels, by the word coming through visions and dreams and prophets and even through an insulted donkey, in most cases these were not signs that had been asked for. And when they were asked for, as in the case of Jehoshaphat and Ahab, they were not accepted. Supernatural phenomena were given at the discretion of Divine Wisdom. It is not for us to ask that God will guide us in some miraculous way. If, in His wisdom, He knows that such means are what we need, He will surely give them.”

– Myers, Discovering God’s Will

A1

Appendix 1.

God's Decretive and Perceptive Will

① Decretive (Hidden) Will.

God is the First Cause of all things (Rom. 8:28), and has of His own will, freely, and unchangeably decreed whatsoever shall come to pass; yet, in most cases, orders such things to fall out according to the nature of second causes.

- Psalm 33:11 – “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.”
- Isaiah 14:27 – “For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it?”
- Job 42:2 – “...no purpose of Thine can be thwarted.”

② Perceptive (Revealed) Will.

That part of God's will that can be perceived by man which is revealed in His Word in the form of rules and regulations is called His perceptive will.

- Matt. 7:21 – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the *will of My Father* who is in heaven.”
- Mark 3:35 – “For whoever does the *will of God*, he is My brother and sister and mother.” cf. Matt. 12:50
- 1 John 2:17 – “And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the *will of God* abides forever.”

③ Evil Cannot Thwart God's Will.

Though God's perceptive will can be and often is disobeyed, nevertheless God has woven even man's worst mistakes into His plan, not by mere permission, but by sovereign design.

- Gen. 50:20 – “And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” [Joseph to his brothers]
- Prov. 16:4 – “The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.”
- Acts 2:23 – “...this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”
- Acts 4:27-28 – “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur...”
- Rom. 8:28 – “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

A2

Appendix 2: Christ Fulfills the Old Covenant

A. Christ Replaced the Aaronic Priesthood.

**A
A
R
O
N**

Aaron’s priesthood was established by God under Moses: “Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. And you shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister as a priest to Me. And you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them; and you shall anoint them even as you have anointed their father, that they may minister as priests to Me; and their anointing shall qualify them for a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations” (Ex. 40:12-15). A special degree of holiness was required of the high priest (Lev. 21:10-15), and only the high priest was allowed to enter into the Holy of holies and then only on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-25).

REFERENCES

- The priesthood has **CHANGED**. (Heb. 7:11-12)
- Christ is the mediator of a **NEW COVENANT**. (Heb. 9:15)
- Christ is a **BETTER** high priest than Aaron. (Heb. 7:22, 8:6)
- Christ is a **MORE EFFECTIVE** high priest. (Heb. 10:11-12)
- Christ is an **ETERNAL** high priest. (Heb. 7:23-25)
- Christ is a **PERFECT** high priest. (Heb. 7:26-28)
- Christ is a **HEAVENLY** high priest in the true temple. (Heb. 8:1-2, 9:11-12)
- Christ is now the **ONLY** high priest between God and man. (1 Tim. 2:5)

**C
H
R
I
S
T**

Christ did not descend from the tribe of Levi, but Judah: “For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests” (Heb. 7:14). So here is the key question: “Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?” (Heb. 7:11). The answer is that perfection did not come through the Aaronic priesthood (Heb. 7:18-19), hence it was necessary for a change in the priesthood. Christ is likened to the ancient priest Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes (Heb. 7:1-10) and He holds the office of high priest “not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life” (Heb. 7:16).

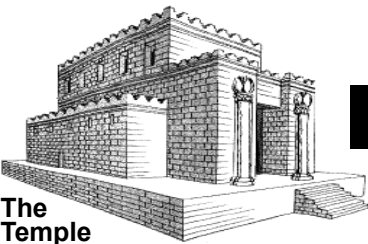
B. Christ Replaced the Tabernacle / Temple.

John 4:19-24

The [Samaritan] woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain [Mt Gerizim], and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father ... But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Under the Old Covenant, the Temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem was the ONLY place Israel was allowed to worship Jehovah (Psa. 48:1, 87:1-3). Any other “high place” or alternate location was condemned by God (Lev. 26:30; 1 Kgs. 13:1-5; Ezek. 6:3-4). Hence, many shepherds, tending their flocks in distant fields were considered ritually unclean, because they were rarely able to make it to the Temple to offer sacrifices.

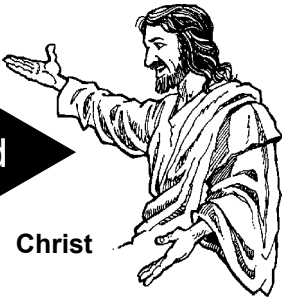
Under the New Covenant, however, Christ has decentralized the worship of God. No longer would an earthly temple be the solitary place of worship. In Christ, all Temple worship, sacrifice, and service is fulfilled. This does not alleviate the need for God’s people to come together to worship (Heb. 10:25), but rather encourages it in every city, town, and village – for “wherever two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst” (Mt. 18:20). The Temple in Jerusalem has been removed (Mt. 24:2), and Christ has taken its place – He is the true Temple (Rev. 21:22) of which the Church is His body (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).



The Temple



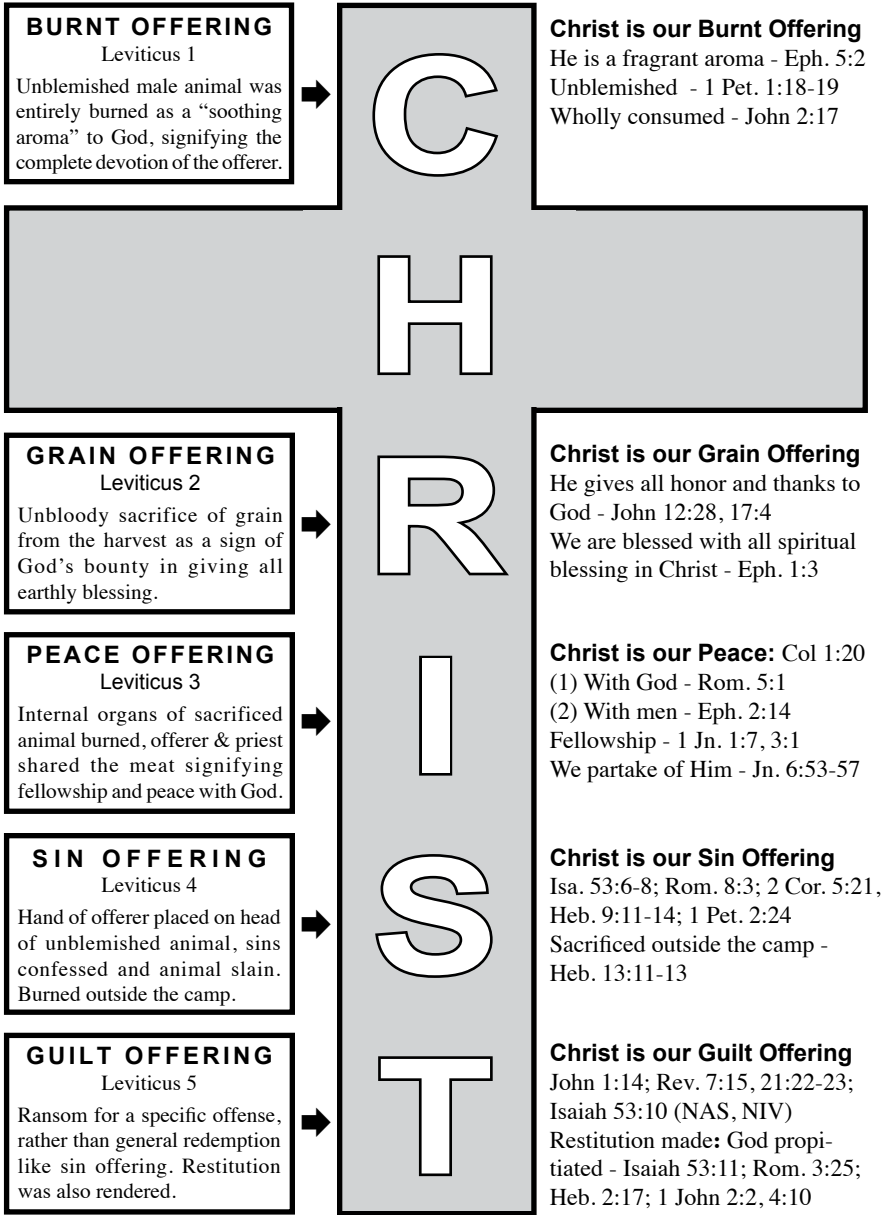
Foreshadowed



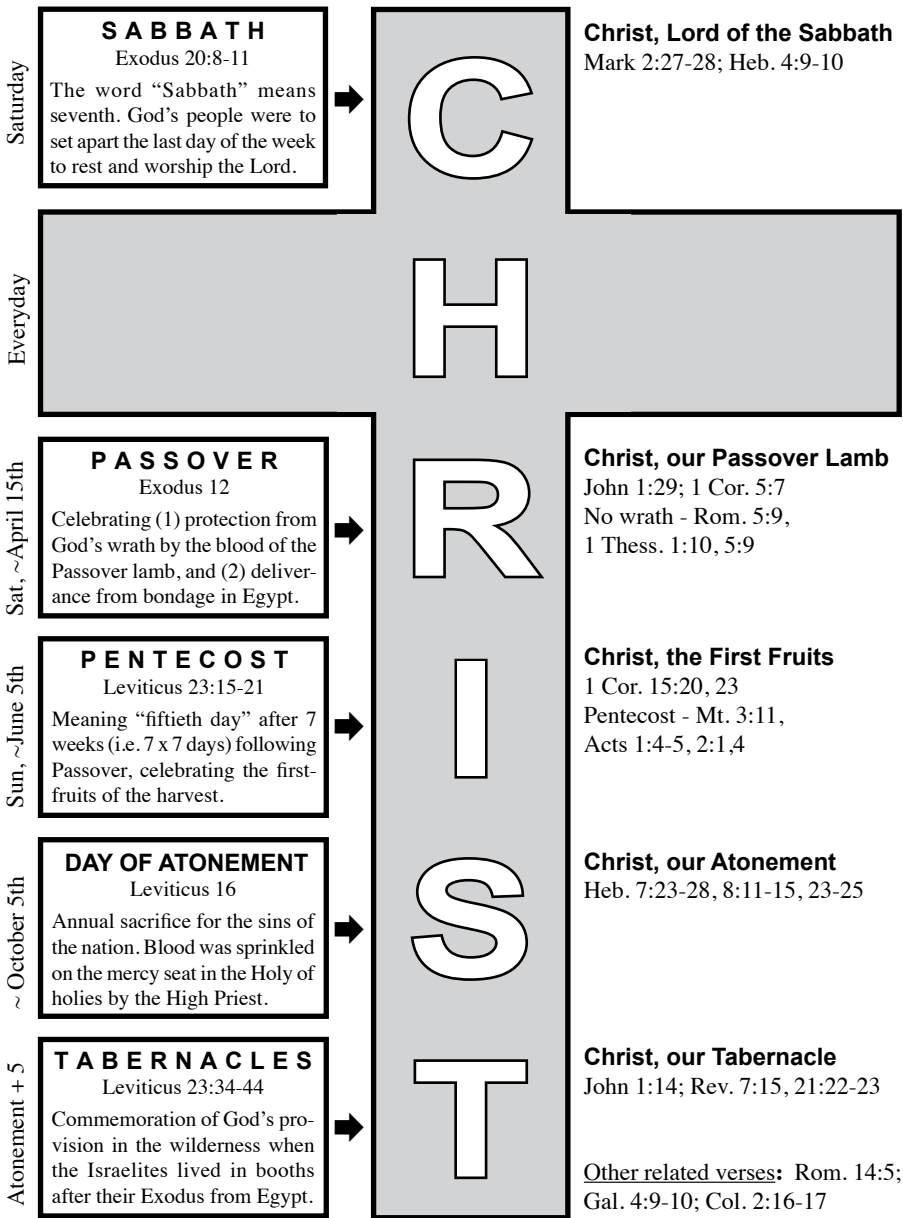
Christ

	OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
PLACE OF WORSHIP	Earthly Jerusalem	The Church (Heavenly Jerusalem) <small>(Heb. 12:22-23; Rev. 21:1-3, 9-10)</small>
CENTER OF WORSHIP	The Temple	Christ <small>(Rev. 21:22)</small>

C. Christ Fulfills the Jewish Sacrifice.



D. Christ Fulfills the Jewish Holiday.



Others: New Moon (Num. 28:11-15), Trumpets (Lev. 23:24-27, AKA “Rosh Hashanah”)
Post-Exilic Festivals added: Purim (Esth. 9:17-32), Hanukkah (victory of Maccabees)

A3

Appendix 3: God's Will in the Psalms

A. Psalm 23 – The Good Shepherd Leads Me

1 *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

2 *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.*

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 *He restoreth my soul.*
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

4 *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*

I will fear no evil for Thou art with me;

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

5 *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*

6 *Thou anointest my head with oil.*

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

v.1 The sovereign God of the whole universe is the Christian's personal guide through life.

- The key is learning contentment & gratitude for what the Good Shepherd provides.
- I want nothing but the Shepherd Himself.
- I die daily to my own wants, desires, and will; and find new life in His.

Psalm 95:7
John 10:14
Phil. 4:11-13
1 Tim. 6:6-11
Psalm 27:4
1 Cor. 15:31
John 10:10

v.2 God doesn't force me against my will, instead He graciously changes my will.

- He makes me leadable & teachable
- God's will produces rest from wandering.
- God's will & path are better than any path I could ever choose for myself.
- God's will is truly satisfying.

Prov. 21:1
Psalm 51:10
Isaiah 64:8
Mt. 11:28-30
Isa. 55:8-9
Prov. 14:12
Isa. 55:1-2

v.3 God does not lead us onward without giving us the power to follow.

- See v.6 how He fills / restores us when we are depleted - i.e. "My cup runneth over"
- God's will is primarily in terms of BEING righteous, from which my DOING flows.
- God has a vested interest in leading me in His will – to preserve His good name.

Eph. 1:19
Luke 24:49
Eph. 5:18
Jn. 7:38-39
1 Thess. 4:3
1 Pet. 1:16
Psalm 31:3
Ez. 20:9,14,22

v.4 God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him.

- In Christ, even death loses its sting.
- A proper fear of the Lord will eclipse the fear of anything or anyone else.
- Notice He "leads" us in His will (v.2,3), i.e. God takes me nowhere that He is not willing to go with me.
- God doesn't just give me a map to find my way; the Mapmaker goes with me.
- I am comforted knowing that God's discipline and guiding hand will not allow me to wander aimlessly.

Rom. 8:28
Gen. 50:20
1 Cor. 15:55
Prov. 1:7
Psa. 27:1-3
Psa. 139:7-12
Deut. 31:6
Mt. 28:20
Jn. 14:6
Jn. 16:13
Heb. 12:5-11
Jam. 1:2-5
Phil. 1:6

v.5 God puts my life on display before the world as living proof of the perfectness of His will, to clearly demonstrate the difference between two opposite paths.

Rom. 12:1-2
Mt. 7:13-14
John 14:6
Acts 4:12

v.6 God anoints w/ H.S. to guide me in Word.

- To be anointed is also to be consecrated unto God for sacred and holy use. God's will is characterized as being set apart more and more unto the Lord.
- God's wisdom, power, and guidance to do His will are given bountifully.
- Contrast with the horrible consequences of sin that follow us outside of God's will.
- God surrounds us; in front He leads me (v.2-3), underneath is His righteousness (v.3), behind is His goodness & mercy (v.6)
- God's will for my life is characterized in whole by being / dwelling / abiding in Christ and He in me.

1 Jn. 2:27
Psalm 4:3
Lev. 20:7
1 Cor. 6:19-20
Rom. 6:13
2 Pet. 1:3
Eph. 1:7-8
Rom. 2:9-10
cf. Deut. 28
Psa. 5:12
Psa. 32:7,10
Psa. 125:2
Col. 1:27
John 15:1-11
Eph. 1:3

B. Psalm 25 – “All the Paths of the Lord Are Lovingkindness”

4	<i>Make me know <u>Thy ways</u>, O Lord; Teach me <u>Thy paths</u>.</i>	v.4	We ask God to give us wisdom to understand His Word / Way / Will. • We make our appeal to God to be His own interpreter of His Word & Will.	Jam. 1:5 Prov. 2:1-11 Psa. 51:6 Psa. 119:27
5	<i><u>Lead me</u> in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation;</i> <i>For Thee I wait all the day.</i>	v.5	All God's ways are tested and true. • In seeking God's will, David remembers that God is the One who saved him, i.e. if God is great and gracious enough to save me by the truth, then He is great and gracious enough to lead me in it. • We wait on God to learn more about Him, rather than waiting idly by just to receive some particular direction in life.	Psa. 43:3 Psa. 62:5-8 Isa. 12:2 Gal. 3:3 Gal. 5:25 Phil. 1:6 Psa. 27:14 Psa. 130:5 Isa. 40:31
8	<i>Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore He instructs sinners in <u>the way</u>.</i>	v.8	The basis for trusting that God will guide me rightly is His glorious character. • If a good man will teach others the path of righteousness, how much more the Lord?	Prov. 3:5-6, Ex. 34:6 2 Tim. 2:13 Psa. 23:3
9	<i>He leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble <u>His way</u>.</i>	v.9	For God to teach and lead us in His Way (v.4-5) implies we must have teachable, leadable spirits – that requires humility. • Wisdom cannot be poured into a full vessel (full of self), but into an empty vessel (a humble man) God will pour out great wisdom and knowledge of His will. • Conversely, pride and self-will block us off from God's Wisdom & Will.	Jam. 4:10 1 Pet. 5:5-6 Mt. 23:12 Mk. 2:17 Lk. 9:23 Prov. 11:2 Psa. 51:17 Prov. 16:5 1 Jn. 2:16
10	<i>All <u>the paths</u> of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.</i>	v.10	Every path God takes me down is a further unfolding of His lovingkindness. • Every path God takes me down will demonstrate the truth of His way. • God's will is for me to experience more and more of His lovingkindness.	Ex. 15:13 Jer. 31:3 Rev. 15:3 Rom. 3:4 Lam. 3:22-23 Jer. 29:11
12	<i>Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in <u>the way</u> he should choose.</i>	v.12	Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom. • The fear of the Lord is obeying Him. • God will personally instruct us in the decisions of life if we will honor and revere Him above all else.	Prov. 9:10 Deut. 10:12 Eccl. 12:13 Prov. 15:33 1 Sam. 2:30
14	<i>The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant.</i>	v.14	“Gospel privileges are not for every pretender. Many profess an art or a trade, but thrive not by it, because they have not the secret and mystery of it; and many profess godliness but are little better for it, because they have not the true secret of it. He that is righteous in secret, where no man sees him, he is the righteous man with whom the secret of the Lord is.”– Michael Jermin, 1591-1659 • The secret counsels of God's Will are the reward to those who delight in Him.	Psa. 44:20-21 Psa. 69:5 Psa. 90:8 Eccl. 12:14 Isa. 40:27-28 Jer. 16:17 Heb. 4:13 Mt. 6:1-6 Eph. 6:5-8 Col. 3:23-24 Psa. 1:1-3 Psa. 37:3-5
15	<i>My eyes are continually toward the Lord, for He will pluck my feet out of the net.</i>	v.15	Cultivate single-mindedness upon the Lord and He will guide your path.	Heb. 12:1-2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ASHCRAFT, Morris. *The Will of God*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1980.

MYERS, Warren and Ruth. *Discovering God's Will*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1980

SMITH, Malcom. *How to Know the Will of God*. Cassette Tape Series MS617-MS619. San Antonio, Texas: Malcom Smith Ministries.

SPURGEON, Charles Haddon. *Spurgeon at His Best*. Compiled by Tom Carter. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988.

TOZER, A.W. *Signposts*. Compiled by Harry Vorploegh. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1988.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Pages 26, 28-29 from the *Men' Manual, Vol II*. Oak Brook, Illinois: Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, Inc., 1986. Pages 4, 5, 35 from *The New Open Bible*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.

Pages 7, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 21, 35 from *The Church Clip Art Book*, by Steve Hunt and Dave Adamson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988.

Written & Edited by
Pastor Stephen Hildebrandt
© 1995, 2004