
Finding God's Will

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Surrendering Ourselves to Who God Calls Us To Be

Hidden? Mysterious? Undeterminable? Ask the average Christian in the pew and they will concede that they passionately desire to know what God is up to in their lives. They want to know God's plan, His will for their Life. So they can better lead their lives. Yet at the same time they will admit their frustrations in seeking it, that their fears creep in saying they cannot live it. Or that it may be just too hard to find. And if you ask them again what they think that will may be, they will utter several self-doubting answers. From *"I think I just need to live a good life"*, *I think I'm doing OK*, *"I hope my choices have been good"*, to *"I do not have a clue"*.

How do I do this? How do I surrender? What is God trying to teach me?

Whether you are looking for God's will for your life or helping others determine God's will for theirs, this 6-part curriculum will help you in your journey. The discovery begins with the right attitude, allowing yourself to be stretched and challenged beyond your comfort zone. So if you are really ready to grow in Christ and be your best for His glory, then this series and its challenges are for you. You may be surprised to find what you thought was His will was just your noise and aspirations plugging your ears, as it was with me. You may find that what the church or some preacher proclaimed does not match up with the priorities that our Lord gave us. For what we think is important often is not, and what we take for granted and ignore is usually our primary call.

The other option is to ignore God and stick to your own will and desires, thus missing out on great opportunities and growth, for which you were placed on this earth. So I plead with you to do as Galatians 2:20-21 calls us, to surrender your will over to His, then you will find His pure and pleasing and perfect will, for you to learn and grow in Him. Would you rather lead a life with distinction and purpose, or continue to complain and spread the disease of sin, gossip, malice, strife, hatred, condemnation, and pride. When God calls us to work together as His representatives in this life to those around us, with love, joy, peace, patience...

"Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God present yourselves a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable, which is your spiritual act of worship. And do not be conformed any longer to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

God's will is not a mystery if we search for it, but the question is; are you willing to accept what you find, and what He reveals? Or do you bury yourself in your presumptions and pride?

This curriculum is designed for you as an individual or with a group to go through key Bible passages to expound on what we are called to do step by step. This is designed to take your questions of what is God's specific plan for me, what is it that I'm to learn, what is it that I'm to do and so forth.

Finding God's will is not about programs or methods. In fact you will be surprised to find out that Scripture does not lay out a specific plan for the individual, even though God has one. The Bible places the concern where we tend not to look, that God's will is about a person who is God, who wants us! A loving relationship! What it is not all about is what we seek, such as what major should I chose, what career is best, or who shall I marry, or where should I move to, or is this a wise investment. Then the bumps in the road come such as death, disease, sickness, trials and tribulations, and we wonder what it is all about, why, why, and more why.

Asking the question, what does God want me to do, is the starting point, and the focus of the will of God.

Matt 6:33-34 "Seek first the kingdom of God..."

The will of God has more to do with controlling our hearts, than what we do in our planning and ideas (I PET 5)!!

We must be a servant of Christ, to let Him mold and shape us to His Glory and purpose, and remain in this relationship!

To know the will of God more intimately. He will reveal it, as we grow close in our experience with Him!

The three types of God's will:

1. REVEALED WILL: God's laws concerning lifestyle and righteous living for all Christians (it is not God's will to ever leave your spouse or start a cult...).
2. DETERMINED WILL: That cannot be thwarted or stopped by anything (predestination, it will happen!!!)
3. SPECIFIC WILL: God's special plan for each believer (whom we marry, career, and education, etc.).

Finding God's will is not about programs or methods, it is about a person who is God, who wants us! A loving relationship!

Asking the question, what does God want me to do, is the starting point, Matt 6:33-34 "Seek first the kingdom of God..."

So are you ready to receive what God wants to give?

This curriculum works quite simply, by Examining the Word and being in prayer! And then discuss with others in a small group or with a mentor.

Step I Learning to Surrender your will to God's

(This curriculum works quite simply, by Examining the Word and being in prayer! And then discuss with others in a small group or with a mentor.)

The key is to PRAY then read and examine the passages and then pray again!!!!

- **Obedience is our moment of truth!**
- **Surrendering Is not giving up!**

We must have the firm desire to surrender ourselves to the will of the Father! However this surrendering we do is not giving up our distinction and personality. It does not make us eunuchs and robots who serve a master out of obligation and employment or out of a predetermined program. It is the refusal to surrender our will that leads us astray and away from His perfect will, that leads to unhappiness and strife.

Surrendering your will to God's is the importance of doing the will of God:

1. JOHN 5:17; COLOSSIANS 1:9-10:God wants us to follow His plan, because He has a better idea!
2. JEREMIAH 29:11; JOHN 5:17-21; ROMANS 8:28-29 Love is what God's will is all about--His love for us!
3. MATTHEW 6:31-34; ROMANS 12:1-3; God's plans are better than ours could ever be! This is wonderful! This is what God wants!!!
4. JOHN 17:3; ISAIAH 55:9 God's invitation is His revelation for us to join His plan!
5. MATTHEW 4:18-22; 5:43-48; 6:5-8; 20:20-28; What kinds of adjustments can you find in these Scriptures?

Obedience will require us to adjust!

6. ACTS 9:1-25 Obedience will cost us, but there is no better way!!!
7. MATTHEW 12:50 This is the moment of truth!
8. PSALM 119:33-35 When God leads with a directive, we are to obey!

God's Blessings are beyond our Imagination

- When we allow Him to work, then His plans become our plans!!
 - We come to know more of our Lord through experience!
 - He will accomplish His will when we obey!!
 - If we truly love our Lord, then we will obey out of our love for what He did for us, out of gratitude!!
 - We must allow ourselves to experience Christ working!
9. JAMES 2:20 Faith without a response is meaningless!

To know the will of God, we must DENY ourselves and focus our attention on our LORD; not on our plans or ideas: But wait on what God shows us!!

10. LUKE 6:46-49; JOHN 7:16-17 God blesses those who are obedient!

11. JONAH; EXODUS 2:11-15; God does give second chances, yet, disobedience will cost us a lot!

12. GENESIS 12:1-20 Abraham started a great walk with God, then he blew it!

13.2 SAMUEL 11 David blew it too!

14. ACTS 9:1-2 Paul began his career persecuting Christians!

We cannot know the way of our Lord without adjustment and paying a price, yet the price is insignificant compared to the worth we will gain than we can ever imagine!!!

- God does not give up on us!
- God often gives us a second chance!
- God wants to develop us as a person of Character and integrity!
- When God sees our faithfulness and obedience, He will grant us more responsibility as well as blessings—Because our TRUST has grown!

The will of God has more to do with controlling our hearts, than what we do in our planning and ideas!!! see I Peter 5:6-11

QUALIFICATIONS OF KNOWING GOD'S WILL:

- a. You must have a growing relationship with Christ!

- b. You must surrender your will to His!
- c. You must be willing to adapt and be flexible!
- d. You must have a growing personal walk, filled with Scripture Study, Prayer, and Devotions!
- e. You must be willing to Obey God!

When people are concerned with knowing God's will they are usually facing a crisis or decision in their lives. This is in two primary areas, first being our concern with future events that is what does God want me to do with my life in regards to education, job, who will I marry or what pet should I buy. The second primary crisis point is dealing with the past, which is what decisions have I made that I now have consequences to bear or are causing problems in my life.

These two crises fall short on what Scripture teaches us about God's will. We need to focus our thoughts upon today not what happened in the past and not be overly focused on the future but how do we please God in our life here and now.

A Question: What would your life be like if you completely trusted God? Luke 4:16-19; John 14:1-14

God's Will for Daily Living!

DETERMINATION

Decisions! Decisions! & Decisions!!! Each of us faces scores and scores and just a huge amount of choices each day. Confronted by either an employment choice, place to live, who will I marry or which socks shall I wear, we decide from the major to the minor: Yet, most of us have learned there is no easy process to automatically know what God is thinking. Mainly because we clutter our minds with all of our own desires so God's seem to be pushed aside.

A Question: Is your life in tune with God's will? If not, are you in prayer about it?

Our choices are based on the perceived urgency of our will and desires, and we make decisions which end up making us miserable in time. Delusions, stress, and misleading common sense derail our best intentions. Right now you might be on the edge of your seat asking, "What is God's will for my life?" Major, critical, life-determining choices, such as school, career, place to live, and marriage! You may not be going through such decisions now; but, you will at some point or already have.

THOUGHTS ON DETERMINATION

God's word is paramount: It must precede everything else; what others say, what others do, what others think!

- The first thing we should do in determining God's will is remove any distractions that lay between us growing closer to God.
- Our first priority is trusting in God's sovereignty and His character.
- Do not allow yourselves to waste away by figuring God does not care about me, I am too small. Are you determined to relinquish the control of your life over to Christ? If not, then finding God's will, will not mean anything to you.
- Never look down at yourself or let others put you down for yielding your life over to Christ. Stand with confidence and assurance that the Creator of the Universe is living and working in you when you let Him.
- Our determined purpose is to do our best in all that we do, from shopping and being courteous to the clerk, to doing our best in our job even when we hate it. We are called to be our best for His glory at all times.
- To reach a level of intimacy with God requires our determined surrender of our will, not thinking about it, not reasoning with logic but pure simple surrender.

The will of God is about us abiding in Christ.

Our call is to work out what God works in us. This is one of the most profound things we can do because our will (the freedom of choice that God gives us) is one of the most profound, unique and special offerings He has for us. With this freedom of choice comes responsibility (Remember Calvin taught more on this subject and prayer, than any other!).

It is God's desire that all of us turn our devotion to Him, yet that will not happen because too many of us rely on our own will even though it is a gift of grace. So working out our salvation as stated in Philippians 2 is not about working for our salvation. Absolutely not! It means focusing our attention on God and working our will over like a mugger "working up his victim".

We are to yield our will by faith and obedience to God's will. Our goal out of this is that we become so in tune with an intimate relationship with God that we need not ask what His will is, but it will just become automatic.

In the meantime, we ask, because it builds our relationship with Him as stated in Matthew 6:8, "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you want before you ask Him." Yes, God knows. However, some people think they can get by without doing anything because whatever they do will be a part of God's predestined plan. Not! The point of us asking and praying to an all-knowing God, who already knows the outcome is to build our relationship with Him.

- Sanctification or the process of our growing deeper in our relationship to Christ means that we surrender with the white flag of our will to God and keep focused on Him.

Philippians 1:20, *"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exhibited in my body"*

whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” So keep every thought focused on God.

THOUGHTS ON SURRENDERING

- When we are surrendering ourselves to Christ, we are not giving ourselves to an enemy. We are not the plunder to an overbearing and vengeful God seeking more souls than the Devil in some galactic game. Rather we are giving ourselves to the One who loves us the most and has the best plan for us!!!
- True sanctification is surrendering ourselves entirely to God.
- Usually total surrender requires a crisis to unbalance our lives because we tend to be hardheaded and not yield to God’s leading.
- God will bring us to the point that He requires of us and if we ignore His subtle nudges, be aware; He will use a more severe means to get our attention.

So, what do we do?

Well, it is simple, or so it seems, to rely on Christ absolutely first and foremost in your life. When Christ takes hold of your life, the course changes to match His Will, or so it should. Our life is no longer our own for He is LORD.

What this means is our will and desires must be put off and surrendered to Christ! And the biggest and best most fantastic journey will unfold in your life. I personally cannot imagine living any other way.

- John 17:3 Jesus is our way, and we do not need a detailed map to be in His will!
- John 14:26 we need only to follow Christ, even when we do not know what is ahead!
- John 15:5 we need not worry about our future, if we trust in His Lordship!

Finding God’s will is not about programs or methods, it is about a person who is God, who wants us! A loving relationship!

Asking the question, what does God want me to do, is the starting point, Matt 6:33-34 “Seek first the kingdom of God...” And one of the purposes of God’s will for us!

Carrier Pigeons amaze me with their seemingly magical ability of finding their direction from anywhere and then making their way home. Once the pigeons are let go, they fly around for a few short minutes until they get a sense of where they are supposed to go and then they fly home. For us to get a sense of direction, we too must sometimes fly around to get a sense of direction, hopefully for a short time only. We may perceive it as risky and even foolish by the ways of our society: but, would you buy a large expensive stereo or computer system and put it together or use it without reading the directions? Probably not, if you want to use it correctly. So why do we do this in our decision-making processes with our lives? Most of us spend more time with finding the will for our stereo, than with ourselves!

So, don’t fear letting go of your will to His. God does not take advantage of our faith; rather He will honor us for it!

The mystery and wonder of predestination (that is God chose us and governs us before we were even born) is that our choices made from our free will are actually God's foreordained decrees! This may contradict our logic and reasoning, but this is the wonderful truth of God.

Theologians may bicker about exactly how much free will we have and have not. It is supposed to be beyond our comprehension because God is God and we are not! So take comfort, God is Sovereign!!! He is in charge.

OUR CALL TO CHRIST

The will of God has more to do with controlling our hearts, than what we do in our planning and ideas!!! I Peter 5:6-11

We are called to Christ!

Jesus calls us to be for Him; that is to be nourished and grow, as a plant is nourished and grows. As a plant sinks its roots deeper into the soil to receive richer nourishment, so must we sink our will into the depth of Christ and yield to His riches and splendor. Our relationship to Christ is not about a way of thinking or a particular theology but it is to Christ Himself.

To make it clearer, our Christian walk is not about what we do, it is about what we are. Too many of us are devoted to saying and thinking the right things, and this is important, but it is not what we are about.

So the question is: Are you devoted to a cause or are you devoted to the person and work of Christ?

Do not be like so many Christians who warm their butts Sundays on the pews and do nothing else. But we are to live our lives for Him. Our confidence is what Christ has done for us and this is what Christianity is about. It is not about what we do. What we do is merely a response of love, devotion and obedience.

When we respond to the call of Christ, do not be fooled that no crisis or disruptions will attack your life. There are two parts to the Chinese word for crisis. First is opportunity. Second is warning. We must take a sign from this that dangers will come but out of these dangers come rich opportunities for us to learn and grow as servants.

In the midst of a crisis, our opportunity is to make a choice. We can either choose to follow God's leading or we can choose to fall further away. It is our stubbornness and desires that seem to take the lead during this crisis, rather than Christ's perfect plan. It is not how we answer the question of suffering; it is how we respond to it that is important. This will build us up and further God's glory. You see, we live in a sin-infected world and God will turn this around for His glory. So, have you allowed Christ into your life to the point that it has caused you a crisis? Maybe a crisis with your family or school or what you will do with your life. Take comfort. Remember that it is God who is in charge. So do not go around looking for a crisis and starting things. Just because we live with a hornet's nest above our heads does not mean we should be whacking it with a stick.

Jesus says in Mark 1:14-18 *"Come and follow me and I will make you fishers of men."*

The call of our LORD is simple and clear; it is to Himself first and always, and this must be if we truly want to find God's direction in our lives!

We are called to a Person, not to a cause, not to a religion, Theology, or a way of life: but, we are called to walk by His side, to walk with Him. This passage does not say

where they were called to go, only that He will lead and guide. How many people do you know that refuse to ask for directions when they are lost? It has been my observation that this is a strong sign of pride, and pride is a great wall between us and what God's best is that He has for us: We are to let Him show us the way.

Christ does not hand us a plan in triplicate, He hands us Himself. Would you rather have a written outline, or the King and Creator of the universe as your guide? Christ simply says "come and follow me." Martin Luther said, "*I do not know the way that I take, but well do I know my guide.*" When I go backpacking (which I enjoy, but do very little) I would much rather have a good leader to show me the way, instead of a map! When I drive somewhere new, I tend to get lost easily, even with a "Thomas Guide" or "AAA" map. I would rather talk to someone who can show me the way (and yes, it is a humbling experience to ask for directions as a strong willed male warrior). This should be our impulse, to follow Christ. He will be the best guide we could ever conceivably or possibly come up with.

Psalm 48:14 *"For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even to the end."*

We must escape the will of our society and selfish desires, and surrender our will to His. To live our life dedicated with passion and conviction for Him. And then God's will begins to unravel before our very eyes!

A Question: What would your life be like if you completely trusted God? Luke 4:16-19; John 14:1-14

THOUGHTS ON OUR CALL TO CHRIST

- Let Christ's awareness take the place of self-awareness!
- Have you allowed Christ to introduce joy to you? Check out Psalm 48 and John 15:11.
- Beware, God may have to destroy the confidence we have in ourselves before we have confidence in Him.
- Have you persecuted Jesus yourself? We do this by invoking our will over His!
- The purpose of discipleship is bringing us into a right relationship so we come to the knowledge of Christ's purposes over our own.
- We start our relationship with God with all kinds of requests until we realize it is the love relationship that is important.
- Where we spend the most time in our lives (especially with our thoughts) molds us to who we are. So, do you concentrate? On Christ, and who He is, and what He has done?
- Our challenge is to be founded on God's purpose, not our own.
- Obedience to Christ means being faithful and trusting above all else.

We must be a servant of Christ, to let Him mold and shape us to His ***glory and purpose, and remain in this relationship!***

We are called to Obedience

Obedience is the foundation of knowing God's will. Without obedience, nothing can happen. For us to be the friend of Jesus, He asks us to, "...lay down our life for His friends..." (John 15:13-15). We must make a conscious decision to give ourselves to Christ. This is not a suicide clause, not at all! What it is about is a life filled with giving wonder and excitement. Yet, it goes against our natural way of thinking and this is where our will collides with God's will. And, we have the choice to obey or face difficulties. So, let us do it with cheerfulness and wonderment in our hearts.

The counterfeit to obedience is creating our own opportunities and the devotion and zeal to go with it. Like the raging euphoria that sporting events generate is a substitute to the devotion that we should have to our Lord. There is nothing wrong with sporting events, and nothing wrong with cheering for them, but why can't we do that for God? Enthusiasm paves a dangerous path when it refuses to learn and yield to God's glory.

Our nature is to do our own thing. Our society thrives on it. But, perhaps a better way is to sacrifice ourselves in devotion for God and not let other substitutions get in the way. The false devotions that get in the way (such as family, school, work and career) are sometimes good, and even necessary, but do not let their cause get in the way of your obedience to the Lord. Because if this is all you have (these other devotions), you end up having nothing.

So, let God work in you and have Him open your eyes to the fallacies to avoid, and embrace the wonders of His truth.

Obedience must permeate everything; and through this lesson my goal is to teach you just that. Obedience is the capstone to our stones of faith and life in Christ. God wants us first. So, how do you find God's will? By obeying Him, His commands, His grace, His love, His will and nothing else. Check out I Samuel 15:22 and John 7:17.

A sense of duty should rise from our obedience, as well as a sense of heroism. The Christian walk is not always on the mount of transfiguration, but in the valleys below. Where we shine is not recorded by our fellow people, but in heaven above. So our obedience is not based on human recognition, but on heavenly endowment.

When God touches us, our eyes are open to Him. Yet, remember the struggle of our sin nature. If we love Jesus with passion and conviction, then the outcome will be obvious. If we are determined to do something else, as we warm the pews with our rears, then our eyes become closed. The closure of our eyes is our choice and our choice alone; "*Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*" John 12:24. Will you allow your life to be rooted in the soil of Christ and what He has done so we can rise in maturity by complying and learning in His word?

It's not about you; it's about God. It's not what we do that makes us a Christian; it's what Jesus has done for us!!!

THOUGHTS ON OBEDIENCE

- Our natural selfish will must be sacrificed through discipline; this is hard but the rewards are plentiful!
- God will not make us obey; it must come out of our free will.
- Obedience does not get us right with God. It is what God has done for us; obedience is merely the response.
- It is easy to be a frantic devotee of a sporting event, but what does it take to be a devotee of Christ?
- Our obedience may cause difficulties that are not meant as a personal attack upon us. Rather they enable us to be better used by God. So, we can identify with a plight of others.
- We can disobey God out of our free will and He will give us His grace. What good would we be?
- Our confusion can only be solved by obedience!
- We are to bring every thought, concern, argument into the captivity of obedience because we are responsible (II Corinthians 10:5).
- Making the choice to martyr ourselves or undergo undue suffering is a very wrong move unless it comes from choosing God's will. God is in control!
- Perfect obedience is perfect trust. Discernment comes out of obedience!

When you are going through suffering, God knows and cares. He is there for you. Let your effort of focusing on the difficulties and uncertainties of life fall away. Why should we worry when the Creator of all things is in charge? In the midst of difficulties, it may appear God has abandoned you, but He has not. His love and grace remain the same!

- Matthew 11:28 states to let our rest be in Jesus, not unrest!
- Remember your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. So, live your life responsibly: I Corinthians 6:19.
- Perfect confidence in Christ is obedience.
- Knowledge and insight happen only by obedience, not just from our experience.
- If you do not understand something spiritual, it is usually because of a lack of obedience.
- We cannot pretend to comply. God will uncover our falseness.
- Do not be an imitation Christian, our Lord does not need impostors!

We are called for courage!

Abraham in Genesis 22 faced a crisis, which was interpreting God's will as having to kill his son. Abraham had to learn he had to do anything, no matter what the cost, to be totally dependent and obedient to God, no matter how much it went against his convictions and belief system. Fortunately for us, God may not ask these extreme measures from us because we can read it in His book. We need to remain trusting, devoted, and obedient, with courage to receive His blessings. We must be willing to surrender our convictions and even our experience of life. This is the purifying fire of our faith to refine us to His purpose and glory.

Philippians 2:13 *“For it is God who works in you to will and act according to His good purpose”.*

Sometimes the call will not make sense to our way of thinking, as in Luke 5:1-11. The disciples were unsure of casting their nets at a time when all of their earthly fishing experience tells them it would not work. Reluctantly the disciples followed the word of our LORD and cast their nets in the deep water, and verse 6 tells us how foolish our wise ways are and how wonderful the ways of the Lord are! And, their nets were beyond full! Peter realizes the holiness of Christ.

The question is, do we realize His holiness? Do we realize His purpose and what He can do for us? It is not about fisherman’s luck, it is about Christ! Then they heard the call to now fish for men, after their obedience was assured.

The will of God is for the ordinary, the sinful, the neurotic, and all of our frailties. For we all have fallen short...but do we hear the call and do we respond in kind? The disciples *“then they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed Him.”* We must be assured that when we follow Christ, He will give us the purpose and courage to go beyond our known limits to His greatness! Jesus Christ is the master fisherman.

THOUGHTS ON COURAGE

- Obeying God can be a difficult task, but it will be an ultimate joy. See Galatians 4:19.
- The key question is not what I should do; it is how should I obey.
- Having peace is courage found in John 14:1. Let this become real in you!
- Taking the time to abide in Christ is the courage to go against the sin nature within us.

There are times when we will not understand what is going on in our lives or what the Lord is about to do.

Sometimes we have to wait. It is not God being unresponsive to us, it is just that we are called to relax and wait. Waiting means teaching. God teaching us His ways. If you have a lot of doubt, perhaps you should wait.

We are called to a Relationship

John 15 is the most beautiful description of our relationship to our LORD. He wants us to be with Him! Just as Christ wanted the disciples along His side, training them, loving them, enjoying their companionship, He wants that of us: love, closeness, and relationship. This is our primary call and the will of the LORD. Everything else falls from this prime directive. He loves me! And wants to be with me! Do we want to be with Him? Do we want that close, loving relationship? Do we want to walk as Abraham walked, building altars?

Following Christ means for us to give up our personal plans, the goals and our ambitions that we have for our future. Yes, it will be a difficult struggle to leave the plans of our family and friends -- our nets -- behind and to humbly follow as a servant to give our LORD the glory with our obedience; doing what our LORD desires over our own ambitions. So, are you willing? Are you eager to do great things for Christ?

And when we follow through what Christ has done for us, by letting it flow to others around us, we bring the results of love and obedience. The deeper commitment we bring to our LORD, the deeper impact we have on the glory of His kingdom and people around us.

The key to the success of finding God's will for our life is simple: obedience, willingness to serve God over our needs, even before we know what the call may be! To totally surrender and trust in His power and authority. He will shape our destiny if we allow it. He will teach us His ways, if we walk in His ways. Trust yourself to our LORD!

THOUGHTS ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

God is more interested in us being in His will, than we are !!!

- God's supernatural power creates the impossible relationship.
- Let your relationship to God be as natural as taking a breath.
- Are we dictating our demands to God or are we communing with Him? See Colossians 1:24.
- There is always a smarter way for us to obey.

At first you may clearly see God's will, like breaking off a bad relationship, or changing a career from selling drugs to building homes; but in other areas, it may not be as clear. However, God will guide you by your faith.

Warning! God's name is not a magic word. He is not a divine bellhop where you can ask anything in His name as some people teach, but God is our focus of intimacy.

- Do not allow your stubborn nature to rule your will.

It is not what God gives to us that makes our relationship grow; it is Christ's redemption and who He is in me. Then, our call is to respond to Him.

We are called to a Purpose

Life is not about you! It is about Him! To honor and glorify Christ as our Lord and proclaim Him to our Church and to the world with passion, conviction, clarity and truth!!!

Are you ready to engage into the greatest business opportunity conceivable?

Do not assume that to be in God's Will, our lives must be harsh and filled with no fun! God's purpose may be vague; yet, our call is to respond out of our love, which comes from the grace He provided as a result of the guilt of sin!

We are to shoot the arrow even when we cannot see the target! Our aim is His purpose and our obedience. The goal is for us to grow in our love relationship with Christ, *INTIMACY WITH HIM!* Just as a boat tied to a dock, so are we when we first become Christians, then we have the opportunity to venture out into the depths of His sea. We will run into swells and storms on the way, yet God will anchor us by our faith, and we will go through it. If we do not venture out from the dock we will experience a storm in the shallowness of our port of will. And a storm at the dock will cause major damage and frustration, because we do not have the richness of depth to protect us and enable us to go through. Growth is the essential element.

The greatest job of all is to make our LORD known. You may not be called into full-time Christian service, but we are all called to make disciples: Matt. 28! Whether we are working in a grocery store, dusting a field, or placing control rods in a nuclear reactor, as a Christian we model Christ in all we do. People see Christ reflected in what we do, say, and how we respond!

So, if you drive around like a jerk, speeding and cutting people off, while sporting a fish on your bumper, what do people see? A Christian is a jerk! Nothing is bigger than modeling Christ. There is nothing that can replace God's will, yet, we try so hard to do so. Too many Christians just go to church, and stay in their sub culture and never venture out to spread the Word.

How much of what you do will count 10 years from now, or 20, or 100, or 10,000 years? In the grand scheme of things, is there dignity? Is there significance or value in what you do vs. serving the LORD? Even if your feelings and identity are based on what you do, can you safely say it is greater in purpose than the Creator of the universe? You know it is a big universe!

If we allow Him, God will reveal to us what He is about to do! And this revelation will be our invitation of indentation to join: for He is able!

There is simply nothing out there that will give you greater purpose and significance than to follow God's will! So, are your plans filling His great purpose? You may not be called to go to Outer Mongolia or fill the pulpit in a church; but are you fulfilling His purpose in your life and growing in maturity? We must be fishers of men whether we are selling hamsters or serving in the U.S. Senate. We are in the business

of mirroring Christ in our lives! Following God's will is life's greatest adventure and reward!

Phil. 2:5-8 states Jesus came as God's servant, to accomplish His will to redeem us from our fallen selves!

- ***To be a servant, we are to be as moldable as clay in His hands!***
- ***We can do nothing apart from God!***
- ***With Christ working in us, we can do anything!***

THOUGHTS ON OUR PURPOSE

- *Are you devoted to yourself or to God?*
- The highest point of morality to us is what we already know; God will take us higher!
- God is working to change our purpose into His.
- What is the most powerful influence in your life, how does this affect you?

We are called to Virtue

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”. (Col. 3:12-17)

Virtue is defined as, *“a conformity to the standard of right: morality. Moral excellence; beneficial quality, strength and courage, and a capacity to act: potency”* (Webster's).

Virtue is not the talk of the town these days; in fact it is depicted in our culture as weak and useless. It is the butt of jokes. It is forgotten as part of a perceived bygone era filled with contempt and arrogance. To be a person of character is to be alone and endure criticism by the world and even by some so-called Christians. Virtue calls us higher to a level where few people desire to go, because it is an assault against the self will. It flies in the face what we expect and desire to do and to be. People today do not see the relativism and purpose of virtue. Yet it is so sweet when it is working, so comforting to be in a higher purpose than we are. Just as a young person enlists in the military to be apart of something bigger than they so it is when we are living virtuous lives.

Even though the polls and the news reports give testimony that virtue is dead, or at least has no intrinsic value today, people do know what it is. All you have to do is watch a 60 minutes type of news show where they catch someone in the act of doing something wrong. Watch how they cower away from the camera. How they deny their deeds with a look on their faces I cannot describe. It is something you have to see for yourself. People may claim virtue is dead as one famous college professor taught, but when his car was stolen, he wanted swift justice. But a wise, cocky young person of his gave his professor back his own words of it being relative, and that professor all he could do was get mad. He came face to face with the flaw of his logic and turned to frustration and arrogance as his comfort.

If you cheat someone they get upset! Why, if it is just relative? If there is no virtue? People do know it and can give you crisp and clean definitions such as honesty, courage, loyalty, hard work, friendship, perseverance, discipline, reliability, compassion, and even faith. When you are dishonest with a friend they become hurt. If you are always saying you will do something and never come through, you will lose your friends. If you are in politics and ignore the less fortunate, you will lose your office. When you slack off at work, people notice. If you are a soldier or police officer and run away from a fight you will be condemned. If you give up too easy at a simple task, others will ridicule you. If you have no self-discipline and just constantly party people see it as fun for a

while, but soon it will be viewed with contempt. If you say you will feed someone's dog and you don't you are scorned as being irresponsible. If you are a person who has no conviction and believes in nothing, people will not trust you.

So society does indeed know virtue well. As a society we just do not like the ties of responsibility, because we want to be free from any kind of constraints. And virtue is a big constrictor. It forces us to do as Webster's defines for us, to act with potency and courage.

So what is the Biblical Virtue

This passage in Colossians makes the definition clear: "*compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*", then says they are put together with, forgiveness and love, and that they operate in the parameters of peace and wisdom. Because wisdom and peace promote virtue and love and forgiveness demonstrates this virtue we all need to have.

So the virtue is a fruit that comes from the tree of love that is fruited with wisdom, pruned with peace, watered with forgiveness producing the sweet fruits of "*compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*".

Virtue cannot come from any tree that does not have the exemplary aspects of love, peace and forgiveness. The Bible tells us to clothe ourselves with them. Not just for their design and style, nor their warmth and comfort that they do have. But to cover our naked sin nature that gets in the way of His call. And because of that sinful nature we have to be abiding in our Lord Jesus Christ who covers us with His clothes so we can be virtuous.

We see this in the presidency of Bill Clinton, whom the public gave the highest approval rating of any president, yet his behavior was the most despicable in U.S. history. People like to see a separation between performance and values. God calls us to merge the two as one, our behavior must be from the values He sets. If we did so dare practice virtue in our culture we would have a taste of heaven on earth, a place of comfort and security.

We need to see that anything that assaults our morality as a hostile enemy who is out to get us. If a movie or book or any act we do does not strengthen us it will pummel us. When we recognize the pummel as tearing us down or moving us in the wrong direction we gain virtue. When we do not recognize the pounding waves of acid corroding who we are to be, our virtue and vitality weakens and commences to dissolve. Our tree of faith and virtue will gain rot and slowly die.

God sees perfection as love, that since He loves us, we should respond in return. And that love is to seek Him, and when we seek Him we love Him, when we honor Him we seek Him. Virtue does not just happen. We do not wake up one day with it, nor do we even receive it when we become Christians. It becomes available, it is in our grasps to open, it is there for us to use, but it does not come naturally. We have to seek it out.

Thoughts on Virtue

- We acquire virtue by our faith, obedience in Christ and being persistent in Him, clothing ourselves in Him. *“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”* Is the mark of perfection and what His will is.
- Virtue is more paramount than what career we should pursue or what major to sign up for, who shall I date or marry, or what color socks should I put on. The perfection of knowing God’s will is to follow God’s character.

The reason we were created is to be in relationship with God, yet we messed it up, He then put it back, and we still try to slip out on Him. This pursuit of His character and virtue will clue us in to the big picture and purpose for our existence, “the meaning of life”. It will unite His will to ours as ours melts away and gives way to perfection, to what is better and exceedingly beneficial. When we put His character at the front of our decisions, even our expectations and desires we are doing as we should. This is seek ye first myself? No, the kingdom of God. So when we are faced with embarrassment because others will not give consideration to values we count it joy for His service. Because we are in Him and not alone to ourselves.

- Thus, the more we follow His character and produce virtue the more we are in His will.
- Suffering is Virtue
- Whatever we do it must be for His glory. Even when we are in a world that does not recognize it.

Because God does and He is our Lord and the ultimate One we are to please. Remember God does not want our sacrifices, the prophet Samuel told King Saul, but He does want obedience to His will. Hebrews tells us what honors our Lord:

“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.’” First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. (Heb. 10:5-10)

- We have to ask ourselves as a Christian what is our main reason and purpose? Are we looking for His favor and perfection? Or are we too busy chasing a plan that will not fulfill us or please Him? Which worker will please the father, and which worker are you striving to be? Why should we even bother to be a Christian if we are not set up to please Him? What good would we be, what example would we set to others?
- It is better to be a Christian who firmly engages in the behavior that pleases Him.

- The Christian who does as they please and try to seek His will, will be disappointed and frustrated, and will end up disillusioned and lost.

See John 6:35-40

- Virtue exists whether those around us acknowledge it or ridicule it.
- Our faith and life needs to feed upon our Lord.
- Our virtue comes from Him, as the will for us to seek and to be. All that we are must come from Him. Because only Christ can satisfy our deepest longings and give us purpose.

When we focus solely upon our own means and ways we are in fact rejecting God's will, desperately trying to find a substitute. But that substitute will not last or be real in the end. All that this behavior will accomplish is to further us away from His perfect and pleasing will.

"...but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me." (John 14:31)

To do the will of God is the prime goal of the Christian life. To seek His will is to do His will, and when we are obeying His precepts we are doing His will. When we do this in the midst of confusion and uncertainty we become crushed. Our will either surrenders and pours out sweet wine, or we fight and squeeze out bitterness and shame. We will either lead, follow or get out of the way. We will lead ourselves to pride and contempt, or we will give up bitter and disillusioned, or we will learn what life is all about. Following Christ.

When we are in search of needs and desires and go to our Lord for His advice we become frustrated because we tend, at least I do, to seek specifics. Sometimes God will give you what you seek, mostly He is in wait for our adoration. We look to specifics; He seeks us and our devotion that is demonstrated in virtue.

Our prayer life should reflect us seeing how to live more Christ like in character with humility, patience, wisdom and so forth. The more we are honest about our call and engage in its endeavor, the more of a blessing we are to Him and others around us. This must captivate our imaginations and desires so we would rather be 'a door keeper' in His house than to live anywhere else. That we would be horrified to gain all of the worlds riches and ignore His call. We would rather be a worm under a shoe, than an eagle soaring, if it is His will we be the worm and not the eagle. Because we would soar in vain triumph and exercise vanity rather than virtue. If God wants us to be the worm, than we are much better off to do so and be that worm for His glory. If we try to soar without Him, we fly to ourselves without meaning and purpose, and crash upon ourselves.

- Virtue is not something we do occasionally. Virtue is not meant for only one certain place such as church. It is not supposed to be put on hold when it inconveniences us or another such as at our work.

- Virtue is a lifestyle that follows us around wherever we go, and whoever we are with. It is character oozing out of us. Integrity is the trademark that produces honesty, truthfulness, faithfulness, authenticity, substance, and reliability, which translates into our moral fiber.
- Consistency must be our hallmark.
- When we surrender our will to God, we are in fact giving Him everything, all we are and all we have and all that we could be. We may give God our money, our time and our talents, but if we hold back who we are, we are giving Him nothing. God does not need our money or our time or our gifts and talents, what He wants is our obedience through virtue, our will surrendered.
- Our greatest treasure is who we are in Christ, not wealth or affluence, not ability or position, whether we are homeless and unemployed or president of the U.S., we are nothing without Him.

And when times of suffering and confusion come upon us we will thirst and wither away without His nourishment. We will learn nothing and become detestable in His sight. How sad and what a waste to go through a trial and come out without learning and growing, seizing His opportunity to be virtuous. We would have gone through all that pain and adversity for nothing, just meaningless emptiness. Can you imagine anything sadder?

- Do we give God what we have, or do we give Him all that we are?

Psalm 131 tells us:

“My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.”

This is God’s foremost will for our lives. It is not a question of what we do is the importance, it is who and how we are that is the perfect supreme quintessential aspect of knowing God’s will for our lives!

Let God remove your Pride!

Jesus is to be our center, the reason for our being! And if we keep placing Him first, then we become God's will!

Have you considered that pride is in the same category as the 'big' sins of homosexuality, adultery and the like? Perhaps you are shocked? Maybe you never thought through how pride impacts others, or it's impact on our sanctification, or how God feels about it? Well check our Romans 1: 26-32!

It is because pride is listed in Rom 1 with the other great sins, and in the Greek syntax, it is listed in an imperative, this means God is serious! In conjunction there are scores of other Scriptural references such as in Psalms and Proverbs that gives an extreme case for what God hates, and that is pride. In America we glance over this and do not consider it relevant. Check out these passages we rarely preach on! (Job 41:34; Psalm 10: 5; 18:27; 101:5; 131:1; 6:17; Prov. 16:18; 21:4; 30:13)!

The big idea is that pride sets us up as a god when there is only One God. God wants our obedience, love and trust, we cannot do that when we are too full of ourselves! I have struggled with this alot over the years, and God keeps humbling me! Has He humbled you? Or are you too big for God?

Are you grateful for what Christ has done or do you take it for granted (Luke 15:17-19)? To despise God is to refuse to acknowledge His sovereignty and work, as well as His generous gift of grace. Refusing to yield your life over to God's will, will cost you greatly in judgment and in life; as God's ways are better than ours! Do you base your comfort on what you do, your works? Works do not earn, they only prove.

Do you obey God and pursue righteousness? Salvation is a gift, not a reward (2 Cor. 5:10)! As driving a car is a privilege, not a right! Is your heart hard or soft? Do you hide in the comfort of your parent's faith, or in the activity of the church? External worship and faith does not guarantee what is inside! God searches our heart, what will He find in yours? God is more concerned with our obedience than our knowledge! The law comes before grace, for without the law and the righteousness of God we have nothing to be saved from. The bad news of judgment is shadowed by the good news of grace!

Does not the reformed church teach that we do not need to seek God's will, because no matter what, God will allow things to come to pass no matter what we do? For the most part this is what the Bible teaches; God is sovereign, and the understanding of His sovereignty is essential in our growth and trust in Him! However, we need to understand human responsibility. We are not robots with preprogrammed parameters. We do not have a specific set of instructions we follow no matter what, so our choices are irrelevant. We have free will and everything that comes to pass is preordained. This may blow your mind, because it is beyond our comprehension.

We have to trust God that His will is set, at the same time, we are to do the best we can in the choices we make. That is why we have the Word and the Holy Spirit. If there were no choices to make, then we do not need to do anything. We do not need to even get out of bed. But this of course is ridiculous. This thinking is called 'Hyper-Calvinism'.

It is a false doctrine that emphasizes divine sovereignty "to the exclusion" of human responsibility (Calvin taught more on our responsibility than any other subject!). To call it "hyper-Calvinism" is something of a misnomer. It is actually a rejection of historic Calvinism. Hyper-Calvinism entails a denial of what is taught in both Scripture and the landmark Calvinistic creeds. This is minimizing the moral and spiritual responsibility of sinners. It emphasizes irresistible grace to such an extent that there appears to be no real need to evangelize; that Christ may be offered only to the elect. It has 5 aspects associated with it: 1. Denies the call of the gospel "applies" to all who hear, OR 2. Denies that faith is the duty of every sinner, OR 3. Denies that the gospel makes any "offer" of Christ, salvation, or mercy to the non-elect, "denies that the offer of divine mercy is free and universal", OR 4. Denies that there is such a thing as "common grace," OR 5. Denies that God has any sort of love for the non-elect.

Unfortunately there are people in the church who teach such things, and I believe it is a comfort for them. Because if you really believe in this hyper-Calvinism, then you do not need to evangelize or do anything you are not comfortable with. It is a great excuse to be a club and not the church Christ called and is the head of!

Condensed from the book "Finding God's Will for your Life" by Richard J. Krejcir, Copyright 1997

We are called to, “just do it!”

If you want to be a cut above the crowd; then, the secret is to learn. Yes the determination to know about the Lord and to grow in His Word is an essential element in our Christian experience.

We need to put out the effort and do. Rom. 12:1-3 tells us *“to present ourselves as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God...”* just like a Marine finishing boot camp and placing himself for duty; so must we place ourselves in His service. We are to offer ourselves daily! Before our feet hit the ground when we get out of bed, our focus is to be in His will! Jesus is our supreme commander, so say “Yes sir, here I am, ready for service!”

True freedom is our strength!

You see, God is perfect and reliable. Proverbs 3:5-6 states, *“He will make our paths straight.”* So, pray for guidance and direction, and our LORD will supply the grace and the path. Spend the time and invest yourselves fully to Christ. There is no other viable option out there! Perhaps you have been struggling with your job, or school, or your future in general. Asking, maybe even yelling, out loud, “What is God’s will? What am I supposed to do? “Who shall I marry? What school should I attend? What musical instrument will I play? What club should I join.....??????

Most Christians, I believe, are sincerely searching, yet are confused. Some even give up and spend their lives being miserable. As a matter of fact, as a Youth Pastor, I get asked this question more than any other. But, there are so many Christians who feel defeated; thinking their life is too small for God to care, powerless to make any serious changes that would benefit them, simply because they do not know how to find God’s will.

To know the will of God, we must deny ourselves and align our life to obedience and focus on God’s perspective, and not our frail ways!

John 12:23-25”...the man who loves his life will lose it...”

I am convinced there is a way to simply find God’s will and that all it requires is our obedience! So, what this undertaking is all about is communicating years of research and experience, all boiled down to simple step by step scriptural principles. God’s will is not a guessing game or some cosmic lottery, or close your eyes and point (my personal favorite, next to asking my cat), to expound a phrase; “God does have a plan for your life.” Yet, with this slogan comes a very resounding objection: “If I give my life to Christ, I just become a puppet, and I give up my self direction”.

The first answer is NO! We are not puppets. Although theologians will debate what free will is or is not, I believe we do have choices and different paths to decide. The question is, what is the best path to give God the greatest glory? God assures that He will guide us and lead and take care of us, but it requires our will to make it work! Our will needs to bend to His, yet God will not force us, it is up to us. So, the second

answer is YES, we do give up ourselves, for this is the basic thrust of the Christian life. God will guide and provide for us; but, it is still up to us to respond.

We cannot take in God's blessings while we go through life doing whatever we please. We cannot rely on dumb chance when the creator of the universe has a better idea!

So, let's dive into God's Word and see His masterful plan unfold for our lives. His perfect plan assures us of His majesty and will bring us (Galatians 5), "Peace, joy, love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

Yes, there are harsh times, difficult trials; but I try my fullest to obey God's will daily. This is where my confidence comes from, because the results belong to the Lord. James 1:5-8 gives me the purpose and baseline to rely and relax because God is in charge, this is so reassuring. This lifts such a huge burden, which we don't need to deal with!

So, if you struggle with what the big plan is for your life, relax. By following these simple scriptures and using your noggin, you will do fine because God is in charge. All we do is **FIRST** trust and know the Lord with our desires. **SECOND**, is to focus our devotion and praise to the LORD. **THIRD**, avoid deceptions. **FOURTH**, use your mind. **FIFTH**, look at all the options. And finally, **SIXTH**, confirm your choice. All in less time than it takes to read your stereo instructions!

THOUGHTS ON JUST DOING IT

- Ask what areas are you weak in? Where do you struggle?
- Have you once flourished in an area and now have fallen away? You need to ask why, and do something about it!
- Do not bite off more than you can chew!
- It is a very dangerous thing to refuse to grow. It's not that God will smite you, no, God loves us too much. But we will not be of much use to Him, and unable to ride out life's problems affected by sin!
- Never confuse the effect with the cause! The call is to be a servant of obedience as the effect of what Christ has done!
- Do not debate with God!
- Do not spend too much time lamenting, "why me" or "why can't I.." But simply trust in Him.
- Are you living your life with the JOY of Christ?
- Do we pray only when things go wrong? If so, this will develop into a pattern, "our theme", and we will keep having things go wrong because God wants us to pray as a living, abiding, reality in Him, not just when things go wrong.
- We must live every moment in Him, as Christ lives in us.
- Our goal in "just doing" is not to make converts for a cause for that is the role of the Holy Spirit. Our task is to obey Him and be His disciple. Thus, we disciple others (Matthew 28).

- Our goal is not just to be useful for Him; it is to be in Him! People are blessed who allow God to work in them!
- God does not have us do easy tasks. They are hard, but we have His grace. Warning! Warning! Do not act as a divine providence in other people -- that is the strict role of the Holy Spirit.

We are called to Learn

No matter what is happening in our life God is working and leading us in the direction to learn and grow.

I love to talk to missionaries and hear their stories. It gives me a sense of perspective of how God works. I have heard some of the most heart wrenching stories and such great efforts to overcome great difficulties. Stories of a spouse being killed and the other taking over, such as with Elizabeth Elliott and her incredible story of how her husband was speared by South American Indians. Then in a return visit to them instead of seeking retribution and revenge, God used her to reach that tribe. One of the most incredible missionary stories I ever heard. I was on staff at a church where she worshipped and frequently taught. After she addressed my Sunday school class for young adults in the late 80's I had the opportunity to spend some time with her. She gave me some insights that have stayed with me for years, and will always be with me.

I have to confess at first I was put off by her. She was prim and proper, dressed elegantly yet conservatively and reminded me of the conceited rich people I knew through my time with Young Life Carmel, who rubbed me the wrong way with their condescending and better than thou attitude. But with Elizabeth Elliott this was not the case. She was a very Godly woman after God's heart. It was more of my immaturity and the way her generation was raised. This too taught me to be more sensitive and be a better listener.

I was struggling with dating. I since the time I started High school through college, graduate school and then seminary worked fulltime and went to school fulltime. Thus, I had little time to explore dating. So I found myself in my late 20's and realized I could count the dates I had been on, on one hand and have fingers left over. Yet, I who was a youth pastor and conference speaker, was too shy to ask girls out, so I was depressed over this. I was also struggling with the abuse I had from my step father growing up, and was wondering if all the pain and suffering and work I went through was worth it.

We are called to be an Offering!

Elizabeth Elliott takes me right to one of the most familiar verses in the Bible for me; Rom 8:28-29. She reminded me that everything that happens fit into His plan for us for good. She told me no matter what I went through, I needed to realize it has and it is happening anyway so we should take advantage of it. We are called to be shaped in His likeness, regardless of what we may perceive or experience. We may not see the joy through our grief, yet He is there loving us and caring for us. *"His love for us is unshakable"*, we have to learn that. Our faith will shake, but His love does not. We become distracted, He does not. All this I have heard before and even have taught it myself so many times, then Elizabeth Elliott told me something that has stayed with me and shuttered me from my despair to His repair: *"The spear that took my husband shook me from my faith temporally but not from His love."* Then she told me how it

prepared her for ministry, how she grew and how He has used her and brought her another husband, and when he died God brought her another, He has always provided. Then I realized how petty I was being, that everything happened in my life a reason. For us to learn and grow, suffering will happen all for His purpose and glory.

So we are in this life so temporarily to learn and grow, to prepare us for eternity. Unfortunately we keep our eyes on ourselves and not on Him, so we miss so much in life. Now I was determined to not let this temporary life pass me by, or dwell on my suffering, but allow it to be used for reaching others and for me reaching Him.

Thoughts on Learning

- If God never used the rod against us, it would mean He hates us. Just as good punishment from a loving parent is never abuse. It corrects us to the right behavior, and with God the right path. His love is guiding us, our faith waivers and struts off the right path that perhaps only a rod will bring us back.
- I believe it was James Dobson who said once that if you overcorrect a child in the early formative years they will either rebel or withdraw from ever achieving more in life. For example if we never let a child touch things they will not be willing to explore their world. If we never let a small child reach for a book, even if they cannot read, then they may grow up hating books. But I'm not speaking of over correction because God does not over correct us. We may think He does because our emotions and expectations get in the way.
- How do mature people get that way? By fear of the Lord. The respect and wonderment and awe. The fact that we go through trials is the proof that He does indeed love us!
- I live because He died! Out of death comes renewal and life, because God transfers and transforms His death for our lives so that we can live in a new life. So that we can be a blessing to others as He has been for us. This is what we are to learn!

Proverbs 15:32 "He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding."

We honor Him through humility. This is the mark of a wise and mature person. When He disciplines us He is training us. Because of His sovereignty, He has us in His hands. He cannot run us if He cannot run the Universe, if he cannot run a single molecule, how can He be in control? So everything that happens, happens for a reason that will end up being good. Just as in Joseph's life, as with mine, as with yours.

Jealousy did not triumph over Joseph, nor did the cistern, or the slavery, or the betrayal, or the prison, or the false accusations, or the long wait from being forgotten. Joseph was lifted from the dungeon to the kingship of the most powerful country at the time. It happened in His time not Joseph's!

Even if we are not risen up from our dungeon, God still has us in His control. We may not see His pattern or plan, but it is there.

- Our hurt and pain, our rejection and loneliness may cloud us for a time, but we must not let it lose our focus.
- God knows our suffering, and has a plan to work it out, if not now, then in the life to come.

READ Psalm 146

- Even in our times of waiting and confusion we are to praise Him. We are not praising because of our suffering, but that He is still in control. We don't have to thank God for our accident, but what we can learn and who He is through it.
- Remember sin corrupts it's way through everything and into our lives as well. So when the sin encroaches upon us and takes us for a ride, He will work it out. And the beneficiary is us, when we have our confidence in Him.
- Even in our brokenness and contrite heart He is there

Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (Isaiah 58: 9-11)

When we offer all that we are to our Lord He will honor it. Jesus took the boy's lunch and used it to feed 5000, just think what He can do for you. Even all that we have is our brokenness it may be the best honor we can ever lay to Him.

- He will transform our pain into glory.

"After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: `I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'" (Acts 13:22)

- Moses asked: *"If you are pleased with me, **teach me** your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."* (Ex. 33:13)
- Job asked: *"**Teach me**, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong."* (Job 6:24)
- David asked: *"**Show me** your ways, O LORD, **teach me** your paths; **guide me** in your truth and **teach me**, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."* (Psalm 25:4-5)

Just look at all the passages where God is directing us upward to learn and not inward to be filled with contempt! (Ex 33:13; Job 6:24; Job 34:32; Psalm 25:4-5; Psalm 27:11; Psalm 51:6; Psalm 86:11; Psalm 119:12; 26; 33; 64; 66; 68; 108; 24; 135; 171; Psalm 143:10) And there are many more!

Consider it the ultimate classroom to grow in our faith and practice for His glory. Sometimes we make wrong decisions that land us in hardship. Sometimes someone did something to us, a spouse, a business partner, or a political decision that got us fired, or lost a business, or lost a relationship. It could have been the reckless driver in a big hurry to the bar after work who runs a light and you end up crippled. Sometimes it is nothing we did to deserve our desert wondering, such as happened to Job in the Old Testament.

When such things happen, there are no words of comfort. The last thing someone wants to hear is we are there to learn. It is always the last thing I want to hear. "So what did you learn from that Richard", a pastor asked me when I lost my job, my fiancé ran off, I became seriously ill, and my car broke down all in the same week. I did not want to hear such words, but I needed to hear them, because without the meaning, the reason it happened; then it would be futile and meaningless. All that we have gone through would be just a cosmic joke. So the question must be sought, and virtue must be pursued. If not there would be no dignity in it, no plan, no purpose, and no God working in us.

When we are encouragers to others it means we have the strength for others and we have a surplus for ourselves.

Step I Learning to Surrender your will to God's

(This curriculum works quite simply, by Examining the Word and being in prayer! And then discuss with others in a small group or with a mentor.)

The key is to PRAY then read and examine the passages and then pray again!

- **Obedience is our moment of truth!**
- **Surrendering Is not giving up!**

We must have the firm desire to surrender ourselves to the will of the Father! However this surrendering we do is not giving up our distinction and personality. It does not make us eunuchs and robots who serve a master out of obligation and employment or out of a predetermined program. It is the refusal to surrender our will that leads us astray and away from His perfect will that leads to unhappiness and strife.

Surrendering your will to God's is the importance of doing the will of God:

1. JOHN 5:17; COLOSSIANS 1:9-10: God wants us to follow His plan, because He has a better idea!
2. JEREMIAH 29:11; JOHN 5:17-21; ROMANS 8:28-29 Love is what God's will is all about--His love for us!
3. MATTHEW 6:31-34; ROMANS 12:1-3; God's plans are better than ours could ever be! This is wonderful! This is what God wants!!!
4. JOHN 17:3; ISAIAH 55:9 God's invitation is His revelation for us to join His plan!
5. MATTHEW 4:18-22; 5:43-48; 6:5-8; 20:20-28; What kinds of adjustments can you find in these Scriptures?

Obedience will require us to adjust!

6. ACTS 9:1-25 Obedience will cost us, but there is no better way!!!
7. MATTHEW 12:50 This is the moment of truth!
8. PSALM 119:33-35 When God leads with a directive, we are to obey!

God's Blessings are beyond our Imagination

§ When we allow Him to work, then His plans become our plans!!

§ We come to know more of our Lord through experience!

§ He will accomplish His will when we obey!!

§ If we truly love our Lord, then we will obey out of our love for what He did for us, out of gratitude!!

§ We must allow ourselves to experience Christ working!

9. JAMES 2:20 Faith without a response is meaningless!

To know the will of God, we must DENY ourselves and focus our attention on our LORD; not on our plans or ideas: But wait on what God shows us!!

10. LUKE 6:46-49; JOHN 7:16-17 God blesses those who are obedient!

11. JONAH; EXODUS 2:11-15; God does give second chances, yet, disobedience will cost us a lot!

12. GENESIS 12:1-20 Abraham started a great walk with God, then he blew it!

13. 2 SAMUEL 11 David blew it too!

14. ACTS 9:1-2 Paul began his career persecuting Christians!

We cannot know the way of our Lord without adjustment and paying a price, yet the price is insignificant compared to the worth we will gain than we can ever imagine!

§ God does not give up on us!

§ God often gives us a second chance!

§ God wants to develop us as a person of Character and integrity!

§ When God sees our faithfulness and obedience, He will grant us more responsibility as well as blessings—Because our TRUST has grown!

The will of God has more to do with controlling our hearts, than what we do in our planning and ideas!!! see I Peter 5:6-11

QUALIFICATIONS OF KNOWING GOD'S WILL:

- a. You must have a growing relationship with Christ!
- b. You must surrender your will to His!
- c. You must be willing to adapt and be flexible!

d. You must have a growing personal walk, filled with Scripture Study, Prayer, and Devotions!

e. You must be willing to Obey God!

When people are concerned with knowing God's will they are usually facing a crisis or decision in their lives. This is in two primary areas, first being our concern with future events that is what does God want me to do with my life in regards to education, job, who will I marry or what pet should I buy. The second primary crisis point is dealing with the past, which is what decisions have I made that I now have consequences to bear or are causing problems in my life.

These two crises fall short on what Scripture teaches us about God's will. We need to focus our thoughts upon today not what happened in the past and not be overly focused on the future but how do we please God in our life here and now.

A Question: What would your life be like if you completely trusted God? Luke 4:16-19; John 14:1-14

Step II Learning to Develop a Continuous Expression of Praise

Knowing what God is about to do is more important than us telling God what we want to do for Him!

A love relationship with God is more important than anything we do in our life!

1. DEUTERONOMY 19-20; JOHN 3:16; 14:21: Our Christian life is dependent on our love relationship with Christ!

Most of us make our decisions in the midst of struggle and conflict!

2. 1 JOHN 3:16; 4:10-19; ROMANS 8:35-39: God created us for relationships, especially with Him!
3. PHILIPPIANS 3:4-14: Being loved by God is the greatest, allowing Him to shape us is the ultimate!
 - Make the right priorities for your life by loving Him!
 - Make regular quiet times with God!
 - Make praise a lifestyle!

When our relationship with Christ is what it should be-THEN we will be in HIS WILL!!! Then we will be able to make good decisions. Then we will understand the road bumps of life, how to learn and grow from them. To be a better servant by being a better child of His.

Will you make Christ the main priority in your life, over everything & anything else!??

Q: How can praising God effect your emotions, your mind, and your spirit?

Q: What about THANKSGIVING?

Not the holiday but having a lifestyle of being thankful; gratitude. When I was in 3rd world countries such as México I noticed extreme poverty that we in this county could not imagine. Yet, I saw joy in a mother's eyes, a father happy and proud and children playing with sticks and rocks. I did not see fancy clothes or designer shoes. None of the latest computer games, or a top career. I saw what was important in life. Being in a loving relationship, being in Christ. Even in the midst of pain and waiting. Can we say that in our comfortable homes? Even if we have a decent pair of shoes we are better off than most people in the world! So are you thankful?

Q: How can you open the hailing frequency between you and God?

4. JEREMIAH 31:3; HOSEA 11:4 The love of God is focused to the eternal, to firmly anchor us in him forever!

Q: Can you honestly say with all of your being that God loves you? Has it reached your existential core, that is the center of who you are?

Have no doubt God will lead you and feed you!

“No one can come to me (Jesus) unless the father who sent me draws him” John 6:44

5. ROMANS 3:10-12; JOHN 6:44-65 You cannot know God’s will unless He lets you know, and He won’t let you know until you follow: It is God who takes the initiative!

“It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose” (Philp. 2:13)

6. MARK 11:24; MATTHEW 7:7-8; Only God has the right to tell you what to do!

To know the will of God more intimately, He will reveal it, as we grow close in our experience with Him!

7. EPHESIANS 5:17; JOHN 7:17, Do not underestimate God’s love for you! The main reason Christians do not commit themselves totally to Christ is they fail to see this!

A lot of people think if they surrender to God’s plan, He will send them to Outer Mongolia! This is totally untrue. He will not send you where you naturally do not desire to go or are not gifted for!!!

8. PSALM 37:4, The Spirit will direct you by study and meditation of Scripture!

9. PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14, Do not hesitate in responding to God’s direction, because of doubt or fear of making a mistake!

10. EPHESIANS 1:10-11; 3:11, God has a plan for us made before the ages! We have an eternal purpose!

“IT” never works!!! Only “HE” works!!!!

11. ACTS 8:26-29; PSALM 32:8, God does communicate to us explicitly!

12. ISAIAH 58:11; PSALM 25, We need to have the assurance!

We must willing to be a servant of Christ, to let Him mold and shape us to His Glory and purpose, and remain in this relationship!

The three types of God’s will:

1. **REVEALED WILL:** God's laws concerning lifestyle and righteous living for all Christians (it is not God's will to ever leave your spouse or start a cult...)
2. **DETERMINED WILL:** That cannot be thwarted or stopped by anything (predestination, it will happen!!!)
3. **SPECIFIC WILL:** God's special plan for each believer (whom we marry, career, and education, etc.)

John 14:21 God wants our relationship real and personal, and what flows out of it will be purposeful, active and practical!!!

Practical ways from Scripture to express PRAISE in your walk with CHRIST:

PSALM 25; 50:6; 66:3, 77:13; 111:3; 121:2; 150; ISAIAH 3:33; ACTS 10:34;
1 CORINTHIANS 1:25; 14:33; HEBREWS 6:18; 13:15; JAMES 1:13; 1 JOHN 1:5:

- A. Be a person who expresses gratitude in all you do regardless of your circumstances: We cannot always control what happens to us, but we can always control our attitude!!!
- B. Do not take for granted your relationship with Christ, always look for the blessings He has given you!!
- C. Praise God even in your difficult issues, even at the cost of your dignity and self worth!
- D. Always give your best in all you do, at work, at school, in your family, etc.!
- E. Know that true praise will cost us, so be willing to pay joyfully; this is what sacrifice is all about!
- F. Be willing to share with others, publicly or privately what you learn in your walk with Christ!
- G. Develop a habit of being a warm person who exerts an attitude of joy and praise!
- H. Focus on giving God the credit, and do not focus on yourselves!

Make sure you communicate to God you never want to be out of His will with confidence!!!

The will of God for the non-Christian is for them to come to a saving knowledge of Christ!

We need to know the attributes of who God is. Knowing who God is, will enable and help us to focus on our trust in and relationship with Christ! Knowing who God is will allow us to praise Him more effectively!!

God is All Powerful-Omnipotent! JOB 42:2; JEREMIAH 32:17; MATTHEW 19:26

God is everywhere-Omnipresent! JEREMIAH 23:24; PSALM 139

God is All Knowing-Omniscience! PSALM 139; HEBREWS 4:13

God is Eternal! PSALM 90:2

God is Spirit! JOHN 4:24

God is Sovereign! 2 SAMUEL 7:22; ISAIAH 40:25

God is Holy! ISAIAH 6:3; 1 PETER 1:15-16

God is RIGHTEOUS! PSALM 89:14; 145:17; 2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-7

God is FAITHFUL! 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9; 1 THESSALONIANS 5:24

God is LOVE! 1 JOHN 4:8

13. Meditate on these Scriptures to prepare yourself for the future: Romans 1:10; 15:32; I Corinthians 1:1; II Corinthians 1:1.

The mark of a spiritual person is seeking to know the will of God which God reveals to us by His 'perceptive' will. It is up to us to meditate and focus our heart, mind and soul on who God is by his attributes, by our praise to Him, and by the leading of His Holy Spirit, and out of this must come our obedience and righteousness. We are called to live our lives from the leading of the mouth of God. What God reveals to us is meant for us to act upon.

14. Meditate on these Scriptures regarding your obedience in the here and now: I Corinthians 8:5; Colossians 4:12; Ephesians 6:6; Hebrews 10:36; I Peter 4:2; I John 2:17

Obedience requires dependence, so God can work in us!!!

15. Scripture contains specific promises of God's guidance for us to make into action. PSALM 32:8

16. Scripture contains the assurance that if I repent and obey, God will act. PSALM 25; ISAIAH 58:1; PROVERBS 3:6

17. We can be filled with the knowledge of His will and understanding. COLOSSIANS 1:9; 4:12; JAMES 1:5

Long periods of preparation are NOT a waste of time in God's plan!!!

18. God's guidance is reality and is a promise. PSALM 119; PSALM 23:3

Do not forget the more knowledge you have, the more responsibility you have to act upon that knowledge

19. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:5-6 Beware of self-sufficiency!

20. JOHN 14:12; 20:21 What are God's requirements?

21. GALATIANS 1:13-18 Paul spent 3 years in preparation and discipleship, before he ventured out!

Q: How much time do you put into preparation?

God will guide us and show us His way; our responsibility is to walk in it. He guides and assures us but without us bending our will and taking a part in it, it will not unfold fully in our lives.

22. God calls us not to be foolish with our decisions. EPHESIANS 5:17

You know the statement, "Wherever you go, there you are." Well, Jesus calls us to be His followers first and He is calling you to follow for opportunity, for love, for acceptance, for caring, for encouragement, and even suffering.

23. We must ask ourselves, "Are we willing?" JOHN 17

Know that God takes the initiative:

- We need to do things God's way.
- God will accomplish more in our lives in one month by following His will than in ten years being *out* of His will.
- We need to understand that we are God's servants and we are to adjust our lives to please Him (Phillipians 2:13)

24. HEBREWS 11:23-29 What was the secret of Moses' success?

25. JEREMIAH 29:13 What are we to focus on?

26. HEBREWS 11:6; MATTHEW 18:3 Our faith is a key component to knowing God's will!!!

27. ISAIAH 55:7; MICAH 6:8 Righteousness is what impresses God!!

Do not neglect the fact that we are beings of relationships. God first calls us to a relationship with Him, then we are called to be in a relationship with each other, and third, we are called to be in a relationship to those around us. Since we are beings of relationships, we must have support from one another, seeking love and encouragement is essential in our walk with God's will. We also need a support team around us. People willing to hold us accountable. JOHN 31:34-35

Jesus sought the will of God; this was His driving purpose and concentration throughout His life. John 5:30 and Luke 9:51.

Step III Beware of deceptions and misleading choices

We need to focus on the source; especially those of us who are not experienced in letting God lead us and are easily turned off the path from what seems to be common sense and good opportunities. But these in fact are sometimes tricks of Satan to mislead us and confuse us. Sometimes we misinterpret our own will as being what God's will is. What we think might be the leading of the Holy Spirit may not be from Him at all but just our own selfish inclinations. Our focus needs to be on what God has revealed to us through His Scriptures; not our own personal desires regardless how good they may seem to be!

We tend to be guided by what we know and by what we have experienced, but to be guided by what we have not experienced takes a leap of faith. So, how can this happen for us to be guided by the facts of God's direction? Well this is where the labor pains are -- in our maturity and growth! Too few of us actually surrender to the facts and truth, only to the seemingly familiar deceptions and voices of unreason as our guide!

We need to focus on the Lordship of Christ, and not the strife and decisions we face!!!

Let us look at the wonderful facts the Lord has given us:

1. Read EPHESIANS 2:1-3 several times and answer these questions:
 - a) In Galatians 5:19-21, what are the sources for our desires?
 - b) In I John 2:15-17 How does the world influence our decision-making?
 - c) In EPHESIANS 6:12, who is our struggle against?
 - d) Read these following Scriptures and state what would be the result of following the source they direct: We have three sources to choose from.
 - e) What are these sources and what would be the result of following them?
Romans 8:5-8; Galatians 6:8; I Corinthians 3:1-3; James 4:4; II Corinthians 11:3; and I Peter 5:8.
 - f) Read these following passages and determine how you can stand against the sources of confusion, ROMANS 8:9; 12:2; 1 PETER 2:11; JAMES 4:7-8.

We need to seek God's reliable counsel, not unreliable hunches.

We need to base our choices on Scripture and not on our experience

1. **God draws us**
2. **God reveals truth!**

3. **God convicts us of sin!**
4. **God causes us to seek Him!**
5. **God convicts us of righteousness!**

- Know the LORD!
- Love the LORD!
- Believe the LORD!
- Obey the LORD!
- Trust the LORD!

PRAY and see what GOD does next in your life!!!

All we can do from Scripture is to discern possibilities and see what is the best choice to be made; the Bible may not give you specific direction!!

2. Let us take a hard look at our LORD'S response to temptation, as an example on how we can follow: MATTHEW 4:1-11

Q: What temptations did Jesus face?

Q: How did Satan tempt?

Q: How did Jesus resist?

Remember that ASTROLOGY, OUIJA BOARDS, TAROT CARDS, PALM READING, MEDIUMS, FORTUNE TELLING, SEEKERS, SHAMANS, SORCERY, WITCHCRAFT, & SIGNS...ARE OF SATAN!!

Q: What are the results of following these practices?

3. DEUTERONOMY 18:10-14; ACTS 13: 6-12; 19:18-20: God warns us very sternly of the dangers of dabbling in the occult!!!

4. We must NOT rely on our emotions and feelings, because they deceive our thinking. MATTHEW 16:21-23; LUKE22: 39-44.

Obedience is the fuel that puts God's will into action!

Our feelings must follow the truth of who we are in Christ! The fact of what Christ did on the cross to pay a debt we could never pay. And out of this comes a response of surrender and obedience and praise.

Faith in God is the foundation of our house of Christianity. Without this foundation our house will fall. The fact of what Christ did and who He is, are the walls that hold. Our obedience is the roof that keeps us safe on God's path by protecting us from the elements of deception. Our feelings are merely the paint that makes us shine, but alone does not stand up!

We must keep our emotions in check, not to be Vulcans without being robust about life, but not let them rule our day or allow them to be our guide! Would you want a house just of paint, it will not function or look good!

Feelings are one of the many misleading avenues of deception; all leading us away from the best plan for us -- the truth! As we use a recipe to make a soufflé, so we need a recipe to engage in our decision making. A recipe based on truth and not on tantalizing distractions. We need to take careful consideration and a whole lot of prayer as key ingredients in our recipes.

5. 1 KINGS 3:5-28 Solomon asks for wisdom, when he could have had anything He wanted YET...

God has given us a great gift -- our MIND, an ability to think and reason. So if you are confused, then pray for discernment, and it will be yours!!!

6. ECCLESIASTES 1:13-18 What has been your guide and teacher?

7. ACTS 16: 6-10 Beware of opportunities that are not open to us, or the way is blocked!

Beware of opposition from Satan! Any good decision may be met with resistance, sometimes little, sometimes big. We must be discerning to what is a closed door and what are misleading thoughts and actions by the Evil one.

8. ACTS 16: 23-34 What are the open doors, even in the midst of opposition?

Too many of us will wait in some kind of holding pattern for our lives, and simply do nothing. Just sitting around waiting for our "ship" to come in. If you are waiting for a burning bush, well don't wait too long, unless you are Moses. God seldom communicates to us in dramatic ways, He wants us obedient and listening!

9. ACTS 6:1-7; 8:26-38 How can you make yourself aware of when the Lord leads?

THINGS TO PONDER

- Do you use any occult practices?
- How can you apply sound judgments?
- How do you double-check your decisions?
- Do the principles of common sense rule your way?
- God is glorified when we obey Him!

- God is ready to teach, are you ready to learn?

Do not allow yourself to be taken in by distortions. Do not just look to being flashy or delusions of grandeur, but allow the subtle leading of our Lord, and for Him to place you where you are best suited.

9. EPHESIANS 4:19-24; 1 PETER 4:15 The best way to honor the Holy Spirit is to allow Him to guide you!

It's not about you; it's about God. It's not what we do that makes us a Christian, It's what Jesus has done for us!!!

Do not allow Satan or anything to twist your way from God's!

W.W.J.D. Is about being the kind of person Jesus was!

11. PSALM 34:14; 37:27 Simple and straightforward! FLEE from EVIL!!!
13. ROMANS 8:14 Being led by the spirit is not about inward voices but it is about removing the sin from our lives!
14. DEUTERONOMY 32:29 God has given us wisdom. So, use it! Not thinking ahead and planning will lead you down the wrong road.
15. PROVERBS 12:15 Be willing to listen to advice of others.

Be a person who thinks things through. Be a person who is realistic with yourself. All too often, we are good at suspecting and discerning others but are hesitant to turn that discernment and wisdom inward. Our feelings and egos and self indulgence eclipses God's best for us. This is especially true when it comes to our sexuality and how quickly we throw God's plans out the window for a cheap skirt or good looking guy.

Good critical thinking and relying on what God has said to us will enable us to stay out of a lot of trouble and needless suffering and injury not only to ourselves but also to those around us. Sin has a way of infecting everything as it did in the fall with the soil, as it does with people around us. Our decisions not only affect ourselves; it affects our loved ones and those around us. Instead of asking how we feel about something, let's ask have we prayed about something.

"Search me oh God and know my heart! Try me and know my anxious thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way about me, and lead me in Your path forever!"
PSALM 139:23-24.

Be heavily aware of the dangers of pride and egotism. There is nothing that gets more in the way of God working in us than our own selfish desires. How foolish are we to look upon ourselves with our limited intellect and experience, when we can draw

upon the Creator and King of the Universe and His unlimited intellect, overwhelming love, His irresistible grace, and His perfect plan.

16. I THESSALONIANS 5:21 Be willing to test your decisions and options!

Be willing to wait upon the Lord. A constant theme in the Psalms is that God sometimes keeps us waiting, so do not be in a hurry – relax and enjoy the ride of life. Do not be in a hurry to get anywhere; all it does is causes stress and strife.

In God's will and leading, He will not contradict His law; that is, He will not call you to leave your spouse or marry a non-believer.

17. JOEL 2:25-26 Do not be afraid to fail. God will restore you. That is what grace is all about. All He wants is our obedience, not our occupation or personal plan!

18. GALATIANS 2:11-14 Peter, the rock, which the church is built upon, had to be corrected from his path by the Lord. So, be willing to allow God to correct you!

5 Misconceptions on God's Will:

1. God does not care about me!
2. I'm too small and insignificant for God to care!
3. It is too difficult to know God's will!
4. If I follow God's will, I will be sent to some strange mission field!
5. Knowing God's will is only important if you are going into the ministry!

The God who initiates our relationship to Him and gives us His work will also give us Himself with a guarantee to complete the work.

- We must allow Christ all the time He needs to shape us for His glory and for His purpose.
- God calls us for relationships primarily, not tasks.
- Let the Lord work in you in His timing.
- Let the details come in His timing.
- God will not give us an assignment that we are unable or incapable of doing.
- God will use our insignificance and frailties for His far-reaching accomplishments.
- God can and will do anything He wants with us; all it requires is our belief, faith and obedience.
- All we have to be is faithful for a small part to allow God to work His big part.

Remember that you can do all things through Christ whom strengthens you. Not by foolish and blind ways!!!

Phil 2:5-8 states Jesus came as God's servant, to accomplish His will to redeem us from our fallen selves!

- ***To be a servant, we are to be as moldable as clay in His hands!***
- ***We can do nothing apart from God!***
- ***With Christ working in us, we can do anything!***

Step IV Using the Mind that God gave us

We need to focus our thoughts on who God is!!, Please see section on God's attributes. God has given us a wonderful gift—our mind!!! We have the ability to process information and to discern our situation. Yet, this is a difficult task. We tend to like the easy way out which does not involve too much thought. This is a result of our fast paced and fast food society, where we want the burger NOW!!! And we want our information now too.

Knowing the path God has for us is one of the most rewarding tasks we can have. What are we going to do, where are we going to go, and how will we do it. This is a key element of our Christian experience, to be our best for God's glory. So we need to use our noggin to determine God's plan, along with these other steps for a six-fold attack plan!

Here are some practical insights into discerning God's will:

First, we need to be cultivating our times with God by quiet times, Bible reading, and most important – prayer. This builds our relationship with Him and cultivates trust. Out of this, comes a longing and desire to know God's interests and plan for us to give Him glory.

Second, avoid sin at all costs. Do not let anything separate you from the love of God. Confess your sins as they happen and remember repentance means not only turning from the sin but also turning and not doing it again.

Third, we need to be focused on God's word. Psalm 119:105 tells us God's word is a light unto our path. God's will or God's path is paved by His word and our understanding and obedience of that word. It is our responsibility to make God's word a primary focus of our life and not an afterthought or I'll do it when I have time to do it, but number one on our to do list.

Fourth, being faithful. Luke 19:17 states the faithful servant was rewarded with greater responsibility. We may not always know in advance what God's full plan for us is. And, looking back in my own life, if I knew what was ahead I may not have followed it because of it's difficulty. So, God may not reveal to you His full plan in advance because we may not be able to handle it emotionally or even intellectually. Would you tell a kindergartner his college schedule? It would make no sense to him, because he is not ready for it. Being faithful means God will reward us. We are simply to follow our Lord even when it seems unimportant.

Fifth, do not compare yourself to other people. Too often preachers compare themselves to the ones they hear on the radio or TV, and become discouraged because they may not have the number of the followers or the elegance of speech. But God does not care of the number of people or how good you can pronounce a \$10 theological word. He only cares of your love and obedience to Him. God will work His

unique plan, His personalized plan, His custom plan for you. And that plan may not be shared with anyone else because each of us is unique.

Sixth, always seek the advice of others, people who are experienced and able to give you solid mature advice for your decision making. God sometimes uses other people's insight to better our own. One thing I have learned over the years is God will bring us through experiences and even sufferings that are not meant as a personal attack but enable and equip us to help others around us for His glory.

Seventh, last but not least, is asking God for wisdom and discernment.

James 1:5-6 states, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him. But, when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like the wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."*

When you do not have a clue with what to do with your life, or are considering a job change, seek the counsel of the Great Counselor, Our Lord, for He will always respond. But remember the career choices you make should be based on lots of prayer and considering your natural talents and spiritual gifts. If you do not know them, then you need to spend the time to find them. When we skip our gifts and just go with the flow you will become frustrated and dissatisfied in your work, when God does have a better plan for you! Remember that career and education are for us to grow and learn too. But life is about relationships first: God and then those around you. This is not skipping school for the party life, nor is it being so devoted to a career you forget God and family. You must find a healthy balance and consider all you learn here and what God's will really is!

One last and important thought is to include your family in your decision process. If you are a high school student seeking college, you should involve your parents. If you are married and have a family and looking to move out of the area, you need to consult with your family because your family's needs are your needs and their priorities are your priorities. Their welfare is a greater priority than your career in God's eyes!

II Timothy 1:7 is the theme of this section, *"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and self discipline."* Self-discipline, using our noggin, this is a key principle on setting our life on the right course.

1. ROMANS 6:1-2 God gives us grace and forgiveness. So if you totally understood what mercy is about, how can this effect your decision-making?
2. PSALM 119:105 How can you build your path more effectively?
3. I CORINTHIANS 2:14-16 Having the mind of Christ means that we think like Christ!

Q: How do you contribute to Christ's mission?

Q: What is the greatest thing I can do?

In my schedule?

In my activities?

In my work?

In my school?

God's grace provides us with the undeserved opportunity for total forgiveness!!! So pray and meditate on this, don't take God's grace for granted—be thankful and respond to life with a sense of gratitude and not bitterness!!!

The scarecrow asked for a brain, what do you ask for?

4. ROMANS 1:17; 14-23 Faith is the key component of our Christian experience. What is the central core of your faith?
5. HEBREWS 11:6 How can you please God?
6. I JOHN 1:9 There must be no un-confessed sin that you are aware of in your life.
7. EPHESIANS 5:18 What fills and controls your life?

Q: When was a time you acted on your own impulses regardless of what others told you for a decision?

Q: When was a time you acted on your own impulse without checking in with God?

Remember for God's will to work in your life, you must be committed to doing God's will. You must realize that God will use you and work through you, and you must be willing and able to allow it to happen. Obedience is our thrust. Our vehicle is our faith and its contents are our accomplishments.

To be a special agent of doing God's will, we must focus on His doing and not upon our doing and then He will lead us. God's perspective is different than ours. God sees our obedience and faith as the most important aspects of our life, yet we tend to think our career is the most important thing. It is amazing how far the chasm is between these two priorities. God thinks of wisdom as riches where we think in money. God thinks about purity and righteousness, we think upon our lust and what we like to do.

8. HEBREWS 11 Read this chapter and discover what did it take to accomplish something great.

Q: What can you do to accomplish something great?

9. PHILIPPIANS 2:13 We must realize it is God who works through us only if we are committed.

Q: What desires, passions and ideas do you have, and how do they mesh with what God's are?

If we allow, God will reveal to us what He is about to do! And this revelation will be our invitation to join: For He is able!

10. DANIEL 10:12 What did Daniel do to accomplish God's will?

Q: What changes can you make to your life to be more effective in serving God?

The good Lord gave us a brain, so why is it so many of us do not use it!

Q: How can you be a more effective witness?

A good opportunity is like a cherry! But beware of the pit! We must go beyond the appearances of what sounds good, we need to check out the facts—ask questions!!!

Q: What part does God want me to play?

Are you thinking of Changing Directions in your life?

Abraham had to make major changes to his plans to accomplish God's will, and so must we: Because God's plans are far better than ours! Gen 12-15; Ex 2:23-25; Ex 24:12-18 Moses had to obey God to join in all the action and fun!

"Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long" (Psalm 25:5 NIV).

Here is one big question that you need to ask yourself concerning if God is leading you for a change.

Is it sensible? Does the plan you have make sense, have you carefully thought it through, weighed all of the options, sought Godly counsel and emerged yourself in prayer? This step IV is about thinking, because God expects us to think. His ways and thoughts transcend human reasoning; yet He gives us a mind to understand what we need to know. God will not evade your mind; He operates through it. We are to pray, but that is not all we do. We are to seek wise counsel, but that is not all we do.

"Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature" (1 Corinthians 14:20).

We have been informed by Scripture not to place our mind in neutral. We are to use it, because when we just rely on our emotions we will be lead away from what is

good and right into chaos and confusion. Taking a careful look and thinking clearly will enable you to follow the right path, especially when it is combined with prayer and counsel! So think and carry out what you know is true, as revealed by the Word. See Philippians 4:8, 9!

Other things to consider:

- If the door won't open then wait or find something else, it probably is not the right timing.
- Does another practical prospect exist? Will it work out to the best? If a door is closed that does not mean you need to break it down. It is probably closed for a reason, look at other options.
- If you still feel led, then find out what you need, and have to learn and grow to be able to proceed.
- If you have a hopeless situation then you have to learn to let it go. Do not dwell on it, learn from it and go on. Consider great Christians such as Joni Erickson Tada, who was paralyzed in an accident, she did not crawl under a rock, but allowed God to use it for His glory. Think of obstacles and setbacks as opportunities to grow and be better.
- If the right opportunity exists, and all the other aspects agree, such as wise counsel then go for it. Sometimes God will open a prospect, or a wonderful opportunity, and if we take too long to figure it out, He may let it go away. Just read the history narratives in the Bible (Judges – Chronicles). They are full of lost opportunities, wasted actions and poor decisions. Opportunities go lost when we do not take advantage of them.
- Ask yourself what do you have to lose, what do you have to gain. How will it affect those around you. When I'm in a rest home in my 90's will it be important?
- Do not make the mistake of acting impulsively with only your emotions! When you seek counsel remember how Solomon's son Rehoboam acted, he ignored the wise advice of his fathers advisors and listened to his friends and lost 10/12ths of the kingdom! So do you have wise advice, is it in agreement with the Word and your decision if not then you may have a big problem. Be careful not to only seek your friend and those who will agree with you. Give your mentors permission to ask you the hard questions. And do not be afraid of "no" answers. If it is not God's will, you do not want anything to do with it! If you do you will live in utter misery, remember God knows best.
- Do not be afraid of the answer. I had a friend once who refused to hear missionary's, because he did not want to be convicted to go somewhere he would be miserable. But God over time convicted him anyway. And he was happy as a clam in a 3rd world country! Never think that being in the will of God

must be an unlikable undertaking. The joy of the Lord is our strength, and our greatest joy is in serving Him.

- At the same time just because everything is going great do not think you are in God's will. I had another friend who was a top DJ in Los Angeles and was ranked 3rd in the country. He left that incredible job to go to seminary and he became a psychologist and helps many people. At the time I thought he was crazy. But His plans and ways are better; my friend is happier and more fulfilled than when he was a famous radio host.
- Your final consideration after lots of prayer is, going through the Word, thinking it through, and wise counsel, "Do I have a peace about it?" Why is this the final thought and not the first, because emotions are very important, but have the habit of misleading us. Go through the steps, and then you will have your peace, if not go through them again.

To know the will of God, we must deny ourselves and align our life to obedience and focus on God's perspective, and not our frail ways!

John 12:23-25 "...the man who loves his life will lose it..."

God is more interested in us being in His will, then we are !!!

Step V Taking a careful look at our options

Being Wise!

Wisdom means choosing the best and noblest plan and then set our sights upon it and do what is appropriate and effective with the integrity and honesty to make it work.

Several books in God's Word are dedicated to teach us how to think and do things the best way—Wisdom Literature! Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, plus many passages throughout the Bible. These books provide us with clear, concise and practical living. The main point being is for us to fear our Lord. That is, not being scared what is under your bed or in some dark alley, but fear means being reverent and in awe of who God is. This is what worship is all about (Proverbs 1:7; 3:5-6; and 9:10).

Choose the people you take advice from very carefully!!! Do they exhibit the fruits of the Spirit? Gal 5 Are they prime examples of modeling Christ in all that they do? Do they have the experience to understand? Are they WISE?

God's wisdom is seen by His grace, which provides us a way out of our sinful nature, by the means of redemption. This was His choice, His decision, for His glory (Psalm 46:10). God works by choosing us (Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:19-20) and then, God gives us the means to carry out His plan (Psalm 145:13-16).

Whatever decision or dilemma you face, relationships, money, career or whatever... you can rest assured that God has an example and advice for you to follow. Now the Bible may not give you specific advice, such as what school to go to, or what city to live, or what kind of dog to get, but it will tell us how to make the choices!

Remember you can never make a mistake that will take you away from God's Love!

- God will not force us into His plan and will, He will only gently guide us His way. It is up to us to respond. He has prepared it, are we willing to take it?

Do not worry about making the wrong decision, life is sometimes about taking risks! Jim Kirk aboard the Starship Enterprise stated, *"Risk is what we are about, that is why we are aboard her."* So isn't this what our adventure of life is about? Enjoy it. Don't fret. You are not going to leave God's Sovereign Plan! *"God is much bigger than our problems,"* says Larry the Cucumber, and Rom. 8:28 says, *"we know that all things God works for the good of those who love Him..."* Trust Him for He is able.

11. ROMANS 8:28-29 Do you love God with all your heart?

Then why do you worry?

Jesus is to be our center, the reason for our being! And if we keep placing Him first, then we become in God's will!

What about FLEECES? Gideon WAS NOT seeking God's will, he already knew it! Gideon was only seeking confirmation of God's power. Very patiently God responds to Gideon's lack of Faith. We are not to bargain with God nor test Him; rather we are to trust Him with our whole hearts! GOD DOES NOT RESPOND TO MANIPULATION "God if you do this, then I.." NOT!!! Judges 6:36-40. But, God will confirm your decision, just be patient!

12. ISAIAH 61:3 What is the beauty in your life?

13. PHILIPPIANS 1:6 Does God have a specific plan for you?

14. ISAIAH 26: COLOSSIANS 3:15 Who is the umpire in your life?

One of the main questions that comes up in this section is, "Does God have a specific plan for me..." With all the years of study on this subject, and the scores of books and lectures, and teaching on this... I do not know! But I do know God guides us, and somehow we are enfolded into the tapestry of His grand scheme! But the exact way and specific plan in triplicate is a mixed bag. Most theologians are divided down the middle, whether there is a dogmatic (not to be confused with catmatic) plan or just a general area for us to be in. Numerous times I personally faced such decisions, like which church does God want me at, all three offers look good, or my biggest quest, who should I marry? Once I asked J. Vernon McGee, "How do I know the right woman I should marry?" He answered me, " just pick a nice girl, make sure she is a woman of faith." I went away even more confused, because I wanted more specifics. But over the years I learned the specifics are not important; it is our OBEDIENCE, TRUST, and FAITH that are!

All we can do is trust Him! Do our best to decipher from His Word, and take a look at creation and all its detail, from the microscopic, to the majestic sunsets. Our God is a God of detail, so He must have a specific plan maybe with several variables and choices for us to make, but it will all work out! Our God is a faithful God and He will complete the work in us!

15. ROMANS 14:5 Are you fully convicted in your mind, are you assured deep within yourself? Out of this assuredness will come the peace that God provides.

Q: What can you do to institute peace in your life?

Peace has two sources for us. Not the peace of the hippie era, or the peace between nations, rather the God given peace as described in Colossians 3:15. Peace can either come from the Lord, who fully convicts us to our very core, or it can come from just us, but this leads us down the wrong road. We must realize that self-centered peace will only last a short time and will not be very comfortable because if we want something bad enough, we will rationalize and convince ourselves of it but we will pay a price. So, we need to be wise and be aware of what is the true source of our peace. Is it God's precepts? Or, is it our own delusions?

PONDERING THOUGHTS

- If you specialize on being the kind of person God wants you to be, He will lead you in His way and path that He has planned for you.
- God thinks about character as the prime will for our lives.
- Once we decide to follow God's will, it is natural that the enemy will attack us and fear will crop up against us, but know this – God will empower you to overcome it.
- It is God, and only God, who can do anything He wants.
- It is our job to please God and not do whatever we want.

Jesus was focused on the Will of God as the cause; the effect was what He did for us. The focus on God was even more than us!

Struggling with your Options

Who does not struggle with the process of trying to find out what God's plan is for our lives? This is part of us growing and maturing in our faith. As a butterfly was once a caterpillar that struggled to get out of the cocoon; so, is our process in struggling. The butterfly's wings become developed and the fluid expands throughout its body evenly and effectively enabling it to break out of the cocoon so it can take off and fly. If you cut a caterpillar out early it will not be able to fly, so it will slowly die of starvation.

Struggle is part of our condition to mold us and make us useable by God. This struggle comes from our fallen sinful nature that God turns around and uses it to glorify Himself and better ourselves. A life dedicated to serving Jesus Christ means that we are able to approach life's difficulties and excel at them. Remember that Jesus Himself was a human being that faced all the decisions and concerns that we do today. He may not have struggled with programming the VCR, but He wept, He laughed, and He went to the cross for us.

It is up to us to make something of it. Jesus says, *"Yet not as I will, but as Your will."* Matthew 26:39. Christ, Himself, struggled deeply on the plan that He knew that He must abide in, but He was obedient. Where would we be if He were not obedient? Jesus is our intercessor, God, and King. He knows our weaknesses, and He knows our temptations, yet He went through them without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

This section is about evaluating and examining the decisions you have to make. This is where we need to examine what our spiritual gifts are. Seeking what our natural abilities and talents are, and just simply seek where the best place is for us. If we look at these honestly and carefully, without prejudice, we will succeed beyond our dreams. The danger is when our own desires and inclinations get in the way and they just end up hurting us because they are just delusions of grandeur.

1. HEBREWS 4:16 What gives you confidence in directing your path?

2. PHILIPPIANS 2:12-14 Do you cooperate when God leads you?

Q: Are you willing to obey?

Q: Where do you need to work out or do your part?

Q: Are you paying attention to what doors and opportunities you have, which ones are open, which ones are closed?

Q: Do you know with confidence and assurance what your spiritual gifts are? Have they been confirmed? If not, you need to “work out” in this area.

3. I CORINTHIANS 12 God has given each of us at least one spiritual gift. Ponder this chapter and take an honest look of what your gifts and talents are. If you are stumped, ask yourself, “what do I enjoy doing in light of God’s word?”

Q: What can you do to give your fullest potential to Christ our Lord?

Q: How can your talents be used to further His kingdom?

4. I CORINTHIANS 1:31 Who do you boast for?

5. ROMANS 12:4-18; I CORINTHIANS 12:4-27; EPHESIANS 4:4-16 Read these passages carefully and ask these following questions:

Q: What do you think your God given gifts are?

Q: What training and experience do you have in these gifts?

Q: What are your personality traits and what are you most comfortable doing?

Example: Are you a people person?

Are you a loner? If you are a people person, you should work with people. If you are a loner, you probably should find something that does not involve working with people too much.

When our hearts are open to sincerely do God’s will, He will show us. If you have any doubts about this, try journaling. Keep a daily or weekly journal and write down what goes on in your life, what you pray for and what you receive, what your ambitions are and how you have been glorifying God. After you have been doing this for several months and especially after several years and you go back through these journals, you will see how God has remarkably directed your path. Or, you will see the wrong paths and stupid decisions you have made. Usually, we see both, or at least I do.

Q: How have you seen God guide you in different circumstances?

Q: Have you experienced God changing the desires of your will?

6. 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 What can you do to glorify God?

If you say to yourself, "If I follow God and be holy and wise, I will never get out and have any fun," but we need to realize our greatest fun is serving God's plan and purpose. Psalm 37:4

Q: When determining what you should do, ask yourself is it needed?

First and foremost, be in prayer. Whatever you are considering, consider your prayer life first. Luke 11:9

7. LUKE 11:9; PROVERBS 24:6 This passage means seeking information, are you doing this?

PONDERING YOUR OPTIONS

- Again, prayer must be your first consideration and your driving force.
- Most people just think wise counsel is good, but do not rely totally on just one aspect.
- Safety in Proverbs literally means deliverance and victory.
- If you are seeking out information, go to the best and most reliable source, that is do not ask your pastor for business advice unless he has been in business or do not ask your chemistry teacher for spiritual advice unless he is a spiritual man.
- Seeking information does not rule out God's counsel. Proverbs 3:5 means do not support yourself on your own decisions.
- You must take the initiative. This is a crucial aspect in doing God's will!

FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT Must have four prerequisites:

1. Is it consistent with the BIBLE?
2. Will it bring glory to God?
3. Has it been confirmed by Godly and mature people?
4. Will it be a blessing to others?

If just one of these prerequisites is omitted, then the source is not God!

This will allow you to see at a glance what are the advantages and potential problems you may have. I have found this very helpful over the years! As you list the options you will be able to make informed decisions along with prayer!

Remember closed doors to us are just as an important leading as the open ones. We must remain in prayer and be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and not forcing our way in what we want. But go in life with a sensitivity and alert attitude while being patient!!!

Jesus promises that He will guide us with His Spirit (John 16:13)

We need to know that God's sovereignty is at work, and God cannot be stopped or frustrated, for He is always in control! This should give us an extraordinary amount of Trust in His Will!

The Christian faith is about trust, it's not about going through life blind; but with the ultimate guide—Christ -- there are no cheap shortcuts. It takes time and patience, a day by day surrender to His control. So give up the remote control of yourself to Christ!

- When we surrender control to God, His purpose will come clear to us!
- God wants us to effect those around us positively!

When the decisions are heavy, use the resource of a "PRO/CON" chart. Write down on a piece of paper the decision, and in two columns the advantages and disadvantages. Then ask yourself the questions previously mentioned in this section.

| The decision | PRO | CON |
|------------------|-----|------------------|
| Blah, blah, blah | | other blah, blah |

- Make sure you clarify what God has given you to do!
- We need to allow God all the time He needs to work in us!

8. ACTS 16:6-10 We need to clarify what the Lord is about to do!

Remember the determined will of God is a reality; we must recognize it and yield. This is a great relief and comfort for God is in control! The Lord our God works all things together for good, Rom. 8:28; 11:33. So don't try to figure everything out. Relax and enjoy the ride, for your trust and comfort is...must be in the Lord!

For us to experience God's Will...well it's about obedience!!! Do you get it ??? This is how God accomplishes His work in us!!!

- Ask God to confirm or refute your decisions!

- To be in God's Will is for us to live by faith!
- There are no shortcuts to being obedient to God's will!
- A day by day submission to God's will must be met by our eagerness!
- God does not give up on us, even when we make the wrong decisions!
- God is in the business of second chances!
- Affirmation comes from our obedience!
- Make sure you CLARIFY!!!
- We need to say, Lord I will follow you wherever you lead me, whatever you require, whatever you want, whatever the circumstances, I am your servant, I will go!!!

Step VI Confirmation How to Follow by Faith

Let Jesus be your supreme example in all that you do.

When you first learn to drive a car, you quickly learn that the only way the car will turn is when it's in motion. If we sit in a car and turn the wheel, while the car is in park all we will get is an arm ache! God cannot direct our way without us getting ourselves in gear. God cannot use us unless we are growing in faith and practice (that is moving for Him)! The confirmation comes out of obedience and patience, and faith!

Life seems like putting together a puzzle without looking at the picture on the box. We pray and hope we are doing it right, but sometimes its like working in the dark. God's will is a mystery; there is no doubt about it. Mainly because we are not mature enough to handle the truth of what is ahead. If we do know, then we are likely to be cowards and flee! So, God reveals his plan to us slowly, just as you start feeding a toddler. You start slowly and gradually increase in the amount and types of food. Only God knows for sure what our finished life will be like, there is no final picture only a template of trust and obedience. God does offer us the plans and instructions that we walk in His Grace by faith see Hebrews 11, "*Without Faith it is impossible to please God.*" So the basic idea is for us to focus our minds on FAITH, not on worry about the future!

Q: What is the difference to you between moving and not moving?

Q: What is the difference between waiting on the Lord and moving?

Q: What part does faith do in the confirmation process?

Cultivating a lifestyle by living in God's Will:

- Surrender your will to God before anything else.
- Cultivate a consistent quiet time with devotions and prayer and Bible reading.
- Read the Word of God and let it transform your life.
- Never forsake your responsibilities as a follower of Christ or as a family member or in your job.
- Discover your natural talents and spiritual gifts, then find people who are mature with the same gifts to disciple you.
- Discover your unique calling in life, which is usually found in your natural gifts and abilities.

- Remain open to God's instruction and His interruptions that change our attitudes and ways of thinking.

With most things in life, attitude will make the difference on how we live and respond not only to God but also to those around us. Part of our attitude involves having a heart of a servant.

The mystery and wonder of predestination (that is God chose us and governs us before we were even born) is that our choices made from our free will are actually God's foreordained decrees! This may contradict our logic and reasoning but this is the wonderful truth of God. Theologians may bicker about exactly how much free will we have and have not. It is supposed to be beyond our comprehension because God is God and we are not! So take comfort, God is in charge.

Look over these next few passages and ask yourself the question, ***"How can I follow God's will with a servant attitude?"***

1. PSALM 40:8:
2. MATTHEW 6:10:
3. ACTS 21:12-14:
3. PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13:
5. JAMES 4:13-15:

Keep in mind; we obey God's will for two essential purposes:

- A) Our purpose in obeying God's will is that we grow closer in our love relationship and out of this relationship flows our obedience to His will.
 - B) Our second purpose is we accomplish God's purpose, which is greater and richer than we can imagine.
6. MARK 3:31-34 How can you take Jesus' words and apply them to your situation?

When we confirm our decision, what we are doing is stepping out in faith. Be willing to take risks but rest assured following God's will can come in many various forms. It has been my experience (as God usually comes to us in a subtle, peaceful and quiet way that is revealed when we read His word and when we obey the subtle, quiet way of God) that He will richly bless us and GALATIANS 5 will come about in our lives powerfully.

7. ACTS 4:32-5:11 Warning! Do not try to manipulate God into doing your will.

8. I CORINTHIANS 4:1-2; PHILIPPIANS 4:19 Do not try to justify your needs and desires as God's.

9. PROVERBS 3:5-6; PSALMS 37:23 Relax and trust God for His wisdom. When you confirm your options, rest yourself on God's promises.

Finding God's will is not so much a technique but it is a loving relationship with Christ through what He has done for us in which we respond with our obedience, trust and faith. **Our search for God's will is the point of God's will.** That is, in us searching for God's will helps build a strong and lasting relationship. This is what our life as a Christian is about -- relationships. First, our relationship to God; second, our relationship to each other as believers; and third, our relationship to others around us. Finding God's will is the means and not the ends. This is what nourishes our faith and obedience to God's will. This is what it is about. This is why I spend so much time talking about the obedience factor.

10. II CORINTHIANS 6:14 Make sure the decision you make is within God's moral boundaries. For example, it is never God's will for you to leave a spouse or sell drugs to make up money for the church.

11. PSALMS 86:11 Do not let your impure desires guide your decision making.

What about suffering? As we look at church history, especially in the lives of many Christian saints throughout time, one key theme runs through it all. From the first century Christians to modern China, that theme is suffering. The path into following God's will is not always an easy path; it is a path filled with potholes and highwaymen. It is a difficult journey but take heart, our sufferings are very temporary in the scheme of our eternal existence. Check out John 16:33 and I Peter 4:19. Remain faithful and enjoy the ride of life even when you hit a pothole and bump your head.

12. ROMANS 5:1-5, JAMES 1:2 Having difficulties does not mean you made a wrong decision. God's goals are different than ours. Remember His goal is character and with any great endeavor or work of art, requires patience and struggle.

13. I PETER 5:8 Be prepared for an attack. Whenever we make a decision to walk with the Lord, Satan will do anything and everything to try to stop us. He will use our family, our friends, our finances, our mental health, even car trouble to discourage us from doing God's will.

Remember, no matter what you have done in the past, when we repent, God cleans us totally and we become part of God's will. God is not thwarted by our decisions even when they are wrong, He will turn them around for His purpose and His glory. Check our Romans 8:28

So, how can we know God's specific will?

- A) The Bible shows us the way, Romans 8:27
- B) The Holy Spirit will guide us, John 16:13
- C) God will draw us into His will, II Corinthians 7:9-10, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1-2, II Timothy 1:1
- D) God will use others to direct our path, Proverbs 25; 27:17-19; Romans 15:14; Titus 2:3-5, Colossians 3:16
- E) We are to pray and seek God's specific guidance, Psalms 25:4; 31:3-4; 40:6-8; 43:3; 48:14; 73:23; 139:9-10, Proverbs 3:5-6; 4:10

Sometimes a rough road can be a sign that a decision we have made is a wrong one. And the trouble may be just a trick of the Devil to throw us off track. But trouble should always be a time of getting deep in prayer on ones knees, discerning your situation, and seeking what God wants you to learn from it.

14. Psalm 34:19 Are you in prayer so you can discern what road signs you are observing?

15. Mark 4:37; 6:48 Jesus' disciples were twice caught in bad weather on the Sea of Galilee, what is your weather situation?

Let's look at the life of Christ who led a perfect example of what it means to be a human being living in the presence of God and following His will. Yet, His life was filled with upsets and turmoil's to the extent many liberal theologians' state that Jesus' life at the end was disillusioned and pointless. But, we know for a fact Jesus' life and work was to pay our debt and to take on our afflictions and sufferings. Thus, He suffered for us. So, we should expect our lives to have a rough road too.

God's guidance will bring us out of darkness and into light. But, sooner or later the darkness and the light get skewed because we see them from the standpoint of how the world sees it. Not how God sees it. So, the darkness is part of the way of the cross.

Remember God does not care so much where we live or how we earn our keep, but His concerns are about our character and who we are. Do not get this turned around in your way of thinking.

16. Matthew 19:14 The disciples had a concern about the children and Jesus set them straight. How can Jesus set you straight?

Self distrust will keep us humble and allow us to lean upon the joy that Christ offers.

So, now that we have done all of these six steps and examined our calls and obedience, what do we do now? Go to Disneyland? Well, maybe, but what we are to

do is launch ourselves and rocket skyward pressing on ever closer to God. Here is a simple formula I learned from Navigators years ago:

P-P-P/A-S-K.

P-P-P means pray, peace and press on. First we are to pray and not be anxious. Second, we are to have peace as Colossians 3:15 states. Third, after we have done the first two, press toward the goal and do not be afraid to fail. When we do this, two things will happen, we will succeed or we will discover that was not God's will and have to reboot. Either way, God will use it to help us grow. Mistakes are not sin unless we are being disobedient to God.

A-S-K refers to ask, seek and knock which comes out of Luke 11:9, "*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*" Asking means simply are we asking God and/or are we asking qualified people? Seek means are we seeking our options and being honest with ourselves and our abilities. Also, are we seeking reliable information? Knock means to get ourselves moving, do not sit around and wait for your ship to come in because it may have already sank.

So, go with confidence to serve the Lord. Do not be afraid. Enjoy the ride of life. Do not let the decisions you have to make unbalance you and cause you unnecessary struggles. Think of it as a galactic game as a child playing it for the enjoyment and pleasure. And, always be obedient to God. For this is our prime directive.

So, how do we find God's specific will? We do not. Sometimes He gives us a clear vision, but most of the time, He does not. We are to pursue Him and grow in character, this is always His prime will, whether you are a pastor, president or fry cook. We are servants called to be obedient. It is the journey of seeking Him is what His will is all about! The process is the plan, is the purpose. It is not necessarily the destination, it is the travel of getting there that is where we learn and grow to give Christ glory. This is His will. It is not jobs, education, where I live, who will I marry... These things are important of course, and we need to follow the Biblical precepts we talked about in the last 6 steps, to make the best decisions possible. But again the destination is only a bump on the map; the road getting there is where His will is at! This is not a disappointment, it is a joy, because the burden is His, He bore it for us. Our yoke is easy Jesus says! Embrace Him and His precepts, and flee from your fallen will.

Do not forget to be honest with people, were you fired, then say so, things will work out for His glory if you allow yourselves to surrender!!! It will work out because God has promised it to us! Make the determination to commit yourself to His plan, and let the perfect and pleasing will of God enfold to you!

We are not rats in a maze, but, Heirs to the kingdom of God! So go in comfort to love and serve the Lord our God. Do this with obedience with passion and conviction! With love and desire!

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Richard Joseph Krejcir is the Director of 'Into Thy Word Ministries, 'a Missions and discipling ministry. He is the author of several books including, Into Thy Word as well as numerous articles, curriculums and solid Biblical resources. He is also a pastor, teacher, speaker and a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena California and currently completing his Ph.D in practical theology. He has amounted over 20 years of pastoral ministry experience, mostly in youth ministry, including serving as a church growth consultant.