

HOW TO KNOW GOD'S WILL

Sharing

1. Much of God's will for us is outlined in the Bible. Can we name at least two of those things? See 1 Timothy 2:3,4; Luke 9:23
 - Name two: _____
2. Do you think we should seek God's will about the little nitty-gritty things in our lives such as the type of automobile to purchase, or which job offer to accept?
 - Discuss: _____
3. If we are knowingly living in open sin in an area of our lives, should we seek God's blessing on our activities?
 - Discuss: _____

Studying

4. Most of us have wondered—at some time or another—what God wants us to do with our life. We've wished for a way to receive a direct 'yes' or 'no' answer from God, to avoid making a wrong decision. We'd like a post card from God, or maybe sky-writing so that we can't miss it. Often we try to 'know' God's will without understanding the foundational principle of decision-making. That principle is this: God's Word is the basis for making **all** our decisions. When we follow the principles outlined in the Bible, we will be able to discern God's will for our life. God's word is like a light in the darkness that draws us to it.
 - Read Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my _____."
5. Sometimes we let our human *desire* overrule the *principles* in the Word of God. God has a specific purpose and a plan for each of our lives. Following that plan is the only way to true happiness on this earth and in the earth to come.
 - Read Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the _____ I have for you, declared the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
 - Read Romans 12:2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's _____ is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."
6. The Bible is the best counselor and guidebook that we can have in this life.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."
7. One of the greatest struggles Christians is the choice of a marriage partner. Because it is a life-long commitment we don't want to make a mistake. We can be certain that God wants us to choose a marriage partner in agreement with His word.
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally _____ together with unbelievers."
 - Read Psalm 37:4 "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the _____ of your heart."

8. God's main purpose for our lives is not what we do but who we become. To grow to maturity in this life, we must learn to make choices, exercise judgment and take responsibility for the consequences. The same is true if we wish to grow to maturity in our spiritual lives. God has endowed each individual with intelligence and freedom to make decisions and choices. But there often are several choices for each situation we face. How can we judge which to choose?
 - Read Isaiah 8:20 "If they speak not according to this word it is because there is no _____ in them." All our choices must be based in God's revealed light of His Holy Spirit's inspired Scripture.
9. God is very connected to us in our everyday life, through circumstances and opportunities, He leads us into His will. He is not an 'absent' God but will be an active participant in our decision-making process if we let Him.
 - Psalm 32:8 "I will instruct and teach you in the _____ you should go."
10. The Holy Spirit guides us when we submit our lives each day to God's will. Sometimes, through circumstances, He will open doors and sometimes close doors. Often we cannot understand why but we accept, by faith, that through the circumstance, God is guiding us.
 - Read John 16:13 (first part) "...when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will _____ you into all truth . . ."
11. God is the God of our circumstances and often uses circumstances to indicate His will. He allows certain things to happen to us, either to confirm the guidance we have received through the Holy Spirit, or to stop us from taking a wrong step.
 - Read Psalm 37:23 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he _____ in his way."

It must be remembered, that Satan also can order circumstances to some extent, to lead us astray. Many have been deceived into choosing a life-partner, engaging in a ministry, becoming immersed in a political controversy, a 'fight' in the workplace, or a family feud by circumstances orchestrated by the devil to trap us! The devil knows our vulnerability and is ever-present to take advantage of our weaknesses. But God is greater than our circumstances! The way to avoid deception in all areas of our lives is by studying the Word of God, being in continual prayer and submitting moment by moment to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God can turn all our circumstances into a positive witness.

A number of cases of negative circumstances turned into positive witnessing in the Book of Acts:

- God used persecution to scatter the church from Jerusalem for the spread of the gospel (Acts 8:1).
- Paul and Barnabas moved from one place to another whenever persecution increased to such an extent that there was no point in staying (Acts 13:50,51; 14:5,6,19,20). This was in accordance with the Lord's own example (Matt. 10:23; John 7:1).
- God used a famine to take Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Acts 11:28-30), where they learned the power of persistent and urgent prayer (Acts 12:5).
- Coming back to Antioch, they imparted this spirit of prayer to their fellow-workers and this finally resulted in the extension of the work to distant regions (Acts 12:25-13:3).
- Adverse circumstances in Philippi were used of God to lead Paul and Silas to preach the gospel to a needy jailor (Acts 16:19-34).
- The last eight chapters of Acts reveal how God used circumstances to lead Paul to preach the gospel to a number of people whom he would not normally have met (Phil. 1:12).

12. Sometimes, when we are working powerfully for God, doors unexpectedly close, blocking us from continuing our work. We tend to become upset or frustrated because we can't discern God's will. Often we blame another person and feel bitterness against them for the loss of our 'job.' When doors 'close' we should praise God and prayerfully seek His will, understanding that He is guiding us in another direction, or into another ministry as He re-directed Paul and Timothy when they were forbidden to preach the word in Asia. We would think that God would be happy to have His ministers preach the word anywhere on earth. But God has a master plan and a time-table of which we often are unaware. When a door closes we should praise God for being the God of our circumstances.

- Read Acts 16:6-9 "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the _____ did not permit them."

13. Often, people who can't make a decision, ask God for a sign. Is it right to ask God to indicate His will by a sign? The Old Testament records some instances of men asking God for a sign to indicate His will. Abraham's servant asked for a sign and thus found the bride God had chosen for Isaac (Gen. 24:10-27). Gideon asked God to confirm His will by a sign. The next night he asked God to reverse the sign. God answered on both occasions and confirmed His will (Judg. 6:36-40). The sailors on the ship carrying Jonah drew lots to find who was the cause of the storm. God answered (Jonah 1:7). The casting of lots was used on a few other occasions too (Josh. 7:14; 1 Sam. 10:20; 14:41-44; cf. Prov. 16:33).

In the New Testament, there is only **one** instance of men asking God for a sign to indicate His will and that was before the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:23-26). Jesus, Himself, scorned men looking for signs rather than following the clear teachings of the Word.

- Read Matthew 16:4 "A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous _____, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah."

Note that after the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost, **there is not a single recorded case in the New Testament of a believer seeking to find God's will through a sign**. That seems to be a strong indicator that the Holy Spirit is God's agent to speak directly into our minds to guide us in the path we are to follow.

Asking for a sign to avoid making a decision is a mark of spiritual immaturity. Sometimes we seek a sign when we are seeking to carry out our own selfish will in opposition to the clear dictate in the Word of God.

14. We should seek the advice of godly men and women in our lives when we seek to know God's will.

- Read Proverb 11:14 "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the _____ of counselors there is safety."

There are three ways that we can know that we are living within God's will for our lives:

- ⇒ We are **convicted** by God that we **must** follow this path, ministry or decision and we are at peace.
- ⇒ Without any conniving, manipulation, behind-the-scenes campaigning or volunteering on our part, **circumstances** arise that demonstrate, beyond question, that this is the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- ⇒ The body of believers (our church family) **confirms** our 'calling' to this path, ministry or decision. Unfortunately, there are many people who do not have the spiritual gift for the ministry in which they are placed—this is harmful to the work of the gospel. While we may believe that we have a 'calling,' if it is not accepted or appreciated by our church family, we can be assured that it is not God's will for us. By insisting that we remain on a selfishly chosen path—serving where we *desire* to serve, rather than where we are *designed* to serve—we miss the genuine path and calling that God had planned for us.

15. God always equips us to do what He calls us to do. If we aren't gifted in a certain area, God will not **will** us to work in that area. There is nothing more frustrating in a congregation of believers than someone trying to do a job or hold a position for which he or she is totally unsuited. We should all be satisfied with working where, in the Lord's will, He has called us to work.
- Read Romans 12:6-8 "We have different _____, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."
16. God sends the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and right and wrong—and the direction we should follow. If we listen to His Spirit's voice, God will accomplish His will in our lives.
- Read John 16:8 "And when He has come, He will _____ the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment."
 - Read Proverb 3:5,6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge Him and He will _____ your path."
17. Often, when praying for God's will—and trying to decide between two alternatives—we will have more peace about one option than the other. The option that brings us peace is most likely God's will. When we are walking closely with the Lord and truly desiring His will for our life, God will place His desires on our heart.
- Read Isaiah 32:17 "The fruit of righteousness will be _____; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever."

Applying this lesson

18. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:27,28 "He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."
- From this lesson I have learned that God is sovereign over all the circumstances of my life even though, from my limited human perspective, it might momentarily seem that evil is winning.
 - _____ A check mark at left indicates that I will pause to reflect on the distressing circumstances in my life and, by faith, believe that God will override evil and bring about His will.
19. Often we go into the presence of God to pray and we do not know what to pray for—we can only approach our problems and our desires from a human point of view.
- I understand that when I pray, the Holy Spirit is interceding on my behalf that God's perfect will be done in my life.
 - _____ A check mark at left indicates that I will submit my life to the perfect will of God for me.
20. In order to know the perfect will of God for our lives, we do not need to know all the details. We simply must walk by faith in Christ knowing that the Holy Spirit is guiding and leading us.
- I believe that discovering and doing the will of God is the most important step that I can take to become Christlike in all that I do.
 - _____ A check mark at left indicates that my goal is to be conformed to the image and likeness of Christ by following His will in all things.