

# Understanding the Will of God

Ephesians 5:15-17

## Intro

Today I would like to focus on knowing God's will and listening to His voice. That reminds me of a story I read...

This fellow goes ice fishing for the very first time. All of a sudden, he hears a voice. "There are no fish under the ice!" He ignores it and moves to another area, cuts a hole, and tosses his line in. Again, he hears the booming voice: "There are no fish under the ice!" He nervously looks up and asks, "Lord? Is that you?" "No, this is the ice rink manager!"

A short while ago I spoke on "When God Says No." We learned that God has a perfect plan and purpose for our lives and that He will accomplish it according to His will and timing and not necessarily ours.

Throughout the Scriptures many individuals received a firm "no" in answer to their requests and prayers, yet they all learned to accept God's "no" reply as His will. By reflecting on God's plan for their lives they realized that they had fulfilled a divine purpose, therefore their disappointments and hardships were completely justified.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" That is one of the key principles in the Lord's Prayer. Not our will but His will be done.

Our prime example of when God says no comes from Jesus when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. We all know that God the Father said no to His Son's prayer. In the end Jesus prayed, "*Not my will but your will be done.*"

This is a very important biblical principle. "***Thy will be done.***"

In Ephesians 5:17 it says, "*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*" The phrase "*do not be foolish*" means do not be unwise, do not become anxious. Basically the Apostle Paul is telling us to not run frenetically in every direction trying to do many things and to be involved in many projects or programs. Such activity easily becomes foolish or futile and leads to burnout and discouragement because it works in the power of the flesh even when it is well-intentioned. We need to understand and do the will of the Lord.

Trying to run ahead of God only puts us further behind in His work. Most of all we need to understand the Lord's will. That word "*understand*" implies that an effort has to be made. So it has the sense of "try to grasp" or "try to perceive."

When our priorities are God's priorities, He is free to work in us and through us to accomplish His will and in the end accomplish great things for His honour and glory.

So how do we understand and discover the will of God?

I would like to unpack for us today 4 areas.

## **1. We Need to Know the Will of God Because Only He Knows the Future.**

First of all we need to recognize that we, as humans, are limited in knowing the future.

Proverbs 27:1 says, *“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.”*

We can plan our day or days but in the end we do not know the details of what that day may bring.

We cannot decipher the future events of our lives.

Also we read in Isaiah 46:9-10, *Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’* No one knows the future only God knows and makes it known.

Also we read in Proverbs 19:21, *“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”* We can make many plans for the future but in the end it is God’s will and purpose that will prevail.

God is omniscient. He sees what is ahead in time and space...

## **2. We Need to Accept the Will of God Because Only He Knows What is Best for Us.**

Many times we are uncertain and don’t know what is best for us. At times our thinking is unstable.

James 1:8 says, *“Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”*

We need to admit that we are limited in directing our future paths. I like what the prophet Jeremiah says in Jer. 10:23, *“Lord, I know that people’s lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.”*

How true. Our lives are not our own. Our time is not our own. It is borrowed time. Our minds and hearts are not our own. Our relationships are not our own. Our skills and abilities are not our own. These are all given by God. They all belong to the Lord.

It is not in our power to direct our steps into the future only God can do that. We need to trust Him with all our heart.

Look with me at Proverbs 3:5-6, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

When we trust Him with all our heart and submit our lives to Him, THEN He will make our paths straight. He will guide us and lead us into His perfect will.

### Trusting God's Will

Pastor and author Alan Redpath made this profound statement on trusting God’s will,

*“There is nothing no circumstance, no trouble, no testing that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment, but as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret, for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is.”*

### **3. We Need to Know the Will of God Because He Has a Plan for Us.**

Because God knows what is best for us, He has plans for us. The Lord says in Jeremiah 29:11, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* Do you believe that God loves you and that he has plans for you? He has plans to prosper and not harm us; plans to give us hope and a future!

I believe God has specific plans for our lives. Look with me at Jeremiah 1:5, *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”* Isn’t that amazing, before He formed us in the womb He knew us and has a specific plan for us. In Jeremiah’s case, he was appointed to be God’s prophet.

Notice the four actions of God toward Jeremiah: God knew, formed, consecrated and appointed Jeremiah.

God too had a similar and specific plan for the Apostle Paul. In Galatians 1:15, *“But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles...”*

We cannot deny that God has a plan for each one of us, especially those who are believers.

The will of God and the Bible are inseparable. The majority of the will of God has already been revealed in the Bible. But what about some of those areas where at times the Bible appears to be silent? Philippians 2:13 assures us that God *“...works in you to will and act according to His good purpose.”* In other words, God will do His part in revealing His will to us.

Also in Psalm 32:8 *“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you and watch over you.”*

### **4. We Need to Know the Will Of God Because He Tells Us to Know and Obey His Will.**

Ephesians 5:17, *“So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*

King David asks and prays that God would reveal and teach His will in his life.

Psalm 25:4-5, *“Make me know Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.”*

In John 14:15 Jesus said, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

There is a danger in not doing God’s will.

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus says, *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

C. S. Lewis has a good observation on God’s will. He was said, *“There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘All right, then, have it your way.’”*

## **Conclusion**

It is so vital that we do God's will.

In 1 John 2:15-17 we read, *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, *“I still believe that standing up for the truth of God is the greatest thing in the world. This is the end of life. The end of life is not to be happy. The end of life is not to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. The end of life is to do the will of God, come what may.”*

## **Steps to Decipher God's Will for Your Life**

- 1/ Pray for divine direction and peace (Psalm 25:4-5)
- 2/ Search the Word of God to guide and confirm it (Psalm 119:15-16)
- 3/ Seek the counsel of the righteous and wise (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 19:20-21)
- 4/ Commit it to God and walk by faith (Proverbs 16:3; 2 Corinthians 5:7)