
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

August 30, 2015

Knowing God's Will

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence.
Know him in all your paths, and he will keep your ways straight."
Proverbs 3:5-6 (Common English Bible)*

How can we know God's will? It is a real question for many people. The world is so vast, with billions of people on it, that it is occasionally incomprehensible to fathom God takes notice of us much less has a divine purpose for our life. Yet, the faith we encounter in the Bible is that all human affairs are under divine direction – that God has a design for the world and that each one is an integral part of that design. We do not live by chance or fate. Our lives are under the guiding hand of God. Sometimes that guidance is clear and unmistakable. More often, that guidance is reduced to a still, small whisper and listening is difficult. The question remains, how can we know God's will?

Absent dramatic intervention – which was and remains one means God communicates God's guidance – people must develop an eye for the quiet succession of apparently natural events that unfold. Listening is also important. The unexpected impulses, sudden promptings and uncommon challenges that confront us all, hold the possibility of God's direction of our steps. Paying attention to everyday situations can awaken us to God's presence and activity in our lives. We shall recognize God in the little things each day – and follow – if we are in touch with God. As exercise strengthens the body and proper diet sustains energy, so the spiritual faculty within us expands through regular prayer and meditation on the Bible.

Immersion in a community of faith is also important. King David listened to Nathan, the disciples honed one another's application of Jesus's teaching and the apostle Paul was instructed in the faith by Ananias. Personal discernment of ordinary events in our lives is important but there are times when it is wise to listen for God's guidance through another. Particularly those people who have developed an uncommon capacity to see God in the ordinary, they can enlarge our vision and sharpen our understanding. They see our lives from a different angle and can offer a dispassionate take on where God may be actively leading us.

What remains is the hardest – surrendering our lives to God's will. Prayers are more often, "This is what I would like you to do, Lord," rather than, "What would you have me to do?" What we really seek is divine approval of what we desire. The words of Gardner Taylor are wise, "It is hard for us to realize that on this uneven journey there are directions, right choices that we cannot know because we are not God."¹ Perhaps the greatest challenge of the Christian faith is learning that we only have two choices in life – a choice of masters. Either we will remain in charge of our own lives or we surrender ourselves to God and trust in God with all our heart. It is in confidence of the latter that the author of Proverbs wrote.

Doug Hood

¹ Edward L. Taylor, **The Words of Gardner Taylor, Volume 2** (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000), 24.