

3 Warnings in Discerning God's Will

There can be so much worry involved in knowing **God's will**. *What if I'm wrong? What if I missed it?* We either blame ourselves or blame God, and both scenarios expose a small view of God. But God doesn't want His desires to be a secret. He wants us to know what's best, and that is why He gives us a lamp to our feet and tells us to ask for wisdom. So, practically, how does God reveal His desires, His will to us?

Prerequisite to Knowing God's Will

Romans 12:1-3 talks about giving ourselves entirely to the **Lord**, having our minds (thoughts, hopes, dreams and aspirations) transformed by **Christ**. Then we will know and be an example of what God's will is. So the question is not "What is God's will for my life?" but "How does my life fit into God's will?" This is saying, "I've surrendered all I have; where do I go to fit into God's work?" rather than saying, "What does God have for me to make me happy?"

So, before knowing God's will, you have to ask yourself:

- Is He really Lord of your life? Are you willing to go anywhere or do anything He might want for you (Matt. 16:24-25)? Are you being fully controlled by the Holy Spirit through faith (Gal. 5:16; Rom 12:1-2)?
- Is there any unconfessed sin that has broken your fellowship with Him (Is. 59:2)?

3 Ways to Discern and Know God's Will

As we seek God's will, we ought to actually ask Him for **wisdom**. Wisdom is the right application of knowledge, not a special revelation. However, if we don't ask in faith (acting on what we know to be true), we might as well not expect

anything from God. We must be committed to act on the understanding that He gives us (James 1:5-6).

The GAS acronym gives us the “fuel” (or confidence) to walk out what God has for us:

1. God’s Word. God’s written Word is our ultimate source of authority in all areas of life. What decisions has God already given us clear direction about, based on the Bible? Ask God to lead you to specific passages of how you fit into His plan.

2. Ask mature believers. Ask for advice from mature Christians who are viewed by many as mature, who are informed about what God is doing around the world, someone who knows you well, who will be objective with you and who knows and walks with God and knows His ways.

“For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure” (Prov. 11:14).

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Prov. 15:22).

“He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding. The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor” (Prov. 15:31-33).

“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Prov. 12:15).

3. Spirit-filled reasoning. With Christ on the throne, think strategic. God has given us a sound and sanctified mind He expects us to love Him with and be a good steward using. Using wisdom and reason we will follow the examples of the apostles:

- “We thought it best ... ” (1 Thess. 3:1-2).
- “I thought it was necessary ... ” (Phil. 2:25-26).
- “If it is fitting ... ” (1 Cor. 16:3-4).

- “It is not desirable ... ” (Acts 6:2-4).
- “It seemed good ... ” (Acts 15:22, 28).

Ask yourself:

- How does it fit in the overall plan of God? What would be the most strategic choice as an investment of my life? How much _____ will it take? Is there a need? Is there a way? Are there enough people, finances, materials? What would prepare and develop me in the future? What are my motives? Is it to gain approval or acceptance from someone, money, power or to stay comfortable?
- How can I best INVEST my life (interests, nature/personality, vision, experiences, spiritual Gifts, treasure)?

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Be careful of authoritative reliance on subjective means.

1. Be cautious of “the open door policy.” Saying that God’s will is whatever opportunity works out for you. When Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt and ran into the Red Sea, that very well could have looked like a “closed door.” Or when Paul and Silas were in jail and an earthquake opened the jail doors but they stayed put. Because they didn’t interpret the literal “open door” as God wanting them to go through it, the jailer and his household came to put their faith in Christ (Acts 16:22-40).

Sometimes a “closed door” may just be an opportunity to give God more glory. Just because an opportunity comes up doesn’t mean it is the best option for your time and resources.

2. Be careful to not judge God’s will by your “feelings of peace.” This is not scriptural (and when it says God will give us peace that passes understanding, it is not talking about decision-making but worry). If our feelings were the authority of God’s will, Jesus would not have died on the cross (Luke

22:42-44; Heb. 12:1-4). God can use our feelings, and oftentimes our desires can be in line with His desire, but when making decisions, it is unwise to use them alone.

Another example is in Acts 21:10-14 and 20:22-23, when the Christians let their feelings try to govern Paul's decision, but Paul would not let the fear of hard times change his decision.

Faith is established on truth, and truth is not relative but established on fact, not hunches, feelings, impressions, looking for signs or mystical experiences.

3. Be cautious of listening to ungodly counsel. Everyone has an opinion, and most people will share it with you. But just because someone is a good friend does not mean the advice they are giving you is godly. Before taking someone's advice make sure to weigh what they are saying against Scripture. Does what they are saying match up with God's Word or contradict it? It might even be best to not talk about important decisions with friends who will encourage you to do the wrong thing.

And finally, step out in faith. Faith is not waiting until you know 100 percent. Genuine faith is moving in that direction, putting confidence more in God's ability to guide or re-direct than in your ability to decide. It means putting your trust ultimately in God and not in self, circumstances or others.

The more we grow as Christians the more decisions we will make by faith in God, from seemingly big ones like who you'll marry, to seemingly small ones like what should you watch on TV. It is important to be ready to trust God in your decision whether it turns out the way you expected or not. And remember that with God the process is as important as the product.

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