

4 Ways God Reveals His Plan for You

Psalm 37:4 (NIV) says, *“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”* What are the desires of *your* heart? Are they in line with the will of God? Clearly, some desires are godly and others aren’t—and ungodly desires are almost always a perversion of godly ones.

There are so many things that are good and holy in and of themselves, but if they are mishandled they become extremely dangerous. Think about water. No human being can survive for long without water. And yet the International Life Saving Federation says as many as 1.2 million people drown every year around the world. That is more than two every minute.

Nuclear power is another example. Used properly, it could meet the world’s energy needs. Used improperly, it could destroy the world. It seems that every good gift or desire God gives to sustain and enhance life can be perverted and turned into something destructive. This is just one important reason why it’s so important to follow God’s will in everything we do.

What does God want you to do? If you like sports, think of it this way. Suppose your favorite football team signed nine kickers. No quarterbacks. No receivers. No linemen. Just kickers. You’d think the general manager had lost his mind, and you’d be in for a very long season.

God gave us all different talents and abilities because we all have unique paths to follow and unique purposes to fulfill. He expects us to work together in harmony to carry out His purposes.

In 1 Corinthians 12:14–18 Paul writes: *The body is not one part, but many. If the foot says, “Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if*

the ear says, "Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has established the parts, every one of them, in the body as it has pleased Him.

Some people have very healthy self-esteem. Others suffer from feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Yet every person has important talents and abilities that were given by God.

Some, because of the nature of their gifts, may be in the spotlight. Others stay in the background. But the person who gets recognition is no more important than the person who works quietly behind the scenes. God sees things much differently than we do, and He is never dazzled by talent or celebrity.

It is vitally important that you learn to use the abilities God has given you. Don't try to be something you're not. Don't offer to sing a solo during the worship service if you're tone deaf. But please don't hide your talent and let false modesty or low self-esteem prevent you from accomplishing great things for God.

Here are four important means God uses to reveal His plans for us:

1. The Bible – This does not mean that you can open the Bible at random, point to a verse, and read, "I want you to go into medicine." It doesn't work that way. Perhaps you've heard about the young man who tried to use that method to find God's will. The first verse he turned to said, "Judas went out and hanged himself." He quickly turned to another section, jabbed his finger at the book, and this time he read, "Go thou and do likewise."

Obviously that's not the way to use the Bible. The Bible will help you by revealing God's will in a general sense. As we

mentioned earlier, there are certain things no believer can do because they are simply contrary to God's laws. Could a believer deal drugs? Could he feel at ease working as a blackjack dealer in Las Vegas? Could a follower of Jesus own and operate sweatshops overseas?

Every individual Bible believer must make up his or her mind about these and dozens of similar issues. The best way to know for sure what is right or wrong for you is to study the Bible. If you have a hard time squaring your life plans with God's Word, it's probably time to rethink the path you're on.

2. Prayer – Prayer is a two-way street. It involves not only talking to God but listening to Him as well—and that means spending time sitting before Him in silence, waiting to hear His voice. Ask Him for direction, and He will provide it. You may receive an impression, or a particular scripture. Or you may find that your prayer is answered through what your friends say to you during the day that follows. The important thing is to know that God is concerned about you and will respond if you ask Him to. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote: *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without criticism, and it will be given to him”* (James 1:5).

Prayer works!

3. Wise counsel of others – Proverbs 19:20 says, *“Hear counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days.”* This doesn't mean we're supposed to follow every bit of advice that comes our way. We should test everything against the Word of God for confirmation.

Much of the well-meaning advice our friends give us is worthless. Far too often our “friends” only tell us what they think we want to hear. But we all need to have people in our lives who are willing to tell us the truth whether or not we want to hear it.

The Bible tells of many kings who failed because they only listened to prophets who stroked their egos and promised them victory. In other words, they surrounded themselves with “yes men” who told them to do what they wanted to do in the first place. And that sort of behavior always leads to tragedy. We can’t cherry-pick the advice we want to hear but must look for the overall consensus of people we trust and respect.

Another great verse from Proverbs says, *“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Prov. 11:14).

4. Circumstances – Do you suppose it was just luck that Peter and John happened to be washing their nets on the side of the Sea of Galilee the day Jesus called them to be His disciples (Luke 5:1–11)?

Did the Samaritan woman just happen to be going to the well the morning Jesus asked her for a drink (John 4:1–42)? Or had it all been seen beforehand?

Many times God speaks through the circumstances that come into our lives. But we’ll never know it if we don’t keep our eyes and ears open.

Here’s an important point to remember: *Never rely on circumstances alone*. Your present situation is merely one of the indicators that can show whether you’re moving in the right direction. You shouldn’t let circumstances alone hold you back from moving forward if every other indicator says, “Go!” Nor should you decide to move forward, based on circumstances alone, if every other indicator says, “Stop!”

If everything else lines up—the desires of your heart, your talents and abilities, counsel from people you trust, God’s Word, and prayer—then look for circumstances to line up as well, and for God to open up a way for you to move ahead in the path He’s chosen for you. {eoa}

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