

5 Keys to Knowing God's Will

A farmer in North Carolina lived on a beautiful farm that his family owned for many decades. When he died, his property—after being in the family for more than 200 years—was sold to one of the neighbors.

As the new owner was walking in the field, he saw a large, unusual-looking rock just barely sticking out of the dirt. He took it home, washed it and took it to a jewelry store. The jeweler confirmed what the owner already suspected: The old stone that had been in the field for thousands of years was a large, uncut emerald that has since proved to be worth several million dollars!

This gemstone was in that field all along just waiting for someone to come along and “discover” it. Undoubtedly, the emerald had been seen thousands of times before, but it was overlooked because it appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary rock.

When we “discover” something, we are finding something that already exists, though we were unaware of it previously. And while many people are desperately seeking God's will for their lives, the reality is that often what they are looking for is right under their nose—but they continue to look for it because they don't recognize it.

To recognize a precious stone, one would need to be familiar with its characteristics and know what it should look like. In the same way, if we desire to discover God's will for our lives, we must learn to recognize the following characteristics of His will.

1. God has a standard will and a specific will.

As we begin the journey of discovering God's will for our lives, it may seem like the potential options are endless.

This can often feel overwhelming. The good news is that God has already gone to great lengths to reveal to us in His Word what His will is for everyone. I call this the “standard will of God.”

In addition to His standard will, God has something tailor-made for each of our lives. I call this the “specific will of God.” It is important, however, to understand that the specific will of God for your life will never go against His standard will—what He has already revealed to us in His Word. This understanding will quickly help us to sort through the plethora of options and instantly eliminate confusion.

There are, in fact, many people who have done appalling things in the name of God. Many of them sincerely believed they were doing God’s will. But there is no need for this confusion because God has clearly revealed His standard will for everyone in His Word if we would only make it our compass and our guide.

Discovering God’s specific will for your life is something that is unique to you as an individual and something that you must discover for yourself. But our quest to discover God’s will for our lives must begin with the Word of God.

By following principles from the Scriptures, we will be able to navigate the ocean of options and opportunities without a shipwreck. Whatever you do in life, it must line up with God’s Word, and He will *never* call you to do something that is contrary to it.

2. God has a “good will” but also a “perfect will.”

God has a wonderful plan for our lives. But since He has given us the ability to choose whether we are going to follow His will, it seems that there are actually four possibilities:

We can remain ignorant of God’s will. This is not you; if it were, you wouldn’t be reading this right now. You obviously

have a deep desire in your heart to discover God's will for your life, and you will make that discovery.

We can know what God wants but still disobey. This is disobedience, and the head-on collision of God's will and the stubborn rebellion of human flesh.

We can know God's will but settle for less. It would've been far better if we had only been willing to obey. Settling for less than God's best is often the easy road.

We can contend for nothing less than God's best. This is the big challenge, because impatience to get what we want is a powerful force. But if we really believe God's will is always better than ours, we will be willing to wait for it and fight for it if necessary.

There is a perpetual conflict in the Christian life between what is "good" and what is "God." His perfect will, and the blessings that accompany it, are reserved for those who are willing to be radically obedient and to wait when necessary.

There are moments when God's way will seem so difficult, so prolonged and so unrewarding, while our idea seems much easier, much quicker and so much more enjoyable. But you will always find that God's plan is better than yours. There will never be an exception to this rule, so you might as well just decide from now on to yield to God's will, do it God's way and wait for God's best.

3. God calls us to do what we *can't* accomplish on our own.

There are many books on the market today about self-improvement and personal success. Many of the principles they teach are actually universal spiritual truths taken from the Word of God and then adapted to fit a wide variety of applications. They are like cheerleaders standing on the sidelines, crying: "You can do it! You can do it!"

If the “You Can Do It” philosophy were true, we wouldn’t need God, would we? This mindset needs to be replaced with another, which essentially says: “I *can’t* do it on my own, *but* I can do all things *through Christ*. With His help and blessing, anything is possible.”

Finding the will of God always requires faith for the impossible and a childlike dependence on Him. The Bible is filled with the accounts of men and women who found their destiny in the perfect will of God by doing things that were impossible for them to do on their own. Think about:

Noah and his impossible project: Noah was commissioned to build a ship the size of an aircraft carrier by hand! Yet he did it with God’s help and grace.

Abraham and his impossible promise: At an advanced age, God told Abraham that he would have as many descendents as the stars of the sky and the sands of the sea. He did become the “father of many nations” just as the Lord said, even though, from a purely natural biological standpoint, it was impossible.

Moses and his impossible passage: Moses was 80 years old when God instructed him to bring approximately 2 million people out of Egypt and take them to a land that He had promised Abraham more than 700 years earlier. Moses had plenty of reasons why he was unfit for the job. Yet despite these enormous obstacles, Moses submitted to his destiny, obeyed to the best of his ability, and God did the rest!

Mary and her impossible pregnancy: A young girl named Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she had found great favor with God and had been chosen to give birth to the Messiah of Israel. Mary submitted to the will of God, even though she didn’t fully understand it. As a result, she fulfilled her destiny by giving birth to and raising God’s Son.

God has always chosen ordinary people to do extraordinary things. He has used men, women, young, old, educated, illiterate. But they all had something in common: Every one of them was called to be part of something much bigger than themselves. Because of their willingness to yield themselves to the One who had created them and allow His purposes to be revealed in and through them, God used them in phenomenal ways. Kathryn Kuhlman once said: "God is not looking for golden vessels or silver vessels. But He is looking for yielded vessels."

It seems that one of the common characteristics of God's will for our lives is that it is always impossible for us to fulfill in our own strength. But as we yield our lives to Him, He causes His divine plans and dreams to become a reality! God takes great pleasure in doing things through us that only He can do, so that in the end He receives all the glory, honor and praise.

4. There are times and seasons in God's will.

We can easily become frustrated if we don't understand that, just as there are times and seasons in nature, there are also times and seasons in our lives and in the process of fulfilling God's will for our lives. This is what Paul was referring to when he said, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart"(Gal. 6:9).

Years ago a group of senior missionaries came together to discuss life principles they had discovered from several decades of combined ministry experience. Their purpose was to be able to share this wealth of experience with succeeding generations.

As these seasoned leaders talked and shared their life stories, a familiar pattern began to emerge: They all had encountered common stages of transition in their ministries,

so they collectively identified a fascinating five-step cyclical process God had taken them through. Here is a brief summary of the stages they identified, steps they all had taken in their journey to know and find God's will:

Stage 1: Birth of the Vision. Before anything tangible existed, each leader had a vision that was imparted by the Holy Spirit. In its infancy, the vision might have been general—but also very real—and brought an excitement and abiding awareness that were from the Lord.

Stage 2: Preparation. Following the impartation came a time of being prepared to pursue the vision. This is the stage where most of God's dreams for people are aborted because they refuse to do the necessary work. When God gives a vision, there must be some kind of action from us or that vision will never amount to anything more than a passing daydream.

Stage 3: The Wilderness and Struggle. One of the biggest misconceptions about discovering the will of God is that if something is God's will, there will be no struggle involved. That is a myth! You can almost be guaranteed a significant amount of struggle will be required. This stage is the proving ground of faithfulness and has no substitute.

Stage 4: Realization of the Vision. With this stage, they attained the vision. This is the place we all are looking forward to, where we can finally enjoy the fruits of our diligent preparation and God's faithfulness to us.

Stage 5: New Beginnings and Vision. They found themselves being challenged once more with fresh vision from the Holy Spirit, and they concluded that their lives had been a continual cycle of ever-expanding vision. As God entrusted them with more, greater amounts of preparation were required and the intensity of the battles they faced always increased.

5. God is interested in our journey *and* our destination.

Why are we still here? Jesus died on the cross 2,000 years ago and completed the work of salvation “once for all.” So why doesn’t He just rapture all of us so that we can be with Him? It seems clear that God is interested not only in our final destination but also in our journey, because along the way He does a work in our lives that has eternal value.

Many of us are impatient when it comes to God’s will for our lives. We just want to get there. But in most cases, there is a great deal of time that elapses between when God calls us and when we have fulfilled His will for our lives. We need to understand that the journey is an important process that matters very much to God. The process of following Him in obedience—through many unknowns, trials and difficulties—is a significant part of our development and preparation.

God uses the journey to teach us faith, refine our character and equip us for the greater challenges that lie ahead and require more strength than we previously had. Even if you’re in the process of seeking God’s will right now, you are already fulfilling a part of it for your life: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go” (Ps. 32:8) is His will.

My friend, don’t make the mistake of thinking even for a moment that because you don’t know today what God’s will is for your life you are not making any progress. Something is happening *right now*. Your faith is being stretched, your patience tried and your doubts confronted.

That struggle is part of the birthing process. God *always* prepares us in advance for all He has prepared for us. Though uncomfortable, it is necessary nonetheless. So get ready: Good things are coming for you!

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air evangelistic campaigns in some of the most dangerous and remote locations on earth. He is president and CEO of Christ for all Nations and hosts an internationally syndicated television program.

To hear the unique way Kolenda describes the power of the Holy Spirit [click here](#).