

‘Follow Your Heart’ and 3 Other Potentially Dangerous Theories About Knowing God’s Will

Where do we find God’s will? Is it in one of the following theories?

1. The Tightrope Theory

This teaching declares God’s will is like a tightrope where one wrong move will ruin your life and require you to start all over again—or worse, be eternally out of God’s will. This view assumes God is powerless to work through the faults of man.

The tightrope theory has a difficult time explaining how Moses could lead the children of Israel out of Egypt with first-degree murder on his record (Exodus 2:11-12) or how Peter could preach powerfully at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) when months earlier Jesus rebuked him and called Him Satan (Matt. 16:23). It seems God is not wringing His hands worried that imperfect men will mess up His will.

2. The Perfect Will of God Theory

Another theory describes a state of being where everything magically lines up to put you in God’s perfect will. (Of course this implies that God also has an imperfect will—which sounds really strange for God.) “Those who [espouse] this view [seem] to think that there [are] a range of possible choices that [are] acceptable to God, but that our main goal should be to hit God’s bull’s-eye.”

This view leaves God at our mercy by assuming He has to take

the decisions we make and do His best with them. Isn't it funny how we never hear Jesus speak this way to anyone? "I'm sorry Andrew, the healing you performed was good, but if you would have been in my *perfect will*, it would have been great! Try to do better next time."

3. The Open Door Theory

Many people believe that if a door of opportunity opens in life, it must be from God. Quoting Revelation 3:8, "... I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut ..." they take this passage totally out of context. But even if the interpretation were correct, it would still leave a difficult question: which door? Every situation in life has multiple possibilities for *open doors*.

Apparently Peter picked the wrong door when he tried to free Jesus by cutting off a Roman soldier's ear. Jesus rebuked him saying, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53) Translation: "I'm going through a different door." I wonder how many of us would have chosen the same one.

4. The Follow Your Heart Theory

Some misguided believers have spiritualized the secular adage to "follow your heart." The only problem, according to Jer. 17:9, is "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Samson may be the first to say, "Amen!")

Sometimes this view comes in the form of the phrase "You'll just know," which is code for "I don't have a clue." Other times someone may refer to having a "peace" about a situation. But Jesus wasn't experiencing emotional peace in Luke 22:41-44 when He sweat drops of blood in the garden. And there is no doubt He fulfilled God's will.

It Shouldn't Be Confusing

All of the theories about God's will have caused many to feel anxious about making any decisions without some sort of divine guidance, so they begin to believe that every hunch or feeling must be God's way of trying to tell them something.

Many times, the feelings they interpret as divine revelation are merely reflections of their circumstances. Jennifer's attraction to Tim's guitar skills may be the real reason she thinks God is leading her to date him. The test Craig bombed in his business class could account for his desire to change majors. And Jim's rough week at the office may have shaped his desire to move to California. Just like Jonah stumbling upon a boat headed to Tarshish, opportunities can seem providential when we already have a desire for them.

All of the stress and strain of trying to stay on the tightrope or in the bulls-eye of God's will seems strange for those who have been promised "... my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:30)

The constant feeling that God's will is always dangling just out of reach seems at odds with "... ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Luke 9:11)

But where do we find God's will?

The preceding is an excerpt from Scott Attebery's book, "Navigate: Understanding & Pursuing God's Will."

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