

**Discern the Will of God**  
**Romans 12:2**  
February 2, 2022

**Context**

*Theme of Romans:* The gospel of God (1:16-17)

Chs 1-11      The gospel as the power of God for salvation – The indicatives

12:1-15:13    The gospel and the transformation of life – The imperatives

- 12:1-2      Consecration
- 12:3-8      Humility
- 12:9-21     Love

15:14-16:27   Conclusion

In 12:1, we as believers are exhorted, on the basis of the mercies received from God in the gospel, to present our bodies to God as a sacrifice

- To consecrate our bodies to our God who has saved us

This sacrifice is to be living, holy, and pleasing to God

This is the believer's reasonable response of worship

12:2 instructs how we are to live a life consecrated to God our Savior...

**1. Do not be conformed to this world**

**2. Be transformed by the renewal of your mind**

**3. Discern the will of God**

*Question:* What does Paul mean here by, "the will of God"?

Here, the will of God is God's revealed will as it bears on our lives as believers

1. This will of God is contrary to our old, unregenerate will
  - **2 Cor. 5:15** and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.
  
2. This will of God is not hidden but has been revealed in Scripture
  - **1 Th. 4:3–5** For **this is the will of God**, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;
  - **1 Th. 5:16–18** Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for **this is the will of God** in Christ Jesus for you.
  - **1 Pet. 2:13–15** Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For **this is the will of God**, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.
  
3. This will of God must be discerned
  - ESV "that by testing you may discern what is the will of God"
  - LSB "so that you may approve what the will of God is"
  - NET "so that you may test and approve what is the will of God"
  - This goes beyond understanding the revelation of God's will in the Bible. This involves discerning how God's will bears upon our individual lives.
  - This involves discerning whether or not something is in accordance with God's revealed will for our lives
  
4. This will of God goes beyond what is morally right and good in itself, and has in view the whole picture of God's revelation and the believer's life
  - **Phil. 1:9–11** And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may **approve what is excellent**, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
  
5. This will of God has in view God's priorities and purpose for our lives as believers
  - **Hos. 6:6** For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
  - **Matt. 6:33a** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
  - **Mark 12:29–31** Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

*Question:* How are we to discern the will of God?

**“what is good and acceptable and perfect.”**

1. “good” in God’s sight
2. “acceptable” / “pleasing” (NIV) to God
  - 12:1 “acceptable to God”
3. “perfect” in conformity to God’s holy character
  - 12:1 “holy”

This is how we need to view God’s will

1. We are no longer to view the ways of the world as such
2. God’s will is often hard, and sometimes does not make sense to us who see only part of the picture

As believers we are called to do the will of the One who...

1. Knows the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10)
2. Who loves us with a love from which nothing can separate us (Rom 8:38-39)
3. Who has lavished His mercies on us (12:1)
4. Whose wisdom, knowledge, ways, and greatness are so highly praised in **11:33-36**

Twelve things the Christian is to evaluate when discerning if something is the will of God (not an exhaustive list by any means):

1. Does the Bible give freedom to do it?
2. Would you be running away from a trial that your Heavenly Father has sent to sanctify you? (Jas 1:2-4; Rom 5:3-5)
3. Would you be following the flesh or the Spirit?
  - **Gal. 5:16** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
  - If we do something with fleshly motives, it is sin
4. Would you be turning to this for happiness, instead of finding your joy in the Lord?
  - **Neh. 8:10** “...for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
  - **Phil. 4:4** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.
5. Would it lead into temptation or toward holiness?
  - **Matt. 6:13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
  - **Heb. 12:14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

6. Would it point you toward self or toward God?
  - **Luke 9:23** And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
  - **2 Cor. 5:15** and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.
  
7. Would it be out of love for God? (Matt 22:36-38)
  
8. How would it affect other people?
  - **Phil. 2:3-5** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,”
  
9. What would it say about God to the people in your life? Would it give them a distorted view of God?
  - **Deut. 9:27-28** [Moses recounts how he prayed to the Lord,] Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which you brought us say, “Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.”
  
10. Would it help your witness or hinder your witness?
  - **Matt. 5:13-16** “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
  
11. Do you have a clear conscience about it?
  - **Acts 24:16** So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.
  - Romans 14:22-23
  
12. What would glorify God?
  - **1 Cor. 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Do not confuse God’s revealed will for our lives that we are called to discern, with God’s hidden will for our lives that we are called to trust.

1. God’s hidden will is part of His sovereign, decreed will
  - **Rom. 1:10** always in my prayers, asking that somehow by **God’s will** I may now at last succeed in coming to you.
  - **1 Pet. 3:17** For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be **God’s will**, than for doing evil.
  
2. We know God’s hidden will after it comes to pass

3. We are called to trust God's sovereign will
  - The book of Job

When we fail to do God's revealed will, then we are to confess our sins to our Heavenly Father, receive His forgiveness, trust in His sovereign will, and then submit to His revealed will.

### **Conclusion**

Have you been renewing your mind with Scripture, and discerning and doing the will of God?

God saved us in His great mercy and grace, so that we would now do His will

- **1 Pet. 4:1–2** Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but **for the will of God**.