

Knowing God's Will

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I. Two Aspects of God's Will

- A. God's moral (revealed) will. Deut. 29:29b | Th. 4:3 5:18 Eph. 5:17 6:6 | Pe. 2:15
Heb. 13:21 | Jo. 2:17 Rom. 12:2 2:18 Col. 1:9 4:12 Mt. 7:21 12:50 Mark 3:35
John 4:34 7:17 Acts 13:22 | Tim. 2:4 Psalm 40:8
1. This aspect of God's will refers to His commands and His desires.
 - a. I Thess. 4:3 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification....*
 - b. I Pe. 2:15 *For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.*
 - c. Mt. 7:21 *Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*
 - d. I Ti. 2:4 *He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
 2. Where do we learn of God's moral will? II Tim. 3:16-17 Ps. 119:105 *Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*
 3. God's revelation in Scripture is complete and infallible. Heb. 1:1-2 Eph. 2:20
 4. Anyone claiming new revelation must meet an exceedingly high standard.
Deut. 13:1-5 18:18-22 II Pet. 1:20-21
 - a. What he predicts must come to pass perfectly in every detail.
 - b. What he says must be in perfect harmony with previous revelation (Scripture).
 5. People who claim supernatural guidance are claiming new revelation from God.
- B. God's sovereign will (His plan). Deut. 29:29a Eph. 1:11 Rom. 9:18-19,22 1:10 15:32
I Co. 1:1 4:19 12:18 II Ti. 1:1 Heb. 10:9 I Pet. 3:17 4:19 Gal. 1:4 Isa. 53:10 46:8-11
Acts 18:21 2:23 21:14 Js. 4:15 Ps. 33:11 Mt. 26:42 John 5:30 6:38-40 Col. 1:27
Prov. 16:9 19:21 Dan. 4:35 Acts 17:26
1. This aspect of God's will refers to His providentially working all things according to His perfect eternal purpose (decrees). Eph. 1:11 Romans 8:28 *Who works all things after the counsel of his will.*
 - a. God has planned and decreed all things from eternity past. Isa. 46:8-11
 - b. He works all things according to His will in the present. Ps. 33:11 *The counsel of the LORD stands forever. The plans of His heart from generation to generation.*
 - c. He does whatsoever He pleases. Ps. 115:3 *Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.*
 2. He is sovereign over any plans we make. Prov. 16:9 *The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.* I Cor. 4:19 *I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills...*
 3. God's sovereign will allows and uses events which violate His moral will. Gen. 50:20 Is. 53:10 Acts 2:23 4:28 Luke 22:42 *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good... This man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men...*
 4. How can you know God's sovereign will?
- C. We are to submit to every aspect of God's will. Mt. 6:10 Luke 22:42 John 4:34
1. We should desire to do His revealed will.
 2. We should willingly embrace His sovereign will.
 3. It is futile to resist Him. Ps. 2:9-10 Dan. 4:34-35

- D. Does the Bible teach that God has a hypothetical “perfect” will beyond His revealed precepts and sovereign plan?
1. People express this as aiming for the center of God’s will: the bull’s eye.
 2. They claim those who miss the bull’s eye have to settle for plan B.
 3. The Bible does not teach that any such hypothetical will of God exists.
 4. God only has one plan: plan A. Romans 8:28
 5. What is the harm of seeking a hypothetical “perfect” will of God? (bull’s eye).
 - a. People waste time and effort pursuing something which doesn’t exist.
 - b. People neglect pursuit of God’s revealed will which is to guide their choices.
 - c. People live with false regrets about legitimate choices they have made in accordance with God’s moral and sovereign will.

II. Should we expect supernatural guidance?

- A. The desire for supernatural guidance is not limited to believers.
1. Pagans also seek direction for the future.
 2. Mystical pursuit of God’s secret things is explicitly forbidden in Scripture. Deut. 18:9-12 Lev. 19:26-31 Isa. 47:33 II Ki. 17:16 Ezek. 21:21
 3. *Some Christians try to pursue God’s will in a way which resembles paganism.*
- B. In the Bible, supernatural guidance is unmistakable, authoritative, significant, and exceptional.
1. When God reveals Himself, He leaves no doubt.
 2. God’s revelation comes with His full authority. Dt. 13:1-5 18:18-19 II Pet. 1:20-21
 3. God reveals Himself to key people at crucial points in the history of redemption.
 4. The main characters in the Bible ordinarily operated upon the revelation they had already been given, rather than constantly seeking special guidance. Acts 15:36 20:16 Phil. 2:25-26 II Cor. 2:12-13 Rom. 15:20-24 I Th. 3:1-2
 5. Now we have a complete Bible which equips us to make godly choices. II Pe. 1:3f
 6. We are never told to seek or expect mystical supernatural guidance.
- C. In what ways do Christians wrongly seek supernatural guidance?
1. Putting out a fleece. Judges 6:36-40
 - a. Gideon had already received supernatural guidance and knew God’s moral will for his life. Judges 6:12-16
 - b. Gideon’s desire for a sign was due to lack of faith.
 - c. The sign asked for was supernatural, not merely coincidental.
 - d. Gideon’s act is never used in Scripture as an example for us to follow.
 2. Casting lots (rolling dice, flipping a coin). Acts 1:15-26 Pr. 18:18 16:33 He. 1:1-2
 - a. Peter knowingly fulfilled Scriptural prophecy. Ps. 69:25 109:8
 - b. Other apostles had been personally appointed by Jesus. Acts 1:2 Lu. 16:13
 - c. The field of candidates was narrowed from 120 to 2 using God’s revealed will. Acts 1:21b-22 I Cor. 15:5-9
 - d. This is the last recorded instance of guidance being sought in this way.
 - e. How did the apostles select church elders? I Tim. 3:1f Titus 1 Acts 14:23
 3. Asking for signs from God. Mt. 12:39 16:4 24:24 II Cor. 11:14
 - a. A wicked generation seeks a sign.
 - b. Satan can produce counterfeit miracles and lying signs.
 - c. We are never told to seek signs for guidance.

4. Open doors (circumstances). I Co. 16:8-9 II Cor. 2:12-13 Jonah 1:1-3 | Sa. 24:1f
 - a. Not all open doors should be entered.
 - b. Some open doors violate God's revealed will. Jonah 1:3 | Sam. 24:4-7
 - c. All circumstances/open doors must be evaluated in light of Scripture.
5. Dreams and visions. Ezek. 13:1-9 Daniel 2 Genesis 41
6. Relying upon feelings and impressions. Pr. 14:12 3:5-6 28:26 Jer. 17:9
Rom. 8:14-16 Gal. 5:18 Prov. 28:26 Eph. 4:22 Js. 1:14
 - a. Feelings and impressions are never identified as the leading of the Spirit.
 - b. Scripture tells us to mistrust our feelings. Pr. 14:12 28:26 Jer. 17:9
 - c. Even conscience may be defiled, seared, and evil. Titus 1:15 II Ti. 4:2
 - d. Should we ever pay attention to our feelings?
7. Using Scripture texts out of context, "lucky dipping". II Pe. 3:16-17 II Tim. 2:15

D. Some claim God speaks to them.

1. Amazingly, many cessationists (those who believe revelation has ceased) claim God gives them specific direction.
2. Does God speak to us in prayer?
3. If you claim God is speaking to you, you are claiming prophetic status and will be held to that standard. Deut. 13:1f 18:18f

E. Why is it wrong to seek mystical supernatural guidance? Deut. 29:29

1. We sinfully want a level of knowledge, certainty, and control over our decisions beyond what God offers us. Dt. 29:29 *Christian mysticism*.
2. We don't want to take responsibility for our decisions and their consequences.
3. We don't want to trust God for the unknown future.

F. What is the harm of seeking supernatural guidance?

1. Many claiming supernatural guidance have made unwise choices and have caused great harm to themselves and others.
2. People claiming supernatural guidance exercise great sway over others.
3. The guidance God offers in His infallible and all sufficient Word is neglected.
4. People put themselves under bondage, experiencing unnecessary anxiety and delay over simple decisions. Gen. 2:16-17
5. They fret over past decisions.

G. What about verses which speak of God guiding us? Js. 1:5 Prov. 3:5-6 Ps. 23 Eph. 5:17 Col. 1:9 Rom. 12:2

1. These verses are not speaking about mystical guidance.
2. He guides us through His revealed Word which tells us how to live.
3. He directs us through providence as we see His perfect plan unfold.

III. **How does God guide you?** Ps. 23 Prov. 3:5-6

A. God guides you through His Word. Ps. 119:24 II Tim. 3:16-17 II Pe. 1:3 *Your testimonies are my delight. They are my counselors.*

1. The Bible provides infallible and sufficient direction. II Tim. 3:16-17 II Pe. 1:3
2. How can you use the Bible to help you make decisions? Psalm. 1:2
3. Apply texts according to their meaning in context. II Tim. 2:15

- B. God guides you through wise counsel. Prov. 15:22 12:15 19:20 *Without consultation plans are frustrated, but with many counselors, they succeed...*
1. Select your counselors carefully. Ps. 1:1 | Ki. 12:1f Col. 2:8 Heb. 13:17 Titus 2:3-5
 2. Why is counsel necessary? Pr. 28:26 27:6
 3. The job of a counselor is to help you to apply the Bible to your situation.
 4. Counsel should be weighted, not merely counted.
 5. Good Christian books can provide useful counsel. *Resources for Changing Lives.*
- C. God guides you through the Holy Spirit (The Counselor). Ro. 8:14 John 16:13 17:17 Eph. 1:13 *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*
1. Nowhere is the leading of the Holy Spirit referred to as a feeling.
 2. The Spirit of Truth gives you understanding of God's Word: illumination.
John 14:26 16:13 17:17 | 1 Co. 2:12-14 Rom. 12:2 Col. 1:9
 3. The Spirit helps you to apply the Word to your life. Ezek. 36:27 Ro. 8:4,13 Js. 4:5 Gal. 5:16f Ps. 139:13-14 John 16:8
- D. How does God guide you through prayer? James 1:5
1. Don't expect a mystical answer to prayer.
 2. Don't use prayer as an excuse for an irresponsible or selfish decision.
 3. Pray that God will give you wisdom to apply the Bible to your situation. Ps. 25:4-5
119:12,26,33,66,73,125 Prov. 2:1-11 Phil. 1:9-10 Col. 1:9-10 James 1:5 | II Tim. 2:7 *Make me know your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths...*
 4. Pray that God will give you the desire and ability to do His moral will. Phil. 2:13
 5. Pray that God will give you the grace to embrace His sovereign will. Js. 4:13f
- E. Is there any sense in which God guides you through feelings? Rom. 5:1 II Cor. 2:13
1. Feelings of peace or a lack of peace have causes which need to be understood.
 2. You may lack peace because deep down you know you are doing wrong.
 3. You may lack peace because you are very cautious or anxious by nature.
 4. Your desires may also influence your decisions. I Tim. 3:1 I Cor. 7:39 Ecc. 11:9
 5. All feelings must be tested against the Word of God.
- F. God guides you through providence (circumstances) which reveal His sovereign will. James 4:13-17 Acts 18:21 Prov. 16:9 27:1 Ro. 1:13 I Cor. 4:19 Mt. 6:10
1. You make your plans and decisions, but the Lord controls the outcome.
Pr. 16:9 *The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.*
 2. He opens and closes doors.
 3. Be careful not to mystically interpret all open and closed doors as signs from God.

IV. Will you always receive clear guidance from God on every decision?

- A. Some decisions are based upon direct commands of Scripture. I Jo. 3:4 Js. 4:17
- B. Many decisions are not as clear-cut, and must be made according to wisdom.
- The Bible does not give you a specific answer for every situation. For example:
 - Should I marry? Whom should I marry?
 - At what standard of living should I live?
 - How much should I give to the Lord's work? Through whom should I give?
 - Where should I live?
 - Which education should I pursue?
 - What vocation should I select?
 - Which church should I join?
 - Am I called to full-time ministry or missions work?
 - How should I divide my time among church, family, and work?
 - Search the Scriptures to find principles of wisdom which apply.
 - Marriage. Genesis 2:18-25 Proverbs 31 Eph. 5:22f I Pet. 3:1-7 I Cor. 7:1f
 - Finances and giving. Ro. 13:8 Pr. 22:7 I Ti. 6:9f Lu. 14:28-29
 - Giving. II Cor. 8-9 I Cor. 16:1-2 I Tim. 6:17
 - Location. Heb. 13:17 I Tim. 5:8
 - Education and career. Pr. 22:29 12:11 I Cor. 15:33
 - Church. Heb. 13:17 I Tim. 3:1-7
 - Call to ministry. I Cor. 12:13 I Pet. 4:10-11 I Tim. 3:1f Titus 1:5f
 - Priorities. I Cor. 10:13
 - Often there will be biblical principles which weigh on both sides of a decision.
 - Questions to ask yourself:
 - What will bring the most glory to God? I Cor. 10:31
 - Are you motivated by a love of the world and the flesh, or by a love for God? I John 2:15-17
 - Are you being sinfully expedient? Luke 14:27
 - What will show love to others? Phil. 2:3-4 I Cor. 10:33 Romans 15:1
 - Would this cause others to stumble? Rom. 14:15
 - What will contribute to your spiritual growth? I Cor. 6:12 *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable...*
 - What will best fit your gifts and abilities? Acts 6:2-3
 - What would Jesus do? I Pet. 2:21 Rom. 15:7-8 John 13:15
 - Sometimes it helps to make lists to weigh pros and cons.
- C. Once you have examined the biblical reasons, you are free to consider your desires. I Cor. 7:39 I Tim. 3:1
- Sometimes multiple choices will be within the realm of your freedom. Ge. 2:16-17
 - You may choose according to your desire. I Cor. 7:39
- D. Once you make your decision, trust God for the outcome. James 4:13-17 I Cor. 4:19
- It is good to plan and to be decisive. Pr. 21:5
 - But God directs your steps and determines the result. Pr. 16:9 27:1 Js. 4:13-17
 - Submit to His sovereign will as it is revealed to you. Acts 18:21 Ro. 1:13
- E. Rejoice as you look back upon His wonderful providence (leading) as He works out His plan for your life. Rom 8:28 Ge. 50:20

V. Concluding summary and applications.

A. Don't be a Christian mystic.

B. Look to the revelation God has given in His Word.

C. Is there something you know to be God's will which you aren't obeying? Acts 17:30