

Pointers from the Word

Read Romans 12:1-2

What is the first, and most important step if we want to know God's will in our lives (v1)?



How can we be transformed rather than copying the world (v2)?

With this transformation we can know God's will, but how is His will described in v2?

a) _____ b) _____ c) _____

Read I Thessalonians 5:16-22

What seven things does Paul list here that are always God's will for every Christian?

- 1) To always be J _____ (v16)
- 2) To keep on P _____ (v17)
- 3) No matter what happens to be T _____ (v18)
- 4) Not to S _____ the S _____ (v19)
- 5) Not to S _____ at P _____ (v20)
- 6) To T _____ everything & hold on to what is G _____ (v21)
- 7) To keep away from every kind of E _____ (v22)

Read Proverbs 3:5&6

What three things should we do to walk in straight paths?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Read Psalm 119:105 & I Corinthians 2:12

What two things will help you to know God's paths?

a) _____ b) _____

Read James 1:5

If you find it difficult to make a decision, what should you do?

LEARN THIS:

[Proverbs 3:5&6]

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths.

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Learning to Live – Lesson 8



Knowing God's will

One of the greatest needs for us as Christians is to know God's will for our lives. God has a purpose for each of our lives, which is to make us like Jesus, and to use us to reach other people for Him. We must know what God's purposes for our lives are and ask Him to lead us in the right way to fulfil these purposes. In this lesson we will learn about God's purposes for our lives as Christians and then we will learn how God guides us in the everyday decisions we make.

God's Purposes for your Life

Before we can understand how God will guide us we must understand God's purposes for our lives as Christians, since God's guidance will always work towards fulfilling these purposes. If we always test how we live against these purposes, we will always stay close to God's will. The Bible teaches us about five purposes for our lives:

1) To know God and put Him first in our lives

WORSHIP

"love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind" (Matthew 22:37)

This was the reason why God created mankind – He wanted us to know Him and live with Him. Sin destroyed this relationship, and we began to worship many other things instead of God – idols made to look like things God had made, false gods, or possessions and power. One test of whether something is part of God's will for us is whether it helps us to put God first in our lives and to worship Him.

2) To love and care for other people in God's family

FELLOWSHIP

"Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39)

Part of God's purpose for all Christians is to be part of a local church where they can share their lives with other Christians in the love God has given them (see *Lesson 17*). If something keeps you away from church or makes you love other Christians less then it probably isn't part of God's plan for you.

3) To become more like Jesus

GROWTH

"God ... chose them to become like His Son" (Romans 8:29)

The four letters WWJD have become very well known amongst Christian young people. They stand for "What would Jesus Do?" This is a useful question to ask about what we do, as God's plan for our lives is that we should become like Jesus. If you do not think Jesus would do something, you probably shouldn't do it either. If you find that something you do, watch or listen to makes you less like Jesus then you should leave it out of your life.

4) To use the gifts God has given us to serve Him

SERVICE

"God has given gifts to each of you ... Manage them well" (1 Peter 4:10)

God has given each Christian gifts to serve Him and to help other people. God's plan for your life will lead you to do things that He has gifted you for. If you are gifted at listening to other people it probably means that God will lead you into a career where you work with other people. God is not likely to lead you to do something that He has not gifted you for. For example, if you are not gifted at speaking in front of large groups of people it probably means that God is not calling you to be a teacher.

5) To reach other people for Jesus

WITNESS

"go and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19)

God has placed us on earth to be His witnesses (see *Lesson 15*). If you find that something makes it more difficult for you to tell people about Jesus then you probably should not do it. Our lives must show God's truth and love to other people.

The Key to Guidance

Some people tend to think that God will try to hide His will from us, and that we must try very hard through lots of different ways to figure it out. Actually, the Bible tells us that God wants us to know how to live for Him in a way that pleases Him. The key to guidance is to walk closely with God every day, led by His Spirit. Two passages from the Old Testament reveal this truth to us:

Proverbs 3:5&6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths."

If we want to know God's will for our lives, we need to be walking in God's paths. This means that every day we must trust in Him. If we submit our lives to His control every day then He will direct our paths with every step that we take. Sometimes we worry about where God might be leading us in five or ten years' time. The most important thing is to keep walking step by step in His path each day. If we do this, and seek His will in every area of our lives, He will continue to direct us.

Psalms 37:4&5

"Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him, and He will help you."

God promises to give those people who take delight in Him the things they desire. The reality is that people who delight in God and commit everything they do to Him have only one great desire, which is to please Him. When our heart is His, God fills it with the same desires that are on His heart. When you live closely with Him day by day, you will know what is right and wrong and where God is leading you. As you become more like Christ you learn to think and feel like Him.

How does God guide us?

Even when we commit our ways to the Lord, we still have many decisions to make, and it is not always easy to know which choice is right. Sometimes our desires can still lead us in the wrong way (although the closer we are to God the less this will happen). Our decisions must be:

- a) **Right** – we must be sure that they are not obviously sinful (breaking laws God has given us)
- b) **Wise** – many decisions are not an issue of right or wrong, but of wisdom and foolishness. This will often depend on the results of the decision for God (does it honour Him?), for us (does it help to make us more like Christ?) and for others (is it really in their best interests?).

There are several tests that we can use to ensure our decisions are right **and** wise. I remember these six tests by the letters of the word "WISDOM":

1. W – for God's Word (the Bible)

"Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105)

God will never lead you to do anything that is opposed to something He has previously told us. If you have a desire to do something that the Bible teaches you is wrong, you can be sure that this desire does not come from God. The Bible is the most important test of everything in our lives. It gives us rules for living our lives the way God wants us to, but does not give yes or no answers for most specific decisions in our lives. However, the more we fill our minds with the truth of the Bible the more we will develop wisdom as it shapes our minds to think in a godly way.

2. I – am I the right person? (Does my gifting help me to decide?)

God has gifted you uniquely to serve Him both in the church and in your everyday life. He has done this through your personality, spiritual gifts, natural abilities and experiences. It is not likely that God will ask you to do something that He has not gifted you to do – for example, if you are no good at maths, it is unlikely that God is calling you to be an accountant. Part of testing your desires and thoughts should include asking whether God has given you the ability to follow the desire through. You might have a good idea, but it might be for someone else to carry it through.

3. S – Spirit (when I pray do I have greater peace about it?)

"let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives" (Galatians 5:25)

God has given you a conscience, which is a feeling deep inside you of what is right and wrong. Sin has damaged your conscience, so that it is not always correct, but the Holy Spirit can restore it to work properly again. There are times when you feel uneasy in your heart about something, and this is often God speaking to you through your conscience to stop you from making a wrong decision. If you feel uneasy about something you should stop before doing it to take more time to pray about it. The Holy Spirit will lead you in the way God has planned for you. If you are led by the Holy Spirit and He fills every part of your life, then He will help you to know what God wants you to do. **When you have a difficult decision to make you should pray** that God will give you peace about the correct decision. Often after you have prayed for some time you will experience a strong feeling leading us towards one decision. This may be the Holy Spirit. The longer you live as a Christian, the more the Holy Spirit will change your mind so that we think in the way Jesus thinks rather than the way people in this world think (see Romans 12:1&2).

4. D – Don't Rush (wait for God's timing in your circumstances)

God often guides us through opportunities that He opens up in our lives. When a new opportunity arises you should always ask whether God might be working in it to lead you into something new. God is in control of our whole universe, and we should expect that He will work through things that seem to be coincidences. Whenever something happens that we did not expect, even if it is something hurtful or disappointing, we should not blame God or ask "why?", but we should ask "where is God leading me now?" If God is leading you to do something, He will give you the opportunity in His time – never feel that you must rush of you are not sure of God's will.

5. O – what do other wise Christians say? (Wise Advice)

When you have a difficult decision to make, it is often helpful to discuss it with an older Christian who knows you. Older Christians have had similar decisions to make in their own lives, and they may have very helpful advice. They may also see weaknesses, temptations and wrong motives in your life that you do not see.

6. M – what is my motivation? (a final check)

It is always worthwhile asking a final question when all of the five tests above point in the same direction: why do you want to do this thing? If your motivation is only for your own good or for selfish reasons then you should reconsider your decision. Everything we do as Christians should be first for God's glory, secondly for the benefit of others and only last for your own good.

What will God guide you about?

God does not always have only one correct decision for us on every issue. There are many decisions in life where He gives us the freedom to make our own decision using the wisdom He has given. For example, God does not have a correct set of clothes for you to wear each day, so that if you wear a different shirt you would be disobeying His will. You do not need to pray or ask God to guide you about a simple decision like that. Even in some of the bigger decisions in life God may not have a correct and incorrect answer, but there may be one answer that brings more glory to God, benefits others more and is better for you than the others. Some decisions matter more than others. The biggest decisions are often our career and who we should marry (if at all). Here are some questions you might find helpful if you are praying about these issues.

Career: What do you enjoy doing, and what has God gifted you to do? Can you serve God and others in this career? Are there any things in this job that would harm your witness for God? How will you build God's kingdom through this career? What opportunities are open to you?

Marriage Is the person a Christian (if not, the answer is no – see **II Corinthians 6:14**)? Do they help you become more like Jesus and want to know Him more? Do they have the same desire as you to serve God?