



"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

Disciplemaking 1 - Abiding in His Word

LESSON 8 - GOD'S WILL

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2

Knowing God's will is very important to every believer. However, our goal must not be just *knowing* God's will. Our goal must also be *doing* His will. Much of His direction for our lives is of a general nature that applies to all Believers uniformly. He also has an individualized will for each believer. There are no shortcuts, no gimmicks, and no magic formulas in determining God's will. Most often God gradually unfolds His will to us as we grow in our walk with Him. It is a product of routine faithfulness.

The importance of following God's will is seen in the life of Jesus. He said it clearly, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me,"* John 4:34. Jesus also said, *"For I have come down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me,"* John 6:38. Obviously, before we can do God's will we must understand what His will is. Paul stressed the importance of knowing God's will, *"So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is,"* Ephesians 5:17.

We can know God's will for our lives. *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go,"* Psalm 32:8. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight,"* Proverbs 3:5-6. The Bible assures us that His will for us is good. *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose,"* Romans 8:28. *"The steps of a man are established by the Lord; and He delights in his way. When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; because the Lord is the one who holds his hand,"* Psalm 37:23-24. This principle is clearly seen in, *"For I know the plans that I have for you', declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope,'"* Jeremiah 29:11.

We know the general will of God for or all Believers directly from the Bible. His general will is the same for every believer. We know God's individualized will for our individual lives as a product of a faithful life in the general will of God. From that base of obedience, we follow three steps to determine and act on His individualized will ... we ask the Father ... we acquire guidance from His Word, His wisdom, His people, and His peace ... and we act when we know His will.

HIS GENERAL WILL. Most of God's direction for our lives is His general will that applies to all Believers without variation. We understand His general will directly from the Bible. We learn of His general will for us from the commandments, principles, and examples found in His Word.

Commandments. There are general non-negotiable commandments in the Bible given for every believer. *"For this is the will of God ... that you abstain from sexual immorality,"* 1 Thessalonians 4:3. *"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus,"* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. *"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution ... for such is the will of God,"* 1 Peter 2:13-15. Jesus expects us to obey these commands and the others, *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments,"* John 14:15. Obedience should be more than an hour-by-hour decision. Obedience should be our way of life.

Principles. There are principles in the Bible covering varied situations. There is the principle of good stewardship described at the beginning of Luke 16. The cost of discipleship is at the end of Luke 14. The principle of spending time with lost people is presented in the three parables of Luke 15. We need to understand and apply all the many principles given in the Old and New Testaments. The principles and commandments give us God's general will for our lives.

Examples. The Bible contains good examples to follow ... and bad examples to avoid. The best example is the life of Jesus Christ. Washing the disciples' feet, Jesus said, *"For I gave you an example that you should also do as I did to you,"* John 13:15. We should follow His example of humility, Philippians 2:5. We should walk in His steps, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 John 2:6. And there are other good examples that we should follow such as Daniel's good example of honoring and serving God in a godless place. And Paul gave a good witnessing example in Acts 17. Paul wrote, *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ,"* 1 Corinthians 11:1. In addition, there are bad examples to avoid such as King Saul giving partial obedience to God ... David's adultery with Bathsheba ... and the 17 cycles of failure during the time of the Judges.

HIS INDIVIDUALIZED WILL. God has an individual will for each believer as seen in Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 8:28, Psalm 37:23-24, and Jeremiah 29:11. There are many examples in the Bible. David wrote, *"You wove me in my mother's womb ... and in Your book were written all the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them,"* Psalm 139:13, 16. God had a specific will for the prophet Jeremiah, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations, ... because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak,"* Jeremiah 1:5,7. God's specific will for Job was determined in two conversations in Heaven, Job 1 & 2. Noah was called to build an ark, Genesis 6. Abraham was called to relocate his family, Genesis 12, and called to sacrifice Isaac, Genesis 22. Rebekah was appointed to be Isaac's wife, Genesis 24:14, 44. Jonah was called to Nineveh, Jonah 1. Jesus chose His Disciples ... they didn't choose Him, John 15:16. Paul was called to be an Apostle, 1 Corinthians 1:1. And the Holy Spirit gives varying spiritual gifts to individual Believers to be used in different ministries as directed by Jesus [see chapter 9 in this course].

DISCOVERING HIS INDIVIDUAL WILL

Three Steps. Follow these three steps to learn and to do His individualized will. First, **ask** God to tell you. Second, **acquire guidance** from His Word, His wisdom, His people, and His peace. And then third, **act** ... do what God has told you to do.

Ask. The starting point of knowing His individualized will is prayer. The Psalmist's prayer should be ours, *"Teach me to do Thy will,"* Psalm 143:10. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *"Thy will be done,"* Matthew 6:10. The Apostle Paul prayed that the Believers at Colossae would *"be filled with the knowledge of His will,"* Colossians 1:9. Epaphras labored earnestly in prayer for them that they would *"stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God,"* Colossians 4:12. Our earnest prayer for ourselves, and for others, should be to know and do the will of God.

Acquire guidance. God gives us His individualized will through His Word, His wisdom, His people, and His peace. We ask God to reveal His will to us ... and He answers those prayers through the four means described below.

His Word. Knowing God's individualized will is often a product of routine Bible study. Or it can be from a study relating to a specific situation. God's individualized will for each believer becomes clear as we gain wisdom and understanding from God's Word. He will never lead us to do something contrary to His Word.

His Wisdom. God's wisdom comes from an accumulative, obedient spiritual life, 1 Corinthians 2:14 - 3:3. The more obediently we walk with Him, the more we can understand His Word and His will. Paul wrote, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect,"* Romans 12:2. Wisdom is different from knowledge. Ask God for His wisdom, *"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God ... and it will be given to him,"* James 1:5.

His People. God's people are a resource for understanding God's will. Those who teach His Word through speaking or writing can help, Colossians 1:28. It is good to get counsel from mature Believers. More than one counselor is a good idea, *"Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed,"* Proverbs 15:22. But remember that advice is only advice. The majority vote of a number of counselors may be right ... or may be wrong. Ten of the twelve spies sent into Canaan in Numbers 13 and 14 were wrong. Mature Believers can give us meaningful insight to help us understand God's will.

His Peace. God's peace, when clearly from God, can be the final confirmation of His individualized will, *"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,"* Colossians 3:15. *"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus,"* Philippians 4:7. This peace is a God-given deep sense of rightness about a decision. It is not rooted in emotionalism or human desire. It does not stand alone. His peace is the confirmation that follows prayer, study of the Bible, spiritual wisdom, and insights from a number of spiritually mature counselors. Seek and wait for His peace.

Act. It is time to act when we know His will. The answer may be *no* as it was for Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. It may be *wait* ... then we must continue to seek His will. His answer of *wait* can result in great blessing, Isaiah 40:31. When His answer is *yes*, we must do His will even if it is difficult, uncomfortable, unpopular, or costly. We should delight to do His will ... and do it from our hearts, Psalm 40:8 and Ephesians 6:5-6.

WARNINGS

His Word. God will *never* give individualized guidance that is contrary to His written Word. He will *not* lead contrary to His Word ... no matter what wisdom we think we may have ... no matter what advice we get ... no matter what we may experience ... no matter what our circumstances may be ... and no matter what peace we feel. Trust God's Word over all these things.

Fleeces. Gideon put out a fleece to get physical confirmation of God's will. It can be a dangerous thing to do. Gideon's words revealed his hesitancy, Judges 6:36-40. Gideon feared God's anger as he asked Him twice to confirm His will. Putting out a fleece seems to be more popular among Believers today than it ever was in the Bible. We should put out a fleece very infrequently, if ever, and only after much prayer and careful consideration.

Suffering. Suffering is not necessarily out of the will of God. It is often God's will that a Believer suffer, 1 Peter 3:17, 1 Peter 4:19, 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Suffering may help you do His will, 1 Peter 4:1-2. An example is seen in the persecution of the early church, Acts 8:1-4, that caused Believers to take the Gospel out of Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus' statement in Acts 1:8. Pure silver is purified in the furnace of suffering, Isaiah 48:10. The easy, comfortable, prosperous life promised by those who preach a health and wealth gospel is not found in the full counsel of the Bible.

Progressive stewardship. God's will for us often involves steady growth as we learn and gain experience in our walk with Him. Moses spent 40 years in preparation, tending obstinate sheep before he was ready to tend God's obstinate people for 40 years in the wilderness. After his conversion, the Apostle Paul spent possibly up to 14 years growing in his walk with God before he went on his first missionary journey. Jesus taught this principle in Luke 16:10-13.

Polarization. Determining God's will requires balance. It is dangerous to focus on one part of knowing God's will [polarizing to an unbalanced extreme] while ignoring the other parts of knowing His will. To focus all our attention on applying wisdom to the exclusion of God's peace is dangerous ... we could be tempted to exclude the leading of the Spirit. To focus all our attention on the inner confirmation of peace is dangerous ... tempting us to ignore the Word and the wisdom God has given us.

Counterfeit answers. Be careful of the counterfeit answers taught in the name of Christianity. There are no shortcuts, no gimmicks, and no magic answers to knowing God's will. No one experience gives all wisdom.

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Disciplemaking 1 - Review Questions

Lesson 8 - God's Will ... pages 110 - 113

Part of learning is review ... storing new knowledge into your long term memory. Print this review test or use separate paper to answer the following questions. Then repeat this test, open book or closed book, until you can accurately and easily answer all the questions. These *review exams* are available with correct answers on VirtualBibleAcademy.org.

WRITE "TRUE" OR "FALSE" NEXT TO STATEMENTS 1 - 9

1. God's *general will* applies to most Believers.
2. God's *individual will* may be different for different Believers.
3. Most often God gradually reveals His will to us as a product of our obedience.
4. Believers can know God's *general will* and *individual will* for them.
5. Most of the time God's will for Believers is good.
6. Principles from the Bible cover many varying situations.
7. All Biblical examples should be followed.
8. God will never lead us to disobey His Word.
9. The first step in finding God's *individual will* is to seek His peace.
10. List three commands that contain the words "*will of God*" in them.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
11. The three steps to learning God's *individual will* for us are:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

12. In finding God's *individual will*, Believers acquire guidance from God's _____, from His _____, from His _____, and from His _____.
13. *True or False*: In seeking advice in finding God's individual will, the majority vote among Believers is always right. _____
14. *True or False*: God's peace is the final confirmation for a Believer in finding God's general will. _____
15. *True or False*: God's peace is the final confirmation for a Believer in finding God's *individual will*. _____
16. In seeking God's *individual will*, these three answers are possible:
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
17. When we know *His individual will*, we must _____.
18. Write Isaiah 40:31 below ... as written in your Bible.

Disciplemaking 1 - Answers to Review Questions

Lesson 8 - God's Will ... questions pages 114 - 115

Do not use these answer sheets to find your answers. Please use them only to check your answers. Go back into the lesson to find the information to correct your answers. Repeat the test until you can accurately and easily answer all the questions. All the lessons, review tests, and answer pages are available on VirtualBibleAcademy.org.

WRITE "TRUE" OR "FALSE" NEXT TO STATEMENTS 1 - 9

1. God's *general will* applies to most Believers. *FALSE*
2. God's *individual will* may be different for different Believers. *TRUE*
3. Most often God gradually reveals His will to us as a product of our obedience. *TRUE*
4. Believers can know God's *general will* and *individual will* for them. *TRUE*
5. Most of the time God's will for Believers is good. *FALSE*
6. Principles from the Bible cover many varying situations. *TRUE*
7. All Biblical examples should be followed. *FALSE*
8. God will never lead us to disobey His Word. *TRUE*
9. The first step in finding God's *individual will* is to seek His peace. *FALSE*
10. List three commands that contain the words "*will of God*" in them.
 - a. *Abstain from sexual immorality.*
 - b. *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks.*
 - c. *Submit to every human institution.*
11. The three steps to learning God's *individual will* for us are:
 - a. *Ask (pray).*
 - b. *Acquire guidance.*
 - c. *Act.*

12. In finding God's *individual will*, Believers acquire guidance from God's _____ *Word* _____, from His _____ *Wisdom* _____, from His _____ *People* _____, and from His _____ *Peace* _____.
13. *True or False*: In seeking advice in finding God's individual will, the majority vote among Believers is always right. _____ *False* _____
14. *True or False*: God's peace is the final confirmation for a Believer in finding God's general will. _____ *False* _____
15. *True or False*: God's peace is the final confirmation for a Believer in finding God's *individual will*. _____ *True* _____
16. In seeking God's *individual will*, these three answers are possible:
- a. *Yes*
 - b. *No*
 - c. *Wait*
17. When we know *His individual will*, we must _____ *Act (meaning obey)* _____.
18. Write Isaiah 40:31 below ... as written in your Bible.
(*should have been copied word-for-word from your Bible*)