



Discerning
the Will
of God

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Forward

Finding and doing the will of God is one of the most talked about subjects in the church. When you don't know what to do, do what you know.

Faithfully apply biblical principles; you can know God's plans for your life. Once you know his will, don't let doubt, fear, or willful sin keep you from obeying him. Your own plans can't compare to the good things the Father has in store. The wisest things you can do is to obey God, and leave all the consequences to Him.

Ken Trivette once said, "There are two days in my Christian life that I value above all other. The first is the day I got saved. The second is the day I found the will of God for my life:.

Ephes. 5:17

Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.

We can trust God and follow his plan for our life. It would be out of character for God to hide his will and still expect us to walk in it. The Bible promises his guidance.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. [6] Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.

The lord is faithful to reveal "The path of Life" to those who seek him.

Chapter 1

One of the most misunderstood subjects that Christians consider is the subject of knowing the will of God.

The greatest source for finding God's will is the word of God.

When we look into the word of God, we find a number of things that distinctly says that this is the will of God.

It is the will of God for all people to be saved.

To understand this, consider the following verses:

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, but we should live with the realization that time is short and that we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though he may not return for many years. He is unwilling for any to be lost.

1 Tim. 2:3

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Both Peter and Paul said that God wants all to be saved (see 2 Peter 3:9). This does not mean that all will be saved, because the Bible makes it clear that many reject Christ (Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:44-50; Hebrews 10:26-29). The gospel message has a universal scope; it is not directed only to people of one race, one sex, or one national background. God loves the whole world and sent his Son to save sinners. Never assume that anyone is outside God's mercy or beyond the reach of his offer of salvation.

Mark 3:31-35

There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. [32] And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

[33] And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? [34] And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! [35] For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Jesus' testimony was trustworthy because he had come from heaven and was speaking of what he had seen there. His words were the very words of God. Your whole spiritual life depends on your answer to one question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" If you accept Jesus as only a prophet or teacher, you have to reject his teaching, for he claimed to be God's Son, even God himself. The heartbeat of John's Gospel is the dynamic truth that Jesus Christ is God's Son, the Messiah, the Savior, who was from the beginning and will continue to live forever. This same Jesus has invited us to accept him and live with him eternally. When we understand who Jesus is, we are compelled to believe what he said.

1 John 2:17

And the world will pass away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

When our attachment to possessions is strong, it's hard to believe that what we want will one day pass away. It may be even harder to believe that the person who does the will of God will live forever. But this was John's conviction based on the facts of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and promises.

So when seeking to know the will of God for your life, know first that all who seek to know his will, must first know it is his will for them to be saved.

Ephes. 2:14

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Before Christ's coming, Gentiles and Jews kept apart from one another. Jews considered Gentiles beyond God's saving power and therefore without hope. Gentiles resented Jewish claims. Christ revealed the total sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles, and then he offered his salvation to both. Only Christ breaks down the walls of prejudice, reconciles all believers to God, and unifies us in one body.

When you invite Jesus Christ to come into their life, you are inviting the Holy Spirit to come in cleanse and dwell within. All Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

This is not the same as the gifts of the spirit. Salvation cannot come without the Holy Spirit coming in and cleansing your sins.

Chapter 2

It is the will of God for a person to be filled with the Holy Spirit

Please allow the following Scriptures to verify this fact.

Ephes. 5:17-18

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. [18]
And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Paul contrasts getting drunk with wine, which produces a temporary “high,” to being filled with the Spirit, which produces lasting joy. Getting drunk with wine is associated with the old way of life and its selfish desires. In Christ, we have a better joy, higher and longer lasting, to cure our depression, monotony, or tension. We should not be concerned with how much of the Holy Spirit we have, but how much of us the Holy Spirit has. Submit yourself daily to his leading and draw constantly on his power.

1 Cor. 12:13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The church is composed of many types of people from a variety of backgrounds with a multitude of gifts and abilities. It is easy for these differences to divide people, as was the case in Corinth. But despite the differences, all believers have one thing in common—faith in Christ. On this essential truth the church finds unity.

All believers, filled by the Holy Spirit become one body. We don't lose our individual identities, but we have an overriding oneness in Christ.

When a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up residence. “We were all given the one Spirit to drink” means that the same Holy Spirit completely fills our innermost beings. As members of God's family, we may have different interests and gifts, but we have a common goal.

Romans 8:9

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

A Christian is anyone who has the Spirit of God living in him or her. If you have sincerely trusted Christ for your salvation and acknowledged him as he Lord, then the Holy Spirit has come into your life, and you are a Christian. You won't know that the Holy Spirit has come if you are waiting for a certain feeling; you will know he has come because Jesus promised he would.

When the Holy Spirit is working within you, you will believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son and that eternal life comes through him (1 John 5:5); you will begin to act as Christ directs (Romans 8:5; Galatians 5:22-23); you will find help in your daily problems and in your praying (Romans 8:26-27);

You will be empowered to serve God and do his will (Acts 1:8; Romans 12:6ff); and you will become part of God's plan to build up his church (Ephes. 4:12-13).

2 Cor. 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The glory that the Spirit imparts to all believers is more excellent and lasts longer than the glory that Moses experienced. By gazing at the nature of God with unveiled minds, we can be more like him. In the gospel, we see the truth about Christ, and it transforms us morally as we understand and apply it.

Through learning about Christ's life, we can understand how wonderful God is and what he is really like. As our knowledge deepens, the Holy Spirit helps us to change. Becoming Christ like is a progressive experience (see Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2). The more closely we follow Christ, the more we will be like him.

Col. 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Paul offers a strategy to help us live for God day by day: (1) imitate Christ's compassionate, forgiving attitude (Col. 3:12-13); (2) let love guide your life (Col. 3:14); (3) let the peace of Christ rule in your heart (Col. 3:15); (4) always be thankful (Col. 3:15); (5) keep God's Word in you at all times (Col. 3:16); (6) live as Jesus Christ's representative (Col. 3:17).

Chapter 3

It is God's will for all to be sanctified.

Please study the following Scriptures.

1 Thes. 4:3

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification that ye should abstain from fornication:

Sexual standards were very low in the Roman Empire, and in many societies today they are not any higher. The temptation to engage in sexual intercourse outside the marriage relationship has always been powerful. Giving in to that temptation can have disastrous results. Sexual sins always hurt someone: individuals, families, businesses, and churches. Besides the physical consequences, there are also spiritual consequences.

Sexual desires and activities must be placed under Christ's control. God created sex for procreation and pleasure, and as an expression of love between a husband and wife. Sexual experience must be limited to the marriage relationship to avoid hurting us, our relationship to God, and our relationships with others.

Being sanctified or made holy is the process of living the Christian life. The Holy Spirit works in us, conforming us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

Here are given five stages of purity:

1. Abstain from fornication
2. Possess your vessel in sanctification and honor
3. Put aside evil desires and lust.
4. No man can defraud his brother.
5. Submit to the ordinances of man.

Chapter 4

It is God's will that Christians suffer.

1 Peter 4:19

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Many Christians were household slaves. It would be easy for them to submit to masters who were gentle and kind. But Peter encouraged loyalty and perseverance even in the face of unjust treatment. In the same way, we should submit to our employers, whether they are considerate or harsh. By so doing, we may win them to Christ by our good example. Paul gave similar advice in his letters (see Ephes. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25), as did Jesus (Matthew 5:46; Luke 6:32-36).

We may suffer for many reasons. Some suffering is the direct result of our own sin; some happens because of our foolishness; and some is the result of living in a fallen world. Peter is writing about suffering that comes as a result of doing good. Christ never sinned, and yet he suffered so that we could be set free. When we follow Christ's example and live for others, we too may suffer. Our goal should be to face suffering as he did—with patience, calmness, and confidence that God is in control of the future.

Peter had learned about suffering from Jesus. He knew that Jesus' suffering was part of God's plan (Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47) and was intended to save us (Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:28). He also knew that all who follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer (Mark 8:34-35). Peter learned these truths from Jesus and passed them on to us.

Christ died for *our* sins, in *our* place, so we would not have to suffer the punishment we deserve. This is called substitutionary atonement.

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby:

One characteristic all children share is that they want to grow up—to be like big brother or sister or like their parents. When we are born again, we become spiritual newborn babies. If we are healthy, we will yearn to grow. How sad it is that some people never grow up. The need for milk is a natural instinct for a baby, and it signals the desire for nourishment that will lead to growth. Once we see our need

for God's Word and begin to find nourishment in Christ, our spiritual appetite will increase, and we will start to mature. How strong is your desire for God's Word?

Philip. 1:29

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

Paul considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ. We do not by nature consider suffering a privilege. Yet when we suffer, if we faithfully represent Christ, our message and example affect us and affect others for good (see Acts 5:41). Suffering has these additional benefits: (1) it takes our eyes off of earthly comforts; (2) it weeds out superficial believers; (3) it strengthens the faith of those who endure; (4) it serves as an example to others who may follow us. When we suffer for our faith, it doesn't mean that we have done something wrong. In fact, the opposite is often true—it verifies that we have been faithful. Use suffering to build your character. Don't resent it or let it tear you down.

1 Peter 2:19

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

Many Christians were household slaves. It would be easy for them to submit to masters who were gentle and kind. But Peter encouraged loyalty and perseverance even in the face of unjust treatment. Paul gave similar advice in his letters (see Ephes. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25), as did Jesus (Matthew 5:46; Luke 6:32-36).

How should Christians feel about suffering at the hands of others?

Matthew 5:10

Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus said to rejoice when we're persecuted. Persecution can be good because (1) it takes our eyes off earthly rewards, (2) it strips away superficial belief, (3) it strengthens the faith of those who endure, and (4) our attitude through it serves as an example to others who follow. We can be comforted to know that God's greatest prophets were persecuted (Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel). The fact that we are being persecuted proves that we have been faithful; faithless people would be

unnoticed. In the future God will reward the faithful by receiving them into his eternal kingdom where there is no more persecution.

John 15:19-20

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. [20] Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Righteous people have always experienced suffering to serve God.

Hebrews 11:24-26

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; [26] Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Moses became one of Israel's greatest leaders, a prophet and a lawgiver. But when he was born, his people were slaves in Egypt, and the Egyptian officials had ordered that all Hebrew baby boys were to be killed. Moses was spared, however, and Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses in Pharaoh's own household (Exodus 1-2)! It took faith for Moses to give up his place in the palace, but he could do it because he saw the fleeting nature of great wealth and prestige. It is easy to be deceived by the temporary benefits of wealth, popularity, status, and achievement, and to be blind to the long-range benefits of God's kingdom. Faith helps us look beyond the world's value system to see the eternal values of God's kingdom.

Daniel is thrown into the den of lions:

Daniel 6:15-23

In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty knows that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed."

[16] So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you worship

continually, rescue you." [17] A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel from the lions. [18] Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn't sleep at all that night.

[19] Very early the next morning, the king hurried out to the lions' den. [20] When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you worship continually, able to rescue you from the lions?"

[21] Daniel answered, "Long live the king! [22] My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."

[23] The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him because he had trusted in his God. (NLB)

The man or woman who trusts in God and obeys his will is untouchable until God takes him or her. To trust God is to have immeasurable peace. God, who delivered Daniel, will deliver you. 12:19; see also Deut. 32:35-36; Hebrews 10:30). Instead of striking back, ask God to take your case, bring justice, and restore your reputation.

David, sang him unto the Lord.

Psalm 7:1-2

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite. O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me: [2] lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

David wrote this psalm in response to the slanderous accusations of those who claimed he was trying to kill Saul and seize the throne (1 Samuel 24:9-11). Instead of taking matters into his own hands and striking back, David cried out to God for justice. The proper response to slander is prayer, not revenge, because God says, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay"

(Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:8-29

But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. [9] They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "Long live the king! [10] You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear

the sound of the musical instruments. [11] That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. [12] But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They have defied Your Majesty by refusing to serve your gods or to worship the gold statue you have set up."

[13] Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be brought before him. When they were brought in, [14] Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? [15] I will give you one more chance. If you bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments, all will be well. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. What god will be able to rescue you from my power then?"

[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. [17] If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. [18] But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

[19] Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. [20] Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. [21] So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully clothed. [22] And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames leaped out and killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in! [23] So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell down into the roaring flames.

[24] But suddenly, as he was watching, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?"

"Yes," they said, "we did indeed, Your Majesty."

[25] "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire. They aren't even hurt by the flames! And the fourth looks like a divine being!"

[26] Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. [27] Then the princes, prefects, governors, and advisers crowded

around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!

[28] Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. [29] Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be crushed into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!" (NLB)

We don't know if other Jews refused to fall down and worship the image, but these three were singled out as public examples. Why didn't the three men just bow to the image and tell God that they didn't mean it? They had determined never to worship another god, and they courageously took their stand. As a result, they were condemned and led away to be executed. The men did not know whether they would be delivered from the fire; all they knew was that they would not fall down and worship an idol. Are you ready to take a stand for God no matter what? When you stand for God, you will stand out. It may be painful, and it may not always have a happy ending. Be prepared to say, "If he rescues me, or if he doesn't, I will serve only God."

Nebuchadnezzar had lost control. How could anyone dare to disobey his commands? As the supreme ruler of Babylonia, he expected absolute obedience. But his pride had caused him to go beyond his own authority. His demands were unjust and his reactions extreme.

If you find yourself angered when people don't follow your directions, ask yourself, "Why am I reacting?" Your ego may be overly involved with your authority.

The three men were given one more chance. Here are eight excuses they could have used to bow to the image and save their lives: (1) We will fall down but not actually worship the idol. (2) We won't become idol worshipers, but will worship it this one time, and then ask God for forgiveness. (3) The king has absolute power, and we must obey him. God will understand. (4) The king appointed us—we owe this to him. (5) This is a foreign land, so God will excuse us for following the customs of the land. (6) Our ancestors set up idols in God's temple! This isn't half as bad! (7) We're not hurting anybody. (8) If we get ourselves killed and some pagans take our high positions, they won't help our people in exile!

Although all these excuses sound sensible at first, they are dangerous rationalizations. To fall down and worship the image would violate God's command in Exodus 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before me." It would also erase their testimony for God forever. Never again could they talk about the power of their God above all other gods.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were pressured to deny God, but they chose to be faithful to him no matter what happened! They trusted God to deliver them, but they were determined to be faithful regardless of the consequences. If God always rescued those who were true to him, Christians would not need faith. Their religion would be a great insurance policy, and there would be lines of selfish people ready to sign up. We should be faithful to serve God whether he intervenes on our behalf or not. Our eternal reward is worth any suffering we may have to endure first.

Many have suffered and given their lives for their faith in Jesus Christ. This is the will of God.

Chapter 5

Obedience is the will of God.

Noah was obedient to the call of God to build an ark. By his obedience, He and his family for saved from perishing in the flood. Gen. 6:22

Because Abraham was obedient, he became the father of the great nation of Israel.

Moses, through obedience to his calling, led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Ex. 3:7-8

Joshua, by following God's supernatural plan, won the battle of Jericho. Josh 1-1-6:25

By David's obedience, he refused to harm Saul, the king. I Sam. 13:4

Jehoshaphat relied on the word of God when the Ammonite attacked Judah. II Chron. 17-19

Peter obeyed God's command to fish in the heat of the day. Acts 5:21

Paul followed the will of God and took the gospel to the Gentiles. Acts 28:19

There are two kinds of people in the world. They are those who obey God and those who do not obey God.

Those who are obedient keep the commandments of the Lord.

John 14:15

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Jesus was soon going to leave the disciples, but he would remain with them. How could this be? The Counselor—the Spirit of God himself—would come after Jesus was gone to care for and guide the disciples. The regenerating power of the Spirit came on the disciples just before Jesus' ascension (John 20:22), and the Spirit was poured out on all the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2), shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God within us, and all believers, helping us live as God wants and building Christ's church on earth. By faith we can appropriate the Spirit's power each day.

Those who do the will of God may call Jesus Lord.

Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Obeying God is like building a house on a strong, solid foundation that stands firm when storms come. When life is calm, our foundations don't seem to matter. But when crises come, our foundations are tested. Be sure your life is built on the solid foundation of knowing and trusting Jesus Christ.

Obedience leads to righteousness.

Romans 6:16

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

In certain skilled crafts, an apprentice works under a master, who trains, shapes, and molds his apprentice in the finer points of his craft. All people choose a master and pattern themselves after him. Without Jesus, we would have no choice—we would have to apprentice ourselves to sin, and the results would be guilt, suffering, and separation from God. Thanks to Jesus, however, we can now choose God as our Master. Following him, we can enjoy new life and learn how to work for him. Are you still serving your first master, sin? Or have you apprenticed yourself to God?

Those who do the will of God may enter into heaven.

Matthew 7:21

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Jesus exposed those people who sounded religious but had no personal relationship with him. On “that day” (the day of judgment), only our relationship with Christ—our acceptance of him as Savior and our obedience to him—will matter. Many people think that if they are “good” people and say religious things, they will be rewarded with eternal life. In reality, faith in Christ is what will count at the judgment.

“That day” is the final day of reckoning when God will settle all accounts, judging sin and rewarding faith.

Those who are obedient to the Word of God will not be deceived.

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

It is important to listen to what God’s Word says, but it is much more important to obey it, to *do* what it says. We can measure the effectiveness of our Bible study time by the effect it has on our behavior and attitudes. Do you put into action what you have studied?

Those who keep the laws of God in their mouth will have their ways to prosper, and will have good success.

Joshua 1:8

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Many people think that prosperity and success come from having power, influential personal contacts, and a relentless desire to get ahead. But the strategy for gaining prosperity that God taught Joshua goes against such criteria. He said that to succeed Joshua must (1) be strong and courageous because the task ahead would not be easy, (2) obey God's law, and (3) constantly read and study the Book of the Law—God's Word.

To be successful, follow God's words to Joshua. You may not succeed by the world's standards, but you will be a success in God's eyes—and his opinion lasts forever.

The willing and obedient will eat the good of the land.

Isaiah 1:19

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

Obedience is proof of our love of God.

John 14:23

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

If you listen and serve the Lord in obedience, you will prosper and years of plenty.

Job 36:11

If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.

Jesus became obedient to death.

Philip. 2:8

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Chapter 6

How Far is Far?

When you begin the journey of finding God's will for your life, it should be determined to be faithful until you receive your heavenly reward.

Abraham went out not knowing where he was going, but remained faithful in his day-by-day walk.

He that puts his hand to the plow and looks back is unworthy. Luke 9:62

What does Jesus want from us? Total dedication, not halfhearted commitment. We can't pick and choose among Jesus' ideas and follow him selectively; we have to accept the cross along with the crown, judgment as well as mercy. We must count the cost and be willing to abandon everything else that has given us security. With our focus on Jesus, we should allow nothing to distract us from the manner of living that he calls good and true.

The mercies of God are unending.

Psalm 103:11

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

David had been brought far by God and continued to rely on him for his journey.

2 Samuel 7:18-20

Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, “Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto”? [19] And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God.

Our sins are cast far from us forever.

Psalm 103:11

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

God’s law was given first to Moses and the people of Israel. God’s law presents a clear picture of God’s nature and will. It was God’s training manual to prepare his people to serve him and to follow his ways. Review the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the history of how they were given, asking God to show you his will and his ways through them.

The Lord will give us blessing far above what we ask or think.

Ephes. 3:19

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

God's love is total, says Paul. It reaches every corner of our experience. It is wide—it covers the breadth of our own experience, and it reaches out to the whole world. God's love is long—it continues the length of our lives. It is high—it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is deep—it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death. When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God's love. For another prayer about God's immeasurable and inexhaustible love, see Paul's words in Romans 8:38-39.

The fullness of God" is fully expressed only in Christ (Col. 2:9-10). In union with Christ and through his empowering Spirit, we are complete. We have all the fullness of God available to us. But we must appropriate that fullness through faith and through prayer as we daily live for him. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is also for you. You can ask the Holy Spirit to fill every aspect of your life to the fullest.

Chapter 7

It is God's will to keep you Safe.

God desires to give safety to all people.

Deut. 10:17-19

For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: [18] He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. [19] Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

God will guide your feet to safety.

1 Samuel 2:9

He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

Like Hannah, we should be confident of God's ultimate control over the events in our lives, and we should be thankful for the ways God has blessed us. By praising God for all good gifts, we acknowledge his ultimate control over all the affairs of life.

He keeps his people from their enemies.

2 Samuel 22:3-4

The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. [4] I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

He makes us dwell in safety.

Psalm 4:8

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

He is a shield to all those who trust in him.

Psalm 18:30

As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

He gives safety to Israel.

Psalm 121:4-8

Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. [5] The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. [6] The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. [7] The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. [8] The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

He guards the course of the just.

Proverbs 2:7-9

He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. [8] He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his

saints. [9] Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

All who trust in the Lord will be safe.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Fear of people can hamper everything you try to do. In extreme forms, it can make you afraid to leave your home. By contrast, fear of God—respect, reverence, and trust—is liberating. Why fear people who can do no eternal harm? Instead, fear God who can turn the harm intended by others into good for those who trust him.

Chapter 8

It is God's will for you to understand the word of God.

The children of God recognize his voice.

John 10:4-5

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. [5] And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

John 10:5-16

(NLT) Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, so he explained it to them. "I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep," he said. "All others who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will leave the sheep because they aren't his and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he is merely hired and has no real concern for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice; and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

A hired hand tends the sheep for money, while the shepherd does it for love. The shepherd owns the sheep and is committed to them. Jesus is not merely doing a job; he is committed to love us and even lay down his life for us. False teachers and false prophets do not have this commitment.

Lean on God's understanding:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Leaning has the sense of putting your whole weight on something, resting on and trusting in that person or thing. When we have an important decision to make, we sometimes feel that we can't trust anyone—not even God. But God knows what is best for us. He is a better judge of what we want than even we are! We must trust him completely in every choice we make. We should not omit careful thinking or belittle our God-given ability to reason; but we should not trust our own ideas to the exclusion of all others. We must not be wise in our own eyes. We should always be willing to listen to and be corrected by God's Word and wise counselors. Bring your decisions to God in prayer; use the Bible as your guide; and then follow God's leading. He will make your paths straight by both guiding and protecting you.

To receive God's guidance, said Solomon, we must acknowledge God in all our ways. This means turning every area of life over to him. About a thousand years later, Jesus emphasized this same truth (Matthew 6:33). Look at your values and priorities. What is important to you? In what areas have you not acknowledged him? What is his advice? In many areas of your life you may already acknowledge

God, but it is in the areas where you attempt to restrict or ignore his influence that will cause you grief. Make him a vital part of everything you do; then he will guide you because you will be working to accomplish his purposes.

The Holy Spirit will teach us all things.

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

All those who learn to listen to the Holy Ghost will understand that He is seeking to reveal the word of God.

Through the Scriptures, we can learn to rightly divide the word of truth.

2 Tim. 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Because God will examine what kind of workers we have been for him, we should build our lives on his Word and build his Word into our lives—it alone tells us how to live for him and serve him. Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent and diligent study of God’s Word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

By knowing the Scriptures, we find wisdom.

James 1:5-8

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. [7] For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. [8] A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

James is talking not only about knowledge, but about the ability to make wise decisions in difficult circumstances. Whenever we need wisdom, we can pray to God, and he will generously supply what we need. Christians don’t have to grope

around in the dark, hoping to stumble upon answers. We can ask for God's wisdom to guide our choices.

Wisdom means practical discernment. It begins with respect for God, leads to right living, and results in increased ability to tell right from wrong. God is willing to give us this wisdom, but we will be unable to receive it if our goals are self-centered instead of God-centered. To learn God's will, we need to read his Word and ask him to show

A mind that wavers is not completely convinced that God's way is best. It treats God's Word like any human advice, and it retains the option to disobey. It vacillates between allegiance to subjective feelings, the world's ideas, and God's commands.

If your faith is new, weak, or struggling, remember that you can trust God. Then be loyal to him. To stabilize your wavering or doubtful mind, commit yourself wholeheartedly to God.

Ephes. 5:17

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Knowing the word of God will result in a changed life.

Col. 1:9

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Paul pointed out that knowledge in itself is empty. To be worth anything, it must lead to a changed life and right living. His prayer for the Colossians has two dimensions: (1) that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and (2) that they would bear fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. Knowledge is not merely to be accumulated; it should give us direction for living. Paul wanted the Colossians to be wise, but he also wanted them to *use* their knowledge. Knowledge of God is not a secret that only a few can discover; it is open to everyone. God wants us to learn

Those who stand in the word of God are complete in the will of God.

Col. 4:12

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

His great concern for the believers show his great love for them

Chapter 9

It is God's will for you to be healed.

Because Jesus willing took stripes on his back, we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

The sacrifices suggested this idea, but it is one thing to kill a lamb, and something quite different to think of God's chosen servant as that Lamb. But God was pulling aside the curtain of time to let the people of Isaiah's day look ahead to the suffering of the future Messiah and the resulting forgiveness made available to all mankind.

1 Peter 2:24

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Christ died for *our* sins, in *our* place, so we would not have to suffer the punishment we deserve. This is called *substitutionary atonement*.

Health will come to those who keep the word of God.

Proverbs 4:20-22

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. [21] Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. [22] For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

Solomon tells us to guard our heart above all else, making sure we concentrate on those desires that will keep us on the right path. Make sure your affections push you in the right direction. Put boundaries on your desires: don't go after everything you see. Look straight ahead, keep your eyes fixed on your goal, and don't get sidetracked on detours that lead to sin.

Jesus gives a commission:

Matthew 10:1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases.

Jesus *called* his 12 disciples. He didn't draft them, force them, or ask them to volunteer; he chose them to serve him in a special way. Christ calls us today. He doesn't twist our arms and make us do something we don't want to do. We can choose to join him or remain behind.

Effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much.

James 5:14-16

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: [15] And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. [16] Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

God wish for his children is for health and prosperity.

3 John 1:2

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

John was concerned for Gaius's physical *and* spiritual well-being. This was the opposite of the popular heresy that taught the separation of spirit and matter and despised the physical side of life. Today, many people still fall into this way of

thinking. This non-Christian attitude logically leads to one of two responses: neglect of the body and physical health, or indulgence of the body's sinful desires. God is concerned for both your body and your soul. As a responsible Christian, you should neither neglect nor indulge yourself, but care for your physical needs and discipline your body so that you are at your best for God's service.

Jesus instructed his disciples to heal the sick.

Matthew 10:8

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Jesus gave the disciples a principle to guide their actions as they ministered to others: "Freely you have received, freely give." Because God has showered us with his blessings, we should give generously to others of our time, love, and possessions.

The sicknesses of Egypt will be taken away for God's people.

Deut. 7:15

And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.

Isaiah 54:17

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

Jesus came to heal the broken hearted.

Luke 4:18

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2. Isaiah pictures the deliverance of Israel from exile in Babylon as a Year of Jubilee when all debts are cancelled, all slaves are freed, and all property is returned to original owners (Leviticus 25). But the release from Babylonian exile had not brought the fulfillment the people had expected; they were still a conquered and oppressed people. So Isaiah must have been referring to a future Messianic age. Jesus boldly announced, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus was proclaiming himself as the One who would bring this good news to pass, but in a way that the people would not yet be able to grasp.

He stretches forth his hand to heal.

Acts 4:30

By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

First, they praised God; then they told God their specific problem and asked for his help. They did not ask God to remove the problem, but to help them deal with it. This is a model for us to follow when we pray. We may ask God to remove our problems, and he may choose to do so. But we must recognize that often he will leave the problem in place and give us the strength and courage to deal with it.

Jesus was anointed with power to heal the sick.

Acts 10:38

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Peter's brief and powerful sermon contains a concise statement of the gospel: Jesus' perfect life of servanthood; his death on the cross; his resurrection, personally witnessed and experienced by Peter; Jesus' fulfillment of the Scriptures; and the necessity of personal faith in him. A sermon or witness for Christ does not need to be long to be effective. It should be Spirit-led and should center on Christ, the way and the truth and the life.

Chapter 10

Your gifts and personality are adapted to God's will for you.

Chapter 11

Where is your mission field?

Chapter 12

Grow where you are planted

Chapter 13

It is the will of God that you are a soul winner.

Chapter 14

Hindrances to discovering God's will

Chapter 15

A feeling of unworthiness will hinder you knowing God's will.

Chapter 16

God may speak to us through dreams

God may speak to us through visions

God may speak to us through the council of other people

God may speak to us through fitting circumstances.

God may speak to us through opportunities and situations..

God may speak to us through a need.

Chapter

God may speak to us through visions and dreams

God came to Abraham through a vision.

Genesis 15:1

Afterward the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

Why would Abram be afraid? Perhaps he feared revenge from the kings he had just defeated (Genesis 14:15). God gave him two good reasons for courage: (1) he promised to defend Abram ("I am your shield"), and (2) he promised to be Abram's "very great reward." When you fear what lies ahead, remember that God will stay with you through difficult times and that he has promised you great blessings. Accept this vision through faith and fear not.

King Abimelech received a dream in warning from God.

Genesis 20:1-3 (KJV)

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. [2] And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

[3] But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman that thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

King Abimelech heeded the warning he had received in a dream and allowed Sarah to return to her husband.

Joel prophesies concerning the Holy Spirit being poured out. Old men would dream dreams and young men would see visions.

Joel 2:28-29

"Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. [29] In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike.

Peter quoted this passage (see Acts 2:16-21)—the outpouring of the Spirit predicted by Joel occurred on Pentecost. While in the past, God's Spirit seemed available to kings, prophets, and judges, Joel envisioned a time when the Spirit would be available to every believer. Ezekiel also spoke of an outpouring of the Spirit (Ezekiel 39:28-29). God's Spirit is available now to anyone who calls on the Lord (Joel 2:32).

God speaks to Paul in a vision.

Acts 18:9-11

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! [10] For I am with you, and no one will harm you because many people here in this city belong to me." [11] So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God.

In a vision, Christ told Paul that he had many people in Corinth. Sometimes we can feel alone or isolated, especially when we see wickedness all around us and when we are persecuted for our faith. Usually, however, there are others in the neighborhood or community who also follow Christ. Ask God to lead you to them.

The first thing we should do is to submit ourselves daily to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We are bought with a price and belong to him. We must desire to grow in the word and see the world as he sees it.

Once you know the will of God, don't let fear, doubt or sin keep you from fulfilling God's plan for your life.

