

Finding God's will for your life

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Forward

God can use us in any circumstance to do his will. Even as we pray for a change in our circumstances, we should also pray that God will accomplish his plan through us right where we are.

Knowing God's eternal purpose for us will help us through the difficult times.

The events that have come together for good are not mere coincidence; they are the result of God's sovereign control over the course of people's lives (Romans 8:28).

It is human nature to make our own plans and *then* ask God to bless them. Instead, we should seek God's will first.

By constantly thinking about the Lord and his way of living, we will gain insights that will help us make right decisions and live the way God desires. Communicating with God allows him to counsel us and give us wisdom.

Unbelievers have a sense of hopelessness about life and confusion over their true purpose on earth. Those who seek God, however, can move ahead confidently with what they know is right and important in God's eyes. They know that God will keep them from being moved off of his chosen path.

Chapter 1



God wants you to help fulfill his will for you.

Exodus 40:1?

The Lord now said to Moses,

Moses was careful to obey God's instructions in the smallest detail. Notice that he didn't make a reasonable facsimile of God's description, but an exact copy. We should follow Moses' example and be fastidious about our obedience. If God has told you to do something, do it, do it right, and do it completely.

Asking for God's guidance.

Numbers 9:23

So they camped or traveled at the Lord's command, and they did whatever the Lord told them through Moses.

The Israelites traveled and camped as God guided. When you follow God's guidance, you know you are where God wants you, whether you're moving or staying in one place. You are physically somewhere right now. Instead of praying, "God, what do you want me to do next?"

ask, “God, what do you want me to do while I’m right here?” Direction from God is not just for your next big move. He has a purpose in placing you where you are right now.

Begin to understand God’s purpose for your life by discovering what he wants you to do now!

We can’t change God’s guidance.

Numbers 23:27

Then King Balak said to Balaam, "Come, I will take you to yet another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them from there."

Balak took Balaam to several places to try to entice him to curse the Israelites. He thought a change of scenery might help change Balaam’s mind.

But changing locations won’t change God’s will. We must learn to face the source of our problems.

Moving to escape problems only makes solving them more difficult. Problems rooted in us are not solved by a change of scenery. A change in location or job may only distract us from the need for us to change our heart.

No human scheme can prevent God’s will

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2 Chron. 18:33

An Aramean soldier, however, randomly shot an arrow at the Israelite troops, and the arrow hit the king of Israel between the joints of his

armor. "Get me out of here!" Ahab groaned to the driver of his chariot. "I have been badly wounded!"

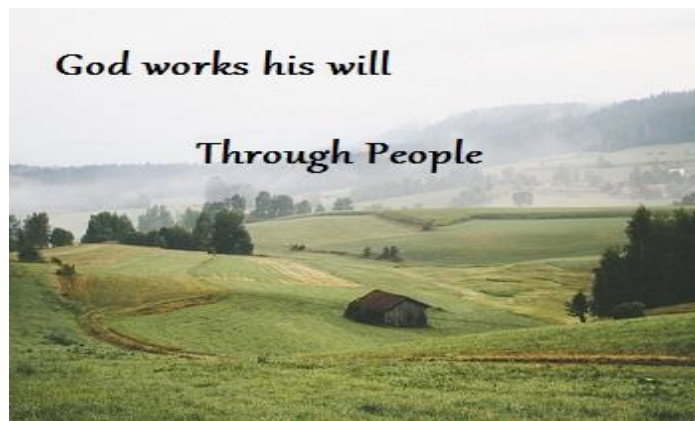
Micaiah prophesied death for Ahab (2 Chron. 18:16, 27), so Ahab disguised himself to fool the enemy.

Apparently the disguise worked, but that didn't change the prophecy.

A random Aramean arrow found a crack in his armor and killed him. God fulfills his will despite the defenses people try to erect. God can use anything, even an error, to bring his will to pass.

This is good news for God's followers because we can trust him to work his plans and keep his promises no matter how desperate our circumstances are.

Chapter 2



God works his will through people.

God will in making Xerxes discover Mordecai's good deed.

Esther 6:1-2

That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the historical records of his kingdom so they could be read to him.

In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate the king.

Unable to sleep, the king decided to review the history of his reign, and his servants read to him about Mordecai's good deed.

This seems coincidental, but God is *always* at work. God has been working quietly and patiently throughout your life as well. The events that have come together for good are not mere coincidence; they are the

result of God's sovereign control over the course of people's lives (Romans 8:28).

Can Satan persuade God to change his plans? □

Job 2:3-6

Then the Lord asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and will have nothing to do with evil. And he has maintained his integrity, even though you persuaded me to harm him without cause."

Satan replied to the Lord, "Skin for skin—he blesses you only because you bless him. A man will give up everything he has to save his life. But take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face!"

"All right, do with him as you please," the Lord said to Satan. "But spare his life."

Unable to sleep, the king decided to review the history of his reign, and his servants read to him about Mordecai's good deed. This seems coincidental, but God is *always* at work. God has been working quietly and patiently throughout your life as well.

The events that have come together for good are not mere coincidence; they are the result of God's sovereign control over the course of people's lives (Romans 8:28).

We must seek God's will first.

Psalm 16:7-8

I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

It is human nature to make our own plans and *then* ask God to bless them. Instead, we should seek God's will first.

By constantly thinking about the Lord and his way of living, we will gain insights that will help us make right decisions and live the way God desires. Communicating with God allows him to counsel us and give us wisdom.

By saying that he "will not be shaken," David was talking about the unique sense of security felt by believers. God does not exempt believers from the day-to-day circumstances of life.

Believers and unbelievers alike experience pain, trouble, and failure at times (Matthew 5:45).

Unbelievers have a sense of hopelessness about life and confusion over their true purpose on earth. Those who seek God, however, can move ahead confidently with what they know is right and important in God's eyes. They know that God will keep them from being moved off of his chosen path.

Our true purpose

John 6:37-38

However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do what I want.

Jesus did not work independently of God the Father, but in union with him. This should give us even more assurance of being welcomed into God's presence and being protected by him. Jesus' purpose was to do the will of God, not to satisfy Jesus' human desires. When we follow Jesus, we should have the same purpose.

Doing God's will doesn't guarantee comfortable life.

Luke 2:3-6

All returned to their own towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee.

He took with him Mary, his wife, who was obviously pregnant by this time. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born.

The government forced Joseph to make a long trip just to pay his taxes. His wife, who had to go with him, was going to have a baby any moment. But when they arrived in Bethlehem, they couldn't even find a place to stay.

When we do God's will, we are not guaranteed a comfortable life. But we are promised that everything, even our discomfort, has meaning in God's plan.

God controls all history. By the decree of Emperor Augustus, Jesus was born in the very town prophesied for his birth (Micah 5:2), even though his parents did not live there.

Joseph and Mary were both descendants of David. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies that the Messiah would be born in David's royal line (see, for example, Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 33:15; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:5).

Chapter 3



Praying to know God's will

Matthew 6:10

May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven.

When we pray “Your will be done,” we are not resigning ourselves to fate, but praying that God’s perfect purpose will be accomplished in this world as well as in the next.

1 John 5:14-15

And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will.

And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

The emphasis here is on God’s will, not our will. When we communicate with God, we don’t demand what we want; rather we

discuss with him what *he* wants for us. If we align our prayers to his will, he will listen; and we can be certain that if he listens, he will give us a definite answer. Start praying with confidence!

Seeking God's will for your children.

Matthew 20:20

Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor.

The mother of James and John came to Jesus and “kneeling down, asked a favor of him.” She gave Jesus worship, but her real motive was to get something from him.

Too often this happens in our churches and in our lives. We play religious games, expecting God to give us something in return. True worship, however, adores and praises Christ for who he is and for what he has done.

The mother of James and John asked Jesus to give her sons special positions in his kingdom. Parents naturally want to see their children promoted and honored, but this desire is dangerous if it causes them to lose sight of God's specific will for their children.

God may have different work in mind—not as glamorous, but just as important. Thus parents' desires for their children's advancement must be held in check as they pray that God's will be done in their children's lives.

According to Matthew 27:56, the mother of James and John was at the cross when Jesus was crucified. Some have suggested that she was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. A close family relationship could have prompted her to make this request for her sons.

Prayers must be in line with God's will

Matthew 21:22;

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

This verse is not a guarantee that we can get *anything* we want simply by asking Jesus and believing. God does not grant requests that would hurt us or others or that would violate his own nature or will. Jesus' statement is not a blank check.

To be fulfilled, our requests must be in harmony with the principles of God's kingdom. The stronger our belief, the more likely our prayers will be in line with God's will, and then God will be happy to grant them.

John 14:14

Yes, ask anything in my name, and I will do it!

When Jesus says we can ask for anything, we must remember that our asking must be in his name—that is, according to God's character and will.

God will not grant requests contrary to his nature or his will, and we cannot use his name as a magic formula to fulfill our selfish desires. If we are sincerely following God and seeking to do his will, then our requests will be in line with what he wants, and he will grant them.

Knowing God's will comes from God's Spirit in us.

John 20:22

Then he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

This may have been a special filling of the Holy Spirit for the disciples, a foretaste of what all believers would experience from the time of Pentecost (Acts 2) and forever after. To do God's work, we need the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. We must avoid trying to do his work in our own strength.

There is life in the breath of God. Man was created but did not come alive until God breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). God's first breath made man different from all other forms of creation.

Now, through the breath of Jesus, God imparted eternal, spiritual life. With this inbreathing came the power to do God's will on earth.

Chapter 4



What to do when seeking God's will

Acts 16:6

Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had told them not to go into the province of Asia at that time.

We don't know how the Holy Spirit told Paul that he and his companions should not go into Asia. It may have been through a prophet, a vision, an inner conviction, or some other circumstance.

To know God's will does not mean we must hear his voice. He leads in different ways.

When seeking God's will,

- (1) Make sure your plan is in harmony with God's Word;

- (2) Ask mature Christians for their advice;
- (3) Check your own motives—are you seeking to do what you want or what you think God wants?—and
- (4) Pray for God to open and close the doors as he desires.

We must accept all that comes with God's will.

Acts 21:13-14

But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus."

When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The will of the Lord be done."

Paul knew he would be imprisoned in Jerusalem. Although his friends pleaded with him to not go there, he knew that he had to because God wanted him to. No one enjoys pain, but a faithful disciple wants above all else to please God.

Our desire to please God should overshadow our desire to avoid hardship and suffering. When we really want to do God's will, we must accept all that comes with it—even the pain. Then we can say with Paul, "The Lord's will be done."

God lets us choose against his will.

Romans 1:24-32

So God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies.

Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever. Amen. That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other.

And the men, instead of having normal sexual relationships with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men and, as a result, suffered within themselves the penalty they so richly deserved.

When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done.

Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. [

They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They are forever inventing new ways of sinning and are disobedient to their parents.

They refuse to understand, break their promises, and are heartless and unforgiving.

They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

How could intelligent people turn to idolatry? Idolatry begins when people reject what they know about God. Instead of looking to him as the Creator and sustainer of life, they see themselves as the center of the universe.

They soon invent “gods” that are convenient projections of their own selfish plans and decrees. These gods may be wooden figures, but they may also be goals or things we pursue such as money, power, or comfort.

They may even be misrepresentations of God himself—making God in our image, instead of the reverse.

The common denominator is this—idolaters worship the things God made rather than God himself. Is there anything you feel you can’t live without? Is there any priority greater than God? Do you have a dream you would sacrifice everything to realize? Does God take first place?

Do you worship God or idols of your own making?

Paul clearly portrays the inevitable downward spiral into sin.

First, people reject God;

Next, they make up their own ideas of what a god should be and do; then they fall into sin—sexual sin, greed, hatred, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, and gossip.

Finally, they grow to hate God and encourage others to do so. God does not cause this steady progression toward evil. Rather, when people reject him, he allows them to live as they choose.

God gives them over or permits them to experience the natural consequences of their sin. Once caught in the downward spiral, no one

can pull himself or herself out. Sinners must trust Christ alone to put them on the path of escape.

When Paul says that men exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of birds, animals, and reptiles, he seems to deliberately state man's wickedness in the terms used in the Genesis narrative of Adam's fall (see Genesis 1:20-26). When we worship the creature instead of the Creator, we lose sight of our own identity as those who are higher than the animals—made in the image of God.

Doing God's will guarantees eternal life.

Romans 2:7

He will give eternal life to those who persist in doing what is good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers.

Although God does not usually punish us immediately for sin, his eventual judgment is certain. We don't know exactly when it will happen, but we know that no one will escape that final encounter with the Creator. For more on judgment, see John 12:48 and Rev. 20:11-15.

Paul says that those who patiently and persistently *do* God's will find eternal life. He is not contradicting his previous statement that salvation comes by faith alone (Romans 1:16-17).

We are not saved by good deeds, but when we commit our lives fully to God, we want to please him and do his will. As such, our good deeds are a grateful *response* to what God has done, not a prerequisite to earning his grace.

Doing God's will may be for you to stay where you are.

Ephes. 6:19-20

And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words as I boldly explain God's secret plan that the Good News is for the Gentiles, too.

I am in chains now for preaching this message as God's ambassador. But pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

Undiscouraged and undefeated, Paul wrote powerful letters of encouragement from prison. Paul did not ask the Ephesians to pray that his chains would be removed, but that he would continue to speak fearlessly for Christ in spite of them.

God can use us in any circumstance to do his will. Even as we pray for a change in our circumstances, we should also pray that God will accomplish his plan through us right where we are.

Knowing God's eternal purpose for us will help us through the difficult times.

Please pray this Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation. Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007.