

Lecture #3: Understanding God's Will

I. Does the Bible give a formula for discovering God's will?

The scriptures do not describe a precise approach to finding God's plan. However, they clearly indicate our need to rely on the Lord Jesus Christ for guidance.

- We are to rationally seek His will in our lives (our part)
- We must depend on the Lord Jesus Christ for guidance (His part)

II. How to discover God's will in our lives?

There are various ways God can reveal his will. He told Abraham where to move and gave Moses a job description. In these cases, God revealed his plan through visions and dreams. Such supernatural phenomena are unlikely to happen today, but we have other means to understand God's plan in our lives.

1. The Scriptures

The Bible is the cornerstone for knowing God's will. If we read and meditate on the Bible daily, we will have a new way of thinking. When we are seeking God's guidance in a given matter, we have the advantage of recalling what the Scriptures preach about this situation.

- It is God's revelation to men. For example, without the Bible we would not know about salvation
- It describes God's moral values such as the Ten Commandments
- It provides spiritual parameters that will come to play when making decisions
- It is where God's promises are revealed

2. The Holy Spirit and Prayer

The Holy Spirit inside each believer instructs us and guides us. (John 14:26 & John 16:13) It is the role of the Holy Spirit to open our mind and heart to understand the will of God.

The realm of prayer is where the Holy Spirit operates most productively. As we are trying to understand God's plan, we are asking for His guidance, and prayer is asking.

With God's infinite knowledge, He already knows what we need. However, we still need to ask God for His help in a specific situation because we need the spiritual discipline of asking in order to be reminded that everything happens through God's will.

3. Discipleship to the Church

Several verses in Proverbs affirm the value of a godly advice.

- "A man's counsel is sweet to his friend" (Proverbs 27:9)
- "In abundance of counselors there is victory" (Proverbs 24:6)
- "Prepare plans by consultation" (Proverbs 20:18)

When we are faced with a decision, often discussing it with our spiritual father can help us sort through the pros and cons of the various choices. The Holy Spirit, which is the true source of wisdom, can speak through a spiritual father to enlighten our understandings.

4. Circumstances

The arrangement of circumstances can obviously be an indicator of God's guidance through open and closed doors in life. However, we should be careful not to give this area more consideration than it deserves.

- Satan can also open and shut doors of opportunity
- Another concern is manipulation. Sometimes we manipulate circumstances to "help God" resolve the issue in the direction we prefer

III. What hinders God from revealing His plan to us?

Sometimes, it is still difficult to discern the will of God despite long prayers. God is asking us to wait for His answers. This could simply mean that it is not yet time to make such a decision.

This uncertainty could also be a tool for correction, to re-examine our relationship with God, re-evaluate our course, or rethink our request. There are several factors that can lead to this lack of clarity in God's plan.

1. Disobedience

If there is an area of stubborn disobedience in our life and we continue to refuse to deal with it, then God's plan might remain hidden. This is because God's will revolves around the quality of our relationship with Him. (Psalm 81)

2. Doubt

The Christian life is a journey of faith. If we are asking for God's plan, then we must trust His ability to provide the guidance we seek. (Hebrews 11:6) If we are unsure of God's will or ability to guide us, then why ask Him?

3. Wrong motives

If we ask for God's will for the wrong motives, He will not answer. (James 4:3). We need to examine our motives and filter our requests through a daily relationship with God.

4. Ignoring responsibilities

There is always a part we have to do. If we want a job, but sit at home waiting for someone to knock on our doors with a job offer, then we have failed to fulfill our responsibility for diligence and initiative. (Proverbs 19:15)

5. Rejecting the means

God may choose to respond to our request in a way different from our expectation. We may be asking for a job in a certain company, but instead God provides opportunities in a completely different direction. We should keep an open mind as to how God will answer our prayers.

6. Redirecting our life

Sometimes, we've sought the Lord's help, did all we can for the right motives, but clouds persist. One possibility is God may be redirecting our life.

For example, we did not get the job that we wanted so much, because God is preparing us for a career change. St. Paul tried to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit redirected him to go to Greece instead.

IV. Have I missed God's will?

Remember:

- **Don't assume that trials mean you missed God's will:** Adversity does not mean you made the wrong decision or strayed away from God. Remember St. Paul ended up in prison.
- **Don't be neurotic about missing God's will:** He cares too much about us, and when we stray there's repentance followed by forgiveness and restoration.
- **Don't expect God to reveal His plans all at once:** This is a step by step process in which we grow in faith and develop a closer relationship with God.
- **Don't depend on feelings:** "Feeling" peaceful does not necessarily mean you are following God's will. God may grant you peace but focus on the principles in the decision-making process not on feelings.