

transform
discipleship mentoring



LEVEL THREE

Discerning the Will of God

2

Transformed Service

**A Discipleship Ministry Resource Provided by
Faith Assembly of God**

254 Spackenkill Rd., Poughkeepsie NY
(845) 462-5955

Discerning the Will of God

EQUIP

Transformed SERVICE

Introduction

If you haven't found your life's purpose or God's perfect Will, don't get all down on yourself because frankly you're not alone. As we begin this new lesson on discerning God's Will for your life, the selected devotionals in these next 2 weeks will provide for you a reassurance and a practical approach for finding and knowing your life purpose and God's Will.

What's Your Life Purpose?

While it seems at times that some discover their life purpose and others are still searching, the fact remains, God really does have a specific purpose and a plan for every single person...Yes, even if it takes a while to discover what it is. Be encouraged, every step you take, every decision you make is established and ordered by God (read Psalm 37:23). Stay close to Him and He will lead you step by step.

My pastor's wife once counseled me with these words, **"the door will open when you get there."** This statement came at a critical time in my life when I strongly felt that my 12 year assignment and ministry as a senior pastor in Hudson NY was complete. Make a long story short, a year before I left Hudson, God set me up with another senior pastor to work on a leadership project. Well, today I am on staff at his church and I am so enjoying what I have always wanted to do...discipling people in their walk with Christ. I want to encourage you by saying that God is faithful and his plan will not disappoint you. Wait on him, ask Him and watch what He does. It's always good!

May the Lord bless you

Pastor John Ogden

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP

Transformed SERVICE

How can I know the will of God for my life?

“What does the Bible say about knowing God's will?”

There are two things we always should consider when seeking to know God's will in any given situation or circumstance. It's like saying “What does God have to say about what I am about to do, say or decide.

First, always make sure what you are asking for or considering doing is not forbidden in God's Word, the Bible. If the bible says “do not” then do not pray for it. For example: If you are a Christian and you pray for God to give you a certain boyfriend or girlfriend who is not a Christian, then you are asking for something God forbids (Read 1 Corinthians 6:14).

Secondly, Always make sure what you are asking for or considering doing will glorify God and help you grow spiritually. If these two things are true and God still is not giving you what you are asking, then it is possible that it's either not God's will for you to have what you are asking for or maybe you just need to wait a while longer for it. Always keep in mind that God's timing is perfect and that He is never late. I am going to be honest with you my friend, knowing God's will is sometimes very difficult and trying when it not spelled out in His Word. Unfortunately, people want God to tell them specifically what to do—where to work, where to live, whom to marry, etc. If that were the case, no one would need to exercise Faith. It's also rare that God gives people information that direct and specific. Sometimes he does but it's not the norm. Personally, I think God allows us to make choices regarding those things. However, we must depend and obey the leading of the Holy Spirit when He leads us. This is critical.

[Romans 12:2](#) tells us, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The only decision God does not want us to make is the decision to sin or resist His will. God wants us to make choices that are in agreement with His will. So, how do you know what God's will is for you? **If you are walking closely with the Lord and truly desiring His will for your life, God will place His desires on your heart. The key is wanting God's will, not your own.** “Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart” ([Psalm 37:4](#)).

Here is an easy rule to live by: If the Bible does not speak against it and it can genuinely benefit you spiritually, then the Bible gives you the “permission” to make decisions and to follow your heart. **If you truly seek God's will with a humble spirit and an open mind, He will reveal His will to you.**

How do I know God is speaking to me?

Ever get frustrated when people around you seem to be hearing God's voice and yet you don't. For starters, it's a great desire to want to hear His voice but let's not make it any more difficult than it really should be. It's actually very simple.

You see, the Bible is where God's voice can be heard. **2 Peter 1:21** tells us that the very words in scripture ultimately came from God himself, even though he makes use of human authors. **2 Tim 3:16-17** tells us that the Bible is 'God-breathed' i.e. that the words have a divine origin. Jesus himself treated the whole Old Testament as God's word (eg **Mt 12:1-14, 19:4, 5:17-20**). As for the New Testament, the apostles, whose witness is what brings us to faith in Jesus (**John 20:30-31**), made it clear that their words carry the authority as God's words and are regarded as Scripture (**2 Pet 3:16, Eph 2:20**). Their authority comes from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (**John 14:26, 15:26, 20:22**).

Here is the bottom line... if you want to hear God's voice, then you need to read and know God's word. Often times when I am reading God's word, certain scripture verses seem louder than others. That's God speaking to me. And he wants to speak to you too. Spend some time with him and hear him speak to you as you read His word. If we can hear God's voice while reading His word, then we will be able to know and discern His will, and lots of it.

Here's a few examples: In His word, His will for us is to be a 'holy people' who sings his praises (2 Pet 2:9-10), to rid ourselves of sin (Hebrews 12:1-2), to love one another (Romans 12:8-10), to be assured that he will bring us to the finish line (Romans 8:28-30) and more! God's will for us is everywhere in the Bible, there's no way to list it all! We might not find advice in the Bible about whether we should work as a dentist or go to Africa. So that probably means that it doesn't really matter to God except that when we work, we work with sincerity and diligence (Colossians 3:22-25), and when we make decisions, we make them because we 'live for him who died for us' (2 Corinthians 5:15).

His word is completely sufficient. It contains all we need to be saved and to live a godly life (2 Timothy 3:14-17). That means that if we want to know God, discern his will for us and how to live, the Bible will let us know what we need to know and do.

So be very careful not to listen to God's voice from so many other quarters - these other 'avenues' are often unreliable, coming from what "Grandpa use to say" but commonly false and sometimes ultimately unnecessary!

David of the Old Testament said in Psalm 119:105 - "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Allow God through his word be your guide and navigation for not only your life but for every situation that requires one step at a time.

One last note is this:

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP

Transformed SERVICE

Part of the confusion about hearing God's voice arises because people talk about "hearing God's voice" and "knowing his will." For those who are not familiar with God's Word, they may cave into the influence of a particular individual or a book they read rather than the truth of the Word of God. That's why it is critical for all of us to discern the will of God by first knowing His word, the Bible.

Personally God seldom speak to me in words that I hear or in a way that makes it clear what God wants me to do. He has a few times but it's not the norm. Rather he "talks" to me as I read, study and meditate on in his Word. And then throughout my day, I am sensitive to his voice and leading when my heart is moved upon.

I hope that eases your burden in wanting to 'hear God's voice'. The wonderful news is that we can, anytime!

Just grab your Bible; open it and God will speak to you! Believe it!

May God bless all of you this day and you begin a disciplined habit of hearing from God as you read his word.

transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring
Pastor John Ogden

transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP

Transformed SERVICE

God speaks to each of us "exactly where we are."

This devotional was taken from one of Joyce Meyer's books called "Hearing the voice of God." My prayer is that it helps you as it has helped me.

God speaks to each of us "exactly where we are."

What does that mean, "exactly where we are?" It means that God speaks to us right where we are on our own spiritual journey.

Let me give you an example...

Imagine a row of seven people sitting in front of you: a 6-year-old child, a physicist, a Catholic priest, a rebellious teenager, a mother of five children, a farmer in Nigeria, and a New York police officer. Now imagine that each one of these people asks God the same exact question. The question could be anything. For example, what would be in my highest good to say or do as I walk past this beggar on the street? Or, what is my true purpose in life? Or, can I best be of service in the world? Is it my highest good to invest in the stock market? What should I say or do when someone yells at me or threatens me?

Regardless of which question is asked, do you know what each person is going to hear when they ask God the same question that everyone else asks?

Each person is going to hear something totally unique to them.

The 6-year-old child will not receive the same communication from God as the rebellious teenager, the Catholic priest, or the police officer. The mother of five children will hear something different than the physicist or the farmer in Nigeria. Each person has their own background, education, life experience, and beliefs. Each one is learning their own unique lessons in life. As a result, **God will speak to each person "exactly where they are" on their path.** One person may be learning about kindness or compassion, while another person may be learning about forgiveness, abundance, or self-empowerment. What one person needs to hear in this exact moment to re-connect with God and their True Self is most likely going to be different than what another person needs to hear. **This is true for all of us.**

In addition, we are constantly evolving and changing in our understanding and awareness. The lessons we were learning 10 years ago are most likely different from the lessons we are learning today. In fact, who we are in this moment is different than who we were three months ago, three weeks ago, and even three days ago. Each time we open up to a deeper understanding and experience of the Love and Peace of God in our lives, the fabric of our mind changes. We could probably ask God the same question every

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP

Transformed SERVICE

year for the rest of our lives and receive a slightly different answer every time we ask because what we are learning and assimilating in each moment is different. What we need to hear right now to restore ourselves to God is unique to this moment alone.

What if you could experience God's unconditional love for you EXACTLY AS YOU ARE?

What if you could learn to love yourself unconditionally, let go of ALL self-judgment, fear, and guilt, and experience the freedom and peace of knowing that you remain exactly as God created you to be? What if you could learn how to hear God's voice within you in a very clear and recognizable way so that you can receive the comfort, guidance, and healing that you seek in your life?

If you want a deeper and more consistent relationship with God, and if you want to hear God's voice within you in a very clear and recognizable way, now is the time for you to believe that you are worthy and capable of hearing His voice in your life.

You have the ability right now to feel God's Presence within you, to ask God questions and receive His answers. Take a moment right now to acknowledge this truth. Take a moment right now to ask God to guide you and direct you in your life. Take a moment right now to be still and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit within you.

God is waiting to speak with you. All that is required for you to hear His voice is your sincere desire to do so. Ask, and it will be given unto you.

- By Joyce Meyers

transform
discipleship mentoring

transform
discipleship mentoring

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP
Transformed SERVICE

Finding God's Will / Part 1

by Blaine Packer

Lately, I've been reading this book entitled Finding the Will of God by Bruce Waltke, and it has brought to mind just how much as human beings, we have this desire to seek the advice or direction of a higher being. Whether that figure is our parents, our mentor, or God himself, I think it's part of the human condition to seek affirmation for our own decisions. Also, as believers, we want to be pleasing to our Creator in the decisions that we make. Consequently, in order to appear and to feel 'competent and valuable' as Waltke puts it, we employ many diverse methods to grasp the wisdom of God as it pertains to our decision.

Waltke begins the book by highlighting all of the ways that people, both past and present have sought the will of a divine being. From casting lots (a fairly common practice in the Old Testament), to seeking a miraculous sign, to watching the stars, to fortune telling, and consulting mediums, mankind continues to seek the will of power greater than themselves. Waltke explains that believers, in some cases like the pagans of old, still seek an unforgettable divine revelation to make them sure of the decision they are making instead of seeking a closer and more intimate relationship with God. Such is the premise of Waltke's book, and to that end, he establishes some key principles that can prepare the believer to obediently follow God's guidance as it is revealed through a deepening relationship with Him.

The first step Waltke establishes in his book is to read your Bible. It sounds fairly simple really, and I for one am already doing that on a fairly regular basis. The question is, 'How does reading my Bible help me in making decisions according to God's will?' Like the quote says above, my personal relationship is built upon how well I know God's heart and character, and the best way to find both of those things is through His own Word. Throughout the Bible, we see God's heart for His people unfold, and it is by reading and meditating on His heart and actions that God can begin to change our thoughts to His thoughts that we may know Him, and His truth.

The second point Waltke makes is to develop a heart for God. In other words, 'One way I know God's will is by the desires of my heart...If you are walking close with the Lord, and He shapes your character and influences your life, then He is also shaping your desires.' (p. 86). For me, I've definitely found that if I am walking close with the Lord, His desires will bubble up in me, and they usually match perfectly with the gifts and character qualities that He has created in me. After all, that's why God makes us the way He does, because we each have different God-given passions and purposes, and it is through pursuing an open and intimate relationship with Him that these passions are charged up inside us. To summarize, the desires of your heart that were placed there by God, come alive the closer your draw towards Him.

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP
Transformed SERVICE

Third, seeking the counsel of others is another important principle in finding God's will.

Waltke highlights this idea by showing the amount of times that the author of Proverbs urges the reader to listen to wisdom, and the times that Paul encourages the church to develop every facet of their church community so it may encourage the body of Christ as a whole. I've always been one to be cautious of others advice because the Word of God always needs to take precedence over the counsel of others. What I needed to learn however, was that if the mentor, or community of believers surrounding me are pursuing the heart of God as well, than others' contributions should be in line with what I've heard in God's Word, and it should be an encouragement to me. That is why, Paul and Barnabas, whom we all know had a passion developing in their own lives to preach the Gospel beyond Judea, were confirmed and set apart by the body of Christ to follow His leading.

“That's why my following of God is based upon my relationship with Him rather than on a special 'sign'. Rather than looking for some sort of wrapped spiritual package from the Almighty, I want to rely upon my closeness to Him...I don't go through a divination process to discover the hidden message of God. Instead, I examine how God has called me to live my life, what my motives are, what He has given me a heart for, where I am in my walk with Christ, and what God is saying to me through His Word and His people.”

While these three principles hold half of the process outlined in Walkte's book, I'm going to be looking at the final three principles next month...so stay tuned for that. In the end, the most impressive lesson that I'm learning through this book is that finding God's will is not an obscure treasure hunt in which I may or may not succeed. It is a lifestyle that leads to God developing His heart in me – a heart that is confirmed in His word and by His people.

By Blaine Parker

Blaine Packer is studying a Bachelor of Cross-cultural Ministry at Worldview Centre for Intercultural Studies in Launceston, Tasmania.

transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP
Transformed SERVICE

Finding God's Will / Part 2

by Blaine Packer

In continuing this very important subject, I looked at the first three steps or ways that we can find God's will that Walkte outlines in his book: **reading your Bible, developing God's heart, and seeking the counsel of wise people.** But these three steps are not the only ways that God reveals and confirms His will to His people.

In my experience, I've found that there are two types of people when it comes to finding God's will and making decisions: people who want God to reveal his will through logical evidence, and people who want God to steady their emotions and make them feel at peace with the right answer regardless of physical circumstances. Each of these types has their pros and cons, but that is really beside the point. You see, we sometimes set expectations of how God will communicate His purposes to us. Whether based on past experience, or the experiences of another believer, we can sometimes limit our spiritual senses to the realm from which we expect an answer.

However, as a part of God's Kingdom, we need to be prepared for God to speak to us in any way He chooses, whether that be in a logical series of events, or circumstances with a certain 'gut feeling / prompting' attached. In this devotional, I'm going to be looking at three more steps/methods to finding the will of God as outlined in Waltke's book that explore the more circumstantial ways that God can choose to reveal His will.

The fourth way that God can express His will is through His providence. God's providence, or sovereign power over circumstances, has been one of the more well-known and accepted characteristics of our God – even by 'non-believers'. Insurance policies refer to 'acts of god', an escapee from a near accident might refer to the 'man upstairs', and the romantic might refer to 'fate', but any one of these concepts express the idea of a greater power supremely altering even the smallest events of our lives to our benefit.

As Waltke explains in his book, we can often seek God's Word, develop God's heart, and even be affirmed by the wisdom of other believers, but still find the door to be closed and the opportunity non-existent. Just as Paul who wanted to visit the Romans (Rom. 1:13) was prevented from doing so by circumstances, Providence can intervene and either negate or confirm our calling.

When we consider the instruction that James gives in James 4:13-17, we realise that our lives as believers in the Kingdom of God pale in significance to God's master plan. God gives us the choice to participate in that plan by guiding us along our decision making journey – sometimes through the use of circumstances. This guidance is what Paul refers to when he says to the church in Ephesus, "I will come back if it is God's will". According to Walkte, what Paul is really saying is, "I shall return if God arranges the circumstances."

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP
Transformed SERVICE

Of course, this method can be dangerous when considered on its own, as we can sometimes remove ourselves from the responsibility of making a decision by relying on Providence alone. But not only is this mentality not biblical, it also opens the way for our decisions to be misguided by any and every circumstance that comes our way. At this point, we are no longer seeking God's will, but are simply searching for a physical manifestation of the spiritual – a process that will almost always open the door to deception. Waltke explains the good news is that when we respond to God's providence, we can guarantee that our actions contribute to an over-arching plan of a God that loves us – so we can trust Him entirely.

The fifth way we can find God's will in our lives is by seeing if what we are being led towards, makes sense. By making sense, Waltke refers to whether or not our leading agrees with Scripture, with our gifts and abilities, with our circumstances, and with our overall strategy. Of course, as humans, this is usually the default step for most of us, but it is a valid point. God gave us our intelligence to glorify Him, and to make decisions that agree with his plan.

Consequently, it is safe to say that God will not likely (never say never) call us to do something that completely goes against our giftings, abilities, circumstances and overall calling. In his book, Waltke does a great job of outlining this concept in detail, and he summarises with the following statement: "We do not rely on our reasoning abilities to determine our course of action. As Christians we rely on God's guidance. But as he leads, we make decisions within his revealed will on the basis of sound judgement," (p. 159).

Finally, there are times in our decision-making careers that God needs to override this entire process to teach us or to expand our perspective. This overriding idea of 'divine intervention' can be found a few times in the New Testament as God was expanding the perspectives of the first century Christians. Waltke points out Peter's revelation of the Gentiles position in the church. Peter did not arrive at this conclusion through Scripture, wise counsel, finding God's heart or Providence, as all of those elements constructed a framework that was insufficient for God's updated plan.

Consequently, divine intervention was necessary, and Peter received a whole new perspective that did still agree with God's overall character and Scriptural testament. However, just as Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is not the standard conversion experience is for every believer, divine intervention cannot be expected with every decision that we make.

We need to be ready to receive a direct Word from God at any time, but this will only ever be in accordance with God's plan, heart and will as revealed in the Scriptures.

Discerning the Will of God

Level 3 Lesson 2

EQUIP
Transformed SERVICE

Consequently, while divine intervention is a term that can be used to envelope and summarize the entire process, it's never something that should alone be relied upon - separated from the Truth of God's Word and the testimony of His people.

Considerations

Ultimately, the methods that we employ to make our decisions in our lives can be seen as a reflection or a witness to our relationship with Christ. And this relationship is not simply referred to in Scripture as a 'faith' – a mere belief system, but a 'way' of life – a lifestyle that seeks to become more and more like the person of Christ and underpinned by our belief system or faith.

Waltke concludes his book by explaining, "If we are committed to the 'way' of Jesus Christ, a way that compels the **transformation** of lives and cultures into a conformity with the ultimate realities of God, our theology (what we believe about God) will shape our lives (how we live for God). **As we are led by the Spirit into a fuller understanding of Him, we experience what the Scripture calls 'the Will of God',**" (p. 187).

By Blaine Parker

transform
discipleship mentoring

transform
discipleship mentoring

transform
discipleship mentoring

transform
discipleship mentoring

Review Questions - Lesson 2

1. List two things we always should consider when seeking to know God's will in any given situation or circumstance. p.12

2. If you want to hear God's voice, what should you practice in your life? p.13

3. Write out Psalm 119:105 and give a brief explanation as to its application in your life. p.13

Explanation:

4. Explain in your own words what "God speaks to us exactly where we are?" p.15

5. In addition to knowing his word, what is required on our part in order to hear God's voice? p.16

6. Name the 5 ways "Walkte" lists in his book on how to find God's Will. p.19-20
