**How to Know God’s Will**

**Philippians 3:15 / February 2nd, 2025**

**Philippians 3:15 - Therefore let those of us who are “perfect” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways.**

**INTRODUCTION**

This passage brings important questions to mind; “how do we discern God’s will?” and “How does God correct our thinking?” How does he “reveal” things to us?

**PREACHING THE TEXT**

1. **“How do we discern God’s will?”**

How To Learn God’s Will

 Here are some of the ways that we discover the will of God for our lives.

**The Word of God** (there are many things that are always God’s will).

Many times, we pray about things that are already answered in God’s word. Now maybe subconsciously we kind of think we know what answer we will find in God’s word, but we don’t want to look it up. So, we pray and hope God might give us a different answer for our own lives. We might ask; “God is this the right person for me?” But the woman I am thinking of dating is not a believer. The bible says that we should not be unequally yoked or bonded in marriage to a person who does not walk with God. They will certainly bring us further from the Lord. But we don’t like that answer. Perhaps we can win them to Christ, or they will become a Christian. So, we begin dating them and then we pray and lament and beg God to show us. But He has already given us an answer. Knowing the will of God begins with taking his word seriously. God will protect you from certain spiritual problems if you follow what he has already revealed.

We take a job that offers more pay or take on another ministry task before we pray and discern God’s will. Then we pray and ask God to confirm to us by some sign what we have already agreed to do. Yes, the bible tells us to nourish our family, but this is an important promotion, so I’m just going to do it. Soon we are overwhelmed and unable to follow through with the things we know God has truly gifted us to do. But we pray and ask God why he is putting us through all this stress. When we never bothered to read the wisdom literature for insights that would have helped us make the right decision in the first place.

The bible tells us there are certain things we should always be willing to do. Give cheerfully, serve others in love, encourage others, provide for our family. We don’t need to pray about these things. When the opportunity arises or need arises, we just do these things and thank God for giving us the opportunity to meet a need. If your neighbor has a flat tire and you know how to fix it, you know God’s will. You don’t even have to pray whether it is God’s will. If you are physically able and you would not do more harm than good, go change the tire and do it in the name of Jesus as you pray for your neighbor. And if you have a spiritual gift to serve in a certain area and have the time, then it is God’s will for you to serve. We don’t need another word; we have the word of God which tells us to serve in whatever way God has gifted you. Serving in an area that we are not gifted with we will only wear us out and prevent others from stepping up.

God tells us to be generous, but we know throwing money at someone who will spend it on booze instead of the electric bill is enabling and helping a person live a lie. Don’t enable people but be a blessing in Jesus’ name. Give generously but don’t fund someone’s addiction. We don’t need a new word from God in these things. We have a word, God’s word, and know God’s will. Most of the decision we will make in life are informed by God’s word.

**Prayer / Circumstances**

The second way that we discern the will of God for our lives is by prayer. We know God is calling us to be generous but how much do I give? We know we are supposed to fellowship with other believers, but where is God calling us to fellowship. These applications take prayer when the answer is not obvious.

One of the primary ways God reveals how to apply God’s word to us is in our conscience. When I thought about marrying Dawn I had to consider moving from Hayward, Wisconsin to Mora, MN. There is no bible verses that say, “Mike Thompson must move to Mora, MN. So we apply biblical principles and try to discern God’s will to apply the word to my situation.

Dawn has many family members here in Mora and to ask her to move from Mora to Hayward would have been hard for her. But moving away from my ministries and friends and support network was a big thing for me. It would be starting from scratch with few ministry contacts. This is big.

So, I took some walks in the woods and spent some time alone without the tv distracting me and prayed. I leaned into God’s presence and prayed and asked God; “do you want me to move to Mora?” Then I imagined myself in Mora and got pictures in my mind of me ministering to others and preaching the word. I felt a sense of confidence and certainty as I prayed and thought about being here. Then I prayed about staying in Hayward and what came to mind was that I had already done my part in Hayward. In my mind I saw people in Hayward that we trained to minister to others, but I could not imagine myself doing anything more. In my heart it felt like a closed door in Hayward.

I prayed this way several times and asked God to change my mind and heart if I was off base. But then God also worked through circumstances. Sometimes we must go by faith but often God reveals things by circumstances. When I was visiting Dawn in Mora, I was talking about starting new recovery ministries. I discerned that I needed to continue doing the same thing I was called to do in Hayward in other places. Dawn said; “call Pastor Jim from The True vine, he has recovery ministry going there.” So, I cold called Pastor Jim, and he said; “we are meeting tonight about starting a residential recovery ministry.” That very night I met with three people who were led by God to start a recovery ministry, but they did not know how to do it. I took this as a sure sign from God that he was calling me here, because I had the part that they were missing.

 So, I discerned God’s will through prayer looking for a sense of peace and then God used circumstances to confirm to me what He was showing me. One important thought to add is that I would not have discerned the will of God if I did not want to know the will of God. If I just took the easiest course I would still be in Hayward. I loved living there. But in the end, there is joy in being in God’s will and now I love living here.

**The Body of Christ** often knows God’s will as they pray and interact

Another way of learning the will of God is to ask people who are close to God. Ask other people in the church. They are not blinded by the emotions that could blind you to the will of God. Don’t talk an opinion poll but ask those who seem to have a close walk with God and who are objective and honest when they speak.

When I was in Stanley, WI godly people knew it was time for me to move on before I did. They knew I had completed my part. God’s people knew when I was on point and off track in ministry. But often our egos are so fragile that we don’t want to ask others.

Don’t ask people who will just throw ideas out with no deep thought or understanding of the circumstances you face. We want to get input into our decisions from those who think deeply and pray deeply and who read the word of God and apply it well. We want input from those whose lives are not a chaotic mess.

**General wisdom / General revelation**

Finally, we can discover the will of God by using general wisdom. God, should I invest in this pyramid business? Well, general wisdom tells us this is not a good idea. Pyramid schemes make the company owners rich but rarely make you rich, and your life and energy will be used up promoting products by pushing them on your friends. They will eventually come to dread your visits.

God rarely leads you into things that are not wise. He will not normally override the rules of creation to make you succeed at foolish things where others have failed.

FINDING GOD’S WILL REQUIRES THE WILL TO DO IT

**John 7:17 17Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.**

One noteworthy scholar and author said, “If we want to do God’s will, we can (and will) discover God’s will.” Note: it takes a miracle to want to do God’s will. None of us want to do God’s will. We want to do our will.

Barnhouse Said: “It is impossible for someone who wants to do God’s will not to know it.”

 God is happy when you want to know His will. He is a God who reveals himself and His will. Yes, there are some things that are a mystery. But God, like all good leaders gives clear instructions to his followers.

 Normally, the way God reveals his will is to supercharge our conscience and our will so that we embrace the will of God revealed in scripture. When we reject God, our conscience becomes seared, and our hearts hardened. We are handed over to our body appetites. When we repent our conscience is restored and we can discern right from wrong and know the will of God.

OUR DESIRE TO CONTROL LIMITS OUR ABILITY TO KNOW GOD’S WILL

 Many are unable to discern the will of God because they do not want God to control their agenda. We don’t like it when someone else tells us what to do. And if we are honest, we bristle at times when God corrects us or tells us to do things in a new way.

Illustration:

 To illustrate this point let’s think about God revealing his will to the Israelites when they wandered in the desert. If you remember, each time the cloud in the desert moved God instructed the Israelites to move under its shade. We don’t often think about this, but God appeared as a cloud so that His people could survive the scorching sun of the desert. And each time the cloud moved the people would pack up all their belongings and move with the cloud. It was God who revealed his will by moving the cloud. How far should we walk today? Well, the cloud will tell you. They didn’t tell the cloud when to move. God moved the cloud at His will to control the travel.

 I’m sure many hated not being able to predict when the cloud would move and not being able to schedule when to pack and unpack all their belongings. Can you imagine the stress of knowing that at any given moment when you would have to quickly pack up everything you own and get it on carts and move to a destination that is unknown.

 The biggest thing that prevents us from knowing the will of God is that we don’t want God to interrupt our plans. Those who want to know the will of God and are willing to do the will of God will discover the will of God.

SOME THINGS ARE ALWAYS GOD’S WILL

 Here are some things that are always God’s will

**John 6:40:** The will of my Father – for everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him to have eternal life

**Romans 12:1-2**: Holiness is God’s will and the beginning of seeking God’s will (believer)

**Philippians 4:8** Whatever is noble and true, think on such things

**Psalm 32:8**: I will instruct and teach you about how you should live, I will advise you as I look you in the eye. (He must catch our eye)

New Ways

God is creative and will often lead us in new ways to keep things fresh. Determine to do God’s will and you will find it.

**SUMMARY / APPLICATION**

 Let’s sum up what we have learned. We learned that the first thing it takes to discover God’s will is that we are willing to do God’s will. The second thing we learned is that God is eager to reveal himself. And we learned that God uses several ways to guide us. He uses the word of God. Read it and do it. And he speaks into our conscience as we pray. He uses circumstances to confirm His will. And he uses other people to confirm his will. And he speaks to all people through general revelation and wisdom that all people have access to.

**TAKING IT HOME**

1. Do you want to do God’s will? Can you think of anything that God could ask you to do that you would refuse?
2. Do you have Godly people around you that can help you hear from God when you can’t?
3. When you plan or propose something do you pray before you speak or act? Are you pausing to pray?