

Knowing God's Will

The Challenges We Face Today

One of the challenges followers of Jesus face is how to know and live God's will moment by moment.

- We tend to focus on God's will only in terms of overall direction or what God wants me to do with my life.
- We are out of God's will most of the time because we have not developed the discipline of listening to the Holy Spirit so we can know God's will moment by moment.
- We get confused and have difficulty discerning our own will from that of God's.

We must learn how to know God's will moment by moment and then discipline ourselves to do His will with question or pause.

Lesson Truth

We can know God's will at any given moment. Learning how to know God's will moment-by-moment means we must take a disciplined approach in our daily living. As we continuously submit our lives to God and keep our minds fixed on Him, His will unfolds to us as naturally as breathing.

Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is for you to learn how to know God's will moment-by-moment and to obey His will.

Lesson Discussion

Two Aspects of God's Will

As a follower of Jesus Christ the primary focus for my life is to allow Jesus to be Lord over my entire life and to walk in complete obedience to Him. The problem is that often I have trouble discerning what I should be doing moment-by-moment.

Some days I am sure I am doing what God wants and other days I am not sure at all. What does it really mean to "do God's will" or to be "in" God's will? If you ask several believers what those phrases mean you are likely to get a variety of responses.

How do you know for sure if you are doing the work God requires of you? Just because you read your Bible, pray, go to church, and are involved in Christian activities does not necessarily mean you are walking out God's will.

There are two aspects of God's will. The first has to do with the daily events in His creation. He engineers each situation and event in creation according to His will.

The second aspect of God's will has to do with what He wants from my life as His disciple. It is this second aspect of God's will that is the primary focus for this lesson.

God has a definite, predetermined plan for your life. His plan is perfect and is designed to make your life of value to Him. His plan is His will for your life and it is up to you to learn how to know His will so you can carry out His plan.

God's will for your life is in line with His will for His creation to glorify Himself and to please Him. When we are living by faith in Him and doing His will, God is pleased with our life.

Doing the Work God Requires



John 6:28-29 ESV “Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

One day the Jews asked Jesus what they must do in order to accomplish the work God requires. In other words, what is the will of God for our lives? Jesus answered that to do the work of God is to believe in the One God sent.

The people were not expecting to hear such a response from Jesus. They might have been expecting to hear: give to the poor, obey the commandments, worship God, or any number of other responses. But Jesus simply said “believe in the One he has sent”

What does it really mean to “believe” in Jesus? It simply means we accept and obey everything Jesus taught and commanded. It means to put our complete trust and faith in Him as we follow Him as His disciples. God’s will for you is to believe Jesus and follow Him.

Many want to serve God and do His will, but unless we are following Jesus as His disciples we cannot be in step with God’s will. Jesus said that no one can serve Him unless they are following Him.



John 12:26 ESV “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”

If I keep it simple and believe that “God’s will” for me is to believe in Jesus by following Him as His disciple I will avoid a lot of frustration and confusion in knowing and doing God’s will in my own life.



Romans 12:1-2 ESV “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

In order to do God’s will consistently I must allow my life to be completely His as a living sacrifice. I must stop conforming to the pattern of this world and begin conforming to the pattern of God.

What is conforming to the pattern of this world? It simply means we are living to please ourselves and we are following the pattern of the world system. Self is the master and God is ignored most of the time.

The Bible teaches we cannot do the will of two masters at the same time. Either self is going to be master according to the pattern of this world or Jesus is going to be master through the pattern of the Spirit.

As my mind is renewed through His Word and I am listening to the Holy Spirit, I can know God’s good, pleasing and perfect will at any moment. I must then step out in obedience to His will as it is revealed to me.

Colossians 3:2 ESV “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

We must keep our minds on the things of God. Jesus was constantly tuned to the Father and His sole focus was to do exactly what the Father showed Him to do. Because we have the life of Jesus in us through the Holy Spirit, we can do the same thing. We can and must walk as Jesus walked.

How God's Will Is Revealed

In order for me to do God's will, I must first know what His will is. God wants you to know His will and He has made it possible for you to know His will all the time.

Many believers are perplexed about God's will and you will often hear them say "if I only knew God's will for my life". By the way they talk you would think that God is trying to keep His will a secret from them.

As we mentioned earlier, God's will is for us to believe in Jesus by following His teachings and obeying His commands. In addition to God's Word we can receive daily guidance from the Holy Spirit.

We can never know God's will moment-by-moment if we are living by the pattern of the world. The pattern of the world is such that people will not take time to know God and spend time the necessary time learning how to hear Him.

We are so busy with the things of this life – wives, husbands, children, jobs, church, and personal interests – that we end up ignoring God most of the day. We miss the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit showing us the way to go.

If you do not change this pattern you will be out of God's will most of the time. Self will continue to be your master and the life of Jesus in you will be given a back seat. You must get out of the driver's seat and take the back seat before you drive off a cliff.

God's will is only revealed to us as we submit to Him and make time to listen to Him. We do this through regular and consistent prayer and reading His Word. As you develop the discipline of hearing Him it can become almost automatic so that you will find yourself becoming God's will without consciously thinking about it.

God's Will Through His Word



Matthew 4:4 ESV "But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'".

The Bible provides us with the general teachings and commands we need to do God's will. God has made it very clear that He expects us to live by His written Word.

If you are not reading His Word you cannot live by it. If you are not living by His Word you are not living according to His will. If you are not living according to His will you have turned your back on Him and are going your own way.

In order to know God's Word you must read it and read it regularly. You should read a chapter each in the Gospels and Letters daily because they show us how to live Christian and remind us daily of God's way.

Even though the sheer volume of God's Word can seem overwhelming there are only a few truths that are critically important initially. Those are the ones you should focus on until you are living them.

One problem that many believers face is a lack of desire to read God's Word. It becomes routine and boring. However, as you truly submit to the Holy Spirit and begin to obey what you already know, that will begin to change.



Psalms 1:1-2 ESV "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

Psalms 119:105 ESV "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Hebrews 4:12 ESV “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

As you learn to trust and obey God consistently, your love for Jesus will grow, and the Word of God will come alive to you. But it cannot come alive if you are not reading it.

Over time God will open your mind to the Scriptures more and more as you submit to His will. You will begin to receive revelation knowledge about God and this will spark a greater desire for His Word.

Always spend time in prayer before reading the Word to get your mind clear of the cares of this life. Prayer prepares your spirit to receive God’s Word and allows the Holy Spirit to open your mind to the Word.

God uses the Bible to help you bring your life in line with His expectation for you. The written Word is not designed to direct your daily steps but to ensure you are living by God’s truth so you are not hindered from receiving daily direction from the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God will renew your mind continuously as you soak in it. The Word will help you know what you need to do in order to break away from the pattern of this world so you are not conformed to it any longer.

As you read the Word you will become aware of areas in your life that are not in accordance with God’s truth. You must deal with those immediately because they are an indication your life is out of order and therefore out of God’s will.

God’s Will Through the Holy Spirit

Even though the Bible provides us the general teachings and commands we need to live by sometimes we need more specific guidance in carrying out God’s plan for our lives. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in.

The Holy Spirit is our guide on the journey as we follow Jesus. Each step of the journey is God’s specific will for the moment. As you live by the Spirit you will no longer be conforming to the pattern of the world.



Galatians 5:16 ESV “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

The Holy Spirit’s guidance to us will never be contrary to God’s written Word. If it is you must not move forward until there is agreement between the written Word of God and what you are hearing from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit reveals God’s will to us through our conscience. If we are submitted to God we will know the next right thing to do every time. If our actions are contrary to God’s will we will experience guilt in our conscience.

If you have not received the Holy Spirit or you have buried the Holy Spirit by allowing your own will to control, dominate and direct your life, you will be continually out of step with God’s will.

The Holy Spirit is our daily guide and counselor. Apart from complete submission to the Holy Spirit, our ability to do God’s will is sporadic at best. Therefore we must keep the Holy Spirit in focus throughout our day as He directs our every step.



John 16:13-14 ESV “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The great enemy of the Holy Spirit is self. Self wants to be in charge of its own destiny and

captain its own ship. Self and the Holy Spirit cannot both be in control. One must go. Unfortunately it is the Holy Spirit that often gets the back seat.

You cannot be in God's will when self is at the steering wheel of your life. Too often we are trying to give equal time to both in our life and this causes a lot of problems. Self is most often going in the opposite direction of the Holy Spirit.

You must make time to listen to the Holy Spirit so you can learn to hear His still small voice. Since He speaks to us through our conscience He can easily be drowned out by all the noise of life.

As you practice the discipline of listening to the Holy Spirit you will get better at discerning His voice regularly even amid the noise of life. But early on you must make it your highest priority.

Regular active prayer is the discipline that keeps you in tune with the Holy Spirit's moment-by-moment direction for your life. Focusing your mind on God through prayer helps quiet the noise of life so you can hear the Holy Spirit.

As you discipline yourself to live by God's Word and listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit you will find yourself in the center of God's will more consistently.

Understanding God's Will

There are times we may know God's will but not understand it. Often the problem has to do with our own view, opinions, or expectations. These tend to get in the way when God's will does not line up with the way we want things to go or the way we think they should go.

When I choose to follow Jesus as His disciple He will reveal to me moment-by-moment what He wants me to do. Whether I am with my family, at work, involved in a personal interest, or whatever, He will direct my steps if I stay submitted to Him.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit may want me to serve in some way that is completely foreign to me and I may feel completely inadequate to serve Him there. He will not necessarily have you serve in the areas you think you are gifted in.

If I am led into menial service of some kind His will for me is to be an example of a disciple in that situation. We tend to want to serve in areas that align with our natural affinities. But God may have a different plan.

We must be careful that we do not choose how or where we will serve God through our own human reasoning. God has the master plan, and we often get in the way of His plan because we think we know what is best.

When we attempt to pioneer our own direction our lives get out of alignment with God's will and we can end up being in God's way rather than fulfilling God's will.

Just because I am a good singer or manager or counselor or whatever natural affinities I might have does not mean God will use those abilities. Often we push forward into areas of service because we feel that is where we are gifted to serve and miss His will.

God teaches me in the place I am right now and through the circumstances He brings into my life. It may or may not line up with my natural affinities or gifts. His commission to me is to be His disciple and to make disciples. His will for my life will always unfold toward that end.

I must allow God plenty of room to be God and not question or try to negotiate His will for my life at any time. He is the Commander and His will for me is to be obedient in whatever He shows me to do.

We must always remember that God's call is to be His disciple. He does not call me to a ministry need. The ministry need is the opportunity that will present itself as I follow Him. The focus is first on following, then when He is satisfied the specific work will be revealed at the right time.

The needs of people are not the primary thing. God calls us to Himself first to belong solely to Him. Once we get that right He will minister through us to others according to His will for each person. That is how He will change and alter people and events through us.



Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Doing God’s Will

Once you know God’s will, the only thing left is to do it. You will have really big problems if after knowing God’s will you don’t do it. You will fall into this trap on occasion and it has consequences each time.



Luke 11:27-28 ESV “As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

If you do not have a heart’s desire to always do God’s will you will soon stop following Jesus. Self will dominate your life and you will experience all the problems that accompany a life outside of God’s will.

We must continually cultivate the desire to do God’s will all the time. We must stop, listen, and wait on God to move, to open doors, to engineer the right circumstances. Then we must move forward as He directs.

Satan’s attack against your life is primarily directed toward diverting you from doing God’s will. He will try to confuse you or discourage you so that you will begin to question God’s will.

When self is out of the way and you have chosen to do God’s will God’s way, Satan cannot sidetrack you. However, when self is in the driver’s seat it is open season for Satan to get a grip in your life.

Remember these two important dangers.

- When you know God’s will but you justify not doing it.
- When you know God’s will but you try to do it your way.

Both of these traps are equally dangerous. Neither of these will accomplish His will. The risk of the latter is that it often leaves us with the belief that we did do His will.

The Holy Spirit will convict our conscience each time we have stepped outside God’s will. Unfortunately we can easily resist the Holy Spirit’s conviction over time. The result is that our conscience will harden and we will stop following Jesus.



John 14:21 ESV “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him”

The more you love Jesus the more you will desire to do His will. The reason many cannot obey Jesus is because they don’t really love Him or trust Him. If your relationship with Jesus is not where it should be you will not be able to do His will and you will soon stop following Him.

When we know we have stepped outside God’s will we treat it as any other sin. It is the sin of rebellion and going our own way. We must confess that sin and repent of our disobedience so we can be restored in our relationship with God.

God's Will God's Way

Even when we do know God's will and step out to do it, often we try to do it our way. Our mind goes to work right away designing a plan and figuring out exactly how everything should be done.

We may be sincere and passionate about what God wants us to do, but if we do not do God's will God's way and wait on Him to unfold the plan, we may find ourselves outside His will.

The most common problem is that we get ahead of God and we forget to connect with the Holy Spirit for daily direction to carry out God's will. So we end up doing things in a way that God did not intend.

It is quite easy to do God's will our own way and still be successful from the world's perspective. However, from God's perspective, He sees it as failure to do His will.

We must remember that God has a different view of the situation than we do. He knows the end from the beginning and everything in between. If we listen to Him and do it His way we will avoid all the personal frustration and problems that result when we try doing it our way.

God is the Commander-in-Chief. We must let God be God and let Him call the shots. He must be the one who decides where we will go, what we will do, how we will do it, when we will do it, and who we will do it with. Don't forget who the Commander is.

When we are doing God's will His way we don't have to push and pull to make things happen. God opens the doors and engineers all the circumstances and situations. All we have to do is be patient and do the next right thing He shows us to do.

If you have stress in something God has directed you to do, that is a good indication you are doing God's will your own way and you have lost touch with Him. God wants you to be restfully active in His work, not stressfully active.

Remember, God does not view success in the same way man does. Success in God's eyes is not what we do for God but that we are completely His. We allow Him to be God and do exactly as He shows us all the time. That is what Jesus did.

And just the opposite can be true. If we are doing God's will God's way, it may not appear a success from the world's view, but God sees you as successful from His perspective because you are doing His will His way.

As we carry out God's will we trust Him for the outcome because the outcome is His responsibility not ours. The outcome will be exactly according to God's plan, good, bad, or indifferent. We must simply do what God shows us to do and trust Him for the rest.



Isaiah 14:2 ESV "The Lord of hosts as sworn: As I have planned, so shall be, as I have purposed, so shall it stand."

God never makes mistakes. All we have to do is learn to receive everything that happens as His will and just do the next right thing He shows us to do. We can be at perfect peace at all times because we know the outcome is totally His responsibility.

It doesn't get any better than that! We don't have to worry, we don't have to have fear or doubt, and we don't have to get stressed. We don't have to push and pull to get things the way we think they should be. We just do His will joyfully and everything will happen exactly according to His will.

When Things Go Wrong

When we have submitted to God's will by giving up the right to ourselves to Him and have allowed Him to direct our each and every step, does that mean that everything will go right for us?

As we seek to do God's will there will be times when things appear to go wrong. They are not

wrong from God's perspective; rather things just aren't working the way we thought they would.

Things that seem to have gone wrong are not necessarily bad. Often God is teaching us through such situations. If we have a wrong perspective we may not realize that things are actually as they should be.

Sometimes God will take things in a direction exactly opposite of our expectations. God always has a reason for what He does. He is teaching us to trust Him and rely only on Him. He wants us to let Him be God and call the shots however He sees fit.

There are two perspectives of God's will. One is God's perspective and the other is our own. How we see and interpret events and situations can be different than how God sees them.



Isaiah 55:8 ESV "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord."

We may perceive that things are good but God perceives them as a problem. We may perceive things as a problem but God perceives that they are just the way He has chosen them to be.

The key is that we must learn to line our perspective up with God's perspective. Then we can see if things are really a problem or if they are really okay. The key is figuring out how to consistently see things from God's perspective.

If we have done everything as the Holy Spirit has directed us, things will unfold exactly as God has willed whether or not they appear as such to us. God does not make mistakes.

What is the bottom line in regards to God's will? Simply this: Believe in the One whom He has sent. God's will is that I believe in and follow His Son Jesus and learn to walk as He walked.

I follow Jesus through the Holy Spirit by abiding in Him through prayer and obedience to His

Word. I give up the right to myself to Him so I can do exactly what He shows me to do in exactly the way He shows me to do it, no matter what the cost, no matter what the outcome.

Following Jesus implies that I have given up the right to myself to Him, that my life is no longer my own, and that I am completely devoted to Him.

If I am saved and I am not following Jesus I can never be in the center of God's will because I am still in the driver's seat. I am still a carnal Christian.

When I am in the driver's seat I am picking and choosing what I will and will not do. There can never be any peace about being in God's will because in that state I am not in God's will.

As I step out in obedience to Him the knowledge of His will is going to open to me clearly and plainly as naturally as breathing.

To be in the center of God's will – moment by moment – is the most wonderful life I can live. It is not easy and it requires discipline of the strictest kind.

As I overcome the hindrances to knowing and doing His will by reading the Word, praying, putting into practice the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ, and giving up the right to myself to Him, I will find myself in the center of God's will more consistently moment by moment.

Jesus set the example for us in that He did the will of the Father. He was obedient even unto a painful and humiliating death. His total desire was to please the Father and do exactly what the Father showed Him to do.

Just before His death Jesus said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. But not my will but yours be done." In the same way that Jesus surrendered to the Father we must surrender to Jesus. Not my will Lord but your will be done.

God's will for me is to believe in His Son. To do so is to serve Him by following Him and putting into practice everything He taught and commanded.



One Step for Living This Truth

The foundation of the *One Step* series you have been reading is to be able to live God's truth, one truth at a time, one step at a time. Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to allow the truth of this lesson to be lived in your own personal life.

This is the step you need to do to master this lesson. Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do this step as directed. The goal is to make sure you are living this truth before you go on to the next lesson.

Learning to know God's will moment by moment, and stepping out in obedience to His will is a critical step in following Jesus. The sooner you learn this truth, the sooner you will enter the joy of your Master. You must learn to clearly know God's will and then do His will His way.

ACTION STEP

Learning to know and do God's will is a discipline that takes time. You should come back to this lesson on occasion to help you stay on track with knowing and doing God's will.

Continue to strengthen your relationship with Jesus through prayer and by reading His Word. Do this for at least 30 minutes each day. The focus for this time is on knowing and doing God's will.

Throughout the day, take a few minutes to focus on a Scripture about God's will. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you anytime you have failed to do His will.

As you come to situations in your day where you are not sure what God would have you do, stop what you are doing, acknowledge your desire for Him to direct your path, and simply ask the Holy Spirit "show me what you would have me know about this situation".

Stopping what you are doing means to stop thinking about it, push any thoughts about it out of your mind and any other thoughts that may be trying to push in. The goal here is to do whatever is necessary to quiet your mind before you ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He would have you know about this situation.

The Holy Spirit will show you in your mind or conscience what He would have you to know about the current situation. Whatever you sense, hear, see, or experience from the Holy Spirit is the answer. Accept it, give thanks for the guidance, and act in accordance to what He has shown you.

It is important not to try to question or negotiate what you have received. If the answer is not clear to you, ask the Holy Spirit again to show you what He would have you to know about the answer He gave you.

If you frequently find yourself receiving an answer that you don't understand, it may be because you don't like the answer. Just do what the Holy Spirit shows you without question or hesitation. You receive what He gives you by faith and step out in obedience.

Take time at the end of each day to examine your day and see if you can see any difference in your day. Whenever you have stepped outside of God's will in some way, just confess it, repent of it, receive God's forgiveness and start with the steps above again.

The goal of this lesson is to learn how to know God's will and then to obey it. You do this by making the step above a daily, continuous habit in your life. You will soon find that being in God's will moment by moment will come as naturally as breathing.

You will have completed this lesson when you are finding yourself more consistently in God's will moment by moment. Stay with the lesson until the steps above begin to become a habit for you.

It is important not to go on to the next lesson and next truth until you are living this truth consistently. To have God's truth and not put it into action is like building your spiritual house on sand. It will come crashing down eventually.

You do not want to continue to make the mistake of knowing more truth, but not living the truth you know. So stick with this lesson until you are living this truth regularly.

Continue to read a chapter in the Gospels each day. Write down thoughts or Scriptures that relate to knowing and doing God's will.

Even if it takes several weeks to get this truth integrated into your life, keep it as your primary focus until you know you are living out this truth.