Reflection #1 – Discerning God’s Will

The Laymen’s Academy

## Romans 12:1-2

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**.

Christian life begins with justification – e. g. being saved, conversion, regeneration, rebirth, surrender, born again, born from above, repent and believe, baptism, metanoia, Spirit baptism – and after that it is a process called sanctification – e. g. discipleship, Refiner’s Fire, perfection, epistrophe, holiness. Both of these critical aspects of Christianity are God’s response to trust. The perspective laid out in this book is particularly directed at those who have been justified and are now in the process of being sanctified. It is a perspective for Christians who are seeking God’s will for their life – their calling, their vocation, their purpose.

Saint Paul’s charge to the Romans in the above passage is one of the best places to start the discernment process. First, he mentions the role of the body in this pursuit. One must offer one’s body as a sacrifice as proper spiritual worship of God. This means putting others first, putting God’s commandments first, and living a moral lifestyle. One must embrace Paul’s words from the very next chapter to the Romans, the same words Saint Augustine embraced at his conversion.[[1]](#footnote-1) This task is achievable through trust and obedience.

For now, I will turn to verse two. Here Paul outlines the entire process of sanctification, or becoming holy, which is God’s ultimate will for His people. This process is a gradual reorientation to God in all aspects of life – it is a project of the mind. One must no longer be conformed to this world! The mind becomes a prisoner to patterns of thought which can be ‘good’, ‘bad’, or just ‘neutral’, but Christians are called to go beyond these categories. Christians must go beyond any sort of earthly reason and trust in God’s word, “believing it to be a stronger foundation than all the securities in the world.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Christians must be serious about Jesus’ teachings and live by them. Each mind on this earth is constantly bombarded with pleas for prioritization. Weight loss, makeup, clothing, college, getting married – people obsess over these types of topics and set them as their top priority. However, Christians desperately need to prioritize following Jesus. I love how Søren Kierkegaard speaks of the disciples following a madman.[[3]](#footnote-3) Sometimes it may seem counterintuitive to trust Jesus’ teachings, but it will always be the best choice.

[edited excerpt from: T. Nagy, *Trust: A Perspective on God’s Will*]

**Questions:**

What is your understanding of God’s will?

What is your understanding of holiness?

Are there ways of thinking (“good” or “bad” or “neutral”) that impact your view of yourself or others?

What motivates you?

What is your foundation of faith? Are there things you would like to add to your foundation?

1. See Romans 13:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Geffrey B. Kelly, John D. Godsey, Reinhard Krauss, Barbara Green, and Alexander Street Press. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works. Vol. 4, Discipleship*. Twentieth Century Religious Thought (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity,* trans. Walter Lowrie (Vintage Books: New York, NY, 2004), 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)