

GOD'S WILL:

**NOTHING MORE,  
NOTHING LESS,  
NOTHING ELSE**



## INTRODUCTION

*“There is a you-shaped hole in God’s global mission.”  
~ Paul Borthwick*

God loved you, designed you and placed you into this world in this time for HIS purposes. God has a will, a plan and a design for YOUR life. Let that sink in. God has a will for our lives, and that will can be known; it can also be missed.

*“So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”  
~ Ephesians 5:17-18*

We want you to know God’s will. It’s not hidden; in fact, it’s been revealed. God’s will is found in God’s Word. God’s Word not only reveals what His will is in general, but it gives us guidance for how to discern God’s will in the specifics of our personal lives. When it comes to the intersection between our life choices and God’s revealed will, this is where believers can miss God’s will and miss much more than that as a result.

*“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”*

*~ Colossians 1:9-12*

- *How does it make you feel to know that God has a will for your life?*
- *To what extent should we seek God's will, according to the above passage?*
- *Fill in the blanks according to this verse: Being filled with the knowledge of God's will leads to \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *Pleasing God leads to \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *Bearing fruit in every good work leads to \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *Increasing in the knowledge of God's will leads to \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *Being strengthened with power leads to \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *Steadfastness and patience lead to \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *In light of this, how important is being filled with the knowledge of God's will?*

God wants us to be FILLED with the knowledge of His will. This word, filled, is used elsewhere in scripture to describe control. The disciples were filled with sorrow, the crowds were filled with fear, the Pharisees were filled with rage and then in Acts the disciples were filled with the Spirit. Each of these show that God wants His will to be richly known and to be controlling every aspect of our lives. The phrase, "all spiritual wisdom and understanding," is about God's will being discerned and applied. In other words, we need to know how to take Biblical principles and apply them to things like friends, dating, marriage, vocation, free time, entertainment, church involvement, etc. To apply God's will to our lives, this study will examine our view of God, our view of grace, our life choices and the importance of getting counsel, as we press into having a heart that says, God's will: Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

## **PART 1: THE HEART OF GOD**

Discerning God's will starts with being willing to do God's will. Jesus said, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." (John 7:17) In other words, if you're not willing to do God's will, as revealed in scripture, you're going to find yourself explaining away what the Bible says. If you're willing, you'll see the wisdom of scripture revealing God's will. It's all about our willingness. This is saying a lot, because deeply entrenched into our hearts is the longing to be the god of our own lives, to have life our way. To be willing requires us to be convinced that God has your best in His heart. Also, deeply implanted within is the suspicion that if we yield our

lives to God, He may not have our best interests in mind. My happiness and God's can seem like they are competitors, as if we'll be in a wrestling match with God for the rest of our lives. It's that familiar feeling of wanting one thing for our lives and knowing that God wants something different.

Paul gives us a New Paradigm of Happiness; God's glory and our happiness are one and the same.

*“so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

*~ Romans 12:2*

What the above scripture reveals is that God's will and our happiness are NOT opposed to one another. God's will is "...that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Because we want control, comfort and convenience, our will clashes with God's will, as He seeks to develop us into the image of Christ. Our momentary happiness is not the same as our ultimate happiness: God's will being worked out in our lives. Momentarily, I may hate the difficulties I am going through, but if I can trust that God is making me more like Jesus through it, I can embrace even the difficulty as "...good and acceptable and perfect." Another way of putting this is that God isn't concerned with our happiness, only our holiness. That's kind of a neat, pithy saying, but I disagree with it. It suggests that our happiness and God receiving glory from our lives are two distinct things, and all that really matters is God's glory. Doesn't the scripture teach that?

*“whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

*~ 1 Corinthians 10:31*

The apostle Paul doesn't argue for God's will being all that matters. Quite the opposite; he argues that God has intimately bound His will together with our happiness. That's why it is "...good and acceptable and perfect." It is the doing of God's will that pleases us and makes us ultimately happy, even though momentarily it is difficult.

To say it another way, in the race of life God's will and our happiness both end the race at the same time. It's a photo finish, and only a close examination reveals that God's will is ultimate and that our happiness came in second. It's that close.



This is just a fancy way of saying that God is not a Cosmic Killjoy. This is perhaps THE BIGGEST THING that prevents people from making wise decisions. They don't trust God because they don't see His goodness clearly. The suspicion in their hearts is that God is holding out on them, so we better get on with going after what we want because God certainly isn't going to show up. But He did show up! The cross is meant to be our bedrock confidence that God will provide all we need in this life. This provides a new paradigm of happiness, that God's will and my happiness are intimately bound together. If you can fully embrace that, your life will never be the same.

If you trust God, then you can chart your course for life like this saying, God's will: Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. We can examine everything from what we understand to be God's will. God always gives the best to those that **leave the choice up to Him!**

- *To what extent do you think you struggle with believing that God's will is "...good and acceptable and perfect?" Where do you think this struggle comes from in your life?*
- *Comment on the photo finish illustration. What negative consequences result from elevating our will above God's? What negative consequences come from regarding God's will as the only one that matters?*

*AW Tozer said, "Outside the will of God, there is nothing I want. And in the will of God there is nothing I fear."*

## **PART 2: OUR VIEW OF GRACE**

We stand on a razor's edge. To the left is the faulty view of grace that says, 'God cannot be pleased with me. I must perform to earn God's approval.' To the right is faulty view of grace that says, 'God is pleased with me no matter what. Whether I do well or do poorly, God cannot be more pleased with me than He is right now.'

***- Walking the razor's edge begins with being crystal clear on God's delight in you as His child.***

Remember that our being included "in Christ" puts us permanently into a position of favor and delight with God. The return of the prodigal son to the absolute delight and joy of the father (Luke 15) is an image of God's grace. We are now God's children, and God loves His kids. There is a sense that God is pleased with me, simply by being His.

***- Walking the razor's edge progresses through a Bible study on pleasing God.***

Again, there is a sense that God is pleased with me simply by being His, but kids who are deeply loved and delighted can also displease their parents; it is the same with God. His love for us motivates us to want to be pleasing to Him.

*“so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”*

*~ Colossians 1:10*

*“trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”*

*~ Ephesians 5:10*

*“Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.”*

*~ 1 Thessalonians 4:1*

Walking the razor's edge matures as we embrace God's grace, not merely as our way to heaven, but as the driving ambition of our lives.

*“adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age”*

*~ Titus 2:9-12*

Notice how God's grace was understood by Paul. It was not merely God's acceptance, something that led him to salvation, placing him in Christ. God's grace did that, but then also taught him how to live. God's grace opened up a whole new way of looking at life; it was instructive, revelatory and eye opening. In other words, if Christ be God and He died for me, how then shall I live? How then shall I look at sin? How then shall I look at what the world offers? How then shall I live my life?

Paul concluded that the gospel teaches us to adorn the doctrine or teaching of God in every respect, meaning IN EVERYTHING WE DO. In case you still haven't caught this, grace wasn't looked at through the lens of permissiveness, 'if God loves me unconditionally, then I'm free to sin.' Instead, grace was looked at through the lens of God's will over all of life. Again, 'If Christ be God and He died for me, I will live from my heart for His will in all of life.'

*“not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”*

*~ Ephesians 6:6*

Paul frequently used the illustration of a slave or bond-servant in scripture. A bond-servant, in the times of the Old Testament, was someone who served their master for a set period of time. Once that time was over, if their master was so good, so kind that the slave didn't want to leave, he would become a bond-servant. This is like saying, 'You have set me free, but I now choose to serve you forever.' Because of grace, Paul exhorts us to be slaves of Christ, bond-servants, doing God's will from the heart because of how God's grace has captured us in the core of our being.

Remember that Paul is our example, not just on how to know God, but on how to follow Jesus. We are to follow his example in all of life, and Paul's driving ambition stands in stark contrast to what motivates most of our lives.

I want:

**To be happy**

**To get married**

**To be secure**

**To be comfortable**

**To be liked**

**To be successful**

The driving ambition of Paul was something entirely different. Because of Paul's view of God's will being synonymous with his ultimate happiness, he was motivated to please only Him.

*“Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.”*

*~ 2 Corinthians 5:9*

*“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”*

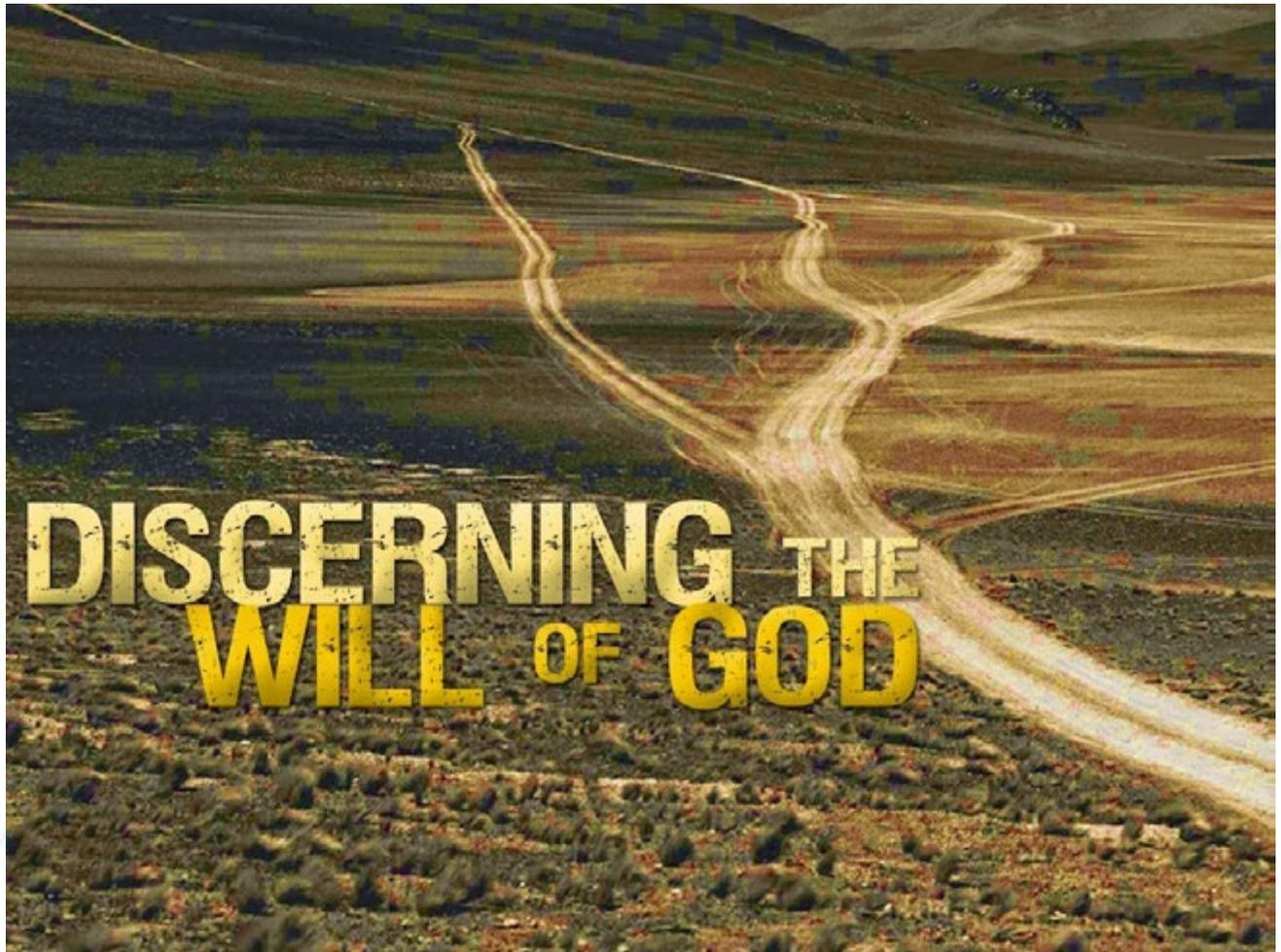
*~ Galatians 1:10*

Our driving ambition will come into CONFLICT with God's will and the will of other people, but we can't please Jesus and people at the same time. You will never influence the world by trying to be like it. Only as you yield to Jesus' Lordship can the approval of others be recalibrated in your life. Pleasing Jesus will cause you to radically reconsider every aspect of life, and God's will, applied to how we think, what we do and what we value, makes us remarkable human beings. Our lives as Christians should make nonbelievers question their disbelief in God.

- *Can you put the two faulty views of grace into your own words?*
- *How did God's grace connect into Paul's driving ambition?*
- *What would you say is an obstacle we face with making God's grace our driving ambition?*

## PART 3: OUR LIFE CHOICES

We don't want to make just good decisions, but GODLY decisions. We want our love for God and for people to so abound that we would have both knowledge and deep insight into God's will, into ourselves and into our choices. Love is the driving motivation behind godly decisions. The heart that says, 'I want God's Will. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.'



### **A Tri-perspectival approach**

If we put a less positive spin on this section, the name might be something like, 'stupid things we do to ruin our lives'. Without taking a tri-perspectival approach to decision-making, Christians, even godly ones, are capable of making very poor decisions. Oddly enough, an example of this comes from one of the most influential believers of all time, John Wesley.

While crossing a bridge in London, John Wesley stumbled and sprained his ankle. Some friends carried him to the house of Mrs. Mary Vazielle on Threadneedle Street. She was a widow with several children. She cared for Wesley, and his response to her concern was to ask her to marry him. He didn't ask any of his friends for their counsel on his decision. Some believers would interpret his sprained ankle as God's providential way of bringing those people together, but the marriage was a disaster; Mary eventually left John. Had Wesley consulted with his brother Charles, or other trusted friends, he might have avoided this heartache. Instead they married. Mary refused to travel with her husband in his ministry,

and she actually ending up opposing it. She gave some of her husband's personal letters to his enemies and even made additions to them that provoked their anger toward Wesley! She herself was so enraged with her husband that she even pulled Wesley around on the floor by his hair! Wesley played the "God card", concluding that God, in His sovereignty, allowed this unhappy marriage to encourage him to work harder and not complain about missing the comforts of a home. Certainly it encouraged him to be away from home more! (Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers, W. Wiersbe, Moody Press)

Playing the "God card" is assuming that whatever happened must be God's will, enabling us to justify our sometimes stupid decision-making by saying God has brought good from it. Since God is always working for our good (Romans 8:28), playing the "God card" is nonsensical. It would be better to take a tri-perspectival approach to decision making.

The Tri-perspectival approach is this: God's will is known through (1) God's Word, (2) God's Spirit, and (3) God's People. We need ALL THREE to make godly decisions.

**God's Word** provides a **normative perspective**, which is black and white but limited to what scripture talks about. **God's Spirit** provides an **existential perspective**, which is inward, based on our desires and our knowledge of how we're wired. **God's People** are part of the **situational perspective**, where we look at our circumstances and relationships. Certainly, in this case, Wesley's tendency to overemphasize the circumstantial would have been checked had he consulted God's people.



The normative perspective honors God's revealed will and His authority over our lives. If we elevate the normative perspective, however, we might disregard that our desires actually matter to God and are a part of discerning His will (existential), as well as ignoring our circumstances and friends (situational). A person who has elevated the normative perspective often plays the "truth card", claiming to follow God's truth revealed in His word, often being unable to give any room for their desires or circumstances.

The existential perspective honors our will and desires as well as our knowledge of our wiring. If we elevate the existential perspective, however, we might disregard God's revealed will (normative) and our circumstances and friends (situational). A person who has elevated the existential perspective often plays the "spirit card", claiming God has led them, even without the counsel of others.

The situational perspective honors the circumstances we're facing, as well as the importance of godly counsel. If we elevate the situational perspective, however, we might disregard God's revealed will (normative) and our desires (existential). A person who has elevated the situational perspective often plays the "open door card", claiming God must have led them, as a door of opportunity just opened up.

- *Do you feel like you understand the tri-perspectival approach to decision-making?*
- *What perspective have you tended to overemphasize in your decisions, the normative, existential or situational?*
- *How might you handle a situation where someone played "God card", "spirit card", "truth card" or "open door card"?*

## **PART 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING COUNSEL**

*"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel."*

*~ Proverbs 12:15*

*"For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory."*

*~ Proverbs 24:6*

The main thing people use to make decisions is the very thing that God **HATES, OPPOSES and SEEKS TO CRUSH**. I'm trying to be strong here, in case you've missed it. What is it? What is this sinister evil that God hates? It's human reasoning, self-reliance or self-trust. It's thinking that I, as a finite human being have any wisdom at all in comparison with the God that spoke 100 billion stars into existence in our galaxy alone. It's the unbelievable arrogance that says I need to trust what I think is best, though I walk every day under a sun that He created in His wisdom, so big that 1.3 million earths would fit inside of it, burning at an interior temperature of 27 million degrees and losing 4 million tons of matter per second. While the sun was created with all of those traits, it was also made to be the perfect distance, temperature and size to keep our planet warm and give us nice sun tans. Human reasoning, which is our instinctive approach to decision-making essentially says, 'Well, yeah God, that's nice and everything, but...here's what I think!'

Decisions about whom we date, whom we marry, what we do with our vocation and where we live, these shape our destiny and God promises us success as we get godly counsel from those who are wise. That wisdom often does NOT come quickly, as God has His purposes for not revealing everything to us in **our** timing. Developing godly character often comes from facing difficult life decisions, and learning through counsel, how to look at life God's way.

*“God doesn't give us answers because God wants to drive us through the process of working things out for ourselves day in and day out, because that is how we become spiritually mature.”*

*~ Tony Campolo*

- *What are some of the big life decisions you'll most likely need to make?*
- *How have you approached life decisions in the past? What determines what you should do?*
- *What do you think of quote above by Tony Campolo?*
- *What do you think you need counsel about?*
- *How would you go about getting that counsel?*
- *Who would you seek it from?*

## SUMMARY

We've talked about having a heart that desires God's Will. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. We've also talked about the importance of trusting that His will and our happiness are one and the same. We looked at how the gospel changes everything and how a tri-perspectival approach, including getting counsel, can keep us from making bad life decisions.

*May God sanctify our decision-making from this day forth.*

### ACTION POINTS

1. One thing to add to your prayers is simply declaring 'God, I want your will. I want that which is good and acceptable and perfect.' Another is simply asking God to reveal His will to you.
2. Look again at this quote from A.W. Tozer; "Outside the will of God, there is nothing I want. And in the will of God there is nothing I fear." This week, with full honesty, list out what you fear about God's will being worked out in your life. Yield those fears to God in prayer.