

Seeking God's Will

Looking for direction in your life? We make many decisions everyday that effect our lives, our family, our friends and our place of work. Most decisions are insignificant to us; but when we have a serious decision, we often seek advice. Sometimes we look to a trusted friend, a coworker, a neighbor next door, a family member, a member of the clergy or a counselor and some of us look to God. But often we live as Proverbs 21:2 states,

Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts. (NASB) Proverbs 21:2

For example, we usually make plans without looking to God for direction. We make plans which seem best to us. And when we do James 4:13-17 becomes true of us. The passage implies that God greatly influences what happens in our life, and we sin when we do not submit our plans to God's will.

God actively cares for us by sending rain, changing our seasons and providing us food (Acts 14:17). He controls the events in our life by opening and shutting doors of opportunity down the long hall of life and creating situations which motivate us through open doors (Rom. 1:10; 15:30-32). For His disciples, His Spirit helps them according to His will (Rom. 8:27) and He provides opportunities for ministry (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1 and Eph 1:1). He does all of this according to his desire - according to His will.

Yet, He has a plan or a purpose for each one of us according to the next passage.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell

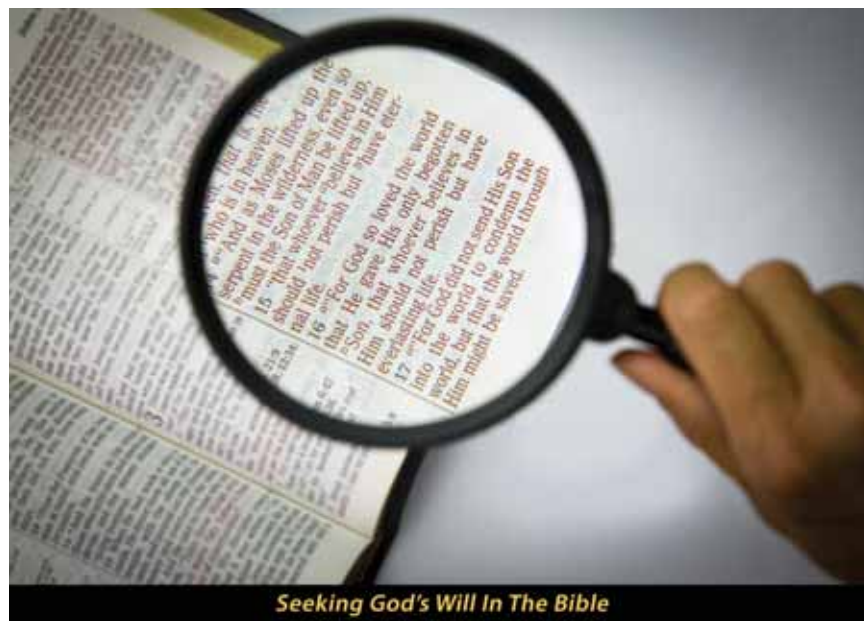
asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.) Acts 13:36 (NASB)

God does not permit us to die until we have served His purpose. What is the purpose of your life? God wants you to be in His will. His will is no secret! He has revealed it to us in the Bible. He has told us we can know His will in the key decisions of our life. Are you interested? Then on to the five wills.

TWO COMMANDS. God has revealed His will to each and every one of us. And He has provided guidelines for knowing His will in specific situations. The starting point of our journey is with one of the first and most important passages in scripture.

It is a command that reveals His will about what He desires to be the passion of your heart,

And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND."



This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Matthew 22:37-39 (NASB)

Do you see His desire, His will? He completely wants your feelings, your attitude and your desires. He wants a relationship where your response to Him comes from a loving heart that longs to know Him, to desire Him and to please Him with everything you have. Is that true of you? God has already expressed His love for you in,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NASB)

What He desires is two hearts (figuratively speaking for God) that love each other. Those of us who are not followers

of Jesus must respond to another aspect of His will. It is also expressed as a command and is found in 1 John 3:23. His first and foremost will is that we love with our entire being. Please note that the word "begotten" in John 3:16 means "one and only."

FIVEFOLD WILL OF GOD. For a true disciple of Jesus, God is already working in us according to His will and His purpose which is to change us (1 Cor. 15:10; Phil 2:12-13; Heb. 13:21). While we know that God wants to make us like Jesus, have you ever wondered just what it is that He wants to change you into? What does He want you to be like? There are five "will" statements in the New Testament which answer these questions. They add to what we already know about the "will of God." These passages are as follows:

1ST WILL - ABSTAIN FROM SEXUAL SIN. Our first passage is 1 Thess 4:3. This passage merely says that it is God's

will for us to abstain from immorality. Now there are many concepts as to what immorality is. Some would say that sexual conduct with a person of the opposite sex is okay as long as you love them. Some would say that no sin takes place unless the other person objects. Many would say that it is wrong to have sex with your neighbor's wife if you are already married - that would be adultery. Many would agree that incest or sex with a sister, brother, son or daughter is immoral. But we would make a serious mistake if we limited God's will about our sexual purity to just adultery and incest. To limit the English translation of the Greek word *porneia* to "immorality" misses the mark because it also includes incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, and prostitution.

In Jesus' day and during the life of the apostles, *porneia* was a problem just as it is today. History tells us that some of the Roman emperors were

homosexuals and Corinth's temple of Aphrodite had 1,000 priestesses who engaged in "sacred prostitution." The temples, art and culture of the time were consumed with suggestions of *porneia* just like we experience today.

Except for not believing in Jesus Christ, sexual sin is the most destructive sin we can commit. The Holy Spirit tells us in 1 Cor. 6:18 that "every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral (*porneia*) man sins against his own body (NASB)." And in Heb. 13:4, God says He will judge those who commit *porneia*. Wow, God means business. And what is God's solution? Stop! Listen to the Holy Spirit,

Each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God. 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5 (NASB)

Explicit Reference To Will of God	Passage
Be sexually pure	1 Thess. 4:3-8
Be filled with Holy Spirit	Eph. 5:17-18
You will suffer	1 Pet. 4:19
Give thanks always	1 Thess. 5:18
Submit to your government	1 Pet. 2:13-15

2ND WILL - BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. Now you may be asking, “But how do I get victory?” The next will of God answers the question. Self control over sexual sin is impossible without the Holy Spirit working in my life. Successful victory over *porneia* or any other sin comes by obedience to His will which includes,

Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:17-18 (NJKV)

The Greek word for “filled” is *pleroo*. It has the idea of being controlled. The word was sometimes used in Jesus’ day to refer to someone who was controlled by wine. So God uses this word to say that we are not to be controlled by wine but by His Holy Spirit. The verb form of *pleroo* used in this verse implies ongoing submission to another. It is a repeated and constant event. The idea is someone who is willingly constantly submitting to the Holy Spirit.

So how is one constantly filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit? Very simply, ask that the Holy Spirit to constantly control you. Start by admitting your sins (1 John 1:9) so that you no longer grieve Him (Eph. 4:30) and quench Him (1 Thess 5:19) because of your sins. Then every time you sin after that, immediately admit to Him what you did and ask God to help you stop and have His Holy Spirit take control of you. Col 3:16 also tells us that we need to be saturated in the study and mediation of His scripture. Col 3:16 calls it “richly dwelling” in His word. If you honestly desire to live a holy life by turning control of every aspect of your life over to Jesus - you will find victory.

3RD WILL- YOU WILL SUFFER. 1 Peter 4:19 reveals another will of God - namely that we will suffer. There are several reasons He desires us to suffer. The first reason is that He wants us to be a light in a world that is dark (Matt. 5:11-16, John 1:5). And if we really desire to be holy we will suffer. Listen to 2 Tim. 3:12, “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” If you really want to do God’s will you are going to suffer - He wants you to be holy. Secondly, God uses trials and persecution to mold and shape us (James 1:2-5). Third, we sometimes suffer because

we have sinned and are unwilling to change (Heb. 12:4-11). This is not God’s permissive will - this is His will.

4TH WILL - GIVING THANKS. The fourth will of God for you is that you,

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV)

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, “When you drink from the stream remember the spring.” From a spiritual perspective, the spring is God. It is God who supplies all of our present needs (Matt. 6:31-33; Acts 14:17; 1 Pet. 5:7) and as well as our future needs (John 14:2;). Do you thank Him for what He has done for you? Heb. 13:14-15 tells us that being thankful is a sacrifice of praise,

For here (on this earth) we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Hebrews 13:14-15 (NASB)

The amazing word in the verse is “sacrifice.” Sometimes it is just very difficult to remember to stop and express my thanks - to acknowledge someone else has met my need. How often do we believe and even act like we accomplished great things for ourselves. Even when we are serving God, we look for praise from others. When we do that we are stealing praise that is due God. We forget that it is the Lord who controls the events in our lives. It is the Holy Spirit Who uses what we have done or said to minister to others. It is He Who deserves the thanks. He is not the stream of water. He is not the spring - He is the spring which feeds the stream.

5TH WILL- SUBMIT TO GOVERNMENT. In a democratic society we have an inherent mistrust of authority. We have a permissive philosophy that looks for “freedom” in society. In church many look for “freedom” in the pages of scripture. We want freedom from authority and we thirst for control to prevent “unjust events” in our lives. The early Christians had an unjust government called the Roman Empire. Yet, God commanded the early Christians to be obedient - to submit. They were to pay their taxes (Matt. 22:17-22). Christians were persecuted and killed. Yet, in 1 Peter 2:13-15 the Holy

Spirit tells us to submit to all forms of government - every form of human institution. This is the will of God for you - your submission. Why? Because He establishes governments (Rom 13:1).

WHAT'S NEXT. By now you may be asking, "But how do I know God's will about personal decisions in my life?" Well, that is the next section - the unknown.

HIS WILL IS MINE. So far we have looked at two commands and five statements that tell us what the Lord's will is in our life. We looked at them first to prepare us for Psalms 37:4 and Romans 12:2. We started with what scripture reveals is clearly the will of God and now we want to know what to do in those situations where there is no chapter and verse to tell us what to do.

Psalms 37:4 tells us that what ever we want, the Lord will provide,

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4 (NIV)

Years ago I knew a man who "became a Christian" so that he would be like his friend. His friend was very wealthy and he assumed that God would make him wealthy if he became a Christian. One day in his backyard we were talking and he complained to me that God did not do what he wanted. He was angry with God. The problem with this young man was his heart.

Psalms 37:4 says that we must start by delighting ourselves in the Lord. The Hebrew word for delight has the idea of "soft, delicate, to live with enjoyment and to have exquisite delight." It has the idea of liking and loving God with your entire being. Your emotions are consumed with Him. Have you ever watched an older couple who are really in love with each other. They almost look alike. They almost have the same likes and dislikes. They have the same desires. That is the result of delighting in each other; that is God's idea. You see, if you delight in Jesus - His desires will become your desires. The Holy Spirit will put His desires in your heart.

You may ask, "How does that happen?" It occurs as you delight in His will - the two commands and the five wills of God. We cannot expect the desires of our heart to reflect His

desires if we are not pursuing the will of God that is already revealed. Romans 12:2 tells us there is also another aspect. Romans 12:2 says,

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. Romans 12:2 (NIV)

This occurs as we spend time delighting ourselves in the Lord - as we discover more about Him in His scriptures - as we drink at His fountain of life - as our mind is consumed with Him.

YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW? We have been looking at God's Word to see what His will is for our life. It is here that we discover how to please Him. It is here that He has shown how to discern His will for our life. And it all starts by delighting ourselves in Him. He loves you!

We have found that when we are consumed with Him, we will want to please Him by doing His known will. If you are delighting in Him and seeking to do His will, you will desire to flee sexual sin; you will be willing to suffer for righteousness; you will give thanks for all things; and you will be willing to submit to earthly authority. Then your desires will reflect His desires for your life. As we are filled or controlled by His Holy Spirit, God will put His desires in our heart and we will know His will for our lives.

But we need to ask ourselves, "Why do we want to know His will?" When I am seeking the will of God, I sometimes discover that I really want my will to be done.

FINDING HIS WILL - MY STORY. Some years ago, I had to make a serious decision about my future. I struggled and prayed everyday asking God for His will. This went on for months. Then one day as I was driving a freeway in California I realized I really wanted my will - I wanted His will to conform to my desires. So I prayed, admitted my sin to Him, and willingly yielded my future to Him. What a blessing - what a relief. And then God surprised me. He granted me the desire of my heart.

I had just learned an old lesson once again - He wants me to delight in Him first. To love Him with all my heart FIRST and then yield the outcome to Him. Knowing His

will in your life starts by delighting in Him!
Do you delight in Him?

Additional Information

Lord Willing

Your making plans and I am making plans and often we do not consider God's plans for our life. Is it not wonderful to know that God cares enough about us to even take the time to include us in His plans. James 4:13-17 reminds us that our plans may conflict with His and we should acknowledge that in our lives . . .

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin. James 4:13-17 (NASB)

How true it is that "us little vapors" act like we are solid rocks. We act like we are in control, permanent and stable. But vapors are not rocks; we are easily blown about by the will of God and He can easily blow here and there and everywhere according to His will. The Holy Spirit says, that we need to say, "Lord willing, I will do this . . . or I will do that . . . "

Only Begotten

The Greek word for “only begotten” is MONOGENAS (μονογενῆς). It is used nine times in the New Testament. Five of the nine times the word is used in reference to Christ (John 1:14,18; 3:16; John 3:18; 1 John 4:9). The other four times it is used of other people (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Heb 11:17).

This Greek word does not mean “only begotten.” Its root meaning is “one and only.” It has the sense of unique or exceptional without the idea of being first born. The emphasis is not on being born but on being unique or special. Look at what happens when MONOGENAS is used in Heb. 11:17 in reference to someone other than Jesus Christ,

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Hebrews 11:17 (KJV)

This passage says that Isaac was Abraham’s only begotten son. But we know that is not true. Abraham had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. But to say that Isaac was Abraham’s “unique” or his one and only in preference is true. Unfortunately, the faulty English translation has not been corrected except in some of the newer translations. So John 3:16 could be retranslated as,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his exceptional Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (NASB)

The Will of the God is . . .

If you are not a disciple of Jesus He desires to forgive you of your sins and to have you eventually live with Him forever. In 1 John 3:23 He expresses this desire as a command. Sometimes we need a command to understand the serious situation we are in - I know I do. What this really means is that you have a responsibility.

This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. 1 John 3:23

The command is very obvious - believe in the name of Jesus. If you do believe, your heart will be alive with the life of God (John 7:38-39). You will know that you belong to Jesus because 1 John 5:10 says,

He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. (NASB)

If you do not believe, you have called God a liar because He is claiming that Jesus is God and that He died for your sins and you have denied His claim.

PORNEIA

This Greek word *porneia* (πορνεία) occurs 25 times in the New Testament. The word has a wide variety of meanings and means more than adultery. Most of us are familiar with Jesus’ statement in Matthew 19:9 where Jesus says,

“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Matthew 19:9 (also see Mark 10:11-12)

In this passage Jesus uses two important Greek words, *porneia* and *moichao*. The first Greek word is translated in this verse as “immorality” and *moichao* as “adultery.” It is important to notice that if Jesus had not included the phrase “except for immorality” He would have declared that all divorce

results in adultery. But He did not do that. He included the phrase “except for immoral-

ity.” Consequently, He stated that if divorce occurs due to *porneia*, then adultery will not occur when the “offended” party remarries. But what does *porneia* mean? The Greek word *porneia* has a very broad meaning and includes illicit sexual behavior such as prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, per-marital sex and bestiality. The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament states,

PORNEIA means “prostitution, unchastity, fornication,” and is used “of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse” (BAGD s.v.). . . . Since in Rom. 1:26f. Paul clearly alludes to homosexuality as sexual immorality, PORNEIA can also refer to homosexuality as sexual immorality . . . ¹

Kittel provides a very complete definition of *porneia* stating

1. Balz and Schneider. Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1993. pp. 137-139

that it has a broad meaning and includes “adultery, fornication, licentiousness, and homosexuality.”^{2,3} Harper’s Bible Dictionary states that *porneia* also includes “bestially.”⁴ The meaning is also illustrated in a variety of other New Testament passages as given in the chart. These references show the

Meaning of πορνεία	Passage
Adultery	Rev. 9:21; 14:8; 17:2, 4; 18:3; and 19:2
Incest	1 Corinthians 5:1
Pre-marital Sex	1 Corinthians 7:2
Bestiality	Leviticus 18:23

breadth of the meaning of this word. The word was also used in ancient literature to refer to

premarital sex. The emphasis of *porneia* is bad moral behavior.

2. Kittel and Bromiley. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1968. VI, pp. 579-959.

3. Bromiley, Geoffrey W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1985. VI, pp. 918-921

4. Achtmeyer, Paul J. Harper’s Bible Dictionary. Harper & Row & Society of Biblical Literature. 1985