

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

The scriptures reveal that God is both omnipotent and omniscient, i.e., all powerful and all-knowing. In the book of Isaiah, we see that before Him *“the nations are as a drop in a bucket”*, and *“it’s inhabitants are like grasshoppers.”* (Isa. 40: 15,22) We are also told that *“there is no searching of His understanding.”* (Isa. 40:28)

When we consider the greatness of God, we understand why David exclaimed, *“What is man that You are mindful of him?”* (Psalms 8:4) He is not only mindful of us, but actually has a purpose and a plan for each of our lives.

In this booklet, we will see that **God desires for us to know His will.** We will also examine the different means He uses to reveal His will to us.

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CAN WE KNOW GOD'S WILL?

Yes! Every Christian is given both the right and the responsibility of knowing the will of God. We not only can know it, we are expected to know it. We are told in Ephesians 5: 17, *"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."*

We have received the privilege and ability to know God's will through our adoption into his eternal family (Gal. 4:5, 6). The sign of this adoption is the indwelling Holy Spirit who comes to *"guide you into all truth"* (John 16: 13). **It is the Holy Spirit within us that enables us to know God's will** in every aspect of our life. Jesus spoke of Him in John 16: 14 when He said, *"He will take of what is mine and declare it to you."*

The Christian needs to know the will of God in these **two general areas**:

1. **How should I live?** - This question concerns our moral and spiritual conduct. We need to know how to behave ourselves in a fashion that will please God.
2. **What should I do?** - This area involves those decisions we must make concerning our life direction. Among these are choices concerning our employment, relationships, how to handle problems, whether to move, involvement in ministry, etc.

The answers to how we should live are clearly revealed in the Bible. Knowing God's will in decisions of direction can be more difficult. **In this booklet, we will see how to determine the will of God for these kind of choices.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WILL

At one point during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus began to instruct His disciples on the proper way to pray. The second line in what we term the Lord's Prayer contains the phrase "*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" (Matt. 6: 10) **In praying this, Jesus reveals that God's desire is for those on earth to express His will just as it had been done in heaven.**

This prayer will be fulfilled completely when Christ returns to subdue His enemies and to establish His rule on this earth (Rev. 19 and 20). Until then, His church is the place where His kingdom is to be manifested. **Every born-again believer is a member of His church, and is to live his life according to the will of God.**

We can see the importance of doing God's will in the following reasons:

1. It assures us eternal life — *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My father in heaven.”* (Matt. 7:21)

2. It allows us to understand additional truth — *“If any man do His will, he shall know the doctrine.”* (John 7: 17 KJV)

3. It guarantees us that God will hear our prayers — *“But if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.”* (John 9:31)

4. It secures for us the promise of God — *“ . . . after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”* (He. 10:36)

THE PRIORITY OF GOD'S WILL

Jesus set the pattern for how the believer should relate to the will of God. In John 5:30 He declares His commitment by saying, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." In another place He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Because of this commitment, just before His crucifixion He was able to say, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

Every believer is to have this same level of commitment to doing God's will. We are told to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." (Matt. 6:33) We should live our lives and make our choices according to what God would want for our lives.

If the will of God is to be a priority in our life, we must be willing to make the following adjustments:

1. We must sincerely desire to do His will — “. . . *doing the will of God from the heart*” (Eph. 6:6). God looks upon the heart. If our obedience is not from the heart, it is merely religious duty.

2. We must be willing to change life habits — “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself” (Matt.16:24). This may mean changing friends, activities, and commitments.

3. We must be willing to suffer — “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed” (1 Pet. 4: 16). Obedience to God’s will can mean difficulties, ridicule, or even persecutions. Jesus faced Calvary with the declaration, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (Matt. 26:39)

THE REWARD OF OBEDIENCE

*“And behold, I am coming quickly, and **MY REWARD IS WITH ME, TO GIVE TO EVERY ONE ACCORDING TO HIS WORK.**”* (Rev. 22: 12)

Obedience to the will of God requires that we resist living according to the course of this world. We must conduct our lives in a way that pleases God. **Living a life of righteousness and obedience calls for both discipline and sacrifice.**

Every effort and commitment, though, will be rewarded. The Lord daily blesses those that live in a covenant relationship with Him. God is constantly aware of our behavior and choices. There is even a greater reward awaiting the faithful and obedient when the Lord shall return and give to every person *“according to his work.”*

HOW TO KNOW HIS WILL — TWELVE WAYS

Even after determining to live our life according to the will of God, **we can still be confused about the right choice in a decision we have to make.**

Should I take this job? Should I teach Sunday school? Is the Lord wanting me to move? These are just a few of the many kinds of choices we must face.

In the remainder of this booklet, we will look at the different indicators to consider when searching for God's direction. Finding His will is not always easy. **He may use any one of these following indicators to reveal His will to us.** As a rule, He will use more than one

→ **Remember, searching for the will of God must be preceded by prayer.** We do not arrive at God's mind through mere thought. Instead, we must cultivate His presence through prayer.

I. A STRONG SPIRITUAL LIFE

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but **BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND**, that you may prove what is that good acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rev. 22: 12)*

A strong spiritual life is the best qualification for being able to hear from God. We must reject being conformed to this world, and allow our minds to be renewed daily by the Spirit and the Word of God.

In I Corinthians 2: 14, we learn that the things of God are “*spiritually discerned*”. We must develop our spiritual life if we want to be sensitive to the leadings of God. **A life of obedience, commitment, prayer, and Bible study will allow for this development.**

II. GODLY MOTIVES

“KEEP YOUR HEART with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23)

The first thing we must do when seeking for the will of God is to check our motives. What motivation is prevailing in my heart? Am I really wanting to please God, or am I acting selfishly? Is my heart free from bad attitudes? Will I be acting in love?

A choice made from wrong motive will not be God’s choice. Our decisions should always be made from a dedication to please the Lord. We are told to live *“not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts”* (Thess. 2:4).

If our hearts are free from bad motives, we are in the right condition to hear from God.

III. THE WRITTEN WORD

“ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”
(2 Tim. 3:16)

The Bible is the clear declaration of the mind and will of God. *Many of our decisions can be answered through the clear statements of scripture.*

For example, Proverbs 29:15 can answer our questions about the value of spanking as a form of child training and discipline. It states, *“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”* **The scriptures are filled with precepts and principles that give us wisdom in our decisions.**

God will never contradict what He has already spoken in the Bible. Failure to obey scripture is failure to do the will of God (James 1:22).

IV. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” (Rom. 8:16)

The Holy Spirit has been given to the believer to guide us into all truth. It is His purpose to receive from the Lord and to show it to us (John 16:14, 15). One of His functions is to provide for us an **inner witness** or indication of the mind and will of God.

As we mature in our relationship to God, we develop a greater capacity to sense the leading of the Holy Spirit. **This spiritual witness is an inner sense of peace and affirmation when our decision is aligned with the will of God.** This witness is lacking when we are moving against God's will.

Again, we must be careful that the peace we sense is not a result of getting to do what we want. To properly receive this witness, we must be totally committed to doing whatever God's will may be, even if it requires sacrifice.

V. THE RHEMA

“The word is near you, even in your mouth and your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach.” (Rom. 10:8)

The Greek word “rhema” for “word” means a “specific utterance or saying.” It is used to describe the way God may speak to a person in a separate and distinct way. In Mark 1:11 we have such an example when the Father spoke to Christ saying, *“You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

Few people ever hear the audible voice of God. Instead, **we may feel we have heard a “rhema” from God by sensing an inner impression of faith around a thought we are having.** *We may also get this “rhema” from a sense of faith in the application of a certain scripture to our situation.*

There are certain **cautions we must exercise** in regards to hearing a “rhema” from God:

1. God will never contradict what is already written in His Word — What ever we hear from God must be in agreement with the scriptures. It must also be in keeping with the nature of God. Revelations 22: 18 gives a severe warning to those who “*add to*” His words.

2. We must look for other confirmations — There is much potential for personal feelings and desires to creep in to what we hear from God. Because of this, a “rhema” must be confirmed through other indicators.

3. We must watch for pride — When we think we have heard from God, there is a tendency for pride to sneak in. “*Pride goes before destruction*” (Prov. 16: 18). Be watchful for this tendency.

VI. GODLY COUNSEL

*“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but **HE WHO HEEDS COUNSEL IS WISE.**”* (Prov. 12:15)

One of the most important steps in knowing the will of God is to seek counsel from others. The above scripture reveals that it is the foolish person who ignores the valuable input of good counsel. By ourselves, we may only see a part of the total picture. Others can help enlarge our understanding. Our personal feelings and biases alone may discolor our judgment. Others can offer objective advice from a neutral position. This is why we are told that **“in the multitude of counselors there is safety”** (Prov. 11:14).

We should **choose godly counselors** that have a reputation for wisdom. We must avoid seeking counsel from those who will only tell us what we want to hear.

Spiritual leaders have been set in the church to help instruct and guide the people of God. **They should have a special counseling role in any major decision which we face.**

The following are some scriptures that show the place of godly overseers in our lives:

“Obey those who rule over you, and **be submissive,** for **they watch out for your souls,** as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (Heb. 13:17)

“And we urge you, brethren, to **recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord** and admonish you, and to **esteem them very highly in love** for their work’s sake.” (I Thess. 5:12, 13).

Church leaders are usually wise and gifted counselors that we should consult for help in important decisions.

VII. CIRCUMSTANCES

*“But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a **great and effective door has opened to me**, and there are many adversaries.” (1 Cor. 16:8, 9)*

We see from above scriptures that Paul made a decision to remain at Ephesus because existing circumstances indicated that “a great . . . door” was opened for the gospel.

Circumstances can often be a strong indication of God’s direction for us. A new job offer, an opportunity for advancement, a lack of finances, or other circumstances may indicate the choice we are to make.

However, we must **be careful when making circumstances the only indication of God’s will.** Other indicators such as godly counsel or an “inner witness” should also be present.

There are occasions when **circumstances may warrant us testing the will of God by stepping forward**. In so doing, we hope to get a clearer witness concerning the direction that God would take us.

We have an example of this with Paul in Acts 16:7: “*After they had come to Mysia, they **tried to go into Bithynia**, but the Spirit did not permit them.*”

Before we test the Lord’s will by stepping forward, we must be careful to have right motives, good counsel, and a sufficient inner witness to do so.

After stepping forward, we must analyze the circumstances and “inner witness” we receive, and again seek godly counsel for further direction.

VIII. PROPHECY

*“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said**, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”. (Acts 13:2)*

The will of God can be revealed through a personal, directive prophecy. There are a number of occasions in the New Testament where this is the case.

There are, however, some cautions to consider regarding personal prophecy. First, prophecies are to be judged (1 Cor. 14:29). Personal prophecies should be spoken in the presence of mature leadership ministries so they can be considered and confirmed. **Secondly,** personal prophecy should be received only from those with proven prophetic or leadership ministries. **Thirdly,** the person receiving the prophecy should have a witness in his heart. **If a prophecy is judged and confirmed, it can then be a valid indication of the will of God.**

IX. VISIONS AND DREAMS

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us.” (Acts 16:9) God may speak to us through visions and dreams (see also II Cor. 12:4 Acts 9:10; 10:10; 22:17).

However, it is important to realize some facts about visions and dreams:

1. **They are rare** - Their lack of frequency in scripture, when considering the time periods involved, prove that they are rare.
2. **They were very clear** - Those seen in scripture were both vivid and extraordinary. They could not be a product of imagination or ordinary dreaming.
3. **Their message was obvious and precise** - God always clearly revealed their meaning to the person they affected.

Visions and dreams should not be sought after. If God chooses to communicate to you in this fashion, it will be obvious.

X. THE FLEECE

*“Then Gideon said to God . . . Look, I shall put a **FLEECE** of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only . . . then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.”* (Judges 6:36, 37)

This incident recorded in Judges 6 has given rise to a technique of determining God’s will called “fleecing the Lord”. **It involves setting up a condition that God must meet to prove that He is guiding someone in a particular direction.**

The Lord met Gideon in his request, yet **there are some definite cautions** regarding the idea of “fleecing the Lord”. **First**, Gideon’s circumstance was unique and extraordinary. **Secondly**, it appears to be a rare technique of determining God’s will in scripture. **Finally**, fleecing can be presumptuous. It presumes that we can dictate how God will speak to us. Because of these reasons, “fleecing” can lead to error. Therefore, **we must also require other indicators.**

XI. NO WITNESS IS GOD'S WITNESS

*“Trust in the lord with all your heart, and **lean not on your own understanding**; in all you're ways acknowledge Him, and **He shall direct your paths.**” (Prov. 3:5, 6)*

It is common when seeking God's will in a decision to not receive any witness at all. In such instances, we may actually be getting a very clear witness. **No witness is often God's way of telling us to continue on in our present direction.** His apparent silence can leave us frustrated and believing that He is not answering our prayer for guidance. Actually, His silence is His way of indicating that there should be no change.

However, we should be careful in accepting a “no witness” as His will too quickly. Further prayer may be required, or it may indicate improper timing. **Such situations should be transmitted to church leadership for counsel.**

XII. TWO OR MORE WITNESSES

“ . . . by the mouth of **two or three witnesses** the matter shall be established.” (Duet. 19:15)

The scriptures give us an important principle in determining the will of God. It is the principle of two or three witnesses. In the Old Testament, it was forbidden to convict a person for a crime on the testimony of only one witness (Duet. 17:6; 19: 15). The same principle is found in the New Testament, and requires that an accusation against another be verified by two or three witnesses (see Matt. 18: 16; II Cor. 13: 1).

This principle can also be applied to establishing the will of God in a matter. **When God is leading you, He will confirm it by two or three witnesses.** For example, a personal prophecy can be confirmed by the witness of leadership. Requiring two or three witnesses in seeking the will of God can prevent us from making a wrong decision.

CONCLUSION

God desires that we both know and walk in His will. We have briefly examined the different ways He can reveal His will to us. **Still, finding the will of God may not always be easy.** Often, He first has to deal with wrong motives or attitudes in our lives, or it may take Him time to arrange the people or circumstances that will eventually bring us the understanding of His will.

However, we do have a promise from God that He will answer. In Jeremiah 29:13, He declares, *“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”* If we are conscientious and careful, in due time He will reveal His will to us.

For a brief overview of the main points of this booklet, please re-read the boldly printed words on each page.



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SCAN FOR SUNDAY
SERVICE TIMES

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