

Christian Discipleship Guide



“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

7. The Will of God

Someone once said that a successful man is a man who finds out what God wants him to accomplish with his life and then fulfills it. We need to realize that the true measure of a man's success is not his social status, his bank account, his influence, or his fame. It is simply doing what God wants him to do. We need to get a clear understanding of what the will of God is, as revealed in the Bible, so we can begin to accomplish those things that God would have us accomplish. We also need to understand the difference between God's will for our lives and God's plan for our lives.

Many people, including Christians, often ask or wonder about such questions in life as: "What should I do when I grow up?" ... "Who should I marry?" ... "Where should I live?" ... etc. These are important questions, and as Christians, it is important for us to have God's input in the decision-making process concerning these matters. But, how can we know what God wants for our life? This is not an unreasonable or foolish question, for as Christians we realize that we are not our own, but were bought with a price (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*). God created us for a purpose, and that purpose is found in *Revelation 4:11*, "Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

There is, however, a difference between what God's will is and what His plan is for our lives. God's will is the same for every person, but His plan for each individual is different. God is much more interested in us being the type of person He wants us to be than in our doing "mighty works." We need to be what God wants us to be, and He will show us what it is He wants us to do.

God's will is no mystery. It is not something we have to wonder about. It is clearly revealed in the Bible, and God wants us to understand what His will is (*Ephesians 5:17-33*). God's will has several elements:

- God's will is that all men be saved. God is not "willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (*2 Peter 3:9*). In fact, God commands "all men everywhere to repent" (*Acts 17:30*), because God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of truth" (*1 Timothy 2:4*).
- God's will is not only that all men be saved, but that all men should be Spirit filled. This means we should be yielded and controlled by the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 5:18*).
- God's will is that we be thankful in all things (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). Closely associated with being filled with the Holy Spirit is thankfulness (*Ephesians 5:20*).
- God's will is that we be sanctified, that is, "set apart for holy purposes" (*1 Thessalonians 4:1-7*). We are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds (*Romans 12:1-2*). When we live holy, sanctified lives, we are separated from evil (*2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:22*).
- God's will is that we be submissive servants (*Ephesians 6:5-8; 2 Corinthians 8:3-5; 1 Peter 2:13-15*). First we are to serve God and then man from our hearts with pure motives. The Bible instructs us to be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses that we may be profitable, fruitful, and able to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (*Titus 3:8-14; 1 Peter 2:15*). Always remember, "ye serve the Lord Christ" (*Colossians 3:24*)

- God's will is that we be ultimately conformed to the image of God's own beloved Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one we are to be like (*Romans 8:28-29; John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:13-15*).
- God's will is that we sometimes suffer (*1 Peter 2:15-21; 1 Peter 3:17; 1 Peter 4:19*).

As human beings, suffering is something we want to avoid, so we need to understand *how* suffering comes to us. It comes through our own sins and mistakes (*Galatians 6:7*), through the sins and mistakes of others (*Genesis 37:23-28*), through temptations (*1 Corinthians 10:13*), and through God's providential dealings with man as in the case of Job (*Job 1:8-22; Job 5:6-11; John 16:33*).

It is hard for us to understand *why* we sometimes have to suffer. The Bible tells us that we suffer for a number of reasons, including divine chastisement (*Galatians 6:7; Numbers 32:23; Hebrews 12:6-11*), for Christ's sake (*Philippians 1:29; Acts 9:16*), to identify with Christ's suffering and follow in His steps (*1 Peter 2:21; Philippians 3:10*), in persecution (*1 Corinthians 4:12; Acts 5:28-29; Acts 5:41; 2 Corinthians 4:11*), in the expenditure of our personal resources (*Philippians 2:30*), in oppression by Satanic forces (*Job 1*), and that the works of God might be made manifest (*John 11:4*).

If it is God's will that we sometimes suffer, there must be some *spiritual benefit* that we receive as a result of our suffering. The Bible gives us a list of specific benefits that we can receive. Suffering produces patience, perseverance, and faith (*Romans 5:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5; James 5:10*). It produces experience through which we might comfort others (*Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 1:4-5*). It produces hope through our experiences (*Romans 5:3-5*). It produces holiness and a harvest (*Hebrews 12:10-11*). Suffering makes us spiritually perfect (*1 Peter 5:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Job 23:10; James 1:2-4*). It establishes and strengthens us (*1 Peter 5:10*). It is proof of godliness (*2 Timothy 3:12*). Suffering unifies the body of believers, that is, the church (*1 Corinthians 12:26*). Lastly, suffering glorifies God (*1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 4:14-16*).

So now that we know that suffering is a reality in our lives, there are a number of ways we can respond to it. We can despise it and rebel against it (*Job 5:17*). We can faint in the day of adversity (*Proverbs 24:10; Hebrews 12:4; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:4; 2 Corinthians 12:9*). We can yield reluctantly. Or, we can yield to the will of God with rejoicing.

As Christians, we should accept the following biblical truths and develop a proper attitude toward suffering:

- Suffering is an unavoidable part of human life (*Job 5:6-11*).
- Suffering is part of our Christian calling (*Philippians 1:21*).
- Realize that God's plan is bigger than we are (*Ephesians 2:6-7; Daniel 4:32-35*).
- Realize that it is good to be afflicted (*Psalms 119:67-75*).
- If we suffer, we shall reign (*2 Timothy 2:12*).
- We should rejoice when we suffer (*Colossians 1:24; Acts 5:41; Job 23:10*).
- Realize that all temptation, trials, and suffering must pass through the permissive will of God (*Job 1 and Job 2*).
- Worship amidst suffering proves our loyalty to God and repudiates Satan's lies (*Job 1:13-22*).
- Realize that all things work together for good to them that love God (*Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20*).
- Our suffering cannot be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us (*2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18*).

Now that we have a better understanding of God's will for our lives, let's see what the Bible says about God's plan for each of our lives. One thing we know for sure is that we will never find God's will or His plan outside the Word of God. We definitely won't find it from horoscopes, fortune tellers (such as Nostadamus), Tarot Cards, Ouija Boards, astrology, numerology, psychics, or séances. We will find God's will and plan by renewing our minds (*Romans 12:1-2*). We renew our minds by putting them in conformity with the mind of Christ (*Philippians 2:5*). We need to replace carnal thoughts with God's thoughts by immersing ourselves in the holy Word of God (*2 Corinthians 10:5*). We must be in conformity to the clearly revealed will of God before He will reveal His plan for us. Our priority should be to fulfill the general will of God in our daily lives and then trust Him to guide us in the detailed plan for each of our lives. Sometimes God reveals His will through opportunities, circumstances, the wishes of parents, the advice of friends, personal inclinations, the evaluation of one's own individual abilities, the needs of the day, and our conscience.

Three things concerning God's will and plan are true:

1. The Word of God directs. God often guides through Scripture verses that speak loudly to us. But, we need to be cautious. We don't just open the Bible, close our eyes, and point to a verse at random. God is a God of order, not randomness. And, we need to saturate ourselves with the Word of God so that the Lord can bring various portions of Scripture to our minds. God's WILL never contradicts His WORD, therefore, we need to know the Bible (*Psalms 119:105; Joshua 1:8-9; Psalm 1:1-3*).
2. Our inner conviction or conscience agrees. God gave us His Holy Spirit to guide us, and He bears witness with our spirit that a certain course of action is right or wrong (*John 16:13*). But, we need to be cautious that the "voice" we hear is indeed the voice of God, not the voice of our own selfish desires (*1 John 4:1-3*). The "old" man (our human nature) is deceitful and desperately wicked; so, if we delight ourselves in God, He will give us the proper desires (*Psalms 37:4-7*).
3. The circumstances permit. God opens and closes doors of opportunity. Nothing happens to the child of God by chance, coincidence, or luck. The Bible assures us that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (*Romans 8:28*). Just as road signs serve as guideposts in our travels, we accept circumstances as guideposts in the direction of God's leading, even if God on occasion should allow Satan to control circumstances, as in the case with Job (*Job 1 and 2*).

Rev. F.B. Meyer (a contemporary and friend of [D. L. Moody](#) and a [Baptist](#) pastor in England) said, "*When the Word of God, the impulse of the Holy Spirit in my heart, and the outward circumstances are in harmony, then I am convinced that I am acting in accordance with the will of God.*"

Our desires may be our own and not God's, and so we can't fully trust our desires. The circumstances may be dismal or contrived by our adversary the Devil, and so we don't want to blindly follow opened or closed doors. But God's "Word is truth" (*John 17:17*) and that is where we must ultimately place our trust. We need to have the same trust that Simon Peter had when he said to Jesus, "*Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net*" (*Luke 5:5*).

In summary, Jesus laid down a principle that should govern all our life, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (*Matthew 6:33*), that is, we need to fulfill God's will that is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Then, "*Trust the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths*" (*Proverbs 3:5-6*).

Questions:

1. God has a direct and clearly revealed will for man. From *1 Timothy 2:4*, what is one thing that God specifically wills for us:

2. List some ways that suffering comes to us.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

3. In general principle, what three things should be true for us to know that we are in God's will?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

4. Briefly explain the difference between the will of God and the plan of God.

Additional Scripture Verses:

Genesis 37:23-28; Numbers 32:23; Job 5:6-11; Job 23:10; Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 37:1-5; Psalm 119:67-75; Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 6:33; John 16:33; John 17:20-23; Acts 5:28-29,41; Acts 9:16; Acts 17:30; Romans 5:3-4; Romans 8:28-29; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 2 Corinthians 8:3-5; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 4:13-15; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 3:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Titus 3:8,14; Hebrews 12:6-11; James 5:10; 1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 2:13-21; 1

Peter3:17;
2 Peter 3:9.

1

Peter

4:19;

1

Peter

5:10;