

# How To Know God's Will



Discovering God's Word  
Bible Study Series

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Written by Eric Krieg

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# How To Know God's Will

## Introduction

A. People do many different things today, claiming it to be according to God's will. And, there are many different standards people use to "know" God's will.

B. This has resulted in a great deal of religious confusion and division.

1. One person claims it is God's will to strap a bomb to himself/herself, go into a crowd of people, and detonate himself/herself so as to kill others.

2. Another person claims it is God's will for every person to be happy on this earth, even if that means having homosexual relationships.

3. Another person claims it is God's will to "baptize" infants (by pouring water over the babies' heads).

C. How can we know whether something is actually according to God's will or not? Is it even possible to know God's will?

D. Purpose: To learn that God has a will, how God communicates His will, difficulties knowing God's will, and how to find out God's will.

## 1. God Has A Will

A. You can understand His will

1. Although many people claim it is impossible to understand the will of God today, God has said that He expects you to understand His will (Ephesians 5:6-17).

2. The warning about deception implies that while you can know the true will of God, there are people who will twist and distort it so that it is something different than God's will.

3. God will bring His wrath upon those who are disobedient to His will. Since God is fair, this also implies that He knows it is possible for people to understand His will so as to obey it.

4. You must not become partners with those who deceive you about the will of God and be involved in their works of darkness.

Rather, you must live in God's light, producing the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth.

5. You can (and must) test whatever you believe or are being taught to see whether it is pleasing to the Lord or not, paying careful attention to the way you live so that you will conduct yourself according to His will rather than foolishly living in ways that go against God's truth!

B. You must train yourself to discern God's will

1. Knowing the will of God takes effort. For example, the Hebrew writer said some things were difficult to explain because they had become too lazy to understand (Hebrews 5:11-14).

2. It is possible for someone to not make the proper progress in being able to discern God's will. This person stays stuck feeding on the milk of the word (basic principles of God's revelation) and may always be dependent on someone else helping them know God's will.

3. God wants you to mature so that rather than being dependent on others teaching you, you will be in the position to teach others. But, this requires that you have developed some maturity in learning to discern between good and evil.

- This is the ability to take the information God has given and draw the proper conclusions (not just that you can understand more complex passages in the Bible).
- For example, when Paul writes concerning the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, discernment is needed in a couple areas. First, it takes discernment to recognize how each word God uses applies in today's culture. Second, it takes discernment to identify anything similar (which is condemned as much as any of the rest).

C. There is right and wrong

1. Although there are many who claim right and wrong are subjective ideas (that differ from person to person), God has always made it clear that right and wrong do exist in a concrete way.

2. After the Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection) asked Jesus a question pertaining to marriage in the resurrection (Mark 12:18-23), Jesus demonstrated their error (Mark 12:24-27).

3. No matter how well you may believe you have reasoned things out, you are mistaken (in error) when your reasoning goes against what the Scriptures teach.

4. Jesus helps you to see that you can know the truth through reading the Scriptures and then drawing the appropriate conclusions!

- There was an obvious conclusion about the resurrection in the passage about the burning bush. But, the Sadducees had missed it! Jesus shows they should have been able to discern that God is not the God of the dead but of the living.
- Whenever you fail to discern the will of God, you will be wrong in your conclusions!

## **2. How God Communicates His Will**

### **A. Different ways at different times**

1. God has used different methods of communicating His will to people throughout time (Hebrews 1:1).

2. Consider some of the ways you read about God communicating His will to prophets throughout the Old Testament times.

- God directly communicated with the heads of the household (patriarchs – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob). For example, God directly instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on the altar (Genesis 22).
- God communicated through giving the law to Moses. For example, God gave many laws concerning sacrifices, festivals, the Sabbath day, purity, etc. (Exodus 20:22).
- God communicated through dreams and visions. For example, God communicated about the coming of His kingdom through King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the prophet Daniel's interpretation of it (Daniel 2:44).
- God communicated by sending a prophet to speak His will to particular people. For example, God sent the prophet Jonah to the city of Nineveh and preach against their evil so they would repent (Jonah 1:2).

### **B. God has spoken through Jesus today**

1. Although God has used various methods of communicating His will through various messengers, today God communicates His will to us through Jesus Christ, His Son (Hebrews 1:1-4)!

2. God sent Jesus to this earth and Jesus taught people the will of God directly (consider Matthew 5-7, the “Sermon on the Mount”).

3. God’s words through Jesus are not limited to those words He taught while He was on this earth. Instead, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the apostles, who would remind them of what Jesus taught and teach all things Jesus would reveal (John 14:25-26; John 16:12-15).

- Notice that the apostle Paul claimed the words He wrote revealed the mind of Christ and contained the words of God and commandments of Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:16; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

#### C. The faith has now been fully revealed

1. Through Jesus revealing His will in this way to the apostles (as well as prophets), you can know the will of God when you read the words they have written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:3-6).

2. Through the messages that have now been written in the pages of the New Testament, God has fully revealed everything He wants you to believe, practice, and teach (the faith of the gospel, Jude 1:3).

3. Since all Scripture has been inspired by God and tells you everything you need to know about what is pleasing to God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), you must study the Scriptures to know the will of God!

4. You should also note that God forbids anyone changing the message for any reason (Revelation 22:18-19; Galatians 1:6-9).

#### D. The Spirit leads through His inspired words in Scripture

1. Although some Christians possessed miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in New Testament times (1 Corinthians 12:4-11), the Scriptures teach that these miraculous gifts and working of the Holy Spirit would cease when the perfect came (1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

2. The “perfect” refers to the completed revelation of God’s will. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit only revealed “part” of the

truth (i.e. piecemeal). So, when God's complete revelation would be available, the partial revelations would no longer be needed!

3. Although many people claim the Holy Spirit leads them today through better felt than told experiences, whispers in the ear, signs, visions, dreams, and such things, the Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit leads people today through the words He revealed in the pages of the Bible (the completed will of God)!

- The Bible shows the Holy Spirit doing the same as what is accomplished through the word. For example, compare the parallel passages of Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16 to see that the Holy Spirit dwells in you when Jesus's word dwells in you!

### **3. Difficulties Involved In Knowing God's Will**

A. There are many obstacles to knowing God's will

1. You can be deceived by others (Ephesians 5:6) and you can deceive yourself (James 1:22).

2. Consider some common obstacles to knowing the will of God (though not an exhaustive list).

B. Worldly wisdom

1. If you are focused on worldly goals and trying to fit your beliefs with the common ideas, beliefs, and traditions of people in this world, you will not be able to understand the will of God (1 Corinthians 1:20-21).

2. God's will often goes against the grain of this world. So, rather than trying to filter God's word through what "makes sense" to you on a physical level, you must learn to fully trust and submit yourself to God in whatever He says (Proverbs 3:5-6)!

C. False teaching

1. There are many false teachers in this world today (2 Peter 2:1-3). Although they often sound like they are teaching God's will and helping people follow the Lord, the devil is using them to give people a false sense of hope (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

2. God has warned His people in the Scriptures to grow and mature in the knowledge of God's will so that we will not be deceived (2 Peter 3:15-18; Ephesians 4:11-16).

#### D. Emotionalism

1. Following your own emotions about what you feel is right and wrong is a sure way the devil will lead you in the wrong direction (Proverbs 14:12). In fact, there are many times people will find teachers to tell them what they want to hear (according to what seems right to them, 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

2. God has told us that it is not within ourselves to determine our own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). In fact, God says that the heart (including the emotions) is more deceitful than anything else (Jeremiah 17:9) and that the one who trusts in himself (in his own heart) is a fool (Proverbs 28:26).

#### E. False standards

1. There are many standards people use to try to determine the will of God. Some look for miraculous signs. Some follow their own consciences. Some follow human traditions.

2. Whenever Jesus asked some Jews about authority, He recognized only two possible origins: Either something is from Heaven (from God) or it is of human origin (Matthew 21:25). The same is true today – and the two are not equal.

### **4. Finding Out God's Will**

#### A. You must test everything

1. Test everything you believe, practice, do, say, teach, decide, etc. to see whether it is according to the will of God, as He has revealed in the Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22).

2. Something is only good if it is according to the teachings God has revealed in the pages of the Bible. And, we must stay away from every evil thing that goes against the teachings God has revealed in the Bible.

B. God expects you to live by His New Testament law today



1. The Old Law has been nailed to Jesus's cross (Colossians 2:14) and has become obsolete and replaced with a new and better law (Hebrews 8:13)!

2. Although we can learn a great deal from studying the Old Testament (Romans 15:4), we have been taught to do everything in the name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17) – which requires New Testament authority!

### C. How to know what Jesus wants

1. We know Jesus is pleased with something when there is a direct command/statement authorizing such in the New Testament (i.e. to love your enemies, Matthew 5:44).

2. We know Jesus is pleased with something when there is an approved example authorizing such in the New Testament (I.e. to worship on the first day of the week, Acts 20:7).

3. We know Jesus is pleased with something when there is a necessary conclusion based on what is said in the New Testament (i.e. baptism as immersion in water, Acts 8:38-39).

4. Without one of these, we cannot know the thing pleases God and it must be avoided!

### **Conclusion**

A. You can know God's will! But, it will not come to you accidentally or through some better felt than told experience. Rather, you must put in the work to learn the will of God and develop your ability to discern God's will and apply it to the circumstances of your life.

B. If you will put in the work to know God's will, you can obey Him and know that your life is pleasing to God!

## **Study Questions**

What are some examples of things people do today, claiming them to be the will of God?

### **1. God Has A Will**

How does Ephesians 5:6-17 demonstrate that you can understand God's will?

How does Hebrews 5:11-14 demonstrate the need to train yourself to discern God's will?

How does Mark 12:24-27 demonstrate that there is right and wrong?

### **2. How God Communicates His Will**

How has God communicated His will in the past?

How does God communicate His will today through Jesus?

How much of God's will has been revealed?

How does the Spirit lead people today?

### **3. Difficulties Involved In Knowing God's Will**

What are the two main sources of deception that hinder you from knowing God's will?

How does worldly wisdom hinder you from knowing God's will?  
How should you respond?

How does false teaching hinder you from knowing God's will? How should you respond?

How does emotionalism hinder you from knowing God's will? How should you respond?

What are the only two possible sources of authority for something?

### **4. Finding Out God's Will**

How must you test everything?

Where can you find the law God has given for you to live by today?

How can you know what Jesus wants from you?

