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# **Keys to Finding the Will of God**

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**Series: The Will of God**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Keys to Finding the Will of God

The Wilson family has a decision to make. Ed Wilson has been offered a job with another company about 2,000 miles away at a considerable increase in salary. It is one gigantic step up the career ladder, and one gigantic step across the country for his family. It means changing schools, changing friends, changing churches, and changing their way of life. But it also means a higher standard of living, a new level of responsibility, and a whole new set of challenges for Mr. Wilson, who thrives on new opportunities.

Ed Wilson is a growing Christian. He desires to do the will of God, so he is seeking counsel from some of the businessmen in his church. "Do you have a peace about it?" they ask. He says he does. They ask, "Were you seeking this job?" He answers, "God simply opened the door miraculously...I wasn't even looking." They ask if he has "prayed" about it, and he answers, "Yes." Most of them encourage him to take the job, relocate, and press on. "This is obviously God's will," they counsel him. There are a couple of exceptions. His family is against it. His pastor encourages him to rethink his priorities first, and one of his closest friends feels that the "challenges" of the job might be more than he is ready for spiritually. He would be away from home more than 60% of the time, and would have to drop out of his Bible study program to stay on the road.

So the counsel is mixed. What should he do? As we progress through this study, we will seek to unfold some of the keys to understanding the will of God, and we will look at the choices this man has to make in the light of those keys.

This is the second of a series of lessons on discerning the will of God. No issue seems more complex, yet draws more simplistic answers. No issue attracts more interest, yet at the same time exasperates more people. No issue is more important, yet it is not an extremely popular topic from most pulpits. It is personal, yet it is universal. It involves absolutes, yet its solutions vary. It is the focal point of excitement, yet it is the touchstone of frustration for many a believer, both young and old...the issue of knowing what God wants you to do.

As we discussed in our first lesson, several things must be

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made absolutely clear at the outset. The first is what the will of God is by definition.

The will of God is the special, precise plan of God for each child of God that will best please the heart of God. In other words, it is what God wants to do with your life. We learned from Romans 12:2 three important things that helped form this definition.

First of all, we learned that *the will of God is good*; that is, it is a reflection of the nature of God as it is revealed in the Word of God. Therefore, the will of God can never vary, not even one ten-trillionth of a degree from the written Word of God. So any time you have a decision to make, and you feel God “leading” you, but that choice requires any deviation from Scripture, *that leading is not of God*. God *cannot* lead contrary to His Word.

Secondly, we learned that *God’s will is acceptable*. That means it is pleasing to the heart of God. Nothing brings more joy to the heart of God than when the children of God do the will of God. Don’t say, “I want to please God’s heart,” unless you are willing to search for and do His will. When you and I do God’s will, God is pleased.

Thirdly, *God’s will is perfect*; that is, it is complete. Nothing can be added to it, nothing taken from it. It has been settled in eternity past, and it will endure. God will not change His mind in mid-stream. His will is eternal. There is “no variableness nor shadow of turning” with Him (James 1:17). Thus, our definition of God’s will from the Word of God.

The second thing we learned is that the will of God is progressive. In other words, until and unless you and I are doing the *known* will of God as revealed in Scripture in any given area of our lives, we have no right to ask God to reveal the details of His will in those areas. For example, if we are not in submission to our employer, we need not seek God’s will for our job. We already know it, and aren’t doing it.

The third thing we learned in our last lesson is that God’s plan is specific. It is not a general set of guidelines that leaves us to fill in the blanks as we see fit. He has a specific job, a specific place, a specific mate, a specific ministry designed in eternity past for each of us. The very hairs of our head are numbered. And it *does* matter where we live, who we marry, and where we serve. It matters because it matters to God. We will explore that truth further as we progress in this study.

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Today we begin a look at some of the keys to determining the will of God in individual situations, situations not unlike what Ed Wilson and his family face as they consider the option of a new job.

We will be looking at some of the key steps in discerning the will of God. As we progress, we pray that these keys will fit into a pattern, and at the conclusion of this series, we hope to share together a printed worksheet that we can keep to help us step through these keys when there is a decision to make. In the weeks to come, we'll look at such issues as: "How to gather facts before you make a decision"; "How to use the Scriptures in determining the will of God"; "How to pray for the will of God"; "How to seek counsel when there's a decision to make"; and "How to learn to wait for the will of God".

In this lesson, however, we are looking at two fundamental issues involved in Christian decision-making, issues that may seem almost too basic to enunciate. And yet I have observed that these are two of the most overlooked steps in the process, *because they are so basic*. Thus, we continue to build the foundation by looking at them.

### I- CEMETERY LEADING AND THE WILL OF GOD

The first is the issue of "cemetery leading and the will of God." Now by "cemetery leading" we mean the process by which we either imply or counsel that dead people can determine the will of God. So often we counsel others on how to seek God's will for their lives. That's certainly not a bad thing to do. There is only one problem. Unless that person has been born-again into the family of God by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross; unless he or she has personally confessed their sins and invited Jesus Christ to enter their lives, forgive their sins, and make them whole, that person *does not possess the capacity to discern the will of God*. And to attempt to imply that they do is to literally frustrate them to death. It would be like tying a man's arms and legs to a table; then entering him in a marathon race, telling him to get in shape, run the race, and win. Win? He can't even walk! He is hopelessly bound by a total inability to perform. It would be like taking a person who is starving to death, but who cannot hear, standing behind him so he cannot read your lips, and telling him how to find food. There's just one problem: He can't hear you. He doesn't understand a thing you are saying. And yet you go on and on and on, giving him detailed instructions on how to save his life; but nothing you say

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does anything but add to his frustration.

Romans 8:14 is a familiar passage. One translation words it this way: *“For only those are sons of God who are led by God’s Spirit.”* In other words, two things are true. If you are truly being led by God’s Spirit, it is a sign you are God’s child. Conversely, only those who have God’s Spirit, who have been regenerated, *can* be led by God’s Spirit. In John 14, Jesus was explaining this phenomenon to His disciples. He said beginning in verse 16:

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners and Standby), that He may remain with you forever—

The Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive (welcome, take to its heart), because it does not see Him nor know and recognize Him. But you know and recognize Him, for He lives with you [constantly] and will be in you.

...He will teach you all things, And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you. (John 14:16,17,26 Amplified Bible)

That’s how God guides the Christian. He gives Him His Eternal Spirit, who comes to live inside of him, becoming his teacher, his director, his counselor, his helper. He literally takes control of that person’s life to whatever degree that person is willing, and leads them through this experience we call life on planet earth. Now the world cannot understand Him, or follow Him, or respond to Him, because it does not hear Him, nor even recognize Him when He speaks. Paul summarized the problem in his first letter to the Corinthians, in chapter two:

But as it is written:

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual

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things with spiritual.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

(I Corinthians 2:9-14 NKJV)

Case closed. And oh, Beloved, if only more workers in “Christian counseling centers”, as well as pastors and lay people trying to counsel, would only re-read this passage, the order of bringing order to people’s lives would take on a whole new dimension. How often God allows a decision to enter a man’s life so that man will be forced to look for answers, and ultimately to find THE ANSWER, even Jesus Christ. God may have allowed that marriage to reach the stage it has, so that husband or wife *would come to Christ*. So they finally yield and go for “Christian counseling.” And what happens? Either they are given the same answers the world gives, or *even worse*, they are given God’s answers, even though they *do not have God’s Spirit to understand them*. Praise God for counselors who know better.

Often instead of leading someone to Christ, or explaining their helplessness in finding spiritual answers without God’s Spirit, we give them answers God wrote in His Word for Christians to follow, assuming they have God’s Spirit to lead them. It is a travesty . It is like holding a T-bone steak in front of a man or woman with no teeth, letting them smell the aroma, then daring them to take a bite.

There are no corpses in the cemetery that can follow instructions. Why? Because they do not have the capacity to hear, to understand, or to do. And telling an unbeliever to follow God’s leading in decision-making makes no more sense than that. The Christian has *one primary responsibility when someone comes to them for direction*. That responsibility is to first clearly explain the meaning of that cross on Calvary’s Hill, and invite that person to have a personal relationship with the Living God, whose Word has the answers to their problems, and whose Spirit opens their eyes to understand that Word and enables them to obey that Word.

Yes, some Christian principles make sense to some unbelievers. But Christian principles run at odds with the ways of the world, and even those who agree in principle *do not have the power* to obey them. The counseling room must become the decision room. I cannot count the number of times I have heard professionals

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and laymen alike say, “I’ve been counseling these people for weeks and they’re not making any progress.” Then when questioned, add, “Well I don’t know whether or not they’re believers. I’ve never asked.” Can you imagine standing out at the cemetery, spending hours talking to corpses about their problems without ever stopping to see if they were alive or not? Issue number one in decision-making: the capacity to be led by the Spirit of God belongs only to the child of God.

And if you have been struggling to find the will of God for your own life, but seem to have no freedom; if the Word has no meaning to you, be certain that you have, at some point, been to that cross and traded the life of God for yours. If you haven’t, don’t bother to seek the will of God in other matters. The will of God for you is that you come to the Son of God and find the Life of God. Then, and only then, can He lead you.

So the first basic issue we must face in either making a godly decision or counseling someone else to do the same is the issue of conversion. In very simple terms, if you want to know the will of God, “You must be born again.” No other spiritual condition allows the human mind to receive the leading of God. Period.

### II- SURRENDER AND THE WILL OF GOD

The second basic issue, then, assumes that the person deciding or being counselled is a believer. Yet some of the most confused people in the world, when it comes to decision-making, are Christians. “BC” or “Before conversion”, a person simply had to determine whether or not doing a particular thing was what they wanted to do, and whether or not it was in their own best interest. Once that was determined, the decision was made. But now God has entered the picture, and we are no longer here to do what *we want to do*. So four new issues loom on the forefront of our lives:

We have a new position

We have a new purpose

We have a new probability

We have a new prayer

Those four “new” things totally change our perspective of decision-making.

1- First of all, we have a new position. The issue is no longer “What do I want to do?”, or even “What do I want to do that will least offend God?” The issue is “What does God want me to do?” “What is His *perfect will* in this matter. What will best please His

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heart?” Our new position is that we have abdicated the role of captain, in favor of becoming totally submissive to the “Captain of our Souls, even Jesus Christ.” In John, chapter 5, verse 30, Jesus stated it this way:

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. (John 5:30 NKJV)

The writer of Hebrews, speaking of Jesus, quotes these words as the reason for His incarnation:

*Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—  
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—  
To do Your will, O God.’* (Hebrews 10:7 NKJV)

The reason Jesus came was to do the will of the Father. Period. There is no other valid reason for living life on planet earth. It is why we were born; and it is why we are here. Jesus, demonstrating on earth how God in a man would behave, gave up all rights to run His own life, in favor of yielding to an Omniscient, Omnipotent God, letting Him make all the decisions and provide all the power. And Beloved, it’s hard. It was hard for Adam and Eve. It was hard for Moses. It was hard for Elijah. It’s always been hard, because you and I want to do what *we want to do*, and pray for God’s approval. *That is not seeking the will of God.* In fact, more often than not, the will of God will be the opposite of what we want, because His ways are so much higher than ours, and His thoughts are so much higher than ours. And so we have a new position, servitude.

2- We have a new purpose that is spiritual. Therefore, *every decision we make must be made on the basis of how it affects the Kingdom of God, not how it affects our comfort, convenience, or success.* That means all other criteria we have used for determining right decisions in the past have to die in favor of one driving thrust that controls all that we do: the furthering of the Kingdom of God. That’s how Ed Wilson must make that decision that faces him. And that’s how you and I must make ours. In eternity, whether or not we became president of the company will be of no importance. In eternity, whether or not we lived in a \$30,000 house or a \$130,000 house will not matter. What will matter is whether or not we have done the will of God. Every soul who is in eternity because we were obedient will matter. Every life transformed because we cared will matter. Every heart touched and transformed because we taught will matter. And that’s all that will matter. That’s why Paul wrote these words in Colossians 3:



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If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

(Colossians 3:1-3 NKJV)

Or as The Living Bible paraphrases verses 2 and 3:

Let heaven fill your thoughts; don't spend your time worrying about things down here.

You should have as little desire for this world as a dead person does. Your real life is in heaven with Christ and God.

So if you have a decision concerning your marriage, the issue isn't what will make you happy; the issue is what will best further the Kingdom of God? What will make God happy? What is the good, and acceptable, perfect will of God? If you have a decision concerning friendships, or finances, or church membership, or church leadership, or vocational promotion, or ministry location, the issue is singular. What will make God happy? What is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God? What will result in the furthering of the Kingdom, and the transforming of lives in the spirit realm, both yours and those for whom you are responsible, and to whom God will send you? That's the issue. Your new life is in heaven with Christ, and your new purpose is to do whatever lays up treasure for that life, period.

3- There is a new probability. That probability is, that in order to do what God wants you to do, and in order to become what God wants you to become, you probably will not travel the easy road. The will of God is seldom the path lined with the aroma of flowers and the scent of success. It is often the road lined with the thorns of adversity, the bullets of persecution, and the pitfalls of failure. Perhaps you prayed for the will of God in a given decision you made a year ago and thought you found it, did what you were called to do; and now you have run into a dead end, and your world has collapsed beneath you. Don't assume you made the wrong decision. The world gauges the success of a decision by the success that follows. Not God. If He had, Jesus wasn't a success. While he walked this earth, His own countrymen rejected Him; His own religious authorities rebuked Him; His own disciples misunderstood Him; and He ended up, not on a Jewish throne, but on a Roman Cross. But He did the will of God. And as He faced that cross, in the garden of Gethsemane, He gave us a pattern for

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accepting that probability. He prayed in Luke 22:42 these words:

...Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” (NKJV)

That is why Peter counselled us:

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (I Peter 4:19 NKJV)

We must often suffer *according to the will of God*. That is often the will of God for us. And if we determine whether or not we are in His will by whether or not we are making money, gaining prestige, living in perfect health, suffering no pressures or problems, we are missing the entire issue. There is a new probability if we are seeking to please the heart of God. It is that we will walk through the Garden of Gethsemane with our Savior, again and again; and again and again we will be called upon to pray, “Nevertheless, thy will be done,” committing our souls to Him, for He is faithful.

4- So we have a new prayer to pray. It is found in Matthew, chapter 6, verse 10. It came from the lips of Jesus. We are to pray every morning, all day long, and before every decision as He prayed: “*Father, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.*” In heaven all of life centers around doing the will of God. The angelic host have but one purpose, to please God’s heart. They do so by worshipping Him, and they do so by serving Him; but they do so by being totally obedient to His will. We have a new position, servitude; a new purpose, to live for the Kingdom; a new probability, that we will suffer; and a new prayer, “Lord, not my will, but yours be done.”

When we achieve *that mindset*, Beloved, we are ready to look for the will of God in a given situation. Any other mindset leads only to a self-serving kind of religiosity, that tries to determine the will of God using the parameters of man, begging God to conform His will to that, like a selfish child trying to whimper and plead until his parents give in and give him what he wants. Finding the will of God is not directing God into your plans; it is surrendering your plans, and yielding to His. And it involves a total surrender of your dreams, your goals, your comforts, and your rights before you can discover what His will really is. That is why Romans 12:1 must come before Romans 12:2. Let Paul speak to us, in closing. Wuest translates it like this:

I therefore beg of you, please, brethren, through the instrumentality of the aforementioned mercies of God, by a

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once-for-all presentation to place your bodies at the disposal of God, a sacrifice, a living one, a holy one, well-pleasing, your rational, sacred service, [rational, in that this service is performed by the exercise of the mind].

And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing and complete will, and having found that it meets specifications, place your approval upon it.  
(Romans 12:1,2 Wuest)

Finding the will of God is not a frantic search, Beloved, it is an act of continual, quiet surrender. And *as you surrender*, you choose not to conform to this world's concepts of success, but instead you pour the Word of God into your heart with such intensity that your mind literally becomes so changed that every thought you think, every decision you make pivots on one eternal thought. How can I know and, then, how can I do the will of God. That is the Christian life.

Are you seeking to find the will of God? You just found it. Commit your body once and for all, right now, as a living sacrifice to God; release your will into His, consciously, joyfully, expectantly. Pray, "Lord, from this point forward, not my will, but thine be done. Not what I want Lord, but what you want."

When that is the true expression of our hearts, Beloved, *then*, we are ready to pursue the process of finding the will of God. And we will find it, because we will have made Him Lord, and thus freed Him to do what He wants to do. Let's pray,

*Our loving Father,*

*Some of us right this moment need either for the first time or the hundredth time to place ourselves on your altar, once again, and stop trying to conform You to our wills and surrender. We need to commit our bodies a living sacrifice totally acceptable to You. It is the reasonable thing for us to do.*

*And when the enemy approaches we need not to conform ourselves to his thinking but rather be transformed by just staying in the Word until we know what You want us to do and do it.*

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*And so, Father, we pray that from this moment each of us as individuals would look into our own hearts and try to determine at what level we are the boss of our own lives. And to that level to surrender, to give ourselves back to You, the Author, the Finisher of our faith and let You be God. Then, Father, let us seek to do the will of God.*

*In Jesus name,  
Amen*

### FOR STUDY AND APPLICATION

Scripture to memorize: Romans 12:1,2.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

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 and acceptable and perfect will of God.' (NKJV)

1- Paraphrase (write in your own words) the passage listed above. Define as you do:

- |                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| a- The mercies of God        | d- Acceptable |
| b- The renewing of your mind | e- Perfect    |
| c- Good                      |               |

2- Build an altar or choose a place of worship and spend time before God this week, once and for all yielding your body as a living sacrifice to Him. Study what that means. Ask God to give you the grace to pray it and mean it. Then do something specific to help you remember that moment when Satan assails you with doubts and fears and questions. Make a plaque, or write a poem, or write a letter to God, or just drive a stake in the ground in your back yard...but do something that will tangibly remind you that you are no longer in control of your own destiny.

3- Begin each day by praying, *"Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..."* Then quietly bow and ask God to reveal what that will is, as you progress through the day.

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