

Preparing Our Lives to Receive and Act on God's Will

2 Basic Facts:

1. God does have plans and desires for our lives
 2. God is able and very much desires to communicate with us
- As Christians, we have received an inheritance from God through our relationship with Christ Jesus, *Ephesians 1:11-12* tells us, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."
 - You give an inheritance to people you care about, therefore since we have received an inheritance from God, we can be assured that He cares what happens to us.
 - When someone passes on an inheritance, it is something of great value and it is given for a particular purpose.

We see examples from Scripture of God's plans for His people:

1. He had a plan for the redemption of his people from Egyptian bondage when he led them out of Egypt through the sea and the desert using the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. (Exodus 13:21-22)
2. He had a plan for the return of his people from Babylonian exile when he guided by setting Cyrus on the throne and leading him to send the Jews home to build their temple (Ezra 1:1)
3. He had a plan for Jesus' earthly ministry - Luke 18:31 "*Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.*"
4. God had a plan for Paul. After Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus, Ananias told him in Acts 22:14-15, "*The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. 15 For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.*"
5. God has a plan for each of His children. Ps 32:8 promises, *I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. RSV*

Biblical truth which confirms the confidence that God will guide:

1. Christians are God's Children. *Matthew 7:11* promises "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"
2. Scripture is God's Word. *2 Tim 3:16-17* tells us, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
3. Christians have an indwelling Instructor, the Holy Spirit. *1 John 2:20, 27* But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.
4. The fourth reason we can know that God's guidance will be available when we need it is that God seeks His glory in our lives and He is glorified in us only when we obey His will. *Psalms 23:3* promises us "...He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

The direction of Jesus and the Old Testament writers was not on the importance of discovering the will of God, but always upon the application of doing it. It was as if they took it for granted that we would know what to do, especially related to God's revealed will.

The battle for us seems to be in three areas:

1. Diligent study of His revealed will
 - *2 Tim 2:15* Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. *RSV*
2. The application of God's revealed will in His Word to our lives
 - *James 1:22* But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. *RSV*
3. Having the proper motivation for what we do
 - *Ps 40:8* I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart." *NKJV*

God's Revealed Will for All Believers

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- *John 1:12-13 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. RSV*
 - *John 6:40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." NKJV*

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- *Eph 5:15-18 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, RSV*

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- *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; NKJV*
 - *1 Peter 4:2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. NKJV*

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- *Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. NKJV*
 - *Hebrews 13:17 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. NKJV*

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- *Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, NKJV*
 - *Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. NKJV*

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- *Acts 24:16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. NIV*
 - *Proverbs 11:3 The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them. NKJV*

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- *1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. NKJV*
 - *Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: NKJV*

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- *1 Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. NIV*

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- *John 7:17 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. NASU*
 - *John 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." NKJV*

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- *Philippians 4:6-7 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. NLT*
 - *Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. NKJV*

Discover the Sound Mind Principle

2 Timothy 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a **sound mind**.
NKJV

A sound mind is a disciplined, self-controlled mind which acts according to God's priorities. This is the opposite of fear and cowardice that causes disorder and confusion. When we focus upon the sovereign nature and the perfect purposes of God, we are able to control our lives with godly wisdom and confidence in every situation.

- How is having a sound mind different than relying on worldly common sense?
- How is having a sound mind different than relying on emotions, feelings or hunches?

Romans 12:1-2 tells us how to allow God to transform our minds to produce a sound mind and seek God's will.

Romans 12:1-2

1 I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. RSV

What are two parts to our commitment in order to discern God's will?

1. Romans 12:1 _____
2. Romans 12:2
 - Do not be _____
 - Be _____

Five Steps in Discerning God's Will

1. _____
 - James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. NKJV*
2. _____—does the Bible speak directly about this decision or are there general principles which would apply?
 - Ps 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. NKJV*
 - Ps 119:130 *The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. NIV*
3. **What are the _____?** Do they seem to be directing one way or another? Beware of using these as your main guide, but they can be a factor.
 - Phil 2:13 *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. NKJV*
 - Revelations 3:7-8 *"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": 8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. NKJV*
4. _____
 - Proverbs 15:22 *Without counsel plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed. RSV*
 - Proverbs 24:6 *For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety. NKJV*
5. _____
 - John 14:26-27 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. NKJV*
 - Isaiah 26:3 *You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. NKJV*

Don't be impatient. If you don't have peace, be willing to wait.

- *Psalm 27:14*
Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD! NKJV
- *Isaiah 30:18*
Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you;
And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
Blessed are all those who wait for Him. NKJV

We need to weigh the purposeful use of freedom.

1. Is there anything wrong with this activity? Is it lawful?
1 Cor 10:23 "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is beneficial.
"Everything is permissible"-but not everything is constructive. NIV
 2. Is it self-serving at the expense of someone else's benefit?
1 Cor 10:33 For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. NIV
 3. Is this something that will glorify God?
1 Cor 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. NIV
 4. Is this worth imitating?
Phil 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. NIV
 5. Is this following the example of Christ?
1 Cor 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. NIV
 6. Will my choice affect others around me? If so, in what way?
 7. Is it beneficial? Does it promote my spiritual life?
 8. Is it a practice that over time will tend to master me? Will it stimulate a desire that will be difficult to control?
 9. Is it constructive? Will it promote the spiritual well-being of other believers if they engage in this practice that is permissible for me?
- Jerry Bridges (*The Discipline of Grace*, 213)

Eight Questions to Ask When Making Decisions

1. Is it permissible? (If there is a clear Biblical command against it, then it is not permissible)
 - *1 John 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. NKJV*
 - *Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. NIV*
2. Will it lead to peace and mutual edification?
 - *Romans 14:19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. NIV*
 - *Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. NIV*
3. Will it build up other people?
 - *1 Corinthians 10:24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. NIV*
 - *Romans 15:2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. NIV*
4. Is it profitable (beneficial)?
 - *1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. NASB*
5. Is it constructive?
 - *"Love...looks for a way of being constructive...Love builds up." 1 Corinthians 13:4b-Phillips; 1 Corinthians 8:1b*
6. Does it have the good of others at heart?
 - *1 Corinthians 10:24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. NIV*
 - *Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. NIV*
7. Will it cause others to stumble?
 - *1 Corinthians 10:32-33 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. NIV*
 - *1 Corinthians 8:9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. NIV*
8. Does it glorify God?
 - *1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. NIV*

Methods and Motives to Be Cautious Of

1. Misusing the Bible
2. Personal Advice
3. Circumstances / Results
4. Setting up conditions
5. Opened and closed doors
6. Ideas, inner feelings, desires, and impressions
7. An audible voice
8. Misusing prayer
9. Inner peace
10. Devices
11. Signs
12. Dreams
13. "Waiting" on the Lord
14. Conscience
15. Reason
16. Faith
17. Fasting
18. The "Call"
19. Small group ("...where two or three are gathered...")

This list is not intended to indicate that these signs or activities will always mislead us; in fact God may use these to guide us. These will rarely be the only guide to indicate God's direction and they will never be in conflict with God's Word.