

session 9 study guide

the will of God

message

What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of our existence? The Bible says that we were created to bring God glory. One of the ways we can bring God praise is by obeying His will.

But what is God's will? How do we discover it? Is it the same for everyone?

As you read the following passage, keep these questions in mind: (1) What do these verses say about God's will for the world? (2) How do we determine God's will?

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:3-14).

dig

1. What did Jesus choose for us before we were born?

2. What does “predestination” mean? And what does it mean to be predestined?

3. What was the reason we were predestined to be God’s adopted sons and daughters?

4. Reread verses 9-10. What do these verses mean to you?

5. What is the seal that Paul says we have been marked with?

6. Based on these verses, what is God's will for our lives? What is our purpose?

apply

Wouldn't life be easier if we could call God and always get direct and immediate answers to our deepest questions? "Should I go to that party Friday night?" "What college should I go to?" "Is the person I'm dating the right one for me?"

What questions would you ask God about your life? What questions would you ask Him about your future?

Unfortunately, it isn't always as easy as a phone call to discern God's plan for our lives, but He does give us some important tools to use as we strive to discover His will.

the Bible

God's Word can reveal His will for us. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105, KJV). The Bible is our authority when it comes to knowing God's will. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

As we read and study the Bible, we can know how God wants us to act in many situations. Look up the following verses. What guidelines do they give about how we should live?

2 Timothy 2:23-24: _____

Matthew 6:33-34: _____

Exodus 20:17: _____

James 1:19-20,26: _____

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: _____

Philippians 4:6: _____

Colossians 3:23-24: _____

Matthew 22:37-39: _____

1 Thessalonians 5:18: _____

The Bible contains a great amount of wisdom on how you should think and act. If you are struggling in a particular area, you can often look in the subject guide or concordance at the back of a Bible to find a list of key words that will help you locate Scriptures on that topic (such as money, pride, worry, fear, and so forth).

However, the Bible will not provide clear guidance for *every* situation you will encounter in life. Nowhere in the Bible will you find an answer as to what college to attend, who you should date, or what career path you should pursue. You likely will find Scriptures that will help you make your decision by providing guidance about godly values, priorities or goals, but nowhere in the Bible will you find the verse, “go to Harvard” or “date Sheila.”

When Scripture appears to be silent on a subject, you can look at other indicators to find out the will of God for your life, including turning to the counsel of others, petitioning through prayer, and examining your circumstances.

counsel

God can often use those around you to reveal His will. Proverbs tells us, “Make plans by seeking advice” (20:18) and “where there is no guidance, the people fall; but in abundance of counselors there is victory” (11:14, *NASB*).

To whom can you go for good, solid, sound advice? What makes him or her a worthy advisor?

You need people in your life to whom you can go for Christian advice and counsel. Oftentimes, God can use these individuals to help you discover His will. But while God is perfect and infallible, people are human and prone to making mistakes and exercising poor judgment. So consider these people’s advice, but weigh their thoughts alongside relevant Scriptures and personal prayer.

prayer

Earlier in session 7, we talked about the “still, small voice” of God. Prayer is one way of hearing God’s voice. People often assume that prayer is just about talking to God, but some of the most powerful moments in your prayer life may come when you take the time to listen.

It’s not always easy to be quiet and still. The world moves at a frantic pace, and often we expect God to do the same. Life might seem so much easier if God could just text us His will or email it so that we could read it when we had the time. But try it this week. Set aside some time to just listen to God. James tells us to ask God for wisdom, expecting Him to give it to us generously (see James 1:5-8), but we must be receptive and available to hearing it.

1. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What does Paul suggest you do instead of worrying about God's will?

2. What things do you need to stop worrying about and present to God in prayer?

3. Read James 4:7-8. How does submitting yourself to God and resisting the devil help you draw near and listen to God?

circumstances

At times, you can also come to know the will of God through your circumstances. Proverbs 16:9 tells us, “In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” Perhaps you have heard someone say that a “door closed” on one opportunity but opened to provide another option.

1. Describe a time when your circumstances seemed to lead you down a particular path by opening or closing a particular door.

2. Read Proverbs 3:5-6. There are three directives given in these verses, but each has the same result. What are these?

If we . . .

then God will . . .

Be sure not to act impulsively based solely on your circumstances. Seek the will of God through the other methods of prayer, Scripture reading and the wise counsel of others to help you determine if the circumstances are from God.

reflect

1. Describe a time in your life when you clearly sensed God's will. How did you discern it?

2. Are there any issues in your life you need or want to give over to the will of God? List them.

3. What is hard about submitting to the will of God? What is easy about it?

4. Which is more difficult for you to do: discern God's will, obey God's will, or trust God's plan for your life?

5. Sometimes you will make a wrong decision. How does that fit into God's will?

6. Do you think there is ever more than one option that would fit into God's will?

7. Read Romans 12:1-2. What do these verses say you have to do to be able to discern God's will?

8. First Thessalonians 5:18 says that we are to "give thanks in all circumstances." Notice that this verse says *in* all circumstances, not *for* all circumstances. What is the difference between the two? How can you learn to give thanks in the midst of your circumstances?

9. Does God have the perfect college choice, career or person to marry picked out for you?

meditation



Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:2