

# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

### LESSON 6: DISCERNING GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

Difficult choices usually call for sound discernment, where we are able to seek out God's will and do what he wants us to do. This lesson talks about how important it is to seek God's will in our life. Sometimes we get confused, not knowing how to seek His will. We ask for answers, but we don't seem to hear any. This lesson will also help as a guide that teaches you how to seek God's will in your life.

Walking with God implies that we have to serve Him with our every thought and action. But every now and then we are faced with a decision where we are not sure what exactly God wants of us. How can you discern God's best? Read on to find out more.

The man in the story, Timothy, has a decision to make, that may seem obvious to us. But, human as we are, we sometimes are unable to see the obvious because our minds are clouded with emotions like doubt, guilt, or worry. Sometimes having a clear head is not as easy as it seems. We should constantly pray and ask God to give us strength to trust him, so that we may not be afraid of the waves of life that toss around us.

Why is it important for us to know what God's will is for our lives? Is there an area of your life where you wish the right choice was clearer to you? You might find that the following story a helpful illustration. Once, there was a young believer called Timothy. He was faced with a huge career decision that would change his whole life. He was offered a new job by a huge industry that would give him important work and a comfortable salary. But the downside was that he would even have to work on weekends, and that would potentially end his involvement with his church's ministry. On the other hand, he could settle for a less glamorous job with a lesser salary, but the job was only for five days a week which meant that he could continue to do the Lord's work on the weekends.

Instinctively, we would say it would be God's will for him to take the smaller job so he would have more free-time on the weekend for his church activities. But how should Timothy come up with the right decision? We should be able to reason out each and every motivation behind his actions. And that is the purpose of this lesson.

Now, even before we seek God's will, we should make a few commitments within ourselves. First, we need to commit ourselves to obey God's command regardless of what it may be. When we are in Christ our actions are not always only for individual benefit but for the benefit of the whole community as well. There is absolutely no reason to find out what God's will for our life is if we are not ready to do it, so when we seek God for His will, we should be ready to do what he says.

Now that we have committed our hearts to follow God's will regardless of what it may be, the next step would be to find out what his plan is for our lives. How should we do this?

**Firstly, we should search the scriptures.** The scriptures are God's words to us, and he has made known his will to us through the scriptures. Obviously, we cannot find specific answers to each and every problem we face, but the scriptures outline the important core values, and we should primarily make our decisions based on those.

**Secondly, pray:** God is always ready to reveal His plan to us, if only we would ask Him. Whenever we are facing a tough decision, we can always pray, asking God for His wisdom, and asking Him to show us his will that we may walk in it.

**Thirdly, submit to the Holy Spirit:** Once we have prayed, asking Him to show us His will, the next step is to completely surrender to Him, submitting ourselves completely to the Holy Spirit.

**Fourthly, seek counsel from church elders:** As we are searching the scriptures, and searching the character of God for answers, we should also remember that we should seek to have our answers confirmed; it is good practice to also seek wisdom from an elder or pastor within the church. We could consult our church elders and leaders who may have spent more time with God and in the Word than we have.

Finally, we should learn to remove any doubt that is within us. One of the biggest stumbling blocks in seeking God's will is the inability to trust in God, and to believe that His will is best.

If we have made sure that we have done all these things and we still don't have clarity about our decision, it helps to take a step back and take a look at our lives. There are a few questions that would help us as we make such decisions. These are not questions that would test our knowledge, but questions that would remind us what our true purpose is. Questions like:

Why did Jesus come to this world? The answer is found in Luke 19:10. "The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost." Since, we are God's disciples, it is also our duty to seek and save the lost. That should be our primary focus whenever we make any decision. Will this decision help or hinder you in that goal?

What are your talents? How can you serve God best? You need not answer this question by yourself. You could take the help of your friends and maybe the elders of the church. Ask godly advisors about what they think you're gifted in, and take their answers seriously. You may enjoy music, or sport, or just entertaining. You may be talented at art or computers. It is important to note that these passions and skills come from God and are to be used for His purpose.

What is the most important thing you can do to fulfil the great commission? This is a personal question, and each person would have an answer. You could use your answer of the previous question, and see how you could use your God-given talents for the glory of His Kingdom.

Once you have listed all these down, get back to the decision you have to make. When you have all your thoughts written down in

Following through after you make a decision is very important. How can we stop ourselves from back-tracking and rechecking every decision we've made?

It is admittedly difficult for any of us to completely rely on God's will as we make a decision. We have a natural tendency to take control of our lives. But true discipleship is the practice of entrusting our lives to God's control.

front of you, you will be able to think a lot more clearly about the choice that you have to make.

Focus on your decision and list out all the possible choices you could make. List out the pros and cons for each choice. Once you do that, you will be able to have a clearer direction about the decision you would have to make. All you need to do now is just step out and make that decision.

You have prayed, searched the scriptures, and surrendered yourself to the Holy Spirit. You have looked at your life and at your purpose from an eternal perspective. God is with you when you make your decision, and if you completely trust Him, he will not let you make a wrong one. So once you make your decision, you should remember to follow it through without doubt. Do not second-guess your decision once you have begun to act on it.

Some people are reckless, and tend to bring their feelings into the decision making. It is highly counter-productive if we try to make our decisions based on what we feel at the time.

Some people are in such a hurry to make a decision that they take the first choice that comes their way. They are usually too nervous and they also rely on their feelings. They are not able to rely on God, and cannot bear to see an opportunity go. Do not be like that. Relax, and trust God to bring the right opportunity in His timing.

On the other hand, there are others that are too lazy. If they see a door closing on an opportunity, they write it off saying that the door is closing because that is not God's plan for them. These too are emotional responses, and it is important for us to discern if that opportunity is really from God, and if it would help us to strengthen God's Kingdom. If that is so, and if you can sense the push of the Holy Spirit, go out of your way to seize that opportunity even though the door is closing to you.

It is admittedly difficult for any of us to completely rely on God's will as we make a decision. We have a natural tendency to take control of our lives. But true discipleship is the practice of entrusting your life to God's control. Doing so requires deep communion with God. Constant prayer, Bible reading and meditation, and a close fellowship at a good church goes a long way to becoming in sync with God's thoughts, and hence being able to listen to and to carry out God's will.

## IN REVIEW

- In order to fully understand what God's will is, we need to a) search the scriptures, b) pray, c) submit to the Holy Spirit, d) look for counsel among church elders, and e) remove doubt.
- The most important thing while making a decision is to keep a clear mind. Keeping a clear mind involves having a long-term vision for your life in the sight of God, and not relying on emotions or on the uncertainty of the present while making your decisions.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- What are the first things we should do as we seek God's will?
- What kind of questions should you be asking as you note down your life-purpose?
- How can you keep away from reliance on emotions as you make important decisions?

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