

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 6: DISCERNING GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled Christian Disciplines. This series of lessons introduces the disciplines of a Christian life, including prayer, Bible study, as well as fixing our mind on eternal things. This is exciting content that should energize and renew the spiritual life of mature Christians and propel newer Christians into deeper faith. The material is practical in nature, yet focussed on the many spiritual rewards of a life devoted to God.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.



CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 6: DISCERNING GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to communicate the importance of seeking out and discerning God's will when making decisions.

LEADER'S NOTE

One of the things Christians often struggle with is the question of God's will. How can we know what God really wants us to do? Should I take this job? Whom should I marry? Should I make this life-changing decision? Sometime we are afraid of disappointing God if we make the wrong choice. Sometimes we are afraid of the choice that God will make if we invite Him into the process. Be sensitive to the decisions that participants may be wrestling with right now. Help them look to God for peace and put their trust in His timing. Do you have a decision to make yourself? Spend time with God about it, and benefit from the ideas in this lesson as you prepare to teach.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ What does it mean to understand, or discern, the will of God? Why is it important to discern the will of God?
- ❖ If you have a difficult decision to make, how would you go about trying to figure out God's will?
- ❖ Have you experienced difficulty in discerning God's will? Do you have a personal story of a misguided attempt to know God's will that did not work?
- ❖ What is one thing you really want to know God's will for in your life right now?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

- ❖ **Following God's Will:** To follow God's will instead of our own, it is imperative to understand biblical principles and to apply them in every area of our lives.

➤ Explore the following Scriptures:



- God desires that we know and experience His will for our lives (Ephesians 1:15-17).
- God's will is best for us:
 - It is good, pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2).
 - It reflects His deep love for us (Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28).
 - It results in a life of fruitfulness, joy, and glory to God (John 15:5,8,11).
- We cannot know the goodness of God or experience His will for our lives unless we are walking in sincere and willing submission to Christ. We are individually responsible for knowing what God wants us to do. It is not wise to plan our lives apart from Him.
- Believers who try to live their own life will only experience disappointment and anxiety. Those who choose to walk in God's will experience joy, peace, and fruitfulness, which bring glory to God.
- ❖ **Commitment to do God's Will is Required** (Romans 12:1-8; 13:1-5).
- We cannot ask God to reveal His will and then decide whether we will obey. We cannot genuinely seek His will in one particular area unless we are committed to do His will in every area of our lives.
 - We must commit to obeying God's will as He reveals it.
 - We must turn from the world's ways and allow God to transform us (renew our mind).
 - **Renewing our mind** includes confessing all known sin (1 John 1:9).
 - **Renewing our mind** includes being filled with the Holy Spirit and walking in His power (Ephesians 5:17-18).
 - **Renewing our mind** implies a reliance on His Word (Colossians 3:16).
- We must recognize that God's will for us is not only for our individual benefit. It is His will that we serve others, and as we do so we come to know the privilege, purpose, and joy that comes from it.
- We must submit to all authority established by God. To fail to submit to authority in all matters, except that which contradicts the Word of God, is to resist God Himself and hinder the ability to understand His will in other matters.

ASK PARTICIPANTS

- ❖ **Look up some of the following verse and discuss what they tell us about determining God's will:** Psalm 119:104; 2Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5-6; Phillipians 4:6-7; 2:13; Acts 16:6-8; Proverbs 19:20; 27:17; Romans 1:9-11.



TEACH

❖ Other Sources for Discerning God's Will

- **Prayer:** Seeking His wisdom (James 1:5-6; Philippians 4:6-7).
- **The Holy Spirit:** Submitting to His direction (Philippians 2:13; Acts 16:6-8).
- **Spirit-Filled Christians:** Weighing their counsel (Proverbs 19:20; 27:17). God often uses the wise counsel of mature, spirit-filled Christians to help in our decision making. However, guard against depending exclusively on their counsel.
- **Providential Circumstances:** Seeing God at work. God sometimes uses circumstances to direct us or give us insight into His will.
- **Our Desires:** If we are walking in the Spirit and want to obey God's will, our desires can be a valid part of discerning His will. However, our desires cannot be the exclusive means of determining God's will (Romans 1:9-11).

❖ The Sound-Mind Principle of Discerning God's Will : While most of God's will is revealed in Scripture, the Bible gives us another principle for discerning God's will in matters not addressed by God's direct command.

- Steps to making a sound-mind decision:
 - **Pray for wisdom** (James 1:5-6).
 - **Be sure you are walking in the Spirit** (Ephesians 5:18).
 - **Determine the options in the decision.**
 - **Search the Bible for any relevant principles and commands.**
 - **Collect all available information and the counsel of mature believers on each option.**
 - **Review these key questions:**
 - Why did Jesus come (Luke 19:10)?
 - What are your talents? What unique experiences or talents do you have?
 - Which option will allow you to serve God best?
 - What is the most important thing you can do for others?
 - What is the most important thing you can do to fulfill the great commission?
- These questions remind us what is really important. They underscore our primary purpose in life. Decisions need to be made based on eternal values, not on temporal values.



❖ Potential Misunderstandings in Determining God's Will

- **The open door policy:** Taking the first option that presents itself. What are some possible dangers of this approach? This is walking by sight rather than faith. Secondly, one could walk through a counterfeit door.
- **The closed-door policy:** Assuming that a "closed door" means the option is not God's will. What are some possible dangers of this approach? This is also walking by sight and not by faith. This approach ignores the way God builds the faith of His people and the reality of a spiritual battle.
- **Looking for a dramatic experience:** This is walking by sight and not faith. While the miraculous is possible, it is not an exclusive indicator of God's will. God's use of this is the exception rather than the rule. Seeking a dramatic experience denies the principle of faith (Matthew 16:1-4).
- **Seeking God's Peace:** Do not depend on your feelings and emotions (the role of "God's peace").

❖ Proper Perspective in Seeking God's Will: Consider these principles regarding God's will found in Scripture. They should be encouraging to you!

- God desires to reveal His will more than we desire to know it (Psalm 32:8-9).
- It is not unusual for God's will to be in line with our desires, if we are walking in the spirit (Philippians 2:13; Psalm 37:4).
- If we are walking in the Spirit and sincerely desire to do God's will, we have assurance that God will always lead us according to His perfect plan (Psalm 25:12; 37:5, 22-23).
- God is not obligated to reveal His will for our lives all at once. (Proverbs 16:9)
- God's will is primarily a relationship with Him, rather than a place or job (Psalm 25:14; John 15:14-15; Colossians 3:23).
- God's will for our lives always reflects His love for us (Psalm 145:8-9; Jeremiah 29:11).
- We will undoubtedly face difficulties in life as we seek to walk in God's will. However, we have the absolute confidence that God causes everything to work for our good. It is our individual responsibility to believe it and to rest in it. God wants us to learn to walk by faith. We need to trust Him for our future.



DISCUSSION

Choose two or three of the following questions to ask participants.

- ❖ What decisions do your peers have to make that would require seeking God's will? How could you counsel them to find God's will?
- ❖ What are the first things we should do as we seek God's will?
- ❖ What are some of the misconceptions people have about discerning God's will? What mistakes do people make because of these misconceptions?
- ❖ When has God guided you through a difficult decision? How did you hear from Him? What was the result?

PRAYER

Close in a time of prayer. Thank God that He is near us, and hears our prayers. Thank God that He provides a means for discerning His will. Ask that He would make known to all of us the paths of life and fill us with joy in His presence (Psalm 16:11). Ask that whether they turn to the right or to the left, each participant would hear a voice saying, "This is the way; walk in it" ([Isaiah 30:21](#)), and that they would trust and listen to the voice of God. Pray for wisdom, for peace and for the revelation of wisdom in each of their lives.