

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living  
Study Guide

## CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

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

#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple 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 focused on the many spiritual rewards of a life devoted to God.

The Student's Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

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

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

We are always looking for guidance in our life from one source or another. This lesson looks at the importance of seeking out and discerning God's will when making decisions.

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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. While we are not given every step of our lives laid out for us, God will give us an idea of where to go next, and will honour our desire to seek His will. This lesson will give you ideas of how you can go about discerning God's will. Like all the other spiritual disciplines, discernment takes practice and dedication but the rewards are worth it!

## GETTING STARTED

1. What does it mean to understand, or discern, the will of God? Why is it important to discern the will of God?

2. What is one thing you really want to know God's will for in your life right now?



# STUDY

❖ **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.

- What does Ephesians 1:15-17 say about God’s desire that we know His will?

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- What do the following verses tell us about God’s will?

Romans 12:2	
Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28	
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:** 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).
- **Renewing our mind** includes being filled with the Holy Spirit and walking in His power .
- **Renewing our mind** implies a reliance on His Word.
- 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.

❖ **SCRIPTURE FOR DISCERNING GOD’S WILL:** Sometimes we can discern God’s will by understanding the Bible. The Bible provides direction and counsel for our lives. If we have a question we want to bring before God, we should first see if God has provided us guidance in the Bible. Look up the following verses to see what God’s Word can provide us:

2 Timothy 3:16-17	
James 1:5-6	
Romans 8:26-27	
Psalms 37:23	

❖ **OTHER SOURCES FOR DISCERNING GOD’S WILL:** Aside from studying the Word of God, there are other ways in which God can communicate His will to us.

- **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. God has given us a ‘sound mind’ – a mind that can reason. If we are putting God’s will first, and desiring what He desires we can move forward and make decisions using our reason.

- 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? Read Luke 19:10. This is God's will in the world and we should make this our goal as well.

- What are your talents? What unique experiences or talents do you have? God has given them to you for a reason.
  - Which option will allow you to serve God best?
  - What will help you to serve others?
- 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.
  - If you were considering taking a new job in a different city, how could you apply these questions to that decision? What would you need to consider?

❖ **POTENTIAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS IN DETERMINING GOD'S WILL:** Sometimes we desire to know God's will but go about it the wrong way. We can misunderstand God's revelation of His will when we move away from God's word and prayer into looking for signs. If you rely on any of the following signs, you might misunderstand God's will. There are no short-cuts to knowing what God would have us do.

- **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! Write down what you learn from each of these verses:

Psalm 32:8-9	
Philippians 2:13	
Psalm 37:4	
Psalm 25:12	
Proverbs 16:9	
Colossians 3:23	
Jeremiah 29:11	

God does not reveal His will for us all at once. He had good plans for us. God’s will is primarily a relationship with Him rather than a place or job. It is also not unusual for God’s will to be in line with our desires, if we are walking in the Spirit and growing in Christlikeness.

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.



## IN SUMMARY

- ❖ A Christians, we should desire to know God's will. God's will for us is good, pleasing and perfect. It reflects His deep love for us. It results in a life of fruitfulness, joy and glory to God.
- ❖ We must have a commitment to following God's will and obedience before we can understand what it is.
- ❖ We should be ready to receive God's will for us by renewing our minds. This involves confession of sin, being filled with the Holy Spirit and relying on the Word of God.
- ❖ The Word of God is our first source in understanding God's will.
- ❖ Other sources for discerning God's will are prayer, the Holy Spirit, other Spirit Filled Christians, Providential circumstances, and our desires.
- ❖ The sound mind principle for discerning God's will helps us to ask specific questions of our situation to discern the best choice.
- ❖ We must be careful not to misunderstand God's will. Looking for dramatic experiences or relying on our own sense of peace are not good indicators of God's will for us.
- ❖ We must have a proper perspective in seeking Gods will. This involves walking in the Spirit and sincerely desiring to do what God desires.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**1.** 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?

**2.** What are the first things we should do as we seek God's will?

**3.** What are some of the misconceptions people have about discerning God's will? What mistakes do people make because of these misconceptions?