

Discovering God's Plan for Your Life - navigating life and finding God's purpose #thewillofGod

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[0:00] We're going to go to the Word of God now to consider the subject of the will of God. And what is God's will? It's really something we all ought to want to know and to find out and to do it.

How can we find it, the will of God? How can we discern it, know it for our own life? It's a recurring theme, a truth that's right through the Scriptures, a repeated truth, the will of God.

Romans 12.2 tells us, And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

It is something we can prove. This word prove is elsewhere translated in our King James as discern. In other words, we can discern the will of God.

We can discern what it is. And of course, it is good, it is acceptable, and it is perfect. So we're going to look more topically about this topic of the will of God and see what the Word of God shows to us about the will of God.

[1:14] What are some practical steps that we can take to find God's guidance, divine guidance? It's one of the fundamental questions of life for every one of us, for every one.

How can I make those decisions of my life that will line up with God's will? How can I know? How can I discern it? How can I be sure of it? How can I discern it?

And really, every believer ought to have that desire to live that life that's pleasing to God, to find it, to discern it, to prove the will of God.

And it's not always easy to discern it. Sometimes we can grapple with decisions of life, choices with decisions that we have to make to find the guidance that, what would please my God?

We don't always catch it, and maybe sometimes we don't always stop and think. I know I think back in my own life at times, I've made decisions about this and that without really thinking, what is the will of God?

[2:19] Or didn't that be the most overarching and most important consideration? And sometimes we don't always think that through. And many of us can struggle with questions like, what is it that God wants for my life?

What does God want for me, for my life? And Paul had this question on the Damascus Road as he had that encounter with the Lord Jesus.

In Acts 9 verse 6, it tells how Paul was there and he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Of course, at the time, he was still sore, unsaved, and he came there, trembling, astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

It was at that point, that very moment, that he trusted Christ and he became a saved man. But the pressing question that came from his lips was that question.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? What do you want me to do, Lord? And that's something we all as believers ought to have, that same heart. How can I know the will of God? How can I know what God wants for me?

[3:27] Let's consider this question, what is God's will and how can we live according to it? The Bible shows us that God's will is overarching in the sense that overarching all of the world, of our life, of the future, is the will of God.

The sense that we could call it the sovereign will of God. The sovereign will of God. And you could see that there in Isaiah 46, verse 10. It tells, declaring the end from the beginning, from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.

There's this aspect of God's sovereign will. Now, this concept doesn't negate the reality of man's free will. There is the sovereignty, the sovereign will of God, but there is the free will of man. God allows man to make meaningful choices. God allows man to have and exercise human responsibility. He allows human freedom and moral agency.

It's not like we robots. Yet there is this sense of the overarching will of God, that he knows the beginning from the end. He knows what will happen.

[4:43] He has that foreknowledge, that ultimate plan that he is bringing about. This ultimate plan and control of God over all things. And his counsel shall stand.

And God's will is this sense of this overarching will. This sense is that it's being constantly fulfilled from creation to redemption, from history to eternity.

In other words, we can trust God that he has that overarching oversight of all that will happen. And even when adverse things happen, bad things happen in our lives, as we've been hearing about through Brother Neil with the Wednesday night studies, this is what we see in the life of Joseph. It's a great case study in this sense that as Joseph suffered adversity, his brother sold him into slavery, God had a greater plan, an overarching plan and purpose.

God used Joseph then, despite his setbacks and hardships, God used Joseph and the sad circumstances at times of his life to save many people in the time of famine.

[5:58] And Joseph endured much adversity, but there was a plan in it all. That God's sovereign will was being accomplished. And even when Joseph suffered much from the evil intentions of others, God's sovereign will was there, watching over and bringing about God's purposes.

God's sovereign will is that sense where it encompasses his ultimate control over creation and history itself. We don't always understand that. As we go through our human lives, we don't always appreciate that.

God's ways, his ways, his thoughts are above our ways, our thoughts. His ways, his workings, his will, it can often be hidden to us. We don't always understand it.

As it's unfolding in time, we will understand it. We'll see it then. But sometimes in the present or in the circumstances, we don't always understand it.

Why is there something bad happening to me? We may not always understand or see the reason for some suffering perhaps, yet we can't trust that his plan will work out.

[7:04] God can bring purpose even out of our pain. And there's this reality that God's will is for us, and it may include suffering and pain. Sometimes we think, well, why is that?

And we don't always understand it, and it can be a paradox. Suddenly we can't grasp the meaning of it, the complexity of life at times and of troubles of life at times.

But yet God is working out his will. We see in James 1, it tells, James exhorts, my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations.

So different kinds of trials. He says, knowing this, that the trying of your faith, it worketh patience. So there's perseverance there, that you're learning endurance there.

And it says, but let patience have a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. God's bringing you about something, and there's a trying of your faith, but it's going to work out.

[8:07] Patience in you. You're going to develop perseverance. God encourages believers, through James' words here, to see trials as a testing of our faith that will ultimately strengthen us.

There'll be something good for it. And while suffering is painful in the present, we can know that God is using it in his way to refine us, to shape us, to mould us, to make us, to mature us spiritually. 1 Peter 1, likewise, has some similar words where it tells us here. 1 Peter 1, verse 6-7. 1 Peter 1, verse 6-7.

So for the meantime, there's some heaviness, some various temptations and trials and tests. But that trial of your faith is going to bring forth that gold-quality faith that is more precious than of gold. Peter emphasises that the trials have a purpose in strengthening us and proving our faith. and we can trust God meantime that he's with us even in a painful situation working out for his good, for our good and for the meantime through faith we can go through those stages those phases of testing

knowing that God's ultimate purpose is being worked out it's for our good and for his glory if it be suffering we can know that our present suffering though real and difficult is temporary compared to the eternal glory that will be future ahead of us as one day we're promised and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death neither sorrow nor crying neither shall there be any more pain for the former things are passed away he makes all things new, amen so in the end God promises a time when the suffering will be gone, all suffering he'll make all things new and this gives us hope of this life that will last forever that is just around the corner really and as believers we're not always privy to the full scope of God's sovereign plan in that sense where we don't always understand the overarching purposes of God are being worked out that everything happens according to his purpose even in the crucifixion of our Lord people looking on at that moment might have had this thought that evil has triumphed the saviour's been killed evil has triumphed

[11:09] Christ has been crucified but we see that as Peter puts it of Christ him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God he have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain but of course he goes on to say and explain that this was the work of God and Christ is the prince of life and so this most tragic event of human history the very cross this dread awesome awful graphic sight of a man nailed to a cross tragic in a sense was yet God's greatest glory and we can trust that God is working even in situations of life that we don't understand that God's will is being worked out just as our Lord trusted in the garden of Gethsemane as he prayed Father if thou be willing remove this cup from me nevertheless not my will but thine be done so the example of our Lord here that he submitted to the Father's will likewise we must surrender our lives to the will of God the will of our Father to surrender our lives to his greater plan even when we don't fully understand it we may not always understand why certain things happen but we can trust that God is in control his sovereign will is being accomplished even in difficult circumstances we can rest in that we can trust in him that he's working all things together for good sometimes life has tough things it's hard to understand what's God's plan in that during those times let's trust and hold on to God's promises that he's still working good he's working good even when it doesn't seem like it or feel like it as that familiar scripture tells us

Romans 8 28 and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose so even if it means pain or loss God is still guiding there's that overarching that overarching sense of God's overarching will is being done his sovereign will another aspect of God's will is the moral will of God God's moral will so we could define God's moral will as what he has revealed in the scriptures about how we are to live as one example 1

Thessalonians 4 3 for this is the will of God even your sanctification in other words your holiness that you should abstain from fornication immorality that you should have holiness as your practice of life and the moral will of God is talking about really what does the Bible tell us how we are to live and some things are very plainly revealed in the word of God about how we are to live of course his commandments his principles the teachings of the word how are we to live a holy and righteous life really there's no argument it's in the word of God it's in black and white and red the word of God it's his word and the word shows us his will the moral will of God in other words how we are to live there's really no argy bargy about that it is written and so really the ultimate source for us finding the moral will of God what's God's will for how I am to live it's in the word of God the word of God shows us the will of God it is written some things are plainly

God's will it's very clear in the scriptures he's revealed it to us even so yet it's true that we can be inclined I know for myself to pick and choose what we do and we say oh okay I'll overlook that scripture but I'll hang on to that one we disobey what the word of God says in other words we ignore God's will don't we we disobey God's will by disobeying God's word or we find some excuse not to do it it's like I was encouraged today for example how someone chose to get baptised and people might have been here and heard her testimony and she wrote it down for me because the original plan was that I read it for her and here's some quotes from what she said this woman who was

baptised this morning she says when I realised that you did not have to be baptised to be saved I was relieved as I did not want to be baptised that is and I reasoned that if God had not made it a prerequisite for salvation then it couldn't really be that important however recently I've been looking deeper and I've come also to see that it doesn't matter what I personally feel about it baptism because what I've found is God says to do it and that's pretty much the end of that which doesn't really give me a whole lot of wriggle room if I want to obey God so she got convicted that she ought to be baptised why?

because the word of God says to be baptised really there's no wriggle room there so if we're a believer and we've yet to be baptised really it's the will of God that you've been baptised so get baptised the point is the Bible says be baptised another thing that it says is to be witnesses unto me and this same woman said this as she was a bit convicted about going witnessing quote I have lately been realising how much time I have wasted not telling people about Jesus and hiding my light as it were I feel like I need to start sharing this news but I don't really know where to start so she decided to come out witnessing on Saturday morning with the witnessing team again she simply read the Bible says that we ought to be witnesses unto him we're meant to go and be a witness if we've got opportunity to come witnessing now whether it be the witnessing team Saturday or whether it be taking leaflets and handing them out your own personal witness one thing's clear the will of God is that we ought to be witnesses unto him isn't it and to simply obey that truth that scriptural truth the word of God says to be a witness so go witnessing some things are plainly in the word of God that's really it's the moral will of God it's the will of God that's revealed in the scriptures and so we ought to heed what the word of God says the will of God is revealed in the written word of God so for example we could think well what is the will of God for me love God with all your heart soul mind and strength that's what it says in the book seek first the kingdom of God his righteousness we're called to walk by faith to walk in the spirit we're called to pray to endure hardship as a good soldier to set our affection on things above these are all things that are the will of God to be content with what we have these are all plainly revealed as the will of God because it's in the word of God to study the word of God to be sober to be vigilant it's the will of God for you to grieve not the Holy Spirit to guard your heart to test everything and hold fast that which is good to put on the whole armour of God this is the will of God for you people today if you're wanting to seek and find the will of God then open the pages of the word of God and heed its messages to abstain from every form of evil to run well the race of your life to not forsake the gathering together with other believers it's the will of God that we fellowship these truths are clearly and plainly declared it is the will of God for our lives we should follow the word of God as our guide for life if we're looking for the will of God to find it to do it then open your Bible and read it of course there's need to discern whether it's written to us or more written for our learning whether it's old covenant new covenant whether it's for

[19:19] Israel whether it's for the church of course there's some scriptures we can misapply so we've got to take it in the context of God's word to the church to the church age and to handle life's problems and challenges we go to the word don't we we go to the word and to know God's will we read what it says how to grow in our relationship with him and so we don't have to wonder what God's will for us is without any sort we've got the guidebook for God's will essentially his will written down in his word to love our neighbour as ourself to be honest to live pure lives to seek to please our God that's the will of God for us it's very clear there's no wriggle room like the woman said in the quote there's no wriggle room if it's in the word then do it don't try to argue or disobey or find some excuse not to do it and knowing

God's will will help us to grow we'll want to spend time in his word to find it more to gain understanding and the problem is really in terms of this the moral will of God the problem is really that we get too cheesy about what we obey I don't have to be baptised so I'm not going to bother people put it off for years and years I know that as a young Christian I did that that I didn't rush to get baptised but then came to that realisation well God says it not better do it and it's the same with anything isn't it are we going to obey the whole counsel of God the word of God understanding what truths are applicable what commands and scriptures are for the church it's for you so heed it and get a hold of it and treasure it the word of God not to pick and choose which bits am I going to obey

there's really no debate no picking and choosing if it's addressed to the church then it's for you and for me isn't it it's the will of God for every believer so we've seen the sovereign will the overarching will

God's plan is really marked out what will happen and ultimately glory that his coming and then glory it's the overarching plan is there the sovereign will then the moral will it's what his word reveals to us there's plain teachings and we can't pick and choose we just got to obey it not be disobedient and thirdly there's more the aspect of the personal will of God the personal will of God so God's dealings with you as an individual person God's personal will it reveals really the specific plan that God has for each one of us as individual people and we can come in faith to find that his specific leading it tells us for example this familiar one I know someone recited it Wednesday night Proverbs 3 5-6 trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths his moral will applies to all the general scriptures the teachings of the scriptures and then there's a personal will that's unique to you it's like your fingerprint

God's got something just for you and your life for example in the calling of Paul God had a specific plan for Paul a unique plan a specific work that he called him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles we see that in Acts 9 as the Lord addresses Paul and he says of Paul here's a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake so this was the personal will of God for Paul it was unique to him and it's the same for everyone here tonight God's got something just for you to a path that he wants you to take that's marked out for you as you face life decisions he will guide you personally guide you and it's revealed his personal will is revealed through different ways so we're just going to touch on some ways so how can

I find out what it is then what is God's will for me as a person his personal will how can I seek that and know that for my life for my individual life how can I discern it so here's some specific ways you could number different things but this is one list of different ways that you can seek God for his personal leading for you and really an excellent thing to do is to be praying about it praying God tells us to pray about everything and that his peace is going to guide us in life's choices Philippians 4 verse 6 through 7 Paul says be careful in other words don't be full of care for anything don't worry he's saying don't be anxious be careful full of care for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God and the peace of [25:04] God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus so it's saying that as someone has kind of paraphrased it don't worry about anything but pray about everything and that's asking like prayer supplication you ask God to supply Lord supply my need it's asking God to supply it's by praying it's by asking it's by thanksgiving to ask God what you need and so we need prayer secondly godly counsel it's important to seek wise counsel from other believers we see Proverbs 11 14 where no counsel is the people fall but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety so a good thing for you believer is to get around other believers maybe more mature believers maybe people have been walking with the Lord longer than you and listen to what they have to say find some godly believers who've got some wisdom and listen to them be willing to receive counsel even correction to help you make wise choices so godly counsel thirdly circumstances too can help us to know

God's will for example God uses life events he opens doors and he closes doors to guide us he can open a door in the sense that an opportunity comes and we can step into it or he might close it or it seems like some action some pathway is closed off for you and it's showing you really how he's opening things or closing things as an example of this Paul and his companions were divinely directed on their missionary journey it tells how they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word there in Acts 16 verse 6 and then it says they tried to go into Bithynia but the Holy Spirit suffered them not so that again there was a stopping of them going to that place and then it tells how Paul had this vision of a man of Macedonia who was saying come over into Macedonia and help us and it says after Paul had seen the vision immediately we endeavoured to go into

Macedonia assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them now of course we need to be careful about dreams and visions and such things some people go right off track seeking some miraculous sign or vision we know that today the word of God is our sure counsel we don't necessarily go into such peculiar things as signs and visions and dreams and such not to discount that that may be some that may be some of that but we need to have the more sure word of prophecy and test everything by the scriptures God won't act in discord with the scriptures and of course the greatest leading that we can have is by the word of God it's the word of God that will be enlightened and illuminated and will be quickened to us that the word of God is the source of direction but there is this sense where God will close doors and he'll open doors so they were prevented from entering Asia to preach there was clear signs that God was redirecting their path and then there was this open door that

God's will was revealed for them where to go and preach and it can be the same for our circumstances the circumstances of life can be a guide for God's will and then lastly the fourth one is that we can have an inner conviction about what God is leading us to do where he's leading us the Holy Spirit will speak to our hearts often confirming God's direction we see as the Lord says of the Holy Spirit John 16 13 how be it when he the Spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth for he shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak and he will show you things to come so you hear the Spirit of truth he's going to guide you we can get that sense of the Spirit of God leading us and prompting us and the Word of God jumping out at us and that sense of God moving on us and giving us that that leading that sensation and we see for one example with Gideon he used a fleece of course we don't necessarily use or regularly or rely on such a thing as that but he saw confirmation from God that was

Judges 6 36 through 40 that Gideon used this way of kind of just seeking a confirmation from God as to what God's will was for his life so part of God's will is that he allows humans to have free will the ability to make choices as we say God's overarching will he's ultimately watching and in control but he allows each one of us to have the free will the ability to make choices even to make mistakes of course God doesn't force us to follow him it's like the call to Christ he says come unto me it's an invitation he doesn't come pulling us and dragging us as it were kicking and screaming but he says come unto me his arms are wide open and so we can have that invitation that free will the ability to trust him to follow him to know his guidance how is God leading you is it to make godly decisions prayerfully let's have that heart that we will understand that we're seeing again somewhat of an invitation here in

[30:56] Deuteronomy 30 verse 19 where the Lord says I've set before you life and death blessing and cursing therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live there's this sense where we choose life we choose the pathway of life and God gives us the freedom of course to be saved or to reject door knocking and really someone says not interested I almost feel like retorting with so you're rejecting Christ then because that's ultimately what they're doing isn't they're saying I don't want Jesus they're rejecting the saviour they're rejecting salvation all you say is I receive Christ it's one or the other isn't it you're either in one camp or the other that's what one of the comments were when we were witnessing yesterday in the sense that it's chalk and cheese isn't it they're somewhat receptive and they're willing to at least hear it and heed it and maybe consider it or they're just outright refusing it oh go away slam the door cursing and swearing it's a choice isn't it either you receive

Christ or you reject him and that's free will everyone has the choice so friends today it's important that we seek God and not act rationally as well as believers we can act rationally we can rush into doing things we can do things hit and miss we can make decisions that were foolish decisions well then again we can see an open door and let's not hold back if God opens a door jump into it God helping you and leading you prayerfully so that you'll take the opportunities the opportunities for you to serve to minister to do something for God don't miss that too because you might think wow that was an open door and I missed it that open door I missed it I think that would be worse than actually maybe acting a little bit like Peter was jumping in in the Bible wasn't he intended to jump into things maybe it's better to jump in than to hold back and just never take any risk never take any step of

faith and just do nothing friends the good thing about

God's will is that we can ask for it and here's a wonderful scripture James 1 5 if any of you lack wisdom if any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally he just pours it out wisdom and he upbraideth not he doesn't hold back he doesn't refuse you asking for it he wants you to ask him for it and it says and he shall be given wisdom think of that if we and don't we all need wisdom maybe we're not asking for it enough that's why we don't have it talking about myself that sense where well maybe I'd be a lot wiser if I asked if I asked for wisdom a bit more amen isn't that true and as we walk in obedience to his will his personal will will be made clearer over time he'll give us peace about our decisions that we make too so I think yeah that was a right decision I had peace about it with God and it wasn't a silly decision and yet there's times too where

God's timing is such that we should wait on the Lord too God's timing is perfect sometimes we can rush when actually in marriage decisions the Bible says don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers so you shouldn't even be contemplating marrying someone who is not a believer if you're a believer because the Bible is very clear about that it's very plain about that now if that's happened to you and you have married well you have to make the best of it now because you have married you've got that covenant but it's that truth where God's timing is perfect isn't it don't just jump into something without actually thinking well actually I should make a prayerful decision and I should make a decision that's in accord with the scriptures so as a single person contemplating marriage I'm going to marry another believer because the Bible is very clear about that living in God's will means that all of our daily decisions our choices will accord with the scriptures will live out his truth will follow the plain teaching of the word we won't pick and choose and say well

I don't like that bit so I'm not going to do that if God says to do it then do it it's like the situation with this one who was contemplating baptism well God says be baptized so I better be baptized for example that's just one example isn't it God says go witnessing go witnessing whether it's joining the witnessing team or other ways that you can witness and one thing's for sure you should be witnessing your faith you should be an ambassador for Christ there's things that are plain study the scriptures go to the word walk in the spirit love one another the scriptures that are very plain it's the will of God and one that really captures so much is Micah 6 verse 8 he has showed thee a man what is good and what did the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God this is very plainly the will of God isn't it it's very plainly God's will and I know I touched on it this morning in what this alone is it talks about rejoice evermore it talks about pray without ceasing it talks about in everything give thanks for this is the will of

[36:33] God these are things that the word of God is very plain about and so they're the kind of scriptures we should take hold of and say well that's very plainly what I should do it's the! the clear command of God so I should obey it not pick and choose what I do or don't do to rather strive to walk in God's way as as the scripture here says to walk humbly with my God to live practically that Christian life that he wants me to live to focus my mind on that which is eternal to set my affection on things above to focus on what truly matters in life to prioritize spiritual goals over temporary worldly concerns of course we've got practicalities of life to pay the bills and make a living but rather that we've got that eternal perspective that overarching wanting to please him to develop a world view that's a biblical world view such that we might be caught up in the way the world lives and just chases after the almighty dollar and it's all about the material world but rather to think about the spiritual things what matters spiritually in all of our decision making in all of our relationships can we live consistently our faith in all areas of our life as we renew our mind and as we reject the patterns of this world as we are not conformed to this world this world's pattern of thinking but be transformed by the renewing of our mind that we'll rather have a mindset that the will of

God matters the will of God matters to my mind the will of God matters when all of my decision making that will renew our mind and will rather want to discern what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God that should be the overarching concern that should concern us more than all of the petty things of this life as much as we still got practical needs to fulfill!

that good and acceptable and perfect will of God of course in closing I urge you today to think about what matters really the very most is are you saved?

God is not willing that any should perish we know that it's God's ultimate will that we would come to see our need of Christ that we come to the Saviour and know his saving love to know Jesus died for me and he is my Saviour by faith I trust him that he paid for my sin I pray that your hearts trust tonight let us pray we thank you that you died on the cross for our sin you rose again you are coming again and you live in heaven but you live in a heart that saved you dwell in hearts by faith Lord that you can come and even dwell within a human vessel such as we that have put our trust in you Lord help us to discern to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will your will for our life Lord we know the overarching sense of ultimately you're in control of time and space and the future your foreknowledge your plan is still being worked out according to your purpose and we're just a little cog in that wheel as it were

Lord help us to also be conscious of what your written word tells us is your will that we do it that we not be disobedient to your word Lord where your word tells us to do something we'll do it and we'll do it from the heart and Lord help us also to know your personal will for each one of our lives what you'd have each one of us to do how you'd have us to serve how you'd have us to live Lord the relationships the decisions of life help us to be prayerful about it help us to get counsel help others from others help us Lord that we'll see the open doors and the closed doors and we'll have that sensitivity so what would please you Lord guide us in the steps of life that will live lives that will honour you and most of all that will live according to your will forgive!

[41:06] us Lord when we fail and we don't fulfill your will we fall short! Lord help us to get back on track where that's true for us and give us the grace to get back where we need to be Lord we praise you in Jesus precious name Amen