

# Tough Topics—The Will of God

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 October 2025

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     This morning, continue our Tough Topics series. Started with the conscience last week. This one kind of falls right in line. How do I discern the will of God?

Martin Luther was once approached by a man who had recently become a Christian. Desiring to serve the Lord, the man asked Luther, What should I do now? What should I do now that I'm a Christian?

And Luther said, What is your work now? And the man said, I'm a shoemaker. And Luther said, Then make a good shoe and sell it at a fair price. Kind of a helpful thing, you know, but the question I think is so common to any believer, What should I do now?

How should I live? Where should I work? What should I do with my life? You know, while the Bible answers so many of our questions, the questions that often plague us, it does not answer.

Where should you go to college? Or should you go to college at all? Whom should you marry? Which church should you join? What job should you take? What city or town should you live in?

[ 1 : 0 5 ]     What home should you buy? Or what home should you rent? What car should you buy? Should you move to a different place? How should you invest your money? How should you invest the rest of your life when you're retired?

So many of these questions are the questions the Bible does not answer. How do we find our way? How do we find those answers? How do we find the will of God?

In his book on the will of God, Chuck Swindoll, whose name probably a number of you know, he talked about people finding the will of God. He said, a man was driving through Washington, D.C.

when his car stalled in front of the embassy to the Philippines. He took it as a sign that he should be a missionary to the Philippines. Is that the way we find the will of God?

A woman's not sure whether she should go on a tour of Israel. The brochure advertising the tour said they would fly a Boeing 747. When she awoke the next morning, she looked at her clock and it said 747.

[ 2 : 1 0 ]     It must be the Lord. The Lord is directing her life. It's a sign. Is that how we're to find the will of God? Are we to look for signs? Are we to read our dreams?

Watch for visions? Lay out fleeces? Look for open doors? Are we to follow the impressions of our hearts and the shivers of our liver?

Or is there another way? This morning, we're going to try to unpack this very difficult subject and seek to understand what is the will of God? How do we find the will of God?

How do we discern it? So we could easily teach four classes or more on this subject. But we're going to take it today in one. So first, what is the will of God?

So first, Roman numeral, what is the will of God? Roman numeral one. You know, the Bible uses the will of God or a similar concept in several different ways. First, it uses it as God's sovereign will, which I've defined there for you.

[ 3 : 08 ] The will of God is used to refer to God's sovereign decree of all that happens in all creation among all creatures. His decree, not merely his oversight, oversight, but him declaring what will happen throughout the whole universe at all times and all places among all creatures.

We see that in Ephesians 1. In him, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

Words that emphasize God's careful planning and sovereign work pile up in that verse. You see them right there before you. He's predestined certain things according to the purpose, who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

So all of these things speak to God's sovereign rule and decree that the work that he does in bringing things forward. But you can notice it also.

Look at the difference between counsel. It speaks to considering the options, weighing the opportunities. You know, we get counsel before we make a decision on something. And so God orders things according to the counsel of his will.

[ 4 : 25 ] That doesn't mean he goes to a counselor. He needs no strength. He makes the decisions within the Godhead. He works. He brings about the best course of action and he wills.

He determines what is the best course of action. Then he works it out. We're meant to see that even in that verse, God works everything according to his wisdom, will, and power.

Kevin DeYoung, in his book on the will of God, says, what God wills will happen and what happens is according to his will. So there's this idea that God's sovereign will is what governs the whole universe.

We see that in Daniel 4.35. One of my favorite verses, a great one to commit to memory. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. And he does according to his will.

Now, do you remember this with Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar, this king? He says, well, the Lord does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

[ 5 : 29 ] And none can stay his hand or say to him, what have you done? That means he answers to no one. He works all things according to the counsel of his will.

Isaiah 46. I am the Lord and there is no other. I'm God. There's none besides me. This is another great verse to commit to memory. So God's sovereign decree orders all that happens in all creation among all creatures.

But God doesn't just handle things from far off. God micromanages. God's into the details. You know, we think about micromanaging in a very derisive way, like a critical way.

But God's into the details. He says that he numbers the hairs on our head and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father in heaven. He's written down all of our days.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them. He orders our plans. I love James 4, which we'll return to later.

[ 6 : 43 ] He says, Come now, you who say today or tomorrow will go into such and such town and do spend a year there and trade and make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow brings. The assumption is God does.

What is your life? You're a miss that appears for a little time and vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will do this or that. So the Lord will.

He sets the plans in motion. And He decides. We see that in our desires. We see that in our calling. Sovereign grace statement of faith says it like this.

From all eternity, God sovereignly ordained all that exists and all that occurs in His creation in order to display the fullness of His glory. God's plans are efficacious.

That means effectual. Always coming to pass. And they are universal, encompassing all the affairs of nature, history, and individual lives.

[ 7 : 43 ] These decrees are an exercise of His free, unchangeable, wise, and holy will. So, you know, we often use the word God's sovereignty.

That's just a way of referring to God being the King over all. He is the sovereign. And as the King, He's not just kind of ruling over the external physical affairs of His people, but He is the King whose heart, the King, is a stream of many waters in His hand.

And so He's ordering all things. Now, there's another word that we often use. It's really what I'm defining here is the word providence. So I think they're very similar, but oftentimes theologians use providence to talk about how God works all things for the good of His people.

So God orders all things. That's His sovereign rule. But providence speaks to Him working all things for the good of His people. So wonderfully, that alerts us that God does micromanage all things, and God micromanages all things for our good, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Now, oftentimes we see God's sovereignty when we look in reverse. You know, life, someone, as Soren Kierkegaard said, life can only be understood backwards, but it must be looked forwards.

[ 9 : 08 ] John Flavel, great theologian on providence, said, providence is like Hebrew, it's best read backwards. So you've got to read Hebrew from right to left, not left to right.

And so He's saying the same thing in our lives. And so often that's the way it is. You look back and you see God ordering things for His good. So there's this idea that God governs everything.

He works all things. We saw that in Job's life. We've seen that. God is sovereign over all that has happened, even though He is not the one who afflicts Job.

Nevertheless, all things, even the Satan, fall under the sphere of His sovereignty. So that's God's sovereign will. And so part of what makes the will of God complex is that sometimes the will is used to, it's not really clear which will is being referred to at all times.

But oftentimes it's a sovereign will. Secondly, God's revealed will. So the will of God is used to refer to God's good desire and purpose for all creatures through His acts and commands.

[ 10 : 16 ] So some people say it's God's sovereign will or His will of decree. Others say God's revealed will or His will of desire. I like sovereign and revealed because it speaks to the fact that God is a revealing God.

You know, God could have flushed everything down the commode in Genesis 3, but instead He revealed Himself to be a God who's gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

And He showed us over hundreds and hundreds of years His great plan for His people that crystallizes in Jesus Christ. But it's a plan that reveals about His character, about who He is.

And so His revealed will is who He is in His acts and His commands. And so that's what we see in the Scripture. God acts in decisive ways.

And then He speaks to understand the acting. You know, when God delivered the people from Egypt, then He spoke. He gave them. You know, Exodus 1-19 is pretty much the people in Egypt.

[ 11 : 23 ] God delivers them. The rest of the book is the law of the Lord, which is perfect and revives the soul. And so the revealed will of God is so vital. You know, so there's this idea that we already...

We kind of know this intuitively. It's that God's sovereign will always comes to pass, right? But God's will, revealed will, does not always come to pass. You know, it's not because God's arm is too short, but God's revealing something about Himself.

We know this from the Lord's Prayer. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now, what's that mean? Like, if you thought the sovereign will of God, it is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Psalms 119, all things are your servants. And yet the revealed will we know is not done on earth as it is in heaven.

So we're longing for a place where all people love God freely from the heart and obey God, obey His revealed will. So we pray like Psalm 143.10, teach me to do your will for you are my God.

[ 12 : 32 ] So we, you know, part of the, a major part of understanding, finding the will of God is, is discovering what God has revealed about Himself. What the revealed will of God is.

And so I broke this out. I put a footnote down there for this, this series from John MacArthur, which I got some of the structure from. This great series you should consider listening to. First and foremost, God's will is for you to be saved.

Be saved. You know, all things are pointing forward to Jesus Christ. Jesus told the guys on the road to Emmaus, everything that was written in the law and the prophets was written about me.

And so when Jesus came, He said, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom is at hand. Repent and believe the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so it is the will of God for you to be saved. You know, 1 Timothy 2 says, God desires all people to come to a knowledge of the truth and to repentance.

So God's revealed desire for all people is to repent and believe the gospel. Now is the day. Today is the day of salvation. The scripture would say. So the first thing you need to do in trying to discover the will of God is to be saved, to turn in repentance to Jesus Christ.

[ 13 : 45 ] God's will is for you to be filled with the spirit. I love the way Ephesians 5 says it. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Now think about that. So often we think the will of the Lord is some out there subject, some riddle that we have to be saw.

He said, don't be foolish. You understand it. What's that mean? He's revealed it. He's not playing hide and seek with you. He's revealed the will of God.

This is it. Don't get drunk with wines, but that's debauchery, but be filled with the spirit. The idea is in the flesh all die. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8.

So you are to live in the spirit. You are to to to worship God and serve God.

I just thought of Philippians 3, which I love. He's talking about kind of condemning all these people. That doesn't say exactly what I thought it did, but but this idea that we are the true circumcision filled with the spirit of God.

[ 14 : 56 ] Yeah, there it is. Philippians 3. We are the circumcision who worship by the spirit of God and glory in Jesus Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

The idea is whether you're charismatic or not. You need to be filled with the spirit. What's that mean? You need to be your life needs to be brought under the sway of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5 and 6 says, Sow the spirit.

Keep in step with the spirit. Bear the fruit of the spirit. Do not grieve the spirit. The idea is the Christian life is a spiritual life. So don't be foolish. Understand the will of God to be spirit filled.

Walk with the Lord. So God's revealed will is for you to keep his commandments. I love we see this again and again. We talk about the will of God. Mark 3. I remember preaching this several years ago in our church.

Jesus comes to town and he starts. He gets caught up in ministry and his mother and brothers aren't happy about it. And they come seeking him. The word used there is to overtake him.

[ 16 : 01 ] Kind of like, you know, he's roamed too far from the old home place. We need to bring him back home and smack some sense into him. And, you know, they say, Jesus, your mother and your brothers are outside.

You need to go attend to him. You need to go with them. And he says, who is my mother and brother and sister? He says, whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

So we see it again and again. The revealed will of God is to keep his commandments. To fear God, keep his commandments. Ecclesiastes 12 and so many other places.

Doing the will of God from the heart is many ways primarily obeying the commands of God. The revealed will of God for our lives. We see it in the Ten Commandments.

It's the moral law of God. It's the way to walk upright. You know, we see it in Hebrews when it says, you write your law on my heart. What is that? But the commandments of God.

[ 17 : 03 ] Have no other gods before me. To honor your father and mother. To not murder, not steal, to not covet. All these things. So keeping his commands is the will of God for you.

God's will for you is to be sanctified. So you see all these things in here. 1 Thessalonians 4. So more than just keeping his commands, but to be sanctified.

For this is the will of God. Your sanctification. That you abstain from sexual immorality. That each of you know how to control his body in holiness and honor. Not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.

So what is, what's God doing? God's making a people for himself. Who are set apart. Who are sanctified unto him. We see that in other places as well.

God's will for you. A little bit unpopular maybe. Is to submit to earthly authorities. Look at 1 Peter 2. This is the will of God.

[ 18 : 03 ] Be subject for God, the Lord's sake, to every human institution. He was talking about Nero. Be subject. As long as they don't lead you to sin.

You need to be subject to the. God's will for you is to suffer. So sometimes we think that suffering is a deviation in the plan. And yet, 1 Peter 4 says it provocatively.

Don't be surprised. Many things to be surprised about in the fallen world. But don't be surprised when the righteous suffer. Don't be surprised. It's the will of God.

Why? Because a servant's not going to be greater than the master. The master suffered. The servants are going to suffer too. Let those who suffer.

Look at that last clause down there. Let those who suffer according to God's will. What? Isn't it all bad? You know, suffering's all bad. According to God's will.

[ 19 : 02 ] And trust their souls to God. God's will for you is to be thankful in everything. Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Give thanks in everything.

So those kind of capture or sum up in a lot of ways the revealed will of God. So in many ways, the will of God for our personal lives can be found in attending to the will of God. So we've talked about the sovereign will, the revealed will.

What about the subjective will for us? This is the way we often use this. The will of God is often used by believers to refer to God's specific desire and plan for our lives.

This will that we must discover. Kind of like, is it Loki? That you can deviate from the plan and they go and rescue you back to the plan.

Nobody knows what I'm talking about. Isn't that show, Loki? Yes. You know, like a deviation. Is that the way our lives are? Is there a plan?

[ 19 : 59 ] You know, were we cast in a mold that we could deviate from it? Oh my goodness, and be rescued back. Well, it's true that providence teaches us that God micromanages our life.

It's not helpful, in my estimation, to think of God's will as a secret plan we must find out. As a riddle we must solve. This belief is where most of our thinking about the will of God goes astray.

Whom should you marry? What job should you take? Where should you live? We're paralyzed, not merely with a decision, but with the potential of a wrong decision. We all got FOMO.

You know, fear of missing out. Or fear of better options. Sometimes I can't settle on anything. Can't settle on a lady or a job or anything because fear of better options.

Well, God does have a specific plan for your life. It's going to be ordered according to the counsel of His will. But He doesn't want you to try to find it before making a decision. Thinking in this way is looking for the will of God in some subjective way rather than the way He's revealed.

[ 21 : 07 ] In many ways, it's just a modern divination where, you know, we condemn divination, condemn casting lots. What does God want you to do?

God wants you to walk in conformity to His law and make decisions that make sense in many ways. I think a very helpful verse on the will of God is Romans 12, too, that's getting at this.

He says, Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So, that by testing, you may discern. So, the idea is not that you unravel the riddle, so to speak, and only marry the girl if it's written in the clouds one day when you're looking out there or something like that.

Rather, that by testing and discern, you may see what the will of the Lord is. So, how do you discern the will of God? Romans 12, how do you discern it?

[ 22 : 06 ] I think I'm going to probably move a little bit quicker through this. Maybe I've been going quick. But, how do you discern it? So, I'm trying to lay down some planks when you think about how to discern the will of God.

What do you need to do? First is, read your Bible. You know, our default setting is to follow our own hearts, but this is never encouraged in Scripture. I'm reading Jeremiah right now.

He just condemned. You followed your own heart. You followed your own heart. Or, my oh my, if Cracker Barrel and some of these Christian bookstores found out about Jeremiah, they might pull some of those things, you know.

Rather, we're meant to follow the words of Scripture. Man does not live by bread of loan, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. 2 Timothy 2 says, The idea is the Word of God is to equip you.

All things. God's given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. So, the first thing we need to do in learning the will of God is to read, meditate, and memorize the Word of God.

[ 23 : 24 ] You know, Psalm 1, when it talks about the man who prospers in everything, it's because he meditates on the law of the Lord day and night. And all he does, he prospers. He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season.

So, what sets him apart? You know? Well, at the beginning of the psalm, it says, Blessed not as a man who walks in the counsel of wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

What does he do? He doesn't settle down in the ways of the culture. His mind is filled with the Word of God. There's a distinction. How does man keep his way pure?

By storing it up in his heart. Storing the Word of God in his heart. So, Scripture encourages us to live by God's precept, not by prying into His hidden will.

The idea is that God doesn't want you to be looking for a hidden will to overtake what He's already revealed. Like He said so much. Let that be the guide. So, obey the Word of God.

[ 24 : 26 ] You know, discerning the will of God is often simplified by obeying what He's commanded you to obey. If you're a Christian, it's the will of God for you to grow in grace. If you're married, it's the will of God for you to love your wife.

If you're not married, it's the will of God for you to marry a Christian. If you're a parent, it's the will of God for you to train them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. So, you shouldn't make any decision to compromise your ability to do that.

You know? That's the command of God. If you're single, it's the will of God for you to be pure, to treat ladies as sisters and fellas as brothers. If you're an employee, it's the will of God for you to be a happy, joyful, hardworking employee.

So, if you're just trying to figure out the will of God all day long, but you're a grump at work. I mean, really? You know? It's very clear what you're commanded to do.

If you're a child, it's the will of God for you to honor and respect your parents. If you're a believer, it's the will of God for you to live out your faith committed to a local church. The idea is the Bible has revealed so much.

[ 25 : 32 ] All we have to do is take it up and read as Augustine was converted. He was, I think it was, he overheard some kids singing the song, Take up and read, take up and read.

And he took up the Bible. It spoke to him, revealed that he needs to put on Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. And he was converted out of a very promiscuous, debauched lifestyle to Jesus Christ.

So, the Bible reveals the Word of God, and we have to take it up and read it. And you discover so much. I remember when I first became a Christian, reading the Bible for the first time, you know, with new eyes.

I'd definitely been exposed to the Bible, knew the stories and things like that. But it was just shafts of light all over the place. Man, I was blown away. Just reading life rearranging truth every morning.

The Bible still speaks. It's living and active. You know, the idea is God's plans for your life are not locked in a book back there.

[ 26 : 38 ] God still speaks to this book. I love the way sometimes in Hebrews, you know, Hebrews kind of introduces the Scriptures in interesting ways. You know, sometimes we fault somebody who doesn't know the chapter and the verse.

But Hebrews sometimes says, well, it says somewhere. It says somewhere, but other times it says, as the Holy Spirit says. Not as it said, but as it says.

So, the Bible still speaks. Point. So, that's kind of, you know, what do I call them? Plank number one. Plank two. Develop a heart for God. Develop a heart for God.

God does not lead us by strong-arming us. He leads us by changing our hearts to want and to freely choose what He wants. You know? So, unlike the way the sovereignty of God is often cast.

God's not this ruler who kind of moves people around unthinkingly as pawns or something like that. No. God reveals and draws us and changes our hearts to want what He wants.

[ 27 : 41 ] And so, God wants us to freely choose to do what is right. And so, it's vital to develop a heart for God. It's so important. And I think when you begin to think about this, to remember that God is more concerned about your heart than anything else.

He's more concerned about your heart than your 401k being as full as you want it to be. He's more concerned about your heart than your prospering in your job.

He's fine with a glass ceiling. You know? He's more concerned with your heart than your child kind of getting everything sorted and acting just the way you want. He's more concerned.

You know? Oftentimes, we live like who God wants us to be has no impact on what He wants us to do. Or other times, we live as if what God wants us to do is more important than who He wants us to be.

But that's not the way Scripture reveals it. Scripture reveals that God is most concerned about our hearts and changing our hearts. So, a large part of discerning the will of God is learning to love what God loves, hate what God hates, prioritize what God prioritizes, sacrifices what God sacrifices for.

[ 28 : 54 ] So, the idea is Scripture is not just about revealing the will of God that you must obey, but revealing like that you would want to obey it. You know, some of the biggest mistakes in parenting is to think that the goal is just for your child to obey the law.

Like, that creates a Pharisee. That's all that does. And you are commanded to call them to obey. You want your child to love the law. That's what David...

He loves the law of the Lord. Anything coming from the mouth of the Lord, that's what he loves. That's what you're after. And that's something you can't perform, but it is what you're after. And so, the same thing is going on in us, J.I. Packer, in his wonderful chapter on the will of God and knowing God.

He says, The true way to honor the Holy Spirit as our guide is to honor the Holy Scriptures through which He guides us. The fundamental guidance which God gives to shape our lives, the instilling, that is, of basic convictions, attitudes, ideals, and value judgment, in terms of which we live, it is not a matter of inward prompting apart from the Word, but a pressure on our conscience of the portrayal of God's character and will in the Word, which the Spirit enlightens to understand and apply to ourselves.

So, the idea, just like Taylor was talking about last week, the conscience is recalibrated by the law of the Lord and by the Spirit's work so that our hearts want what God wants.

[ 30 : 17 ] And so, what that means for us with this second plank is we're trying to develop a heart for God. We're trying to keep our spiritual life first and foremost.

When it comes to the will of God, a final question can be, will this be spiritually profitable for me? You know, as 1 Corinthians 6 says, All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

There may be things. At times, you've got to learn to say no to something you could do, so that you can find what is truly spiritually profitable. I remember years ago, a guy in the church I used to serve was a lawyer, was doing well, very good lawyer, still is a good lawyer, and was working at a place, just working him to death, you know, whatever, 90 hours a week, something like that.



And he got an offer down in Louisiana for a job that would be more like a, you know, fast partnership track. If you know anything about law, that's kind of when you get, you oversee lawyers, and it's a little bit of an easy schedule.

And good pay, wonderful pay, a great, great future. And at the end of the day, like he said, this job that's so hard in the context of the local church is doing so much good work for my heart that I'm going to turn down the easy job because I want my heart to be desperate for God, to be relying on His promises more than I want my wallet filled and life easier.

[ 31 : 57 ] I just think that's so wise. Like, imagine if a major plank in finding the will of God is, where will my heart thrive? Not where will my 401k be filled, or where will my this prosper, or where will that prosper?

Where will my heart thrive the most? You know, so if I make this decision, will it isolate me from other Christians and from the local church? Will it serve my heart? And so, as we read the Bible, I think you can think of meditation and prayer as a way of developing a heart for God.

You know, meditation, you know, it's one thing to just eat food, but it's another thing to enjoy it, like Bill Murray does in What About Bob, you know? And so that's what meditation is.

You're savoring every nutrient in the Word of God. You're trying to make this wonderful truth be a wonderful truth for you. That's all that meditation is.

And prayer is a way of kind of aligning your heart with it. In many ways, prayer is just submitting to God. So God, your revealed will is you are first, and there's no other second.

[ 33 : 04 ] I mean, that's a great place to start in your prayer life. Lord, I'm starting this day. I want you to be first in my life, and you're developing this heart to God, submitting to His ways, asking for His help.

Third plank, seek wise counsel. And I'm going to have to start moving fast here. But God does not lead us by ourselves, but through the counsel of others. Proverbs 15, 22, without counsel, plans fail, but with many advisors, they succeed.

Don't be a spiritual lone ranger. The idea is the will of God so often is revealed through counsel, through help. We think of Rehoboam, who got counsel when he came in to rule, and he just rejected it.

He threw it off, said, I'm going to be worse than all those guys. And he was one of the worst. Manasseh, Rehoboam, Jeroboam. I mean, that's the infamous list. All these people not obeying God, and so seeking counsel is a vital plank.

Fourthly, recognize God's providence. The things that happen in our life do not happen by chance or fate, but by providence, by the plan and purpose of God. 1 Corinthians 7, 17 says, Only let each person lead the light that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.

[ 34 : 19 ] This is my rule in all the churches. What he's saying is review the details of our circumstances as providentially arranged. Sometimes we can think it's the details of our circumstances being things that only limit us.

You know, that's why I'll sometimes say the worst church member is a church member called to be a missionary. Because they're not called to be a church member right now.

You know, and that's the way we can live. We can live like these circumstances are what limit me from the will of God, but God's called me to obey him right here. Even if I want to be a missionary one day.

And so they're providentially arranged. So, you know, finding the will of God for your job might begin with, what is your job? Like, what is it right now?

Finding the will of God for your love, like, well, what is? Who is your wife? Or whatever it is, you know, discerning the will of God is not a matter of jettisoning the circumstances in our life, but the folding out of the circumstances in them.

[ 35 : 23 ] So the idea is it's helping us to understand that our circumstances are providentially arranged. And oftentimes the will of God is also helpfully found when we find that providence limits our circumstances.

You know? And so, just like James 4 says, you say you're going to go into each town and do this or that, you know, but you don't know if the Lord will.

Sometimes some of the most crushing things in this life is that providence limits us. You may be the best salesman in the southeast, you know, or something like that.

But for whatever reason, providence isn't opening the doors you want. Whatever it is, there's comfort in that truth. But you see it, you know, in lesser ways.

You know, I remember going to a mission trip to Korea one time. And you go, you know, you plan, you're like, you just packed full all the days that you're on this mission trip.

[ 36 : 22 ] And then we get there and we get stuck in Detroit. And we're stuck. The flight's delayed over 24 hours. So we arrive.

This eight-day mission trip shrunk to six. We arrive. We start the English camp. It started, actually. When we arrive, you're like, there's no recovery, no adjusting. It was just a giant blur of a week.

And what it, well, that's providence. Sometimes it limits what you can do. And so God does some of these things. And so after those planks of read the Bible, I'm going to find this link to develop a heart for God, seek wise counsel, recognize God's providence.

If you do all those things, then do whatever you want. If you've developed a heart for God, you've sought wise counsel, then do whatever you want. I do think God does lead us by our desires.

So like, you know, God, you know, Augustine said, love God and do what you want. Yeah, I remember when Kim and I, like, you know, there's been a couple big will of God moments.

[ 37 : 29 ] And one was when we got engaged. And I had, I don't know if I'd bought the ring, but I was thinking heavily about, or thinking seriously about it. And I went to, but, you know, it's like, like anything, you know, I had second guesses.

Didn't know if I was ready for marriage. Didn't know if this was the right decision, all that type of stuff. And I went to, like, Barnes & Noble or something like that, or Books A Million or something.

And went into this section on premarital stuff. And I opened this book and it said, if you have any doubts whatsoever, do not get engaged.

And I just, like, threw it away. I was like, that is trash. Well, I know that can't be the will of God. That's not the way we make decisions. And then I went back to what I knew. You know, I went back to the way God had been working our relationship.

The people around us that were testifying to what looked good in our lives. And then, as I started thinking about that, I realized, man, this is what I want, actually.

[ 38 : 28 ] Like, once I get out of that, like, you know, FOMO or whatever, I realized, this is what I want. And so, the idea is, do whatever you want. It's not just kind of, okay, surah, surah.

The idea is, is this decision the best I can envision for the glory of God and the good of others? And am I excited about it? You know, God's not trying to strong arm you.

Am I excited about it? Is this the best? And am I excited about it? So, love God, do what you want. You know, be free.

You don't, you know, you don't have to wait until the clouds move or until you get a word from God. You don't have to wait. You can make massive decisions with those planks in order.

So, all right. Encouragement is in discerning the will of God. So, I'm actually probably going to just read the titles here, which this is probably why you don't come to the class.

[ 39 : 26 ] But, so, I apologize. God's good purposes will not be frustrated by your sin or your failures. I don't know why I wrote sin twice.

But, God's good purposes will not be frustrated by your sin or by your failures. The Bible teaches us that. Jacob fools his father and keeps the will of God.

Moses murders an Egyptian and keeps the will of God. David numbers his people and keeps the will of God. We see all that. God guides through open doors and closed doors. You know?

And so, it's not always best to assume an open door is actually the open door that you should walk through. God usually guides one step at a time. The idea is God doesn't give you the whole deck of cards.

You know? He doesn't give you the full hand. He makes you, you know, if you're playing poker, you may have something decent in your hand. But you don't know what you can lay if the game keeps going. Well, that's the way God guides.

[ 40 : 28 ] God only reveals things one step at a time. God's guidance often includes waiting. So, something about the will of God must include the story of Abraham and Sarah.

Who waited and waited and waited and waited. So, the Bible says, wait for the Lord. Be strong. Take courage. Why? Because finding the will of God often includes waiting.

So, He guides us one step at a time. And as He guides us, we need to wait. So, we wait until things are clear. God sometimes guides us to do what we like and will later change our hearts to like it.

God guides us to do what is right and will later change our hearts to like it. Why is the story of Jonah in the Bible? Surely not that that's the way we find the will of God. By resisting what God commands.

But He's basically laying out. God's call to preach the good news to all people is something you should want. But it is a story though of how God can change our hearts.

[ 41 : 33 ] Even though Jonah refuses to change His. It's a very sad book. Discerning the will of God is more of a matter of judgment than of spiritual fleeing.

You know? So, sometimes there can be this testing of fleeing. You know? We take the story of Gideon out of context and turn it into this whole way of finding the will of God. But knowing the will of God is a matter of judgment.

So, it can be very wise to just lay things out. So, if you're trying to determine what's the best good I can do with my limited life on earth. Then it might. It is very helpful to lay out a chart.

What are the pluses and minuses of this or that? It's a wonderful way to do it. You know? If you're trying to marry a girl and you lay out the pluses and minuses. Write it out. But don't let her see it. You know?

You don't want her to see one side of it. But the point is, you should think. You know? Like, many times, that's the way we work. It's a matter of judgment. You're trying to discern the will of God.

[ 42 : 28 ] Not unwrap or discover. But to discern it. The idea is God's working with you and in you to help you walk in ways that fear Him. God sometimes gives internal nudges and assurances towards the right way.

But not always. God's guide often includes risk.

You know? There is no actual thing called risk. Risk is only a human thing. There's nothing in the way the world is governed that's suddenly thrown into an unknown possibility.

It's human because we don't know the future. But what we see for the cause of Christ is risk is vital. Don't be surprised if you find making a decision difficult.

You know? I think the world has drastically changed here. You know? Years ago, you married the girl that you married because there were three options in the high school. And you thought she was cute. You know? But now, you just hop on social media.

[ 43 : 38 ] And you're just stout. And let alone, like, dating apps. You know? You're introduced to all these people. That's where the fear of better options comes up. You know? So many choices for our time.

For our cereals. For everything. So don't be surprised. Ten pieces found in the providence of God working in and through and over your decisions.

I love Ephesians 2.10. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. So you should work hard.

You should think like this. One person says you should work like an Arminian and sleep like the Calvinists. You know? Whether you want to take any of those titles. The idea is you need to work. You need to discern.

You need to think about this. You need to think critically. And then you need to go to bed and rest in the sovereign will of God. Rest in His plan for your life. You know? Who are you? You're just a mist. You're here a moment.

[ 44 : 33 ] You're gone the next. And yet, God is sovereign. God's determined your days. God's given you a few things to do with a few people to do it with in a few places for His glory.

And so just find something and do it. Or as Kevin Young says, just do something. You know? That's his book on the will of God. So a couple of recommended resources I put down there. Just Do Something by Kevin Young is a fabulous little book.

About 90 pages. Something like that. It reads like a magazine you'd like. It's very helpful. Thou Our Guide, a chapter from Knowing God. If you don't have Knowing God in your library, that could be a sin.

So we need to talk about that. But it's a very important book. And that chapter is just fabulous. It's kind of, J.F. Packard is best. Summing up so much within one chapter.

God's Will in Making Decisions. That's available free online. That's a helpful kind of grid by this guy Andy Nasselli. He wrote a book on Conscience that Taylor talked about last week. Modern God.

[ 45 : 40 ] Discovering God's Will would be a good representation from some Reformed thinkers on the will of God. So that's by Sinclair Ferguson.

Messages. John MacArthur this week. I was happy to be prepping for this. And, you know, they released his messages on Grace to You app. You know, if you get that. They released a series.

And I think in four or five messages, they've, you know, broken it up. On the will of God. So the title of the series, If God's Will is So Important, Why Can't I Find It? And it's very helpful.

I mean, it's John MacArthur. So he goes straight at your throat. But very helpful. Good book. So I hope you find the will of God. And I hope you don't waste your life looking for it.

Or waiting on it to surprise you. Because God has spoken. He's revealed. Lord, thank you that you have spoken. You revealed your plan to us. You have opened our eyes. There's so much about you that we know.

[ 46 : 36 ] Lord, help us to keep the main things. Or the plain things, the main things. Help us devote our lives to these things. And make the reasonable decisions that flow from it. I pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen.