

DAILY DEVOTIONS

WHY?

GOD, SUFFERING & HOPE

WEEK 3:

God's will for your life.



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MONDAY – What does the Bible tell us about the will of God?



Genesis 1: 28 (NIV) *God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

Psalm 139: 13-14 *For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful.*

1 John 1:3 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.*

We are still exploring the topic “WHY? God, Suffering and Hope”. This week, in the context of this broader theme, we are looking at God’s will for our lives. This is obviously a deeply personal issue, so we will be exploring this in the first person, saying “God’s will for my life”.

We see from the scriptures quoted above that God made mankind in the image of God, that man is fearfully and wonderfully made, and that God gave man stewardship over the earth and all life on it. We also see in 1 John 1:3

that God is a relational God and wants to be in relationship with us.

Reflection: The above scriptures start to give us some idea of the will of God. But how are we to really get to what it is that God wants you and me to do for the glory of His Kingdom? When I first pondered this question years ago I felt like a first-year student who is overwhelmed by the enormity of what he has to master and wondering “Where am I going to get the resources to do the right thing?” Is or was this your feeling too?



Prayer: Heavenly Father, as I surrender my will to Your will please fill me anew with the Holy Spirit to guide and reveal to me Your perfect will for my life. In Jesus’ name. AMEN

TUESDAY – What is the will of God for my life?



Psalm 115: 3 *Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him.*

1 John 2: 17 *The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

Mark 12: 29-31 *“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”*

We see that God does all things according to His will (see for example Psalm 115: 3). We can call this God’s sovereign will. On the other hand, keeping in mind that God created man in His own image, there are some things that happen that are obviously not the will of God. The manner in which John in 1 John 2: 17 describes this, makes it clear that not all people abide by the will of God. This is a different type of will from the sovereign will above, we can call this the moral will of God.

In other words, the Bible makes a distinction between God’s will, understood as His purpose that is never frustrated in any event; and God’s will, understood as His

moral command to us to act and live in a certain way. The clearest example of the challenges posed by these two sides to the will of God lies in the fact that the Ten Commandments clearly forbid murder, yet God allowed Jesus to be killed on the Cross; in order to give us eternal life.

Reflection: By studying the Word of God, it is clear that we have to live such a life that just by our actions, others can see the image of God in us (see Mark 12: 29-31 above). Frequently, in our quiet time, when reflecting on this reality, I have to confess to Abba Father that I sometimes battle with this. Have you had such a conversation with God yet?



Prayer: Dear Father God, I trust You to guide me to always abide in Your love and to share that love with all around me. In the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN

WEDNESDAY – Practical steps for discerning and confirming the will of God for my life?



Romans 12: 2 *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

When I was still in secondary school, all students were tested with a now outdated IQ test that was in use 60 years ago, to assist school leavers with finding a career or careers that offered the best match for their skill set. I was asked to assist the teacher with scoring the answer sets and I noticed that one girl in our class, who had consistently scored between 40 and 50% for mathematics, according to this IQ test, was the learner with the highest mathematics aptitude in our class. I checked her answers and realised that she must have considered what answer would give her the highest overall aptitude. The lesson of this is that one has to ask the questions in such a way that the responder cannot manipulate the outcome.

The same is true with discerning the will of God. Discernment is essential to recognise when God is speaking, and to understand God's will; but also to help me

distinguish between true and false claims about a matter; and to avoid imposing my own preferences on the spiritual or moral choice(s) I have to make.

I have to honestly review all the facts in the matter with discernment, and I have to talk to God about it, allowing more time to listen out for God's counsel, that is, to discern God's will, than to talk about my preferences, I must become still before God and listen out for the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit who is in me, I must let God talk to me through the Bible and I must also bounce my ideas off godly counsels in the community of believers.

Reflection: Having done all of this, I must then consider the likely outcome(s) of my preferred decision, and if it will likely yield good fruit. I can then with confidence confirm my decision. Have you had success doing that?



Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to discern Your will for my life.
AMEN

THURSDAY – How does suffering fit into God’s will for my life?



James 1: 2-4 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

1 Peter 4: 19 *So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

James 5: 13 (NLT) *Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises.*

All the way from Genesis to Revelation it is clear that God never says that when we give our lives to Him all pain and suffering will disappear from our lives, in fact, it is the exact opposite. Pain and suffering are part of our existence, as we learned in Week 1 of this series. It could refer to illness and death, or the break-up of a long loving relationship, or economic hardship, or conflict at work, to name but a few examples.

At a young age, I had a clear calling into a specific profession. I duly qualified and the Lord told me where He wanted to use me. Because it was all so clear I followed that cue and took a job 10 000 kilometres from home. On the very first day in a foreign

country, my designated boss told me that he did not need someone from Africa to come and hold his hand, and he duly took me to their library and stayed there until my one-year contract was over. This was the first in a number of apparent hardships that came over my career, but now, in retrospect, I clearly see that these hiccups, or one-way-streets or whatever you call it, all collectively contributed to getting me to the place, more than 40 years after the incident, where I could only succeed because of the lessons I learned at the “roadblocks” along the way. I praise God for staying patient with me.

Reflection: When you look back, can you also see God’s hand in everything?



Prayer: God of wisdom, I thank you for divine understanding that reveals to me the things that I do not understand. **AMEN**

FRIDAY – How do I live out the will of God for my life?



Colossians 1: 9b,10 (NIV) *We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.*

Romans 12: 6-8 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Galatians 5: 22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Throughout the letters of Paul the Apostle, we see evidence that living out the will of God is frequently a team matter. In the Colossians scripture above, Paul and Timothy pray for the Colossians to ask God to fill them with the knowledge of His will. We have seen that we have multiple sources of discernment at our fingertips, such as the Word of God that provides clear guidance on moral and spiritual issues; talking and listening to God through prayer; consulting godly counsel about complex issues; and lastly, being still to allow the quiet voice of God to speak discernment into you.

Frequently the gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12: 6-8) provide clear pointers of where we should go. It is also important to always be honest when evaluating contrasting options. If the expected outcomes of your decision then align themselves amongst others with the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-23) you will have arrived at a spiritually aligned decision.

Reflection: Think of things that you do that were not listed here that you have personally done that work for you and reflect on whether you can incorporate some of what is mentioned herein into your approach, or vice versa.



Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for having patience with me while I align my understanding of Your will for me with what actually is Your will for my life. AMEN