

# DECISION MAKING

*Discerning the Will of God*



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**“He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not.”** . . . Through the ages, children have played this simple game of deciding whether someone loved them or not by plucking petals from a daisy one-by-one. The last petal supposedly reveals the answer—but what an unreliable way to make decisions!

And just as unreliable is making choices based on changeable circumstances or the cries of a crowd. Wise decisions are made by discerning the will of God, and God delights in revealing His will to those willing to do His will. And His will is clearly revealed in His Word.

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*

(JAMES 1:22)

# DEFINITIONS

We make decisions every day. Many are of little significance; a few will change our lives forever. Do you make quick decisions by “doing what comes naturally,” or do you struggle with delay because of a paralysis of analysis? Many bad choices are made in life because we do not take the time to discover God’s perfect will for our lives.

Be assured, God doesn’t play “hide and seek” as you try to discover His will. The more intimately you draw close to the heart of God, the more clearly you will know the will of God. And as you sincerely begin to place His desires above your own desires, He will be faithful to point the way. Let this be the prayer of your heart . . .

*“I desire to do your will, my God;  
your law is within my heart.”  
(PSALM 40:8)*

## What Is Decision Making?

Decision making is a process that includes making a choice or judgment about an attitude or action. **Decisions** are an act of the will, and they are always influenced by either the mind or the emotions.

**Your decisions** receive God’s blessing when you are willing to obey God.

The Old Testament Hebrew word *abah*, which means “to breathe after” or “to be acquiescent,” is used to indicate a willingness to accept or comply.<sup>1</sup>

*“If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land” (ISAIAH 1:19).*

**Your decisions** should be based on God’s revealed will.

The Greek word *krino* is one of the many New Testament words that can be translated “to decide, or to make a judgment.” This Greek word means “to distinguish, to decide mentally, to determine or resolve.”<sup>2</sup>

*“As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality” (ACTS 21:25).*

**Your decisions** reveal the desires of your heart.

Another Old Testament Hebrew word *bachar*, which means “to select, to choose,” is also translated “to prefer or desire.”<sup>3</sup>

*“I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set my heart on your laws” (PSALM 119:30).*

**Your decisions** are ultimately determined by what you desire the most.

The fundamental principle for each of us becomes: “Do I choose to please myself, or do I choose to please the Lord?”

*“If serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (JOSHUA 24:15).*

## What Is the Meaning of “Will”?

Like a prism, the word *will* reflects many different sides.<sup>4</sup>

- When making a choice, you are communicating your *will*.
- The word *will* is also used to express the desire or mandate of someone having authority. (God reveals *His will*.)
- Another meaning of the word *will* carries the idea of having a disposition to act according to one’s desired goals. (A child may be born with a *strong will*.)
- Further, by use of your own *will*, you can exercise power and control over your own actions or emotions.

*“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”*

(LUKE 22:42)

**Question:** “What did Jesus mean when He prayed, ‘*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*’?”

**Answer:** Jesus modeled a heart of submission to the will of His Father because He knew God’s will would ultimately be best. The meanings of the following Greek words used in the New Testament describe why *God’s will* should always be preferred.<sup>5</sup>

*Thelema* means “a determination, choice or a desire of the heart.”

- God’s will is His heart’s desire for you.

*Boulema* means “a plan of the mind; a deliberate design and purpose.”

- God’s will is His ultimate plan and purpose for you.

*Eudokia* means “good pleasure.”

- God’s will is ultimately pleasing and good for you.

*“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

(MATTHEW 6:10)

## What Is Meant When Scripture Refers to the Will of God?

Scripture uses three descriptive words—*perfect*, *permissive*, and *prevailing*—to paint a three-dimensional picture of the “will of God.”

### 1. God’s *Perfect Will*

*“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”* (ROMANS 12:2).

- God has an ideal plan.
- God’s plan is pleasing and good.

**Example:** God’s *perfect will* is for everyone to repent of sin and for no one to perish.

*“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”* (2 PETER 3:9).

## 2. God's Permissive Will

*"They hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD" (PROVERBS 1:29).*

- God permits each person to exercise free will . . . in opposition to His will.
- God is ultimately sovereign over all that He permits.

**Example:** God's *permissive will* allows everyone the option of choosing right or wrong, spiritual life or spiritual death, being blessed or being cursed.

*"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (ROMANS 3:23).*

## 3. God's Prevailing Will

*"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (PROVERBS 19:21).*

- God's plans cannot be thwarted.
- God's ultimate purposes are achieved because He is sovereign.

**Example:** God's *prevailing will* is to grant full forgiveness and a home in heaven to all who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

*"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (JOB 42:2).*

# What Are Common Questions about the Will of God?

### **"Has God already determined His will for me?"**

Yes. God's will for you was prepared in advance.

*"We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (EPHESIANS 2:10).*

### **"Can I actually know God's will for my life?"**

Yes. God desires to reveal His will to you in a personal way.

*"The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth" (ACTS 22:14).*

### **"Will God reveal the whole blueprint of my life?"**

Only God sees the whole picture—the past, present, and future of your life. Discovering God's will is like reading a scroll. He teaches and counsels you as He unrolls the scroll one day at a time.

*"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you" (PSALM 32:8).*

### **"What if God's will seems undesirable?"**

God's will may seem undesirable and unpleasant when your heart is following your own desires and not trusting God.

*"Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (PSALM 37:4).*

### **"Why does God's will for me sometimes include sorrow and affliction?"**

Suffering allows you to see God's sufficiency as you learn to depend on Him.

*"It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (PSALM 119:71).*

## How Does God Reveal His Will?

God reveals His will primarily through . . .

### The Spirit of God

*“When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come”* (JOHN 16:13).

### The Word of God

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path”* (PSALM 119:105).

## What Decisions Are Pleasing to God?

God blesses . . .

– **Decisions** that He initiates

*“I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths”* (PROVERBS 4:11).

– **Decisions** that line up with His Word

*“Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees; that I may follow it to the end”* (PSALM 119:33).

– **Decisions** that accomplish His purpose

*“It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose”* (PHILIPPIANS 2:13).

– **Decisions** that depend on His strength

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).

– **Decisions** that result in giving Him glory

*“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God”* (1 CORINTHIANS 10:31).

– **Decisions** that promote justice, kindness, and humility

*“He has showed you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”* (MICAH 6:8).

– **Decisions** that reflect His character

*“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity”* (1 TIMOTHY 4:12).

– **Decisions** that come from faith

*“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him”* (HEBREWS 11:6).

– **Decisions** that consider the interests of others

*“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others”* (PHILIPPIANS 2:4 ESV).

– **Decisions** that are bathed in prayer

*“Pray continually”* (1 THESSALONIANS 5:17).

## What Is God's Heart on Decision Making?

God's heart on decision making is to help us with our decisions. God empathizes with our struggles and is eager to lead us according to His infinite wisdom and perfect plan. None of us knows what the future holds, and at times we truly don't know which way to turn. When we seek our all-knowing God, He never fails to direct us—for our good and for His glory.

What an indescribably awesome privilege . . . the God of the universe, the Creator of billions of galaxies and even more stars, cares about the decisions you make concerning your health, your job, your marriage, your children—your life. He longs to help with all of your decisions. There is no need to fear that something is too small or insignificant to take to Him. If it matters to you, it matters to God.

*"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

(PSALM 121:1-2)

Concerning our decision making, God's Word tells us that **He is . . .**

**Eager** to help us in our time of need

*"He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters" (PSALM 18:16).*

**Sympathetic** when we experience strenuous circumstances

*"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God" (PSALM 43:5).*

**Moved** when we trust Him at all times

*"When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, 'Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith'" (MATTHEW 8:10).*

**Determined** to use opportunities of uncertainty to deepen our fellowship with Him

*"When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place" (PSALM 118:5).*

**Attentive** to direct the circumstances of our lives in accordance with His perfect plan

*"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground" (PSALM 143:10).*

**Willing** to tap into His unlimited resources to wisely guide our lives

*"Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power" (PROVERBS 8:14).*

**Faithful** to lead us all the days of our lives

*"Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you" (ISAIAH 46:4).*

**Generous** in granting wisdom if we but ask for it in faith

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord" (JAMES 1:5-7).*

Concerning our decision making, **God wants us to . . .**

**Seek** His will

*“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever”* (1 CHRONICLES 28:9).

**Desire** His will above our own

*“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done”* (LUKE 22:42).

**Wait** patiently for Him

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope”* (PSALM 130:5).

**Look** to His Word to find guidance

*“Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart”* (JOB 22:22).

**Approach** Him with an honest heart and a clear conscience

*“I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent”* (1 CHRONICLES 29:17).

**Value** the counsel of His Word above the counsel of people

*“We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts”* (1 THESSALONIANS 2:4).

**Ask** for advice from godly counselors to make successful decisions

*“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed”* (PROVERBS 15:22).

**Please** Him with our decisions

*“We make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it”* (2 CORINTHIANS 5:9).



# CHARACTERISTICS

He couldn't conceive of carrying out the gargantuan task the Lord was requiring of him. He was too insignificant, too weak, too . . . whatever! How could Gideon—the least in his father's house and identified with the weakest clan in Manasseh—ever deliver Israel from such a monstrous enemy army?

Although God had directly spoken to him, this godly young man still felt insecure about making the right decision. To make sure he had actually heard from God, twice Gideon asked for a supernatural sign. The first night he put out a fleece and asked God to make it wet and the ground dry. The next night, Gideon asked God to make the fleece dry and the ground wet.

Although God honored both of Gideon's requests, today Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who counsels them, and the “. . . *word made more sure*” (2 Peter 1:19 NASB). Therefore, we are not to look to supernatural events to reveal the will of God.

*“Gideon said to God, ‘If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—  
37 look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor.  
If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry,  
then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.’  
38 And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day;  
he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.  
39 Then Gideon said to God, ‘Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request.  
Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry  
and let the ground be covered with dew.’ 40 That night God did so.  
Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.”*  
(JUDGES 6:36–40)

Some people will always want visible signs to discern God's will, yet these signs are based on normal occurrences, such as chance phone calls or letters. If you insist on “putting out a fleece,” make sure the sign is supernatural. Suggestion: On a hot summer day, why not ask for a snowstorm!

## What Are Six Methods of Decision Making?

If you could, wouldn't you want to know the future? If you could see the outcome, wouldn't it make your decisions a lot more accurate? Today, people seek guidance through a plethora of occult practices.

They search for answers in newspaper columns, carnival booths, and psychic hotlines. Astrologers, palm readers, and fortune-tellers toting tarot cards all claim to speak for “God.” But the God of the Bible says these dramatic ways are “*detestable*” (Deuteronomy 18:9). He warns us . . .

*“Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists,  
for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.”*  
(LEVITICUS 19:31)

## Six Methods of Decision Making

Making decisions can be approached in various ways, but most will fall into one of the following six methods or a combination of some of them. Not all methods of decision making will prove to be profitable.

### 1. Dramatic Method

Some people misuse Scripture by flipping open the Bible and *pointing to a random scripture for guidance* without considering the context. Others expect God to come through with a spectacular, supernatural sign that will give proof of His will in a given situation.

Yet, God says, “*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*” (John 14:26).

### 2. Defaulting Method

Scripture tells us there is an appropriate time to delegate duties and to seek counsel, but ultimately we are responsible for our own choices. We can be so *pressured by the opinions of others* that it becomes easier just to let others make decisions for us . . . even when we think they are wrong.

Yet, God says, “*He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right*” (Isaiah 7:15).

### 3. Delaying Method

Many people *choose to procrastinate* when a decision needs to be made, hoping that “it will all come out well in the end.” They allow circumstances to determine the outcome. However, not to decide is actually to decide. Their delay tactics are filled with superfluous activities that do not include placing a high priority on knowing God’s will through prayer, biblical counsel, and intimacy with the Lord.

Yet, God says, “*That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways’*” (Hebrews 3:10).

### 4. Deductive Method

The Christian life is to be a life of balance between human deduction and spiritual insight. If we become solely *analytical in thinking* through a situation and choose to rely completely on logic, we will miss God’s way.

Yet, God says, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways*” (Isaiah 55:8).

### 5. Desirous Method

Too many people allow their emotions to have “soul control.” This means allowing *feelings to determine their behavior*. God gave us emotions, but He never intended emotions to be our “decision makers.” Many of us don’t even realize that we often have an “if it feels good, it must be good” mentality.

Yet, God says, “*Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe*” (Proverbs 28:26).

### 6. Discerning Method (the best method)

To be discerning is to *grasp what may not be evident*, that is, “to have insight and understanding by going beyond what seems obvious.”<sup>6</sup> Spiritual discernment, therefore, is wisdom to determine what is true, appropriate, and superior in the eyes of God, regardless of how things may seem.

Yet, God says, “*The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

## **Biblical Example: Noah and the Ark** **Genesis 6:5–22**

“*Noah was a righteous man*” who walked with God (v. 9). Because of his personal relationship with the Lord, he knew God’s voice and, having the heart of a servant, was willing to do “*everything just as God commanded him*” (v. 22)—even though his construction of an ark (a mammoth structure on dry ground) made Noah look foolish in the eyes of his friends.

Without knowing the future, Noah focused on what God was doing and adjusted his life according to God’s plan rather than asking God to bless his own plan. Logically, Noah could have chosen to build a place of worship. After all, weren’t the people morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt? Yes, they were, but God knew the people would remain unrepentant . . . something Noah did not know. If Noah had built a church, he and his family along with the church, would have washed away.

*“Noah did everything just as God commanded him.”*

(GENESIS 6:22)

## **What Are Tests for Decision Making?**

He was scared to death—but it was to the *dead* that he turned for guidance!

The enemy army had gathered for war against his smaller country. He wanted counsel from God, but “*when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him*” (1 Samuel 28:6 ESV). Desperate for supernatural insight, Saul disguised himself and went to a medium (a practice forbidden by God). He asked to talk with the beloved prophet Samuel, who had died. After Samuel appeared and after Saul complained that God no longer answered him, Samuel replied, “*Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy?*” (1 Samuel 28:16).

The Lord would not answer Saul because he had continually defied the commands of God—and since he did not reflect the heart of God, he became the enemy of God. When faced with a decision, we need to see whether we “pass the test” so that our decisions will be blessed.

### **Eight Tests of Decision Making**

From God’s perspective, decisions are not to be determined by random selection, supernatural events, people’s opinions, delay tactics, analytical thinking, or good feelings. God wants you to measure your decisions by His standards. Rather than testing God, test yourself against the following eight scriptures. This will help you to make choices that are pleasing to the Lord.

*“Live as children of light . . .  
and find out what pleases the Lord.”*

(EPHESIANS 5:8, 10)

## 1. Scriptural Test

“Has God already spoken about it in His Word?”

**Example:** Marrying a nonbeliever with the hope of drawing your spouse to Christ even though 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, “*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.*”

“*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*” (2 TIMOTHY 3:16).

## 2. Secrecy Test

“Would it bother me if everyone knew this was my choice?”

**Example:** Thinking no one is hurt by keeping an overpayment of returned cash or credit

“*The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity*” (PROVERBS 11:3).

## 3. Survey Test

“What if everyone followed my example?”

**Example:** Assuming a little trash tossed out the car window will never be noticed on a busy highway

“*Set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity*” (1 TIMOTHY 4:12).

## 4. Spirit Test

“Am I being people-pressured or Spirit-led?”

**Example:** Accepting a commitment of time that has not been affirmed in your spirit by God

“*Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ*” (GALATIANS 1:10).

## 5. Stumbling Test

“Could this cause another person to stumble?”

**Example:** Having an alcoholic drink in a public place

“*It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall*” (ROMANS 14:21).

## 6. Serenity Test

“Have I prayed and received peace about this decision?”

**Example:** Deciding to make any major change without praying and waiting on God’s peace for confirmation

“*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7).

## 7. Sanctification Test

“Will this keep me from growing in the character of Christ?”

**Example:** Failing to obey God when He prompts you to do something that is difficult or burdensome

“*We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit*” (2 CORINTHIANS 3:18).

## 8. Supreme Test

“Does this glorify God?”

**Example:** Conforming to the world’s standards by living a lifestyle of indebtedness

“*Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*” (1 CORINTHIANS 10:31).

# CAUSES

He had it all—*except wisdom*.

Flocks by the thousands grazed in his fields, a beautiful wife adorned his arm, and food and drink were abundant in his household. But a foolish choice made by Nabal—whose name means “fool”—*would prove fatal*.

David and his small, young army had been protecting Nabal’s shepherds and sheep. Then during a time of shearing and feasting, David asked Nabal for food to sustain his men in the wilderness. This reasonable request was met only with resentment and an insulting refusal. As a result of Nabal’s selfish, self-absorbed, self-indulgent decision, he met his death prematurely: Ten days later, the Lord took his life.

Our decisions can be costly when they are made with mixed motives and spiritual immaturity.

## What Causes Clouds of Confusion?

“*Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse?*” (1 Samuel 25:10) Nabal spouts condescendingly in contempt.

Who was David? Nabal likened him to a runaway slave, but this David, whom Nabal refused to help, was *the next king of Israel*.

Enraged by Nabal’s response, David directs 400 of his men to arm themselves to take vengeance on Nabal and his household. . . .

*“David had just said, ‘It’s been useless—  
all my watching over this fellow’s property in the wilderness  
so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good.  
May God deal with David, be it ever so severely,  
if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!’”  
(1 SAMUEL 25:21–22)*

## Reasons for Confusion in Decision Making

Common reasons that clouds of confusion engulf your decision-making process include . . .

**Not having** pure motives

“*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures*” (JAMES 4:3).

**Not surrendering** your will to God’s will

“*Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’*” (MATTHEW 26:39).

**Not seeking** God's will through His Word

*"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (PSALM 119:105).*

**Not repenting** of known sin in your life

*"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened" (PSALM 66:18).*

**Not praying** continually and earnestly

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (JAMES 1:5).*

**Not expecting** God to answer

*"When you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord" (JAMES 1:6-7).*

**Not patiently waiting** for God's timing

*"After waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised" (HEBREWS 6:15).*

## What Place Do "Natural Reactions" Have in Our Decisions?

It is not "natural" for us to live life God's way, especially if we are used to doing things our way—the way we have always done them, such as acting foolish or being vengeful. Following the Lord completely means following Him in every area—including in the way we make decisions. Since His way is the right way, for us to pursue what is natural to us may lead to making disastrous decisions that result in regret.

*"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death."*

(PROVERBS 14:12)

**Do you . . .**

**Wait** too long before asking God to show you His will?

**Ask** everyone you know for advice instead of asking God?

**Fail to look** at the big picture?

**Lie** about failure, whether big or small?

**Ignore or minimize** the impact your decision will have on others?

**Make** choices too quickly?

**Fail to weigh** the pros and cons of a specific action?

**Fail to explore** other options?

**Take action** prematurely before making necessary plans?

**Overlook** the moral implications of your decision?

*"The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction."*

(PROVERBS 16:21)

**Question:** “What can I do when the way seems dark about a decision that must be made?”

**Answer:** Many times the Bible speaks specifically to a circumstance in your life. At other times, you must look for guiding biblical principles that can light your way.

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”*

(PSALM 119:105)

## Root Cause for Anxiety over Decisions

Swords at their side and moving down the mountain, David and his men encounter a figure prostrate before them—Nabal’s wife, Abigail. Tipped off by a shepherd about the impending massacre, the discerning wife of Nabal turns diplomatic and sends on ahead of her a feast on four legs: an entourage of donkeys laden down with two hundred loaves of bread, wine, five prepared sheep, grain, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred fig cakes.

As soon as she sees David, she wastes no time dismounting her donkey and falling at his feet to appeal for mercy for her household and restraint for David’s men. She expresses her disdain for Nabal’s folly, offers David’s men food, and honors him with words befitting a king:

*“David said to Abigail, ‘Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.’”*

(1 SAMUEL 25:32–33)

Abigail wisely decided she had to act quickly because of the foolish decisions of her husband. What a contrast in decision making!

### 3 Inner Needs

We all have three inner needs: the needs for love, significance, and security.<sup>7</sup>

**Love**—to know that someone is unconditionally committed to our best interest

*“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”* (JOHN 15:12).

**Significance**—to know that our lives have meaning and purpose

*“I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me”* (PSALM 57:2 ESV).

**Security**—to feel accepted and a sense of belonging

*“Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge”* (PROVERBS 14:26).

## The Ultimate Need-Meeter

### What do our inner needs reveal about us and our relationship with God?

God did not create any person or position or any amount of power or possessions to meet our deepest needs. People fail us and self-effort also fails to meet our deepest needs. If a person or thing could meet all our needs, we wouldn't need God! Our inner needs draw us into a deeper dependence on Christ and remind us that only God can satisfy the longings of our hearts. The Lord brings people and circumstances into our lives as an extension of His care, but ultimately only He can satisfy all the needs of our hearts. The Bible says . . .

*“The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.”*  
(ISAIAH 58:11)

All along, the Lord planned to meet our deepest needs for . . .

**Love**—*“I [the Lord] have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness”* (JEREMIAH 31:3).

**Significance**—*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’”* (JEREMIAH 29:11).

**Security**—*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”* (DEUTERONOMY 31:8).

Our needs for love, significance, and security can be legitimately met in Christ Jesus! Philippians 4:19 makes it plain, *“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*

**Wrong Belief:** “I can't trust God with all of my decisions in life. I need to rely on my own abilities to influence an outcome that I desire.”

**Right Belief:** “God will come through for me when I step out in faith and trust Him to guide me in all decisions.”

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.  
Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.”*  
(PROVERBS 3:5–7)

Because of Abigail's wise decision and gracious demeanor, David receives her provisions and sends her home in peace. There she encounters a drunken Nabal. The next morning Abigail told him all that had occurred between her and David.

*“In the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things,  
and his heart failed him and he became like a stone.  
About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.”*  
(1 SAMUEL 25:37–38)



## What Is the Most Important Decision of Your Life?

Never has there been a time when divine guidance wasn't desired. The ancient world was consumed with the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and power. Yet the road traveled was strewn with pagan rituals, sacrifices, omens, and astrology. Amazingly, people today are still infatuated with seeking God's guidance through similar occult practices even though the Bible clearly states such methods are abhorrent.

*“Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft,<sup>11</sup> or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.<sup>12</sup> Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.”*

(DEUTERONOMY 18:10–12)

When you come to a crossroads in life—when knowing God's will is crucial—don't look for signs in the sky! The worst decision you can make is to go against God's will and to reject Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. There is only one way to gain true wisdom—through God Himself. Today you can have direct access to God! He has made a way for you to know Him personally and profoundly and to know His will for your life.

The first step to having this kind of relationship is submitting to the sovereignty of God. Admit that you've been the major decision maker, and then willingly surrender your will to the will of the Lord—let Him be your personal Decision Maker for the rest of your life. This is what the Lord says . . .

*“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

(JEREMIAH 6:16)

### The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make 4 Points of God's Plan

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, there is hope. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will receive His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”*

(JEREMIAH 29:11)

### 1. God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

- What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (JOHN 3:16–17).
- What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (JOHN 10:10).

### 2. The Problem: *Sin*

- What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway"* (ROMANS 7:18–19 NLT).
- What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *"Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God"* (ISAIAH 59:2). Scripture also says, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (ROMANS 6:23).

### 3. God's Provision for You: *The Savior*

- Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (ROMANS 5:8).
- What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (JOHN 14:6). The Bible says, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31).

### 4. Your Part: *Surrender*

- Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"* (MATTHEW 16:24–26).
- Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your "good works" as a means of earning God's approval. The Bible says, *"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast"* (EPHESIANS 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you've humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

“God, I want a real relationship with you.  
I admit that many times I've chosen to go my own way  
instead of your way.  
Please forgive me for my sins.  
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross  
to pay the penalty for my sins.  
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.  
Change me from the inside out and make me the person  
you created me to be.  
In your holy name I pray. Amen.”

### **What Can You Now Expect?**

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . .”* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*“Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word  
and believes him who sent me  
has eternal life and will not be judged  
but has crossed over from death to life.”*

(JOHN 5:24)

# STEPS TO SOLUTION

*Chicken Little*, the classic children’s fable, demonstrates the potential consequence of making a decision based on fear. When the falling acorn hit her head, she ran from one friend to another exclaiming, “The sky is falling, the sky is falling! Oh, what will we do?” One by one, her barnyard friends became alarmed and narrowly escaped being eaten by the fox as they ran to tell the king.

This same kind of fear is demonstrated when people panic over the future uncertainty of “What will we do?” God’s direction is not always obvious because He is more concerned with *what we become* rather than with *what we do!* His goal is the process . . . developing our character and deepening our knowledge of His ways.

*“That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,  
so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure  
and blameless for the day of Christ.”*

(PHILIPPIANS 1:9–10)

## Key Verses to Memorize

*“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices,  
holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

*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.”*

(ROMANS 12:1–2)

## Key Passage to Read

### Living to Please God

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12

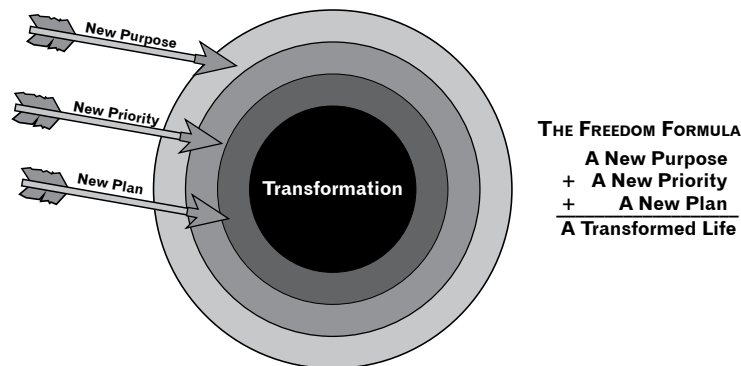
- Live** your life choosing to please God in all you do. ....v. 1
- Live** by growing in the knowledge of God’s ways—study the Bible. ....vv. 1–2
- Live** a life that is “set apart” from the ways of the world. .... v. 3
- Live** within God’s requirements for sexual purity. .... v. 3
- Live** a life that demonstrates self-control. .... v. 4

**Live** a life that is holy and honorable. .... vv. 4, 7  
**Live** without lusting like pagans. .... v. 5  
**Live** with integrity in relationships with others. .... v. 6  
**Live** knowing that when you reject the Word of God, you reject God. .... v. 8  
**Live** with brotherly love toward others. .... vv. 9–10  
**Live** a quiet life, minding your own affairs. .... v. 11  
**Live** a life that gains the respect of others. .... v. 12  
**Live** a life that is dependent on no one except the Lord. .... v. 12

**The more you choose to please God, the more you will discern the will of God.**

## How to Have a Transformed Life

### Reaching the Target: Transformation!



#### Target #1—A New Purpose

**God’s purpose for me** is to be conformed to the character of Christ.

*“Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (ROMANS 8:29).*

—“I’ll do whatever it takes to be conformed to the character of Christ.”

#### Target #2—A New Priority

**God’s priority for me** is to change my thinking.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (ROMANS 12:2).*

—“I’ll do whatever it takes to line up my thinking with God’s thinking.”

### Target #3—A New Plan

**God’s plan for me** is to rely on Christ’s strength, not my strength, to be all He created me to be.

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).

– “I’ll do whatever it takes to fulfill His plan in His strength.”

#### My Personalized Plan for Sound Decision Making

As I determine in my heart to become the person God created me to be, I will seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in formulating a plan that will help me to rely on His strength within me, not on my own abilities.

**I will make it my goal to . . .**

**Seek** God’s will first and foremost

- Read God’s Word to grasp the ways God does and doesn’t lead me (Example: He never tempts.)
- Pray fervently for wisdom and direction in all I do
- Search the Scriptures asking, “What has God said about the issue?”
- Discern how God might be using circumstances to lead or direct me

*“Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them”* (PROVERBS 4:5).

**Be** “decisive” about being decisive

- Allow faith, not fear, to prevail by memorizing verses that strengthen my faith
- Avoid procrastination by making a weekly schedule for taking care of specific responsibilities
- Refrain from making decisions primarily to please others
- Permit the peace of God to give me confidence from God that He is always with me

*“God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 CORINTHIANS 1:9).

**Flee** from false, ungodly counsel

- Renounce all counsel from occult sources, such as astrologers and psychics
- Reject any counsel that advises relying on intuition or instinct
- Rebuff all counsel that violates biblical principles
- Refuse to be persuaded by those who question God’s “best” for my life

*“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers”* (PSALM 1:1).

**Practice** sound judgment

- Commit to never let feelings alone be the driving force in decision making
- Assess any personal motives behind the decisions I need to make
- Carefully weigh all sides of an issue before making a decision
- Execute decisions with diligence and fairness

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”* (PROVERBS 9:10).

## How to Develop Spiritual Discernment

Just as discernment does not come by flipping a coin and saying “heads or tails,” neither does it completely rely on common sense or the conscience. Spiritual discernment is a gift from God and comes to us through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in every authentic Christian. It is the supernatural ability to “know” something not because of personal knowledge or experience, but because of personal time spent in God’s Word and in prayer with Him.

*“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God,  
who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.  
<sup>6</sup> But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt,  
because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.  
<sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”*  
(JAMES 1:5–7)

### Sources of Spiritual Discernment

The ability to know God and discern His will for your life comes through . . .

#### Salvation

Spiritual things can be discerned only by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. When you have trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior and have begun a personal relationship with Him, you have met the prerequisite for knowing “the mind of Christ.”

*“The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ”*  
(1 CORINTHIANS 2:15–16).

#### Scripture

As you study Scripture, you learn how God works in the lives of His people. Understanding God’s principles gives you a basis for knowing how He is working in your life today.

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise”* (PSALM 111:10).

#### Situations

Are you focusing on this: *What is God’s will for my future?* Instead, focus on God’s purpose in your present situation, and trust Him with your future. God always has a personal will for you, and your responsibility is to adjust to what He is doing in your life right now.

*“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”* (MATTHEW 6:33–34).

#### Submission

Are you submitting to what God wants to do in your life today? Pray to be moldable clay in the Potter’s hand, allowing God to mold and shape you into the vessel of His choosing.

*“Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel’”* (JEREMIAH 18:6).

## Servanthood

Have you given up ownership of your own life? When your heart is willing to be God's servant no matter the cost, He will reveal His plan for you.

*"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"*  
(MATTHEW 6:24–25).

## Discern the Spirit's Leading

When you experience authentic salvation by recognizing your sin and separation from God and accepting Christ's death as payment for your personal sins, God sends His Holy Spirit to live within your human spirit. In this way, God will guide you into all truth and prompt you to cooperate in bringing about His purposes for your life.

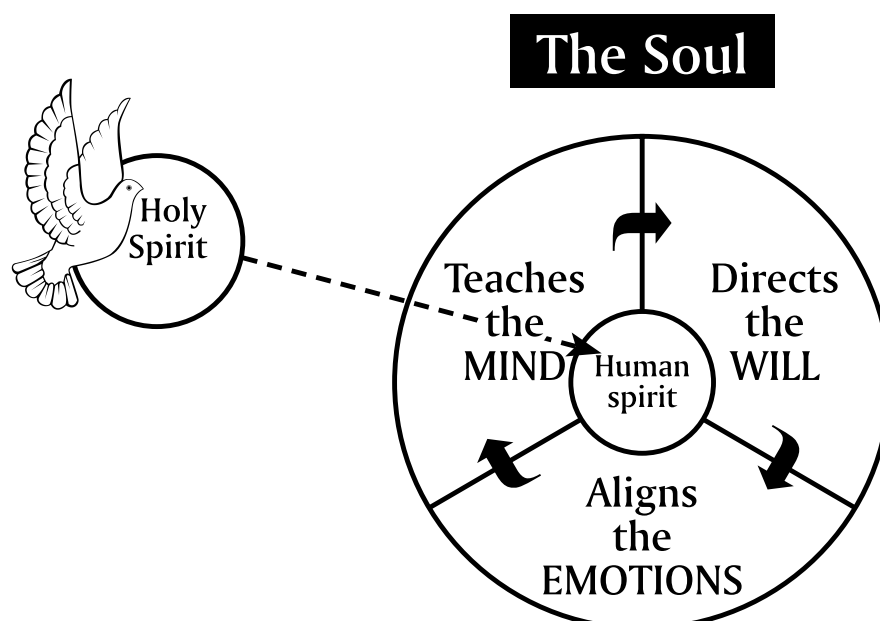
*"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.  
He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears,  
and he will tell you what is yet to come."*

(JOHN 16:13)

## The Work of the Holy Spirit in You

The soul is made up of the mind, the will, and the emotions.<sup>8</sup> As the Holy Spirit relates to your soul . . .

- He teaches your *mind* how to *think*.
- He directs your *will* how to *act*.
- He brings your *emotions* into *alignment* (what is right in God's sight).





When faced with a decision or deadline, tell God that you want only His will.

- Ask God to shut all doors to opportunities that are not His choice.
- Ask God for a heavy heart if you are making the wrong choice and peace if you are making the right choice.

*“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard,  
and what no human mind has conceived’  
—the things God has prepared for those who love him—  
these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.  
The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”  
(1 CORINTHIANS 2:9–10)*

## Determine the Don'ts of Decision Making

“Doing what comes naturally” is not a good barometer for determining God’s will in your life. What comes naturally can be the sinful nature or the “flesh,” which operates apart from the Spirit of God. How can you determine whether what you think you should do reflects God’s will or whether it is your own natural wishes and desires? . . .

*“The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.  
They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”  
(GALATIANS 5:17)*

### The Don'ts of Decision Making

**Don't** wait until all else fails before seeking God’s will.

*“First seek the counsel of the LORD” (1 KINGS 22:5).*

**Don't** seek the plan but rather the Person who reveals the plan.

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (PROVERBS 3:5–6).*

**Don't** pray for permission regarding something God has forbidden.

*“I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws” (PSALM 119:106).*

**Don't** make decisions based on feelings.

*“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (PROVERBS 4:23).*

**Don't** assume that God’s will is too difficult for you to do.

*“This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 JOHN 5:3).*

**Don't** have divided loyalty and allow money to dictate your decision.

*“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (MATTHEW 6:24).*

**Don't** test God by seeking visible signs.

*“Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah” (DEUTERONOMY 6:16).*

**Don't** think trials and adversity indicate you are out of God's will.

*"Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good"*  
(1 PETER 4:19).

## Discover God's Guidance

Far too often we rely on our own instincts in making decisions. When a crisis occurs, we are confused because we have not consistently sought to understand how God guides. Trust that God is ultimately involved in every detail of your life. Listen, learn, and obtain His guidance.

*"Let the wise listen and add to their learning,  
and let the discerning get guidance."*

(PROVERBS 1:5)

### Guidance

(an acrostic for the word GUIDANCE)

#### G—Gifts

Discover and use the spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities God has given you to serve others. Discern His direction by noticing the opportunities He brings to develop those gifts.

- Reflect on what you really enjoy doing.
- Write down past accomplishments that have brought you joy.
- Become aware of your weaknesses.
- Ask a friend to evaluate your strengths.

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms"* (1 PETER 4:10).

#### U—Understanding

Take time to clearly discern what the decision is about and what is involved.

- Do I have all the facts?
- Am I aware of the consequences of my choices?
- Is there a deadline for the decision?
- Am I making a decision based on guilt?

*"Folly brings joy to one who has no sense, but whoever has understanding keeps a straight course"* (PROVERBS 15:21).

#### I—Impressions

The Spirit of God often brings conviction, or establishes truth in your heart through strong impressions of His thoughts or principles regarding a matter.

- Pray for God to speak to you about the matter.
- Consider a time of fasting if led to do so.
- Spend time in quiet reflection and meditation, seeking God's heart on the situation.
- Ask God to confirm your impression through another source.

*"I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me"* (PSALM 16:7).

### **D—Desires**

When you seek to please the Lord in all areas of your life, His desires will become the desires of your heart. As this occurs, His will in each situation becomes increasingly easier to recognize.

- Study Scripture to know the heart of God.
  - Pray, “Lord, may I see my sin as You see it. May I hate my sin as You hate it.”
  - Find Scriptures that promise His strength for your weaknesses. Choose to believe them and thank Him.
- “Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart” (PSALM 37:4).*

### **A—Advice**

God often speaks to us through others. Your wisdom will increase by seeking counsel from people who are . . .

- Grounded in the Word of God
- Mature in godly wisdom
- Living successfully, having overcome similar circumstances

*“Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future” (PROVERBS 19:20 ESV).*

### **N—Necessity**

Evaluate your God-given responsibilities and choose your actions appropriately. For example:

- If you have young children at home, decisions that would keep you from being with them for extended periods of time would not be in keeping with God’s will for you.
- Moving a long distance away from a dependent, elderly parent who would be left alone would not be God’s desire.
- Choosing to take a vacation at a time when your employer needed your assistance for an emergency is contrary to the biblical principle of having a submissive attitude toward those in authority over you.

*“If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them” (JAMES 4:17).*

### **C—Circumstances**

Not all doors are opened by God, but closed doors can help determine your way at least for the present.

- Circumstances are to be considered, but they are not the final answer.
- Learn to see beyond circumstances into what God wants to accomplish in your life now.
- When unsure about an “open door,” pray for God to close the door if it is not His will for you.

*“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps” (PROVERBS 16:9).*

### **E—Elimination**

Even though all the choices may be permissible, some may not be the best choice for you.

- Eliminate one by one the options available to you.
- Eliminate choices that place you in tempting situations. (Don’t go shopping if you’re tempted to overspend.)
- Eliminate choices that would not be the best use of your time. (Don’t organize a drawer when work on an assignment is past due.)
- Eliminate choices that require skills you don’t have.

*“‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’—but not everything is constructive” (1 CORINTHIANS 10:23).*

**Question: “Can God use dreams to reveal His will for me today?”**

**Answer:** The Bible does not say that dreams will never be used by God to communicate His will. On rare occasions in the Old Testament, God did use dreams to reveal His will.

- Pharaoh had a prophetic dream that Joseph accurately interpreted.
- King Nebuchadnezzar had a prophetic dream that Daniel accurately interpreted.

Today many assume that after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to reside in all believers, dreams were no longer valid for revelation—that the Holy Spirit would reveal all that Christians need to know. However, the New Testament states that *“in the last days”* God will indeed use dreams and visions.

So, should you totally rely on your dreams as revelations from the Lord? Ask yourself: “Do all my dreams come true?” Obviously not. Thus, your dreams are not solely valid as revelation. Pray for additional confirmation if you sense God is leading you by way of a dream. Ultimately, God will use whatever way He chooses to reveal His will to you.

*“In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”*  
(ACTS 2:17)

## God’s Promises for Guidance

When faced with making a decision, look to God’s Word for direction.

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”*  
(PSALM 119:105)

**Psalm 32:8**—*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”*

**Isaiah 42:16**—*“I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. . . . I will not forsake them.”*

**Psalm 37:23**—*“The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him.”*

**Proverbs 16:9**—*“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.”*

**Proverbs 3:5-6**—*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

**Isaiah 58:11**—*“The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”*

**Psalm 37:5-6**—*“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.”*

**Psalm 139:9-10**—“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

**Psalm 73:24**—“You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.”

**Psalm 48:14**—“He will be our guide even to the end.”

**John 16:13**—“He [the Spirit of truth] will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

**John 8:12**—“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

**Question:** “What should I do when someone says, ‘The Lord told me to tell you this . . .’ and yet I don’t feel at peace with the message or the messenger?”

**Answer:** God can give someone a discerning message in regard to you. However, since Jesus is the Prince of Peace and since one aspect of the “fruit of the Spirit” is *peace* (Galatians 5:22), if you don’t feel at peace with the message, something is wrong spiritually.

Do not act on any “word from God” by a self-proclaimed “messenger of God” unless you personally have the peace of God.

*“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.”*

(GALATIANS 5:22)

## **When Time Has Run Out . . . and You Still Don’t Know What to Do**

If you have to make a decision and you’ve prayed for God’s choice, say to Him . . .

“Lord, because you know everything,  
you know the decision before me and the way I should go.  
I want only your will. Since I no longer have the option of waiting,  
I will choose ( pick one of the options ).  
If this decision is not right in your sight,  
I ask your Spirit in me to put a heaviness in my heart.  
If this is the right direction, please confirm it with your peace.  
I am willing to take whatever detours you decide to put in my path,  
as long as I reach the destination you have for me.  
In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.”

*“I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.”*

(PSALM 40:8)

“God plays no game of hide and seek—  
the more intimately you draw to the heart of God,  
the more clearly you know the will of God.  
While He blindfolds you from the blueprint,  
He reveals His will day by day  
and unrolls the scroll line by line.”  
—June Hunt

# SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE

God's Word offers the hope and promise of a changed life. The Lord will renew your mind—transforming the way you think, act, and live—as you saturate yourself in His Word. In the following questions, the bold-faced words serve as prompts to help you more easily memorize the verses related to this topic. May God's truth come alive to you, flourish in you, and flow through you.

To whom does God promise to **guide** and **teach His way**?

*“He **guides** the humble in what is right and **teaches** them **his way**.”*

(PSALM 25:9)

What will happen if I **trust in the Lord with all my heart**?

*“**Trust in the Lord with all your heart** and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

(PROVERBS 3:5–6)

As I make decisions, what will **light my path**?

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a **light on my path**.”*

(PSALM 119:105)

How will God show me **the way I should go**?

*“I will instruct you and teach you in **the way you should go**;  
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”*

(PSALM 32:8)

Can a person be **guided into all truth**?

*“The Spirit of truth . . . will **guide** you **into all truth**.  
He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears,  
and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

(JOHN 16:13)

How can I know what **God's will is**?

*“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.”*  
(ROMANS 12:2)

How can I **plan** my **course** correctly to make the right decisions?

Who **establishes** my **steps**?

*“In their hearts humans **plan** their **course**,  
but the LORD **establishes** their **steps**.”*  
(PROVERBS 16:9)

What if I **lack wisdom** about making a decision?

*“If any of you **lacks wisdom**, you should ask God,  
who gives generously to all without finding fault,  
and it will be given to you.”*  
(JAMES 1:5)

What can I do if I really want to **glorify God**?

*“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,  
do it all for the **glory of God**.”*  
(1 CORINTHIANS 10:31)

What makes me **desire to do God's will**?

*“I **desire to do your will**, my God; your law is within my heart.”*  
(PSALM 40:8)



## ENDNOTES

1. H14 - 'āḇâ - *Strong's Hebrew Lexicon* (niv). Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Feb, 2022. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h14/niv/wlc/0-1/>
2. G2919 - krinō - *Strong's Greek Lexicon* (niv). Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Feb, 2022. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2919/niv/mgnt/0-1/>
3. H977 - bāḥar - *Strong's Hebrew Lexicon* (niv). Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Feb, 2022. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h977/niv/wlc/0-1/>; W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996).
4. *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (n.p.: Merriam-Webster, 2001), <http://www.m-w.com>.
5. G2307 - thelēma - *Strong's Greek Lexicon* (niv). Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Feb, 2022. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2307/niv/mgnt/0-1/>; G1014 - boulomai - *Strong's Greek Lexicon* (niv). Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Feb, 2022. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1014/niv/mgnt/0-1/>; G2107 - eudokia - *Strong's Greek Lexicon* (niv). Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Feb, 2022. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2107/niv/mgnt/0-1/>
6. Adapted from *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*, s.v. "discernment," <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=discernment>.
7. For more on the three inner needs (or longings), see Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., *Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 17–18, 124–127; Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance: Seeing Your True Worth through God's Eyes*, Revised Edition (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 6–11, 21–24.
8. Discipleship Counseling Services, *Discipleship Counseling Training Student Manual* (Dallas, TX: Discipleship Counseling Services, n.d.).

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