

## Session 1: What is the will of God?

WCR Summer Elective: God's Will & Making Decisions

Was it God's will for you to come today? How do you know? How can you determine God's will for your life both in the big matters and in the small ones?

Garry Friesen gives three possible causes for our lack of success in finding God's will:

- God is unable to reveal His will.
- My own sinfulness or insincerity.
- My understanding of the nature of God's will is Biblically deficient.

Friesen says, "Christians cherish a mythology with their theology that influences our understanding how to know the will of God." Understanding the will of God is one of the most complex concepts of our faith. It has been misunderstood and mistreated by many believers and teachers.

To understand a complex concept, sometimes it helps to break it down into smaller parts. To have a complete understanding of God's will, we can sub-divide it into God's will of decree, desire and direction. Therefore to fully understand God's will, we must understand the ways of "God's willing."

**I. God's will of DECREE.** This refers to God's sovereignty over all things. Everything that comes to pass, falls under God's choosing or allowing it to come to pass. Everything that happens, happens according to God's plan. God's decrees cannot be thwarted or changed. God has a plan that determines everything that happens in his Creation. He ordains matters big and small, such as when Jesus would be born and which shoe you will tie first tomorrow morning.

Scripture reveals 4 elements regarding God's will of decree:

- A. It's Certain (Dan 4:34-35; Isa 46:9-10; Job 42:1-6)
- B. It's Exhaustive (Rev 4:11; Prov 16:33; 21:1; 1 Pet 3:17; Eph 1:11)
- C. It's Secret (Deut 29:29; Ps 115:3; Rom 9:18-19; 11:33-36; Jam 4:15)
  1. The exception of prophecy (Amos 3:9)
  2. The exception of the ultimate destiny of the saved & the lost (Jn 3:16; 14:3)
- D. It's Perfect (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20)

*Additional Passages: Ps 139:16; Matt 10:29-30; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28*

Although God determines all things, he never violates his character and therefore never sins or forces someone to sin. Though God is sovereign, he fashioned man so that he has a will and is responsible for his actions and decisions. When we trust in God's will of decree, we are allowing God to be God in all things, including the details of our lives. The entire basis of Rom. 8:28 rests on the sovereignty of God.

**II. God's will of DESIRE.** This refers to what God has commanded and taught in Scripture. God's decree describes the way things are. God's desire describes the way things ought to be. That may seem contradictory, but they are compatible. For instance, the death of Jesus violated God's command not to kill, but at the same time it was necessary to complete God's sovereign plan for our redemption.

God's will of desire is often called God's moral will. It teaches us how to believe and how to live. The Bible reveals 100% of God's moral will. Everything we need for life and godliness is given to us by the truth of Christ found in God's Word (2 Pet 1:3)

- A. Scripture communicates 4 elements regarding God's will of desire:
  - 1. It's the Expression, in Behavioral terms, of God's Character (1 Pet 1:15-16)
  - 2. It Touches every Aspect and Moment of Life: our Goals, Attitudes, Means (1 Pet 4:10)
  - 3. It's Fully Revealed in the Bible (2 Pet 1:3)
  - 4. It's Able to Equip Believers for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17)
  
- B. Our Responsibility to God's will of desire:
  - 1. We must LEARN what is included in His will.
    - a. Reading (1 Tim 4:13)
    - b. Careful Consideration (2 Tim 2:7)
    - c. Search and Inquire (1 Pet 1:10-11)
    - d. Diligence in Study (2 Tim 2:15)
    - e. Meditation (Ps 1:2; Josh 1:8)
    - f. Memorization (Ps 119:11)
    - g. Learning from Gifted Teachers (Phil 4:9; 1 Cor 12:28-29)
    - h. Learn to Move from Milk to Meat (1 Cor 3:1-4)
  
  - 2. We must GROW in obedience of His will.
    - a. For our own Good (Deut 10:12-13)
    - b. Obedience is the key ingredient in successful living (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-3)
    - c. The Bible was given for our Benefit (1 Jn 5:3)
    - d. God has not abandoned us. He has revealed His will (Acts 13:22; Ps 19:7-11)

*Additional Passages: Deut 29:29; Matt 7:21; Rom 2:18; 2 Cor 6:14; 1 Thess 4:3; 1 Thess 5:18; Heb 13:20-21; 1 John 2:15-17*

When we follow God's will of desire we are being obedient. Since God's moral will is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, all of our decisions must be in harmony with what the Bible teaches and commands and we should never contradict Scripture when making a decision or attempting to discern God's will. When a person violates God's commands, we conclude that this person has chosen to go beyond God's will of desire, yet he remains firmly within God's will of decree. God is still in control of all things, even through human disobedience.

**III. God's will of DIRECTION.** This refers to what God has planned for an individual person. It is God's detailed plan for every person. This can be the most confusing aspect of understanding God's will and yet, it tends to be what we are looking for the most, especially when we have a decision to make.

At times, what seems to be most frustrating is knowing that God has a detailed plan for us (will of decree) and even has ordained the big and small matters of our life, yet often, He doesn't tell us what our future holds. Because of this, some Christians may become frozen with indecision because they don't know what God has ordained, or feel that they have to wait until they are certain about God's plan for their life before they make a decision.

Psalm 37:3-7

Psalm 32:8

Proverbs 3:5-6; 16:9

Romans 12:2

Ephesians 5:16-18; 6:6

Colossians 1:9-10; 4:12

God uses a number of means to determine his individual will for every believer. He mainly uses His Spirit to renew the mind of every Christian to acknowledge what His good and acceptable will is. Still, to know God's will of direction, we cannot stop living until it is revealed, nor can we simply flip a coin and force our decision. If a decision needs to be made that the Scriptures do not speak to specifically, we must realize that we cannot reach 100% certainty of God's will of direction for us. We simply must use all the resources that God has given us to make wise choices. We will be discussing these resources in later sessions.