

Steps in Finding God's Will

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The fact that God, the Creator of this immense universe, cares about each of us, wants to guide us along life's pathway, and has a personal plan for each of our lives is one of the most inspiring ideas the human mind could contemplate. The Christian Scriptures make clear that the idea is factual. Those who write or speak about this concept use various terms to express it: understanding God's will, discovering God's direction, detecting God's desire, learning God's leading, gaining God's guidance, perceiving God's plan.

"That sounds great! I want it," you say, "but how do I find it?" First prepare yourself! There are four preparatory steps or prerequisites stated or implied in a classical New Testament passage, Romans 12:1,2 (Berkeley, italics added):

"I beg you, therefore, *brothers*, in view of God's mercies, that you *present your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, but *be transformed* by the renewing of your mind, so as to sense for yourselves what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

The four prerequisites for perceiving God's plan are:

1. Salvation. Make the great faith decision, accepting Christ into your own life as the Savior He came to be.
2. Dedication. Present (give, yield, dedicate) yourself completely to God, telling Him that you are fully His, that you will do anything He asks and go anywhere He sends you.
3. Separation. With the power of the Holy Spirit, clean up your life. Separate yourself from the wrong and evil things in this world. They will obstruct your ability to gain God's guidance.
4. Transformation. Daily study the Scriptures and talk to God to keep yourself growing, maturing, and changing for the better.

Divine guidance is essentially a matter of God applying inner impressions on your mind. He gives you peace on mind when you decide correctly and remain on track. When you decide wrongly, get off the track, or when it is time for the next step in your program, He withholds or withdraws this peace of mind. The Father's plan is not like a blueprint laid out on a drawing board with every detail visible at one glance. God's plan for you, rather, is like a scroll which reveals His will bit by bit, as a scroll in unrolled. Unrolling your scroll completely will take a lifetime.

The four steps in discovering God's will are: 1) erase and pray, 2) read and remember, 3) consider and think, 4) decide and check.

1. **Erase and pray.** Make a conscious mental effort to erase your own desire as though you were erasing a blackboard clean, so that God can imprint upon your mental chalkboard His will and plan for you. Then pray, asking God to finish the erasing process (especially in the subconscious part of your mind which is so hard to reach), guide you, reveal His plan to you, and give you wisdom to decide correctly.
2. **Read and remember.** Read pertinent portions of the Scripture, for God already has revealed His will about hundreds of subjects. Obtain a topical Bible concordance so that you can quickly and easily find Bible passages which deal with the subject at hand. Even if the Scripture does not speak directly to the decision before you, remember the great principles of God's Word which apply to many decisions, and ask yourself these questions:

Could I do this in Christ's name? (Colossians 3:17)

Can I imagine Jesus doing this or deciding this way? (1 John 2:6)

Will this action bring any glory to God? (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Would I want to be found doing this when the Lord returns? (1 John 2:28)

Will this action bring impunity or useless harm to my body, which is the temple of God's Spirit? (1 Corinthians 6:19,20)

Will this activity be a hindrance which will hamper my spiritual progress? (Hebrews 12:1)

Will my following this decision offend another Christian, cause him to stumble, or make him weak? (Romans 14:1)

Will this action be a help or a hindrance to non-Christians? (Matthew 5:16)

3. **Consider and thank.** Consider the ways that are open before you, the available options. Write them down, then consider them more carefully, one by one. Consider, too, the circumstances surrounding you and your decision; the circumstances sometimes point clearly in a certain direction. Do not hesitate to consider also the advice of mature Christian friends or parents (they know you so well). Think and meditate over all aspects of the question at hand. If many factors are involved, draw a line down a piece of paper and list the factors: pro and con. Prayerfully meditate over your list until the decisive factors become clear.
4. **Decide and check.** Don't let the matter ride indefinitely and miss God's guidance by default. Decide! Check for peace of mind. If you decide correctly regarding God's will or plan for you, He signals you, "Correct decision there," by a wonderful sense of inner peace. If you have decided wrongly, the peace of mind will not come. And if that peace does not come? Then you must return to step number one and start all over again. The trouble usually lies right there—you never really erase your own will in the first place.

In matters large and small I have found this approach to knowing God's will and finding His personal plan practical and successful.

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