

How Do I Know God's Will for My Life?

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“I know God's will for your life.”

When I say this to my students, they typically think I've received a special word from God and that I'm about to reveal to them who they should invite to prom, where they should go to college, or whether they should take A.P. History. While God does care about these issues, the Bible has something different in mind when it discusses the will of God.

Consider a few things we know about God's will for us:

1. That we are saved (2Pt 3:9).
2. That we are filled with the Holy Spirit (1Co 2:19).
3. That we are pure (1Th 4:3).
4. That we submit to the proper authorities (1Pt 2:18).
5. That we suffer for doing what is right (1Pt 3:17).

Knowing the will of God begins internally. Are you following the five principles above? If you have truly followed them, then you are free to make choices based on your desires. And if you are living a godly life, God will give you the right desires. This is why Psalm 37:4 says, “Take delight in the **LORD**, and he will give you your heart's desires.”

You see, God's will is not so much about what you do, but about who you are. God's will is not so much about what college you choose, but about the type of student you are. God's will is not so much about who you take to prom, but about the way you treat people. God has dignified you with the freedom of making choices and he calls you to make them wisely (Pr 16:16).

You may still be wondering about God's *specific* will for your life. Should you look for open doors, listen for a “a voice, a soft whisper” (1Kg 19:9-17), or put out a fleece like Gideon (Jdg 6:33-40)? The problem with such approaches is that the Bible never suggests them as a model for decision making. Paul viewed open doors as opportunities that he had the choice to act on or ignore rather than a revelation of God's will (2Co 2:12-13). The “still small voice” through which God spoke to Elijah was not an inward feeling or impression, but an audible voice. Gideon's prayer for a sign—the fleece—actually showed his *lack* of faith, for God had already revealed what he wanted him to do.

While God does sometimes give personalized guidance, such instances are rare and unmistakable (1Co 14:8). So, if God doesn't give a clearly supernatural message, how are we to make decisions in life? The Bible teaches that we are to *seek wisdom*. Wisdom comes from Scripture (2Tm 3:16), God (Jms 1:5), research (Pr 18:13), counsel (Pr 15:22), and life experiences (Ps 90:12). Wisdom is so important that we are commanded to seek it with all we have: “Get wisdom—how much better it is than gold! And get understanding—it is preferable to silver” (Pr 16:16).