

Quick Questions on God's Will

This lesson is a synopsis of the book *Found: God's Will* by John F. MacArthur.

Is God a Cosmic Killjoy?

*One may look for definite guidelines in this area but merely wind up with a variety of ideas. Some apparently think that God's will is lost. At least they say they are searching for it! To them, God must appear to be a sort of divine Easter bunny who has stashed His will, like eggs, somewhere out of sight and sent us running through life trying to find it. And He is up there saying, "You're getting warmer!" (John MacArthur, *Found: God's Will*, pp5-6)*

Others offer the suggestion that God's will is to be found via a traumatic experience. Running down the street, you fall on a banana peel and land on a map of India. Immediately you say to the lord, "Thank You for that clear leading. I understand! India it is!" (p.6)

Then there are those who are actually afraid of the will of God. I will never forget the athlete who came up to me at Hume Lake Camp and said, "I'm not sure I want to give my life to Jesus Christ because I am afraid of what He will make me do." He had the idea that God wants to take robust athletes, break both their legs, and make them play the flute. This implies that God is a kind of "cosmic killjoy," stomping on everyone's fun and raining on parades. People with this view actually fear the will of God as a severe way of life which will demand the sacrifice of their most treasured ability or possession. (p.6)

Let's begin with a simple assumption. Since God has a will for us, He must want us to know it. If so, then we could expect Him to communicate it to us in the most obvious way. How would that be? Through the Bible, His revelation. Therefore, I believe that what one needs to know about the will of God is clearly revealed in the pages of the Word of God. (p.7)

The First Crucial Step

The first thing about God's will—he wants men to be saved. So much that he stays His judgment. Paul said, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:3-4)

It is God's will that men be saved. If you are stumbling around in life and tossing up some periodic prayers to God but have never come on your knees to the foot of the Cross and met Jesus Christ, then you are not even in the beginning of God's will. God has no reason to reveal to you anything particular about your life because you have not met qualification number one: Salvation. (pp.10-11)

The Bible says that God's will is that men be saved, and that is where it all starts. Jesus made this clear in Mark 3:31-35. he was already teaching inside a building when His brothers and mother arrived. The multitude was sitting on the inside, and it was so crowded that His family could not get to Him. Someone said to Him, "Jesus, your mother and Your brothers outside seek You."

He answered, "Who is My mother, or My brethren?" (v. 33)

I am sure the crowd's reaction was something like: "What kind of a question is this? Everyone knows His mother and brothers!"

If Jesus' first reaction did not shock them, His next words did. "He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, 'Behold My mother and My brethren!'" (v. 34)

Each person probably looked at the other and thought, "Who, me?"

Then he qualified it. "For whosoever shall do the will of God... is My brother, and My sister, and mother" (v. 35)

What was Jesus saying? He was teaching that in order to be related to him, one has to do the will of God. Turn it around. To do the will of God one has to be related to Jesus. (pp.12-13)

Spirit-Filled by Jesus Christ

As believers—people in God's family—if we do not know God's will, what are we? Uninformed? No. Searching? No. We are stupid.

"That's pretty rough," you say. "The Bible doesn't talk like that."

Oh? Try this. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph 5:17). Can you think of another word for unwise? I'll give you a hint; it starts with "s."

OK, maybe stupid is a little stronger, a bit more vivid. But it's certainly the same idea.

The way to be not unwise is covered in the very next verse. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (v.18).

Many Christians say, "I don't understand why God hasn't revealed whom I am to marry." Others say, "Why doesn't He show me that job I should take...? And all the time these people are not even Spirit-filled, which is clearly revealed as His will. Why should God show a person something if he is not even fulfilling that which God has already clearly stated as His will? (p.17)

How well do we get Spirit-filled?

When you were saved, the moment you received Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live within you. There is no Christian who does not possess the Holy Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9 cf. 1 Cor 6:19; 12:12-13) Yet it is amazing how many Christians think they do not have the Holy Spirit.

Spirit-Filled as Filled with the Words of Christ

Compare Ephesians 5:17-20 with Colossians 3:16-17

¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 5:17-20, NIV)

¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:16-17, NIV)

Do you see what the Spirit-filled life is? It is being saturated with the things of Christ with His Word, His Person. You might say, "Well, you know I'd like that. I'd like to be saturated with Christ. How do I do that?" The only way is to study the Book that discloses all He is! You say, "I tried reading the Bible, but I didn't get anything."

Let me share how I study the Bible, and how the Bible has come alive to me. I began in 1 John. One day I sat down and read all five chapters straight through. It took me 20 minutes. Reading one book straight through was terrific.

The next day, I sat down and read 1 John straight through again. The third day, I sat down and read 1 John straight through again. The fourth day, straight through again. The fifth day, I sat down and read it again. I did this for 30 days. Do you know what happened at the end of 30 days? I knew what was in 1 John. (pp.27-28)

Planned Neglect

The more you study the Word of God, the more it saturates your mind and life. Someone is reported to have asked a concert violinist in New York's Carnegie Hall how she became so skilled. She said that it was by "planned neglect." She planned to neglect everything that was not related to her goal.

Some less important things in your life could stand some planned neglect so that you might give yourself to studying the Word of God. Do you know what would happen? The more you study the Word of God, the more your mind would be saturated with it. It will be no problem then for you to think of Christ. You won't be able to stop thinking of Him.

To be Spirit-filled is to live a Christ-conscious life, and there is no shortcut to that. You can't go and get yourself super-dedicated to live a Christ-conscious life. The only way you can be saturated with the thoughts of Christ is to saturate yourself with the Book that is all about Him. And this is God's will, that you not only be saved but that you be Spirit-filled. (p.30).

The Priority of Purity

To some people who have been looking for the will of God for a long time, this is going to seem quite obvious. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). God desires every believer to be sanctified. What does "sanctified" mean? Let's use the word pure instead. Paul is talking about practical purity and he gives four principles. (p.31)

³ It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

Abstain from Fornication

Stay away from sexual sin. It does not say avoid sex; it says to stay away from sexual sin. Of course, this means we must not get involved in sexual acts that are wrong. It also means we should clear away from those things. Some Christians who wouldn't dream of doing those things sit and watch somebody else doing them or read about them in some book and call this entertainment. We should have no part in those things. (pp.31-32)

It is absurd for a young person (or anyone else) who is living in sexual impurity to say, "God, show me Your will." Such a person is not even doing what this text of Scripture says is His will. Why should God disclose some further will? (p.32)

Control Your Body

We ought to keep our bodies in subjection to insure that we are honoring God. That includes controlling the way we dress and the things we do with our bodies. This principle covers the whole area of lust of the flesh, and not just sexual things... Nothing which gratifies the body to the dishonoring of God can have a place in the will of God. (p.33)

Subdue Your Passions – "... not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;"

Treat Others Fairly – "... and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him." *Some people step on others' necks to get what they want. Some people use others in a sexual way to gratify their own desires. Others use people in a business way. There are many ways to use others. Don't do it for "the Lord will punish men for all such sins."* (pp.35, I used the NIV for the Scripture)

Silencing the Critics

The Apostle Peter wrote, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's Sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that you do well. For so is the will of God" (1 Peter 2:3-15) (p.38)

What is it God will that you do? Submit. What kind of submission is He talking about? Scripture outlines several kinds, including to parents and other believers. But here Peter calls specifically for the kind of submission that makes you the best possible citizen in the society in which you live. (p.38)

If you are the citizen of a certain state, obey the laws of that state so that people might know that your faith is real, that it reaches and influences every area of your life. I always get disturbed if a guy who has a Christian slogan on his bumper weaves in and out of traffic like a maniac. (p.40)

Facing the Flak

A Christian is expendable. You may not get physical flak but may suffer intellectual persecution instead. You may be quietly ostracized from society. You may be politely shunned at the water cooler... And that causes a deflated ego problem. Every person wants so much to be accepted. But you cannot be accepted by the world and be effective for the Lord. (pp. 51-52)

You're It!

God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and suffering. God's Word makes all this clear. Do not read on until you have grasped these five principles... (p.54)

OK, let me give you the final principle, but hold onto your seat! You may want to jump up and shout! If you are doing all five of the basic things, do you know what the next principle is? Do whatever you want! If those five elements of God's will are operating in your life, who is running your wants? God is!... If you are living a godly life, He will give you the right desires. (pp.54-55)

I had a friend come to me and say, "John, I don't know where the Lord wants me to serve."

I said to him, "Marty, if you had your choice of any service in the world, what would you want?"

He said, "Oh, I have such a burden for my people Israel. I speak French fluently, and Paris is just loaded with Jewish people who don't know Jesus. I personally would like to go to Paris as a missionary to the Jews."

I checked him on the five spiritual principles and said, "Marty, have you done all these things?"

He said, "Yes, I honestly believe that I am committed to Christ in these areas."

I said, "Marty, good-bye, have a nice trip."

He hesitated and said, "But I have to write to 42 mission boards."

I said, "No! Go."

He said, "But this is only my desire."

"Then trust that it is God who planted it. Get out of here." (pp.55-56)