



Introduction

Your life is shaped by the decisions that you make. Some decisions seem small and insignificant. Other decisions seem overwhelming in their importance. But each decision has an effect on the outcome of your life.

God wants the outcome of your life to be pleasing, acceptable and good. Knowing what God's desire is for your life is essential to having a good outcome. But how can you know what He wants? This study will give you principles to use in determining God's will for your life.

God's Intent is to Guide

God has a personal interest in the decisions you make and the path you follow.

This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.

Isaiah 48:17

- Underline the thing God will teach you
- Circle the actions God will take to help you understand the way you should go.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

Psalms 32:8

- Circle the actions God will take to help you understand the way you should go.
- Notice the four things God does toward you: *instruct, teach, counsel and watch over.*

Because He is teaching us and counseling us, we need to be careful not to rely on our own experience and wisdom.

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;* ⁶ *in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

- Underline how we are to trust in the Lord.
- Circle the amount of our heart that is to be involved in trusting.
- Underline what we are NOT to lean on.
- Frame how we are to acknowledge Him.
- Underline what will be done to our paths.

There are some valuable points to ponder in this verse. Trust is another word for faith. Trusting with the **whole** heart is one key to knowing God's will. Acknowledging God as we go on our way is another key. In a certain sense, acknowledging God is an act of faith! Similarly, not relying on what we know is a third ingredient for finding God's will.

Some might think that finding God's will is really difficult. It is as if He takes pleasure in hiding His will from us. Yet, to those who know the principles, finding His will is a simple process.

God's promise of guidance has conditions. He reveals His will to those who are rightly related to Him. So a good place to start when you are seeking to know God's will is with confession of sin. The vDRC study "**Assured Forgiveness**" in the **Getting Started** series can help.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that faith is the thing that pleases God. So it is logical to find that faith is an important ingredient in knowing God's will.

Notice that the promise is not that God will tell you what to do. Rather, the promise is a "straight path". In other words, as you trust God and listen to Him, He'll make your path easy to find and follow.

Personal Preparation

While God is intent upon leading you in your decisions, there are some very practical things you need to do. The first has to do with the desire of your heart.

I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."
Psalms 40:8

- Underline what your desire should be.
- Circle the thing that needs to be in your heart.
- *An attitude of **wanting** to do God's will is an essential ingredient for finding His will. And, having God's Word in your heart goes a long way in helping to develop the right attitude.*

But having a right attitude is not the only preparation you can do.

Do not conform any longer 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

- Circle what you should no longer be conformed to.
- Draw a box around how you should be transformed.
- *The Greek word **metamorphose** is translated by the word "transformed". The image the word conveys is that of a caterpillar being changed into a butterfly.*
- Underline what you will be able to test and approve when your mind is transformed.
- Circle the three words describing God's will at the end of the verse.

Scripture memory is the best way to get God's Word in your heart. Have you begun to memorize God's Word yet? The **God's Word** page of the **Tools Section** of the **vDRC** website contains instructions that will help you get started in memorizing God's Word.



God's General Will

The Bible gives general direction concerning most moral choices you will make. Thus, if you want to know whether or not God wants you to tell the truth, the guidance is already given in the Bible.

Knowing the general principles is essential for determining the course of action God wants you to follow. Draw a line connecting the reference with the summarized message of the verse contained in the right column. (Verse text is at the end of this study.)

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Summarized Message</u>
Matthew 28:19-20 •	• Do good to others
1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 •	• Don't worry
1 Peter 1:15 •	• Filled with God's word
Colossians 3:16 •	• Giving thanks
1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 •	• Love God and people
Galatians 6:10 •	• Make disciples in every nation
Luke 10:27 •	• Seek God first
Philippians 4:6-7 •	• Sexual purity
Matthew 6:33 •	• Lead a holy life

These verses are by no means an exhaustive list of the general guidelines in the Bible. They illustrate the fact that God's Word is full of direction and guidance for most decisions you face.

There are a number of questions that you can ask yourself as you attempt to determine the best course of action to follow. Based upon the general revealed will of God, use the following questions to help you think through your decision:

- Will this help me love God more?
- Will this help me love others more?
- Will this help me lead a more holy life?
- Will this course of action help increase my personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus?
- Am I putting God's desires ahead of my own?

Specific Guidance

But what do you do about situations where you want to do what God wants, but God's Word does not speak specifically about your decision? Some possible situations might include the following questions:

- Should I get married?
- Should I go to College?
- Should I take a new job?
- Should I move to a different area?

To find God's will in these and other situations, there are three steps of personal commitment to be taken and four sources of direction to be considered.

Personal Commitments

Commitment to Do Whatever God Says

One of the key ingredients to finding God's will is being willing to do whatever God tells you to do. There is a glaring example in the Old Testament about a group of people who wanted God to approve their plans.

When the remnant of people left in Jerusalem feared for their lives, they went to Jeremiah the prophet and asked him to find out God's Will.

Pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do."

Jeremiah 42:3

Their choices included staying in Jerusalem or escaping to Egypt. After 10 days Jeremiah told them that God wanted them to stay in Jerusalem. Their response revealed the intent of their heart.

^{43:1} *When Jeremiah finished telling the people all the words of the LORD their God--everything the LORD had sent him to tell them--² Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, "You are lying! The LORD our God has not sent you to say, "You must not go to Egypt to settle there."³ But Baruch son of Neriah is inciting you against us to hand us over to the Babylonians, so they may kill us or carry us into exile to Babylon."⁴ So Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers and all the people disobeyed the LORD's command to stay in the land of Judah.*

Jeremiah 43:1-4

- Circle their reason for disobeying.
- *The only reason for accusing Jeremiah of **lying** is that they had already made up their minds as to the proper course of action.*

Commitment to Ask God's Direction

Asking God for direction shows our willingness to depend upon Him

⁴ *Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths;⁵ guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.*

Psalms 25:4-5

- Circle the three types of leading David requested.

While God's Word may seem to be silent on such very personal decisions, there are general principles that apply and can shed light on the path to be taken.

How can you tell if you are willing to do whatever God say? One way is to pretend that God has answered in a way that you do not favor. If your response to that pretend answer arouses emotions of anger, bitterness or denial, it is very possible that you are not willing to do whatever God might reveal.

Prayer is the essential first step.

A Commitment to Wait

The third commitment that one needs is that of patiently waiting for God.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Psalms 27:14

- *God will often delay His answers. He may give no answer at all. Never mistake God's delay as God's denial. Waiting has a purifying effect on the one who waits.*

Sources of Direction

The four sources of direction below are listed in order of their importance. When all four are in agreement, you can feel certain that the path you are contemplating is the one you should follow.

God's Word

Often times, simply reading the Bible for an extended period of time will bring you to a passage that sheds light on your particular circumstance. So the best places to begin looking for direction is in the Bible.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Psalms 119:105

- Circle the implement to which God's word is compared.
- *The image that this verse uses is someone walking a dark path with a lamp in hand. The lamp sheds only enough light to see the next few steps ahead. Similarly, God will only give you direction for the immediate decisions ahead. He tells you what you need to know when you need to know it.*

Godly Counsel

Often, turning to someone for advice will help you to make the right choices.

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 15:22

Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.

Proverbs 20:18

- Underline why plans fail.
- Circle what you should do if you are making plans.

You are never bound to "obey" the counsel of another. A counselor should help you understand the issues involved in your decision and help you see the possible courses of actions you should take.

Circumstances

Often circumstances make it possible to do or not do some activity. Having favorable circumstances has been likened to an open door. If the door is open, it is an indication to proceed. If it is closed, it is an indication to not proceed.

⁸ But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

1 Corinthians 16:8-9

- Circle the choice that was made in verse 8.
- Underline the reason for that choice.



but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:31

There are some common sense things to keep in mind as you seek counsel.

- Go to someone who knows God's Word
- Go to someone whom you know and trust
- Go to someone who will tell you the truth, not just what you want to hear.

Just because there is an open door does not always mean you should go through it. Paul had an open door in 2 Corinthians 2:12, but chose not to use it.

Inner Peace

The last source of direction comes from the peace that accompanies a right decision.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15

- Circle what is to rule in your heart.
- *The Greek word translated as "rule" has the meaning of umpire or decision maker. Peace is to be the factor used in deciding*

Bringing It All Together

Are you in need of knowing God's Will for a decision you are making? Use the following Chart as a tool to help.

Personal Commitment

Have you committed the decision to prayer?	Yes	No
Are you willing to do whatever God says?	Yes	No
Are you willing to wait for God's answer?	Yes	No

Direction From God's Word

Will this help me love God more?	Yes	No
Will this help me love others more?	Yes	No
Will this help me lead a more holy life?	Yes	No
Will this course of action help increase my personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus?	Yes	No
Am I putting God's desires ahead of my own?	Yes	No

Other Guidance From God's Word

Counsel From Other Christians

Circumstances

Favorable	Unfavorable
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Inner Peace

YES	NO
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The biggest problem with relying only on the peace of your heart has to do with the nature of your heart.



Jeremiah 17:9 says
The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

It is easy to be deceived by your heart!

God will never lead contrary to His Word

Verse on God's General Will

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.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

¹⁷ pray continually; ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

1 Peter 1:15

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:10

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20

He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Luke 10:27

Let 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.

Colossians 3:16

**These verses are used
in the matching
exercise on page 2**