

27. Focus on Trying to Discover God's Will Instead of Actually Doing It

*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;
may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*

(Ps 143:10)

As the verse above demonstrates, King David's prayer and focus was to do the will of God. He accomplished this when he lived according to the laws, commands, and statutes found in God's Word.

This same desire was the main driving force in the lives of all the Lord's great saints found in the Scriptures. They discovered and fulfilled God's will by living according to his Word.

We can become so focused on trying to discover God's will in that which is unknown that we lose sight of the primary importance of actually doing God's will in that which is known from the Scriptures.

The will of God which is spoken about here is often called the *moral will of God*. In the same manner we who live today are also called upon to discover and fulfill the moral will of God. The Bible says, "*Do not conform 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" (Rom 12:2).

However in our day and age when we speak of discovering God's will, it quite often means something different. It usually has to do with wanting direct, specific, and binding direction from God into matters that are outside of his written ethical commands.

Some of these relate to whom we should marry, where we should live, which vocation we should pursue, what item we should purchase, as well as the answers for a whole array of other daily decisions and choices.

Even though having a desire for God to tell us exactly what to do in regards to such things appears noble, we in fact are never given any indication from Scripture that this should be *expected* on our behalf, even if the Lord has done so at times in the past for persons in the Bible.¹

In spite of this, we often go about seeking to discover his specific will in such a mistaken manner that it amounts to nothing more than divination and soothsaying.

We frequently analyze our personal desires, inner impressions, the counsel of friends, as well as current circumstances in hopes they will give us a clue as to what the divine will is. Along with this, we sometimes desperately seek to find words or phrases within the Scriptures that may relate to our situation in the hopes that they will give us a hint of what we are to do.

At times we may even be tempted to dictate various scenarios to the Lord so that the fulfillment of them or lack thereof become a divine mandate for us to either act or refrain from acting (just as in the case of Gideon in the Old Testament²).

¹ Gen 24:10–27; Acts 1:24–26.

² Judg 6:37–40.

While we should not rule out the possibility that God could make his non-moral will known to us through the use of any combination of these “tea leaves” (see entry “Put God in a Theological Box”), we must realize that trying to find his precise will in manners such as these frequently produce nothing but tainted and conflicting results, while posing great danger to us as well.

This peril is because a reliance on these things can cause us to become misguided into believing that we are actually doing God’s will (when we are not) as well as conversely fearful that we may be missing it (also when we are not). Along with this we can experience a feeling of being abandoned by the Lord if for some reason we have to proceed upon a course of action before we sense his certain direction.

However, perhaps the greatest danger of believing we have to discover God’s exact will before we make any decision is that we can become so overly passive that we end up doing nothing at all.

In light of all that has been said, how can we avoid wrongly trying to discover God’s exact will in matters where the Word of God gives no specific direction? Here are three essential ways.

Focus on Doing God’s Will by Loving God and Your Neighbor as Yourself. One may immediately ask what love has to do with discovering the will of God. The answer is *everything*. Christ was once asked by an individual what the greatest commandment was. In essence, he was requesting to know what God’s primary will was for us as humans. Jesus answered him by saying that it is to “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and*

with all your mind....And...Love your neighbor as yourself
(Matt 22:35–40).

To love the Lord as spoken of here does not primarily have to do with emotion (although it certainly may include it) but it has to do with *action*. To truly love him is to obey him just as the Apostle John said, *“In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome”* (1 John 5:3).

In regards to loving our fellow humans we do this by serving them and striving to meet their needs. This is in accordance with the teaching of Christ when he commanded us to, *“Do to others what you would have them do to you”* (Matt 7:12).

Therefore, as we seek to truly love God and our fellow humans we place ourselves in the middle of his moral will for us.

Follow the God-Centered Desires of Your Heart. Even when we are seeking to be in the center of God's moral will by loving him with our whole being and our neighbor as ourselves, there are still many decisions which we need to make where specific direction is not found in the Word of God. When this is the case there is a wonderful, biblical principle that we should adhere to which is, *“Take delight in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this”* (Ps 37:4–5).³

When we first and foremost strive to do the known will of God as found in the Word of God, he will surely guide us to where we need to be and into what we need to do.

³ Cf. Prov 16:3.

Thus as amazing as it may seem, when we are in the middle of God's moral will, but yet in doubt as to what to do in a particular situation, we are told that we can follow the desires of our heart!

However, we must note the words "delight" and "commit." These terms clearly show us that our desires are to flow from a God-centered life so that the main goal of whatever it is we are considering has our relationship with him, his glory, and the furtherance of his kingdom at the forefront.

Therefore, questions about such things as marriage, employment, education, living locale, or whatever other decision we are facing should be viewed in this light. They are not to be seen merely as ends in and of themselves.

It must be noted that even as we are focusing our hearts on the Lord and seeking after the God-centered desires of our heart, we may still be uncertain as to how to proceed in pursuing them. When this is the case we need to pray for God's wisdom, knowing that he will give it to us when we ask for it in faith.

The Bible says in this regard, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind"* (Jas 1:5–6).⁴

With this in mind we should be aware that the Lord may bring his wisdom through the counsel of godly friends and so we shouldn't hesitate to seek their advice.⁵

⁴ Cf. Prov 2:6; Rom 11:33; 12:1–2; Eph 5:15–16; Col 1:9–10.

⁵ Prov 11:14; 24:6; cf. Ps 119:24.

Trust in God's Sovereign Ability to Achieve His Purposes through Us. Even when we are seeking to pursue God-oriented desires which flow from a life of love for him and our fellow humans, we can still be fearful that we will somehow miss out on God's purposes (i.e., his "best") for us. When this happens we must fully trust in his sovereign ability to bring about precisely what he would have us to do, as well as when and where he would have us do it. This is because God "*works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will*" (Eph 1:11)⁶ and "*in all things God works for the good of those who love him*" (Rom 8:28).

Thus, we are encouraged to, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight*" (Prov 3:5–6).⁷

In light of this, we should not be passive or afraid of the unknown or fearful of taking what seems to be a risk because we are uncertain of where our God-oriented choices will take us.

We very well may have some hits and misses but we should embrace the walk of faith, be active in it, not passive because we are afraid we might get it wrong. The Lord can and will redirect us and get us to where we need to be and into what we need to be doing when we are fully yielded to do his will.

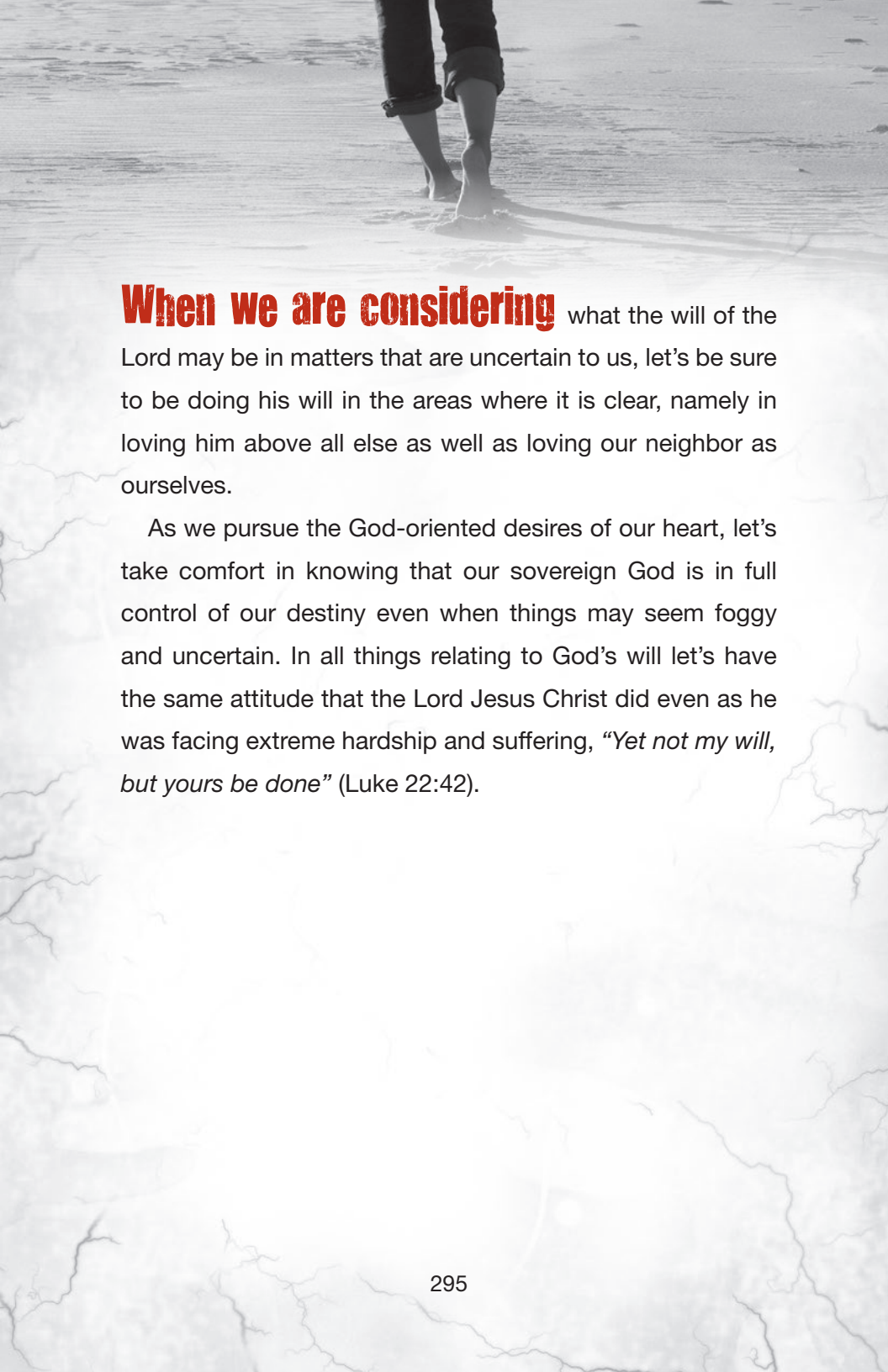
One final note in this regard—we must also take to heart God's Word when he says, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the*

⁶ Cf. Prov 16:9; 19:21.

⁷ Cf. Isa 46:9–10; Rom 8:28.

LORD” (Isa 55:8). His will may lead us to pursue endeavors that do not seem to make perfect sense and sometimes the end result may seem like total failure and defeat, as it did for many saints of old.⁸ But through the Lord’s divine grace, wisdom, and power, seeking and doing God’s will, is never a waste of our time or our life.

⁸ Heb 11.



When we are considering what the will of the Lord may be in matters that are uncertain to us, let's be sure to be doing his will in the areas where it is clear, namely in loving him above all else as well as loving our neighbor as ourselves.

As we pursue the God-oriented desires of our heart, let's take comfort in knowing that our sovereign God is in full control of our destiny even when things may seem foggy and uncertain. In all things relating to God's will let's have the same attitude that the Lord Jesus Christ did even as he was facing extreme hardship and suffering, *"Yet not my will, but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42).



HOW TO DESTROY YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

If God truly has a specific will for you then you can be certain that he will precisely reveal it to you just like he did for various individuals in the Bible. Therefore, before you even think about embarking upon any pursuit that you are unsure is of the Lord, just wait until he makes it absolutely clear to you what it is. Otherwise, you will just be acting presumptuously and end up missing his perfect will and messing up your life.

However, one way you can tell for certain if something is of God is that it will almost certainly involve you having to do the thing you most dread doing. Without a doubt you will also have to experience extreme hardship in some way as well. This is what happened to almost every major character in the Bible who was greatly used by the Lord and so you should expect the same—that is, if you truly mean business with God.