

“Clearing up the Confusion”

Text: Ephesians 5:15-17

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Three friends seeking God’s will:

- One is looking at three grad schools he’s been accept to.
- One is looking to stay in Arizona or move to Florida—work, church.
- One is dating 3 guys and looking to marry one of them.

This morning I want to start a new series called “What Is God’s Will for My Life?”

- I believe this is one of the most frequently asked questions.
- It’s an important question because there’s nothing more important than knowing and doing God’s will.
- Success is knowing the will of God and being right in the center of it. God wants us to know His will.

Read Ephesians 5:15-17, *“Be very careful how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord’s will is.”*

Pray!

God wants you to understand what His will is.

- Why is it so difficult?
- Why is it so hard to figure out “God, what is Your will for my life?”
- How come it’s so confusing?
- Why do we have a fog so much of the time?

This morning I want to us to look at “Clearing Up the Confusion”. Thank you to Rick Warren for being a resource for this series.

- I think the reason there is so much confusion about knowing God’s will is that there are some basic misconceptions it. I want us to look at these this morning, what God has to say about it.

I. GOD’S WILL IS NOT A FEELING.

A. It’s not an emotion, a sensation, an impression, or goose bumps.

Some people use this technique. You sit down, get in neutral, let your mind go blank. You’re just sitting there waiting for an emotion. You’re relying on emotion. God’s will is not a feeling.

1. People having a direct line to God – “God told me that you are going to marry me.” “God told me that you are going to buy that house.”
2. I don’t think Paul had it that easy. He struggled with it. Many times he had no idea what God was going to do next.

- B. The problem with this approach is feelings are very unreliable, highly suspect. They come from many resources. Your feelings may be based on fatigue, illness, on a TV show you watched, a book you read, a bad pizza you had last night. Feelings are highly unreliable.
1. Jeremiah 17:9, *“The heart is deceitful. It is desperately wicked.”*
 - In Hebrew that means it’s sick. When you’re sick, you don’t feel good. When you don’t feel good, you can get all kinds of feelings. Even the devil can create feelings.
 - God’s will is not a feeling. Feelings come and go.
 2. Jim Jones and Guyana – People followed a man who was always getting God’s word directly – not from the Word but from emotions, from feelings. Led many to drink poison Kool Aide and kill themselves.

II. GOD’S WILL IS NOT A FORMULA

- A. This is the mechanical approach to God’s will. You follow this recipe and you’ll get automatic results. Most of the books on God’s will are this approach – the formula approach. Do this and this, mix it together and you get God’s will.
1. Have you noticed how many “easy steps” there are for Everything? We live in an instant society. We don’t want a long drawn out process. We want a formula.
- B. Problems with this approach:
1. There are different formulas and they can’t all be right. Plus, if I miss one little step, I’m off in a wrong area and maybe I’ve missed God’s will forever.
- C. God’s will is not a closed system. It’s dynamic. It’s ever changing and God takes into account even our mistakes.
1. I hear people say, “God can’t use me. I made a mistake in my life ten years ago and made the wrong choice. I went into the wrong career... I married the wrong person... I made a bad mistake. For the rest of my life I’ve got to settle for second best.”
 2. That’s a lie. You don’t find the phrase “second best” in the Bible. Many people think if I make one bad decision back there then I’m off course the rest of my life. No!
- D. **Misconception:** If I disobey then the whole thing falls apart. All through the Scripture, all believers made mistakes. Can you imagine Moses saying, “I killed a man. God can’t use me.” But God did, didn’t He? Or David saying, “I committed adultery. God can’t use me anymore.” But God did. God is forgiving and His will takes into account even my mistakes, my humanity.
- E. Aren’t you glad God’s will for your life is bigger than just one wrong decision?

III. WHAT IS GOD’S WILL? GOD’S WILL IS A FELLOWSHIP.

- A. **It’s a friendship.** 1 Corinthians 1:9, *“God is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with His Son, Jesus Christ.”*

1. God's will is not rules. It's a relationship to Him.
 2. God's will is not a life map, but it's a lifestyle.
 3. It's the way you live. It's not an agenda; it's your attitude toward God.
- B. When you study Scripture and try to find the techniques of finding God's will, you just don't find them. Why isn't it all laid out for us? Because God's will is a fellowship, friendship, a relationship.
- C. **Focus on God, not guidance.** That's the key to knowing God's will.
1. I encouraged the three people to spend more time with God.
- D. If God's will is a relationship, then your attitude is the key to it. **Three attitudes.** God says, "Don't get these attitudes in your life because you'll miss My will if you do."

1. DON'T BE FATALISTIC ABOUT GOD'S WILL.

- A. This is the attitude, "What will be, will be... It happened, therefore it must be God's will". And you passively slide through life with an attitude of resignation, "Whatever happens is God's will" – grin and bear it, and you assume that everything that happens in your life must be God's will. That's fatalistic. There are a couple of errors in this.
1. **It's unfair to God.** If everything that happens is God's will – God's perfect will – then God gets blamed for all the bad in the world: Somebody gets leukemia – "It must be God's will!" Somebody dies in a plane crash – "It must be God's will!" A nation gets blown up – "It must be God's will!" He gets blamed for all the evil in the world.
 - a. The Bible makes it extremely clear that God's perfect will is not always done. If God's will were always done, this place would be perfect – heaven. That's why we're to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*" It's done perfectly in heaven; it's done imperfectly on earth. If God's will were always done, you wouldn't have to pray, "Thy will be done." It would just happen automatically.
 - c. Don't blame God. That is unfair to God.
 2. **It's unhealthy for you.** It keeps you from growing and robs you of one of the greatest gifts God has given you – the freedom to choose. It promotes self-pity, passivity. The blame is taken off you and you pass the buck and say that everything that happens (according to this fatalistic attitude) is God's will. Christians are in the world to bring about the will of God. We're to pray for it. A fatalistic attitude robs you of the initiative.
 - a. **Illustration:** The parent that makes all the decisions for their child and never lets that child make any decisions own its own, that poor child is doomed to immaturity.

- b. God lets us make choices. Even when we make the wrong ones it's part of learning. God wants you to grow to the point in your life that you make decisions just like Jesus Christ without Him having to write it in the sky. That's called maturity.

3. **Insight:** God's will involves my choices.

2. DON'T BE FEARFUL ABOUT HIS WILL.

- A. For many people, even the subject of God's will scares them, frightens them, makes them nervous. They get defensive and start to run from it. Maybe He'll send me to Africa as a missionary... What if He makes me a religious fanatic? God says, "Don't be afraid." Jesus came to earth not to scare us but to save us.
- B. Are you sometimes afraid to pray, "Lord, Thy will be done." What is it we are afraid of?
 - 1. **We're afraid of change.** What if God changes my lifestyle? He may!
 - 2. **We're afraid of criticism.** What are other people going to think if I sell out to God's will?
 - 3. **We're afraid of commitment.**
- C. The root of that attitude – fear – is the attitude that we really doubt that God has our best interest at heart.
 - 1. Jeremiah 29:11, *"I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. 'Plans to...' make you miserable? To make you a fanatic and everybody's going to hate you and stay a mile away from you? No. "...plans to prosper you and not harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future."*
- D. **Insight:** God's will is an expression of God's love. Everything that God does to you, for you, through you He does as an expression of His love, not His anger. It's for your best.

3. DON'T BE FRUSTRATED ABOUT HIS WILL.

- A. This is where most of you are today.
 - 1. Maybe to you God's will is confusing, complicated. You just can't figure it out.
 - 2. Maybe you are resentful about God's will. Maybe you did something. You honestly prayed about it and you thought, "This is God's will" and it bombed. What happened? You're resentful.
 - 3. Maybe you feel like a failure – "I just can't start over!"
 - 4. You're worried and you're confused about God's will.
- B. Romans 8:28, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."* All things.
 - 1. Does that include my own mistakes? Yes.
 - 2. Does that mean when I'm an innocent victim of somebody else's bad decision? Yes.

3. Does that include when I've raised my kids the best I could and they reject everything I've tried to teach them and it hurts?
Yes.

C. **Insight:** God's will is a long term process, and the process is to make you like Jesus. That process includes problems and pleasures.

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE: IT'S FAITH.

Hebrews 11:6, *"Without faith it is impossible to please God. Anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."*

A. If you want to be in God's will -- whatever it requires, it's going to require faith. God's will always requires faith. That is why God doesn't spell it all out. If He spelled it all out, would that require any faith? No. Not at all. Faith comes when you're not really sure and you have to take that step into the dark. He gives you enough light for that step but not for the long haul. That's why everything isn't spelled out. Maturity is moving in faith.

B. So how do we get started?

1. 1 Timothy 2:3-4, *"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."*

- a. The starting point for knowing God's will is to establish a relationship with Jesus Christ. God's will is a relationship. Not a religion but a relationship.

2. The second thing we do is begin to fill our mind with God's word. God's will is found in God's word. The more you fill your mind with the Bible, the more you know God's word, the more you're going to know God's will. The more you know God's word, the deeper the relationship becomes and you begin to think like God thinks, to act the way He acts.

- a. Psalm 119:105. This is the longest chapter in the Bible and it's all about God's word. *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

Prayer:

God, we praise you that you have a plan and purpose for our lives. Please clear any confusion we may have concerning Your will for our lives—the fatalism, fear and frustration—and replace it with faith.

Dear Jesus, I want to know what Your will is for my life. I want to know You. Lord, take my life and make it what You want.

Lord, thank you for your word. Thank You that we know Your will through Your word, that You did not come to confuse us, but to give us confidence as we put ourselves into Your hands. In Jesus' name.

Amen.