

JESUS, CONTINUED ...

LESSON 5: THE SPIRIT SHEPHERD

Some notes from J.D.'s teaching:

Wrong ideas about discerning God's will ...

How does God *primarily* guide us?

In Scripture, teaching about the "will of God" is more often referring to the shaping of my _____ more so than instructing me on what I am "to do".

Proverbs presents the will of God as a " _____ " rather than a " _____ ".

This path is a path of _____. Where does that come from?

Does God guide us through our circumstances?

What about "*open doors*"?

What about *opposition* and *obstacles*?

Sheep and our need for a Shepherd ...

Proverbs 3:1-8 (ESV)

¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, ² for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. ³ Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. ⁵ **Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.** ⁶ **In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.** ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. ⁸ It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

THE WILL OF GOD

1) God always _____.

See: Eph. 1:11, Matthew 10:29-30, Acts 4:27-28, Psalm 139:16, Isaiah 46:9-10

This is God's will of _____.

God knows all things and sovereignly superintends all things. God's will of decree is absolute. It is from before the creation of the world. It is the ultimate determination over all things, and it cannot be overturned.

"Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which he upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty - all things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but from his fatherly hand."

- Heidelberg Catechism

2) God _____.

See: 1 John 2:15-17, Hebrews 13:20-21, Matthew 7:21, Deuteronomy 29:29

This is God's will of _____.

This refers to what God has commanded — what He desires from His creatures.

If the will of decree is how things _____, the will of desire is how things _____.

3) Does God have a specific _____?

What we are seeking/asking for is God's will of _____.

God does have a specific plan for our lives, but it is not one that He expects us to figure out *before* we make a decision.

God does help us make decisions (that's called wisdom), but God's will is not like a maze, or a bull's eye, or a tightrope or a door.

"Conventional understanding of God's will defines it as a specific pathway we should follow into the future. God knows what this pathway is, and he has laid it out for us to follow. Our responsibility is to discover this pathway — God's plan for our lives. We must discover which of the many pathways we could follow is the one we should follow, the one God has planned for us. If and when we make the right choice, we will receive his favor, fulfill our divine destiny and succeed in life. ... If we choose rightly, we will experience his blessing and achieve success and happiness. If we choose wrongly, we may lose our way, miss God's will for our lives, and remain lost forever in an incomprehensible maze."

- Gerald Sittser, *The Will of God as a Way of Life: Finding and Following the Will of God* (p. 17).

This conventional understanding is the wrong way to think of God's will. In fact, expecting God to reveal some hidden will of direction is an invitation to disappointment and indecision. Trusting in God's will of decree is good. Following His will of desire is obedient. Waiting for God's will of direction is a mess. It is bad for your life, harmful to your sanctification, and allows too many Christians to be passive tinkerers who strangely feel more spiritual the less they actually do. God is not a Magic 8-Ball we shake up and peer into whenever we have a decision to make. He is a good God who gives us brains, shows us the way of obedience, and invites us to take risks for Him.

- Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (p. 24).

THE HOLY SPIRIT and GOD'S GUIDANCE

1. God guides us by His invisible _____ at all times. (Rom 8:28)
2. God has spoken to His people in _____, guiding them with their conscious cooperation.
Examples: a still small voice, by angels, by dreams, by inner promptings, by the mouth of a donkey, by a burning bush, by writing on a wall, etc.
3. In these *last* days, God has spoken to us by _____. (Hebrews 1:2-3)
4. God continues to speak to us by His Son through _____ in the _____. (Hebrews 3:7, 4:12)
*(1) God can speak in many ways.
(2) In these last days, God has spoken by his Son.
(3) God speaks to us by His Son through the Holy Spirit speaking by the living and active Word of God.*
5. Apart from the Spirit working through Scripture, God does not promise to use any other means to guide us, nor should we expect Him to.

What about "special revelation"?

Any time you take the Bible out of context you destroy the intent of God's Word. That's why you cannot take instances of special revelation and make them normative for the Christian experience. ... When he [Paul] did experience a special revelation, seeing a vision of a man calling him to Macedonia, he obeyed. But the special revelation of God was a rare and unique experience, even for Paul. ... We cannot take special circumstances and make them the norm by which we live our lives. Special revelation for guidance was not the normal apostolic experience. And at the time it was received (by Paul, by Philip, by Peter as he lay on his roof) it was not being sought. ... Special revelation came at a time when God wanted to lead them apart from the normal ways in which His people make choices.

- Bruce Waltke, Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?, 18-19.

"When we have ruled out what God has expressly forbidden, and when we have searched the Bible and prayed for wisdom, we are free to choose. This seems to be what is modeled for us in the New Testament. We do not find people desperately seeking God's will through dreams or visions (though occasionally God saw fit to use such miraculous means), but we see people making decisions based on what seemed good or best or necessary"

- Tim Challies, The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment, 116.

The most reliable guide to the _____ of God is the _____ of God.

The Spirit who _____ Scripture is the Spirit who _____ Scripture.

CONCLUSION: Wisdom and the Will of God...

God's Word

Godly counsel

Going to God in prayer

Godly desires