**What is God’s Will for My Life**

Lightbearers resource papers are designed as a resource to Lightbearers staff as they interact with

students and partners and are asked to provide wisdom on a variety of topics. These papers should be considered an internal resource providing clarity on a sound evangelical stance on particular issues.

Foundational to each paper is the perspective that the Gospel is primary recognizing that the Gospel impacts every corner of life (1 Corinthians 6:20); therefore, we aim to provide staff with direction that is Biblically sound and points them to view any issue through the lens of the Gospel.

**What drives this particular paper?** *Students are asking the question, “How do I know what God’s will is for my life?” Major seasons of life are amidst them as they choose a degree plan that leads to a career, they are beginning to date and get married, most of them are on their own for the first time and making financial and other big decisions, and some might even be starting a family. They are seeking answers on what the“right” next steps for their lives are.*

**Defining the Will of God**

There are many reasons a student might want to know what God’s will is for their life. They may be striving to please Him by wanting what He wants. They may be fearful of making a decision without all of the facts or they might be searching for perfect fulfillment in life. It may be the fact there are just too many choices so how are they to know? Perhaps it is the fact that humans are cowards who want nothing bad to happen to them and want to know that everything is going to turn out fine.[[1]](#footnote-0)

“What does God will for my life?” is a question we see not only college students wondering and seeking out answers for, but people of all ages. As we take a look into Scripture, we see that God’s will has two sides to it. The first side of this is God’s will of *decree.* Kevin DeYoung highlights that this refers to God’s sovereignty over all things and that everything that He decrees and ordains will happen.[[2]](#footnote-1) We see this side of God’s will in Ephesians 1:11 which says, “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.” God knows all things and His will of decree is absolute. The second side of God’s will is his will of *desire*. This refers to what he desires of his creatures, holding us responsible for our actions. We are called to do what is pleasing in His sight by obeying His Word and commandments. In this we must remember that God has secret things He knows that He will not always reveal, but He will be gracious to reveal the things we need to know.[[3]](#footnote-2) We see this idea in Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Often when students are asking what God’s plan for their life is, what they are really looking for is God’s will of direction. We can be assured from Romans 8:28 that He will work all things together for our good and His glory, but our future is not something that we are tasked with knowing ahead of time. We are called to trust that God cares about our future, He is sovereign, and we can ask Him for direction knowing that He has a specific plan for our lives, but that we cannot exist outside of His plan.[[4]](#footnote-3) We must not wait for God’s will of direction, but rather trust His will of decree, obey His will of desire and cling to Matthew 6:33 which says “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”[[5]](#footnote-4)

**A Biblical Foundation of Knowing God’s Will**

The problem we are seeing is a desire in students to know things God may never reveal to us and an ignorance or lack of acknowledgement and care for the things God has revealed to us in the Bible.[[6]](#footnote-5) We are not called to figure out what tomorrow will bring, but to be content with simple obedience on the journey.[[7]](#footnote-6) What then is it that is revealed to us in Scripture? What do we have to trust and hope in? We are called to live holy lives—set apart for Him. God desires sanctified lives from us. We are called to rejoice, pray, and give thanks in all circumstances. We are called to know God’s will so we can bear fruit and know Him better, and we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God’s will is that we would grow in His likeness.[[8]](#footnote-7) In Kanakuk Institute’s handout “God’s Will,” we see that “God’s will is that we be saved (1 Timothy 2:1-4, 2 Peter 3:9), that we be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:17-18), that we be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8), that we be submissive (1 Peter 2:13-15), that we suffer (1 Peter 3:17, Philippians 1:29), and that we are obedient (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 6:5-6, Colossians 1:9-10, 4:12, Hebrews 13:20-21).”[[9]](#footnote-8) These are just some of the primary commands and principles evident in Scripture.

God does not want us to worry about the future. We see this truth present in Matthew 6:25-33, specifically in verse 34 which says. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” So now the question remains, *Does God guide us at all in decision making?* Yes, He does! He guides us by His invisible providence at all times. He directs our affairs at all times. He can speak to His people in different ways, even guiding through conscious cooperation. God has spoken to us by His Son. God shows Himself in the face of Christ and God’s word to us is centered on Jesus.[[10]](#footnote-9) He continues to speak to us by His Son, through His Spirit in the Scriptures. Apart from the Spirit through Scripture, God does not promise to use any other means to guide us, nor should we expect Him to.[[11]](#footnote-10) This means that although God can make anything happen, we cannot expect Him to reveal anything through extraordinary means such as dreams, visions, signs, etc.

James Petty highlights that God’s knowledge is exhaustive and we can trust ourselves to his eternal and unchangeable will.[[12]](#footnote-11) Our knowledge of both good and evil is actually restricted by God’s love for us.[[13]](#footnote-12) We would probably never be able to handle certain problems if we knew them in advance. Most anxieties we face are about the future in some form which is why we are tasked with not worrying about tomorrow.[[14]](#footnote-13) We can trust in and lean on the one who holds the whole world in His hands. It is important to note that God’s sovereign rule never discourages prayer but always encourages it![[15]](#footnote-14) As James Petty writes in his book *Guidance: Have I Missed God’s Best?* “Because God can intervene, we should pray and we should work.”[[16]](#footnote-15)

**How to Make Decisions According to the Will of God**

In his book, *Just Do Something,* Kevin DeYoung states that “Wisdom is knowing God and doing as He commands.”[[17]](#footnote-16) We should make decisions by obeying what we know to be true in Scripture and exercising wisdom. We do this by storing up God’s commands in our hearts, turning our ears to wisdom and calling out for insight.[[18]](#footnote-17) What this looks like practically is reading our Bibles, asking and listening to sound advice and praying for it! 2 Timothy 3:15 says that as we study and read and memorize Scripture, it makes us “wise for salvation”. We must regularly be soaking in God’s Word that we might be conformed to His image like Romans 12:1-2 says “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

So, when it is time to make a decision, what steps should I take? Begin by searching the Scriptures for principles. The second step is to get wise counsel. Next, talk to people who know you well about your abilities and gifts and be willing to be teachable. The third step is to pray—not just that you would be able to figure out His will of direction, but that you would be following His will of desire. Pray for a right heart that is not motivated by pride. Pray that you would not be making a decision based on people pleasing or fear. And finally, just make a decision. It does not need to be over-spiritualized.[[19]](#footnote-18) John MacArthur Jr. states in his book *Found: God’s Will* that “The Spirit filled life is yielding every decision to the control of the Spirit”.[[20]](#footnote-19) Do this and remember who the Spirit is that is in you. We can be comforted knowing we are making the decision in a protected environment, knowing the almighty God watches over with providence.[[21]](#footnote-20) God has established boundaries in our lives and holds us in his hands despite our foolishness.[[22]](#footnote-21)

**Appendices:**

**Q&A:**

**Is there one specific plan for my life?** Yes, God has one specific plan for your life and the choices that you make and circumstances that arise all are a part of that plan. That plan accounts for all of your sin, mistakes, and spiritual blindness.[[23]](#footnote-22)

**Because God is sovereign over all does that mean He is the author of evil?** Absolutely not! James 1:13 says “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.” The causes of evil are Satan and mankind's own sin. Petty writes, “Our minds cannot fathom how God can create responsible creatures who are truly accountable to him, while all their sin is worked out in strict accordance with the plan of God”. [[24]](#footnote-23) Divine sovereignty and man’s responsibility work together.

**Does my feeling of peace, or lack of peace, play into God’s will?**

We know that God is the God of peace and not confusion (1 Cor. 14:33); that a fruit of the Spirit is peace (Gal. 5:22); the Gospel is peace (Eph 6:15); the peace of Christ should rule our hearts (Col. 3:15); and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard our hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). With these Truths guiding decision making, God’s peace should be experienced when determining God’s will. If there is lack of peace, this is more than likely discernment from the Holy Spirit in the situation.

**What type of guidance and counsel should be sought out when making decisions?**

Simply answered–wise (Prov. 1:5, 12:15, 13:10, 19:20-21; 27:9). Wise counsel should be sought when determining God’s will. So how do you know who will give wise counsel? One, we know that ultimately Christ is our Wonderful Counselor (Is. 9:6). Going to the Word of God and seeking counsel from what He has said is the first step. Second, counsel should be sought from wise people. So how do we determine who will give wise counsel? Take a look at the people in your life and see who you trust and who have made wise decisions of their own i.e. pastors, mentors, family members, church members, co-workers, friends. When receiving counsel from others, make sure that what is said lines up with the Word of God–test what you have been told. You will find confirmation in Scripture.

**If the outcome of a decision is not enjoyable, does this mean it is not in God’s will?** Throughout Scripture, it is seen that suffering will be experienced and is inevitable (Rom 8:17; 1 Cor 12:26; Phl 1:29; 2 TIm 1:12; 1 Pet 3:14, 17; 1 Pet 4:19). So just because what is being experienced may not be necessarily enjoyable, it does not mean that it is not in the will of God. The direction given is to live for Him in every circumstance because He is sovereign over all (Prov. 19:21; James 4:14-15).

**Bibliography:**

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1. Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God’s Will.* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. DeYoung, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God’s Will.* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. DeYoung, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. DeYoung, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. DeYoung, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. DeYoung, 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. DeYoung, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. “God’s Will”. Kanakukinstitute.com https://kanakukinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Gods-Will-Handout.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. DeYoung, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God’s Will.* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. James Petty. *Guidance: Have I Missed God’s Best?* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2003), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Petty, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Petty, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. Petty, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Petty, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. DeYoung, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. DeYoung, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God’s Will.* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. John MacArthur Jr. *Found: God’s Will*. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1973), 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. James Petty. *Guidance: Have I Missed God’s Best?* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2003), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. DeYoung, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Petty, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. Petty, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)