**THE WILL OF GOD**

**WEEK 5: What Can We Do to Know God’s Revealed Will to us?**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

* The goal of this six-week class is to discuss the will of God. We want to take on the subject from as many different angles as possible and discuss what is being taught in the church world today.
* We want you to have a Biblical, theological and personal understanding of how to know and then pursue the will of God in your own life.
* So, for the next six weeks, we want to explore with you all what the Bible says about the will of God and how we can apply that to our decision-making processes.
* Our schedule will look like this:
	+ Week 1: What is the will of God?
	+ Week 2: What are the wrong methods of interpreting God’s will?

### Week 3: What is the Holy Spirit’s role in interpreting God’s will?

* + Week 4: How do we reconcile evil in the world when God’s in control?
	+ **Week 5: What can we do to know God’s revealed will to us?**
	+ Week 6: What steps can I put into place for proper Biblical decision making?

# INTRODUCTION

* So far in this class, we have worked to lay the Biblical foundation for understanding the various aspects of God’s will (sovereign & moral will)
* We have looked at the *wrong* ways to interpret God’s will
* We have sought to understand the Holy Spirit’s role in interpreting God’s will
* So, for our final two weeks, we are going to transition into the practical application of these Biblical principles regarding God’s will
	+ We now want to ask: how we can know and live according to God’s revealed will?
* Before we look at the steps for Biblical decision making, I want to look with you, from Scripture, how we can know God’s revealed will for believers.
	+ With that, we are going to examine and answer, from God’s word, one of the biggest questions that believers have: **What is God’s will for my life?**

# REVIEW: GOD’S SOVEREIGN, MORAL, AND INDIVIDUAL WILL

## God’s Sovereign Will

* Also known as His “will of decree” or “decretive will”
	+ **Definition**: everything that God ordains to happen
* God’s sovereign will is that which God brings to pass according to his sovereign plan
* This aspect of God’s will is only for the Lord to know...it’s not for us to know
	+ **Deuteronomy 29:29** - ***The secret things belong to the Lord our God****, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*
* No one knows what God is going to do in the future apart from prophecy
	+ It’s not a plan to find out ahead of time

## God’s Moral Will

* This is also known as the “preceptive will” or “will of command” or “will of desire”
	+ **Definition**: The commands and principles contained in God’s Word for us to follow
* God’s moral will is that which is revealed to us in the Word
* This aspect of His will is not hidden, it’s not secret…It can be known ahead of time
	+ **Deuteronomy 29:29** ~ *The secret things belong to the Lord our God,* ***but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law****.*
* God’s word, the Bible, contains for us God’s revealed will or His will of command

## Individual Will

* As believers ask, “What is God’s will for my life”, they often mean that they want to know what God wants them to do in a specific situation
* Most Christians have this idea that God’s will is like a target and the bullseye represents the very center of His individual will
	+ Most Christians think that they must find the “dot” in the center so they can make correct decisions and they think that if they don’t find that “dot…the very center of God’s will” they are going to miss it and then they are going to miss God’s best for them
	+ ***The idea of an individual will for every detail of a person’s life is not found in Scripture***
* The emphasis in Scripture is never on discovering or finding God’s will, rather, it is understanding, knowing, and doing God’s will

Center of God’s Will

Biblical Principles Narrowing Down Options

Decision that Misses God’s Best

 Biblically Legitimate Options

Non-Biblical Options

# NAVIGATING GOD’S REVEALED WILL IN SCRIPTURE

* Part of living within God’s revealed will is understanding the guard rails that have been put in place for believers.
	+ However, one way that believers misinterpret God’s revealed will is by taking Scripture out of context
	+ One way this can happen is when we confuse descriptive text and prescriptive text
* When studying the Bible, it is important to determine whether the verse or passage at hand is descriptive or prescriptive.
	+ A passage is descriptive if it is simply describing something that happened.
	+ A passage is prescriptive if it is specifically teaching that something should happen.
* Simply put, is it a description or a command? Is the passage describing something (it happened) or is it prescribing something (it should happen)?
	+ Example: Passages that talk about the early church meeting in their homes (Acts 2:46, 20:20; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19)
	+ Can we infer from this that it is wrong to gather in a church building?
* No, this is simply describing a practice that happened **at that time**, it’s not giving a principle for us to follow.
* It is critical for us to be studying a text in its context!
* In one word, we need proper **hermeneutics!**
	+ There is one interpretation of the text, intended by the author, and from that comes application

# WHAT IS GOD’S WILL FOR BELIEVERS?

**#1 Be Saved From Your Sin**

**1 Timothy 2:4 -** *[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*

* The word “desires” is the Greek word for “will”
	+ What does He desire or will?
	+ God wills that all men be saved – that all people believe in the Lord Jesus Christ
* ***This is the first step in knowing God’s will!***
	+ Only those that have turned to Christ in salvation are capable of knowing God’s will
* **2 Pet 3:9** - *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
	+ God does not wish (or will) that any perish
	+ How does that happen?
	+ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of their sin and be saved
* God’s will first and foremost that people believe the Gospel, that unbelievers become believers, that those destined for hell embrace Christ so they can be destined for heaven
* God’s will for every person is that they embrace and receive Christ and the transformation that comes as a result (2 Cor 5:17)
* In fact, God not only desires this and wishes that people be saved, He also willed the means by which that takes place – through Christ’s death
	+ **Acts 2:23** – *[Christ], delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*
* Before the foundation of the earth, God willed that Christ would come, live a perfect life, die a death on a cross He didn’t deserve to die, satisfy God’s wrath, raise from the dead, make a way for sinners to be saved
	+ Everything in the OT moves towards that – the coming of Christ, the coming of the Messiah who would redeem His people
	+ The Gospels chronicle Christ’s birth, life, and death
	+ The rest of the NT looks back on Christ’s sacrifice
* God wills that all people are saved – and that can only happen through Christ
* So, God desires that sinners be saved from their sin through Jesus Christ
	+ This is God’s will...this is where “being in God’s will” starts
	+ So, if you want to know God’s will for your life, you must start here
* If you are not saved from your sin, if you have not trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you have not repented of your sin and placed your faith and trust in Christ alone, **then you can’t know God’s will**
	+ **1 Cor 2:14-16** - *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.*
* You can’t have any confidence that you will make a wise decision, nor can you have any confidence that the Lord will help you make that decision
	+ You’re not living in his revealed will, because you can’t know it
	+ And if you are not living in his revealed will then it’s pointless to ask for the Lord’s help in any of those other areas
* God is saying to you, in Scripture: Repent, believe the Gospel, receive Christ
	+ And if you are rejecting that, but are wanting help with a life decision...you’re not going to get any help because you are not in God’s will
	+ No one who has rejected Christ can know God’s will about anything else
* So, the place to start when it comes to knowing God’s will for your life is to be saved from your sin!

**#2 Be Filled with the Spirit**

**Ephesians 5:17-18** - *So then do not be foolish,* ***but understand what the will of the Lord is****. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit*

* Notice the command given in v. 17, to “*understand what the will of the Lord is*”
	+ Can only understand it if it is known
* Remember, knowing God’s will is not some cosmic treasure hunt with God
	+ God’s revealed will can be known and understood!
	+ The only way we can understand the will of the Lord is if He tells us
* He tells us in Scripture, here in the context of Eph 5, that the will of God is for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit
	+ In vs. 17, He says “*understand what the will of the Lord is*”
	+ In vs. 18, He tells us what that is: “*do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit*”
* But what is it that Paul means here with this command to be filled with the Spirit?
* The issue here is control or being characterized
	+ When you are drunk, you are controlled by alcohol
	+ And when you are controlled by alcohol, you are going to be characterized by it, meaning you are going to act like someone who is drunk
	+ But that’s not God’s will for believers!
* His will is the opposite....that we would be controlled by and characterized by the Holy Spirit
	+ God’s will is that we act like the person who is characterized by the Holy Spirit
	+ He wants His Holy Spirit who is living in us to have full reign in our minds, hearts, words, actions
* What does this look like? To help us know what it means to be Spirit filled, Paul tells us:
	+ **Eph 5:19** - *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*
	+ **Eph 5:22** - *Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*
	+ **Eph 5:27-29** - *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*
	+ **Eph 6:1 -** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*
	+ **Eph 6:4 -** *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*
	+ **Eph 6:5 -** *Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;*
* These are all expressions of living a Spirit-filled life
	+ This is God’s will for you.....be Spirit filled
	+ The Holy Spirit must characterize you
* If you are, then you are living in God’s will
	+ If you are not, then you not obeying God’s revealed will
* How are we to be filled with the Spirit?
	+ **Col 3:16 -** *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*
* Every believer has all of the Holy Spirit. However, the Spirit does not have all of every believer
	+ To be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled with the Spirit
	+ It means to be yielded to the Spirit in every area of our life
* It means to allow Him to:
	+ Convict us of sin
	+ Teach and apply the Word
	+ Use Scripture to comfort us
	+ It means to live dependently on Him every moment of the day in every way
* God’s will for every believer is that they would live their lives in the power of the Holy Spirit

**#3 Be Holy in Your Lifestyle**

**1 Thess 4:3** - *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;*

* This is the will of God, your sanctification!
	+ God’s will is that you be holy in your lifestyle
	+ That’s what the word “sanctification” means – to be set apart, to be holy
* Specifically, in this context, he’s talking about sexual purity
	+ **1 Thess 4:4-7** ~ *that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.*
	+ Don’t engage in lustful passion
	+ Don’t defraud – don’t take what doesn’t belong to you
	+ Don’t be impure
	+ Be holy, sanctified when it comes to sexual purity
* We see that if we are engaged in what is sexually inappropriate, we cannot know God’s will for our life is
	+ God’s will is for you to be holy, sanctified, specifically set apart from sexual sin
* So, if you are living in sexual sin you are out of God’s will for your life
	+ You WILL NOT know what God wants you to do in the other decisions of life
* We see in Scripture, this call to holiness exists outside of the bounds of moral purity
	+ **Gal 5:24-25** - *Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*
		- If #1 and #2 are true of us, then #3 should be true of us as well!
	+ **1 Pet 1:14-16** - *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”*
		- We are called to be holy, set apart, in ALL our behavior
* God wants you to be holy above all!
	+ In fact, it’s the purpose for which He saved us:
	+ **Rom 8:29** - *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;*
* This is God’s revealed will you for!
	+ If you are outside of his revealed will, you can have no confidence that the decisions you are making are the right ones

**#4 Be Thankful in Your Praying**

**1 Thess 5:16-18** - *Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*

* Again, Paul says very clearly: This is God’s will for you
	+ He tells us! It’s not hidden
* God has revealed His will to us: He wants us to be thankful in our praying
* He lists 3 things:
	+ 1. Rejoice always
		- Be joyful
		- Be a content person
		- Trust in God’s sovereignty such that your joy is not shaken
		- As believers we are always to be joyful
	+ 2. Pray always
		- He’s not talking about repetitious praying or just saying words over and over
			* **Matt 6:7 -** *And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.*
		- He’s talking about having an attitude of constant prayer
		- Where you pray regularly and consistently and with persistence
	+ 3. Be thankful
		- This is a command – be grateful
		- Be filled with thankfulness
		- Believers are to be grateful people –thankful because they recognize that everything is a gift from God
* Notice these are all commands: Rejoice, Pray, Be Thankful
	+ This is God’s will! He tells us
* If you are joyful, prayerful, and thankful, you are in God’s will
* When you pray with thankfulness and joy in your heart, you are in God’s will
* When you come to the Lord regularly with joy and gratitude, no matter the circumstances, and pray, you are in His will

**#5 Be Submissive to Your Authority**

**1 Peter 2:13-15** - *Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

* Here Peter is very clear: This is God’s will for you
	+ Be submissive to authority
	+ The term “submit” (*hupotasso*) is a military term
		- *hupo* = under; *tasso* = to arrange
		- literally "to rank under, arrange under”
	+ The picture is one of a soldier who is under the authority of his commander
* Who is Peter talking about?
	+ Submit yourself to every human institution; willingly place yourself under the authority God ordained
		- Government (1 Pet 2:13-14; Rom 13)
		- Bosses (Eph 6:5, 1 Pet 2:18)
		- Elders (Heb 13:17)
		- Husbands to Christ (1 Cor 11:3)
		- Wives to husbands (Eph 5:22, 1 Pet 3:1)
		- Children to parents (Eph 6:1)
* God has ordained an authority structure and He expects believers to humbly place themselves under that authority
	+ Do you have an attitude of submission to the authority God has placed in your life
	+ If so, you are in God’s will
* But if you buck authority you are outside of God’s will
	+ Unless that authority asks you to do something against God’s Word, then to resist that authority is to be outside God’s will
* Outside of that caveat, if you rebel against the authority God has placed in your life, you are outside of God’s will
	+ And if you are outside of God’s will, then how do you know if you are making God honoring decisions?

**#6 Be Content in Your Suffering**

**1 Peter 4:19** - *Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

* Peter reminds us that suffering is part of life for believers
	+ We are following in Christ’s footsteps
	+ Not sinful suffering but suffering for doing what is right
		- **1 Peter 3:17** - *For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.*
* Suffering is part of what God wants to do in your life
	+ We discussed this last week in reconciling evil in the world with God’s sovereign will
	+ Suffering is one of the means by which God grows us and sanctifies us
		- **James 1:2-4** - *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*
* So, what is God’s will for us in the midst of suffering?
	+ we should welcome it, not resist it
	+ God’s will is that we suffer trials and rejoice in the sanctifying power that comes from trials

# CONCLUSION

* So, as we ask the question, “How can I know what God’s will for my life is?”, we see that it is not a mystery
	+ If you want to know God’s will for your life, look to His revealed will in Scripture!
	+ Use proper hermeneutics to understand the intended meaning of the text, understanding if it is descriptive or prescriptive, and seek to live within the bounds of what Scripture prescribes
* Now you may ask, “Okay, but what about areas of my life that Scripture doesn’t address directly?”
	+ Who do I marry?
	+ What house should I buy?
	+ What career should I pursue?
* How can I be making Biblically informed decisions in these areas?
* This is what we will focus on next week
	+ As believers, living within God’s revealed will, we will address the question: What steps can we put into place for proper Biblical decision making?