



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

COURSE WORKBOOK

*"Teach me to do Your will,
for You are my God.
May Your gracious Spirit lead me
on level ground."
—Psalm 143:10*

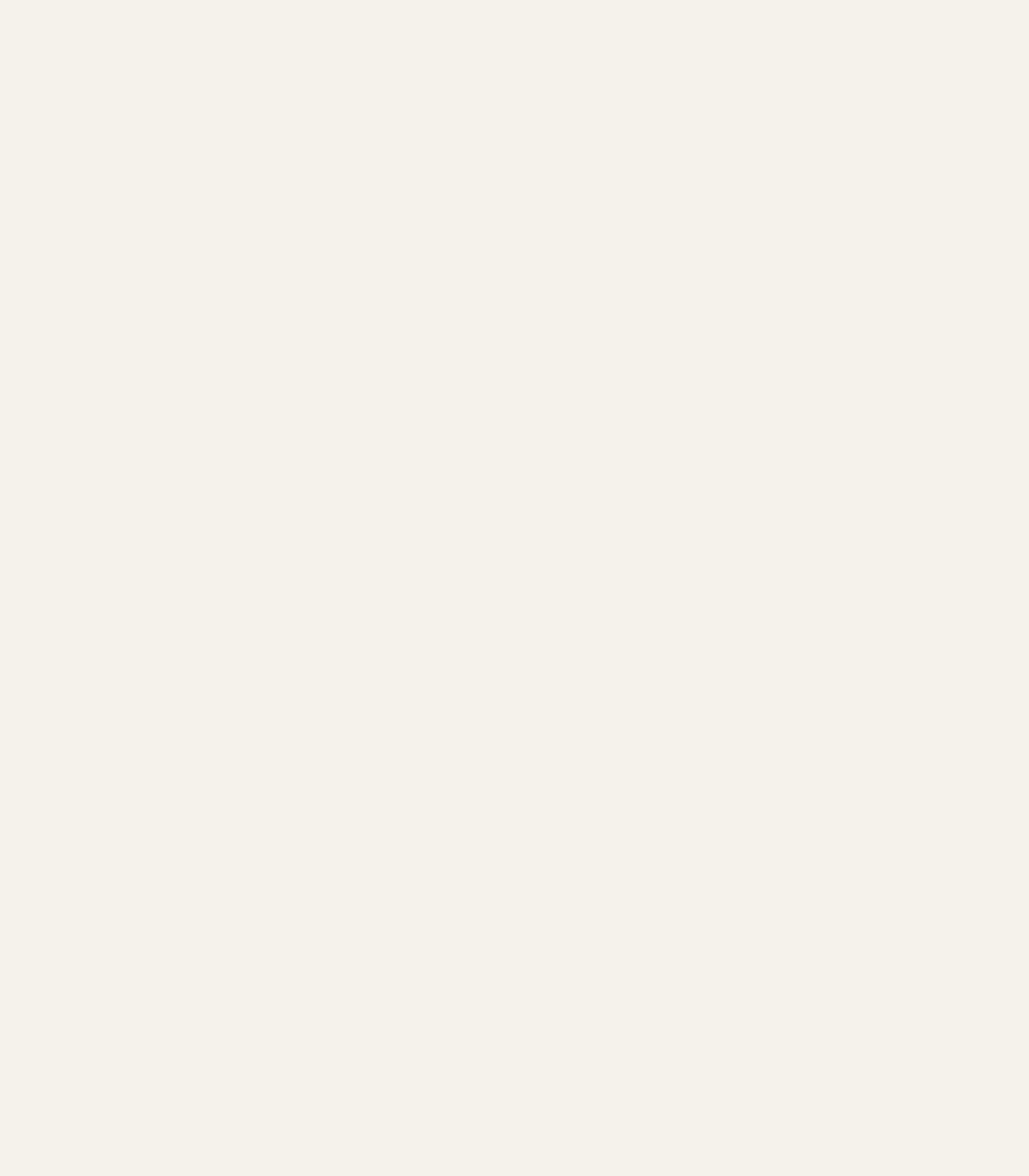
*Also used for
Retreat/Small Group Leader Guide*

DISCERNING GOD'S WILL COURSE WORKBOOK

Leader Guide
WORKBOOK

RICHARD T. CASE





Endorsements

Realizing that God's will is as much about who I am becoming as about what I'm doing has given me such freedom. God's promise to get His specific will for me, with great clarity has become an exciting reality for me. As I process with Him and my spouse by persistently asking for His will in a specific situation, really seeking it and then knocking on the door that's in front of me, His will becomes clear. This study has given wings to the whole process of discerning God's will.

— Nancy Hoover

Discerning God's Will has brought insight into God's word I had not experienced before. My relationship with Jesus is deeper and more personal. I'm thankful for *Discerning God's Will* and to see His will for my life.

— Allyson Weinberg

As a follower of Jesus, my ultimate hope is to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" as I enter into Heavenly eternity. But, how do I serve Him well if I don't know what He wants me to do today or this week or this season in my life?

This course on *Discerning God's Will* showed us how to apply Scriptural principles in practical, day-to-day ways to hear His voice. We better understood how God works and how He guides us into His perfect will. This course is not built on formulas but understanding how staying in relationship with our loving Father yields insight to our present and our future. And it is fun, not religious or laborious!

— Joel Gunn

One of the most, if not the most, asked question is how can I know God's will with confidence?" Is it really possible to know God's will and what He has to say about big things and even little decisions as we walk out a Spirit-filled life? The answer is a resounding yes, which may surprise most people. Nearly every one of us grew up reciting The Lord's prayer, which says, "Thy will be done on earth" (in my life). The truth is the Father does have a will for each and every one of us—for both big issues and small. *Discerning God's Will* walks through the Word and unpacks these Truths in a way that Rich Case and Living Waters make so clear. Enjoy the journey of discovering God's will.

—Dave Dunkel

The "All for Jesus" study on *Discerning God's Will* has been so important in my life. To know without a doubt that God wants to speak to me and tell me about what lies ahead is a fundamental truth. The study walks one through the bible and reveals this truth in scripture. Brace yourself for the realization that God's ways are not of this world, but are supernatural. One learns how to lean into God to have revelation and peace from Him for our decision-making process. God loves us as dear children. If we lean into him, He will reveal our next steps.

— Kathryn L. Bielik, D.D.S.

*To my wife, Linda, who has greatly showed me the heart
to seek God's will together for everything in life.*

*She knows for certain that God's will is: Best and None Better!
She always encourages us to work through the process of what we have
learned and now teaching others, no matter how long it takes,
or no matter that we both begin with differences of views and
perspectives. Though we may disagree, which is normal for any couple,
we have learned together to never let it ruin our night, our weekend, our
week—she reminds us that we just have not yet fully received
and understood God's will. She often wakes up in the morning and says:
I received a new thought about... and I know it will be quite fun to pro-
cess what she heard or thought. She is truly a joy and because of her joy,
it is a joy to seek and walk into God's will together.*

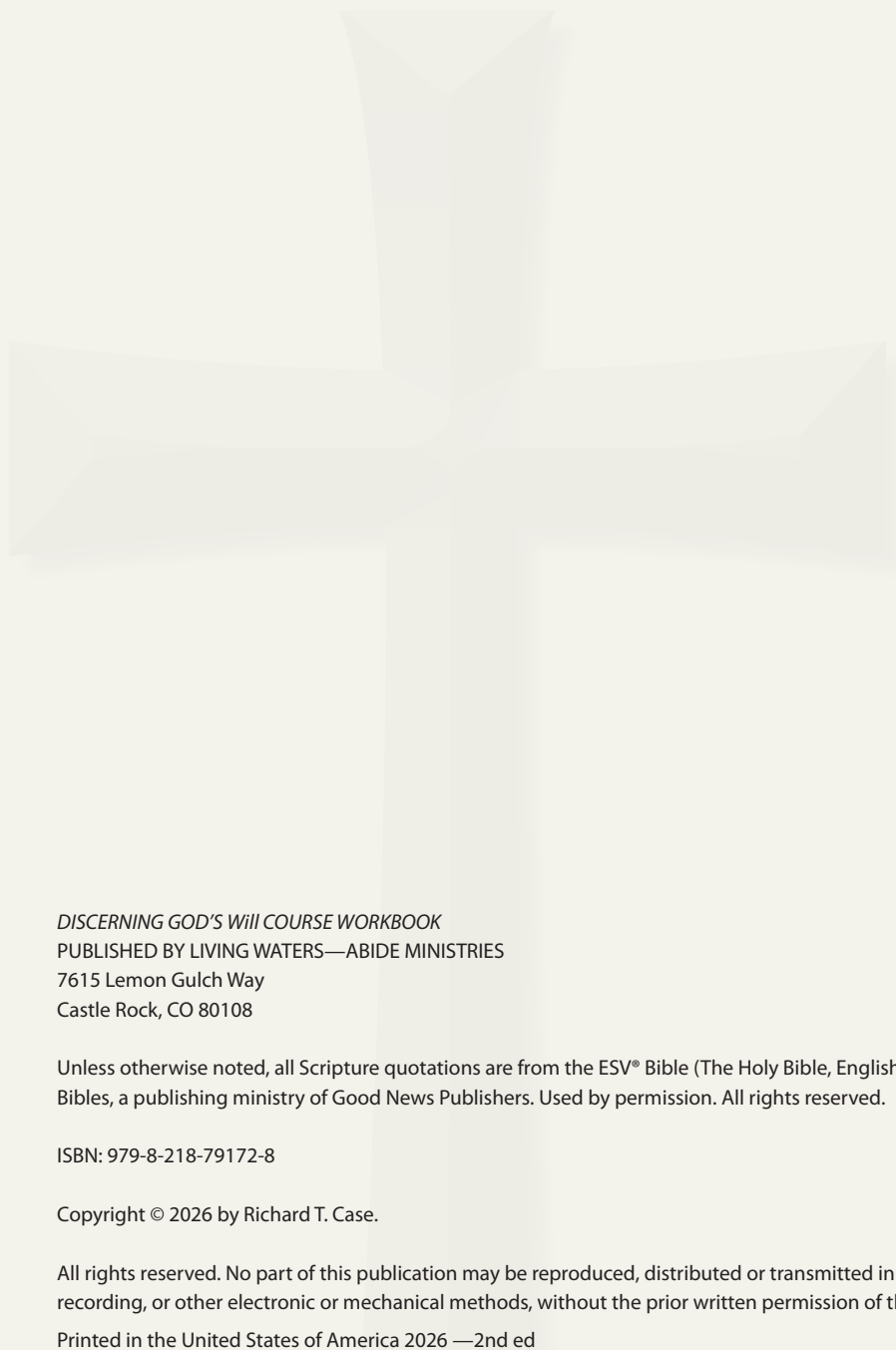
Best and None Better! Thank you, honey!

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank all of the leaders of our ministry: **ABIDE Ministries!** These leaders daily and faithfully also have learned to seek, process and live out God's will; and experiencing God's Best and None Better—and together we are giving this away to others who are learning to live in God's will and bear witness to the promised life that God plans for each of us—is multiplying in a wonderful way! Thank you all:

These leaders are:

Jake and Mary Beckel
Colton and Alicia Cardie
Heath and Rebecca Cardie
Rich and Janet Cocchiaro
Larry and Sherry Collet
Scott and Kristen Cornell
David and Melissa Dunkel
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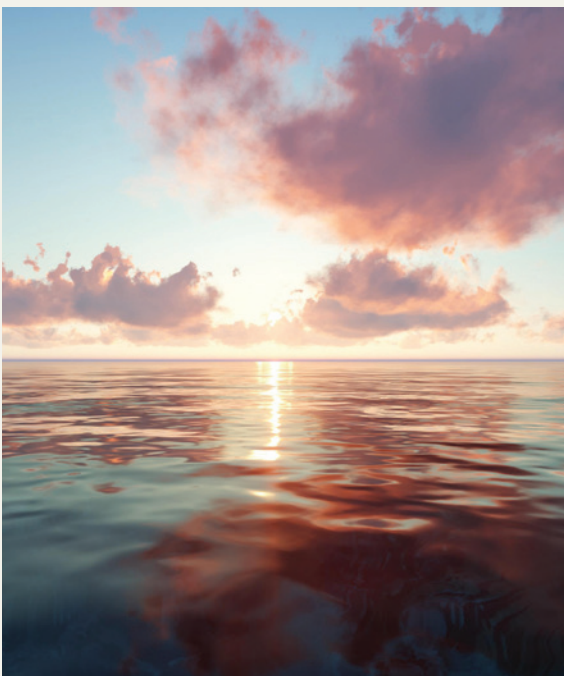


Discerning God's Will



*"Teach me to do Your will,
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—Psalm 143:10



LESSON 1:

GOD HAS A SPECIFIC WILL FOR EACH OF US, AND HIS PURPOSE IS TO DRAW US INTO HIS BIGGER KINGDOM STORY



“Isn’t God in control of everything, so isn’t all that happens to me already His will?”

Why is it so challenging to discern God’s will? Most Christians struggle with understanding God’s will (particularly as it relates to them specifically) for a variety of reasons:

- They think His will is unknowable.
- They cannot hear clearly His voice on personal things (even though the Bible gives us principles that would enable us to apply His word properly).
- They believe His words are not specific to our situation, and isn’t it up to us to just do our best?
- They wonder if God really cares to the level of specificity to us individually. Isn’t God’s will just a matter of following Biblical life principles that are important?
- Isn’t God in control of everything, so isn’t all that happens to me already His will?

This last question deserves special attention. Our life isn’t subject to what we might call “Christian fatalism”—that is, the belief that everything that happens is automatically God’s will. There are many situations that aren’t God’s will that we’re going to experience if we’re not learning to follow God’s will. We must understand that God’s will is personal and specific, not passive and automatic.

- Isn’t it just a matter of open and closed doors; God directs us by these circumstances?
- They believe their situation is too complex and thus requires special wisdom that only a few possess.

If you’d like to know more about
Abide Ministries,
please see our pages
at the back of the workbook

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- They think back to past situations remembering a time when they sought God's discernment, but it didn't pan out.
- They see no relation between their character and how that fits in to understanding and receiving His will.

READ PSALM 106:13-14

But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel. But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert.

—Psalm 106:13-14 ESV

What does it say about the reason we do not receive God's will?

In what ways do you struggle with this?

Word Meanings: **Wait:** tarry

Counsel: advice, purpose, deliberate with plan

Lusted: desire, incline, covet (intensely—bad sense)

Test: try, prove, tempt, assay, put to the proof or test

Leanness: scantness, wasting

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In Psalm 106:13-14, we see that humans are impatient. We are not comfortable waiting for His word. Because our lives are fast-paced and busy, we think we must make our decisions in the same manner. We therefore believe we don't have the time to wait for God's counsel. So, we wind up testing God by asking Him to bless our plans, ignoring whatever blessings God may have had planned for us. The result is that we experience the exact opposite of what He had planned for us: leanness. In this course we are going to learn what it means to wait on God's word. You will be gifted with tools that teach you how to receive God's will and thus experience all the blessings He has planned.

Which decisions or issues are you currently facing? What questions do you have as you seek to discern God's will?

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WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF GOD'S WILL?

Read Luke 11:1-13

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

—Luke 11:1-13 ESV

What are the first two things we should ask for?

1. _____
2. _____

What is the reason we must ask for this versus it being given to us automatically?

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Word Meanings: **His Kingdom Come:** royal power, kingship, dominion, rule, not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom
Come (into being): arise, come forth, show itself, find place or influence, be established
His Will to Be Done: what one wishes or has determined shall be done, of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ

What does it mean that the Kingdom is to come and Thy will to be done on Earth as in Heaven?

Jesus tells us to “ask for thy kingdom to come and thy will to be done.” Thus, since we have to ask for the Kingdom to come and His will to be done, His will is not automatic for our lives, to be lived in a fatalistic way of whatever happens, happens. Otherwise, He would have not included it in His prayer; we would have assumed that everything that happened in our lives was His will, but that is not the case. We have to request it, seek it, and learn to receive it. One of the key elements of prayer is to learn how to ask for His kingdom and to ask for His will. This will be one of the foundational truths of this course.

HIS will is PERSONAL, from a God who is personal.

To whom are we asking this (Luke 11:2)? _____

As we pray and seek God’s will, it is important to know that we are praying to and seeking the will of “our Father,” who is personal, loves us, cares for us, and who knows everything about us. He has planned out our days and has only good things in order for us. We can count on that and know that He is our wonderful Father, who wants only the best for us.

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READ PSALM 23:1-6; JOHN 10:3-5; 10:27

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

—Psalm 23:1-6 ESV

To Him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear His voice, and He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all his own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

—John 10:3-5, 27 ESV

What does this speak to regarding how personally God knows and directs my individual life?

My Shepherd (Psalm 23:1-6; John 10:3-5; 10:27) cares for me, leads me, knows me by name. I am special to Him.

List the benefits to “us” sheep as offered to us from the Good Shepherd:

- MY Shepherd
- I shall not want (Why? Because He offers an abundant life)
- Makes me lie down in green pastures—rest and refreshment
- Leads me beside still waters—nourishment, sustenance
- Restores my soul—heals my deep wounds and hurts

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- Though I walk in a difficult world (an enemy against me as I walk in enemy territory): I need not fear, I can experience that He is with me—I am safe
- His rod and staff (weapons against the enemy) will protect me and I can be comforted completely
- I am able to feast with joy and peace all prepared by Him even in the middle of this difficult world
- I will be anointed—set apart to experience the Holy Spirit fully—and my life will be overflowing
- Goodness and mercy will be my life—all the days of my life
- I am able to dwell (abide) with Him all the time

We have wonderful benefits and know that He, as our Shepherd, is going to take care of us since we are His sheep. He will be our provider, He will restore us, He will take care of us in trouble, and we will experience His goodness all the days of our lives, knowing that we will dwell with Him all the time. As we seek His will, we can always count on this fundamental relationship as being the basis of His will for us.

“...there is a unique sound, a unique quality, a resonating with the truth, and the application of that truth through the Spirit within us.”

- As His sheep, what is our amazing privilege?
- In John 10:3-5; 10:27, we see that we can hear His voice. He speaks to us personally, without using theology or concepts, so that we can actually hear HIM.
- If we are hearing His voice, what is He doing?
- Speaking, talking to us, discussing with us, and communicating personally.
- How will we recognize the difference between His voice and others’?
- We will know the difference because there is a unique sound, a unique quality, a resonating with the truth, and the application of that truth through the Spirit within us. His words will not be fuzzy or confusing, they will be clear and distinctive, always lining up with truth from the Word and creating in us righteousness, peace, and joy.

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HE HAS PLANS FOR US—TO LIVE OUT HIS BIGGER STORY

Read Jeremiah 29:11-14

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

—Jeremiah 29:11-14 ESV

What do these verses speak about God's plans (thoughts) for us?

Word Meanings: **Plan:** purpose; hope

Peace (shalom): welfare, health, prosperity, quiet, tranquility, contentment

Evil: NOT dark, awful, or black—rather, things that annoy, frustrate, irritate, and cause difficulty. God's plans are not to lead us INTO difficulty; we'll encounter enough of that in the world on our own.

Future: ahead

Hope: positive expectation, good outcome (not 'I hope it works'—but certainty)

He says, "I know the plans I have for you." His plans are described as "welfare"—the Hebrew word means spectacular, supernatural, beautiful, over-the-top wonderful. And His plans are "not for evil." The word evil here isn't dark or awful—it refers to things that annoy, frustrate, irritate, and cause difficulty. God says, "My plans are not to lead you into that difficulty." Why not? Because we're going to be involved in difficulty all the time—we live in a wicked world. Jesus said, "In the world you will have trouble." God doesn't need to lead us into trouble; we'll find it on our own. His plans are for good—to give us a future and a hope.

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Read John 10:10; Psalm 65:11

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

—John 10:10 ESV

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

—Psalm 65:11 ESV

What is the life that Christ has promised us? When will it come? How would you describe this life?

We read in John 10:10 and Psalm 65:11 that the abundant life is exceedingly good. It is God's intent to give (deliver to) us superabundant life. This life, and the path of this life, are intended for us to experience the fullness of all that God has planned for us. We think abundance centers around material things; but God's definition is "all of life," meaning all those things that God values: relationships, work, provision, health, identity, communion with Him, ministry (giving it away), experiencing the supernatural—all aspects of life that He plans for us to live in abundance now, and along the path that He will take us.

Word Meanings: **Have:** own, possess, hold firmly
Life: full, genuine, real, active, vigorous, fullness of life of God
More Abundantly: exceedingly, supremely, extraordinary, more remarkable, more excellent
Goodness: pleasant, agreeable, excellent, rich, valuable, glad, happy, prosperous
Abundance: become prosperous, anoint

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Read Mark 1:14-18

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

—Mark 1:14-18 ESV

What is the purpose of following Him and joining Him in His Kingdom?

When Jesus came to His disciples, His first statement was: "The kingdom of God is here." He brought the kingdom, and He's giving us an opportunity to learn what it means to live in the kingdom while living in the natural, where the trouble is. The good news isn't just forgiveness of sins—it's that Jesus came to give us life abundantly. This isn't just a ticket to heaven; it's experiencing eternal life NOW, starting here on earth.

Word Meanings: **Kingdom:** royal power, kingship, dominion, rule
Repent: turn around, to change one's mind
Believe: to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to place confidence in
Follow: come hither, come here, come

LESSON 1:

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Read Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

—Matthew 28:18-20 ESV

What is always our bigger mission, our bigger purpose?

In Matthew 28:18-20, we are taught to transfer His authority to ourselves as we join Him in making disciples and teaching others to follow His instructions (His will). We don't tell fellow believers what they should do—we teach them how to hear God's will for themselves. That's the bigger story: sharing what we're learning about God's will, so others can learn it too.

Read Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

—Ephesians 2:10 ESV

How does joining Him in His bigger mission play out specifically for us?

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We are His workmanship—His nature is being worked into us. We're created for "good works," and the word "good" there means spectacular, supernatural things. But who defines what's good? He does. And these works were prepared beforehand, uniquely for each of us. Our role is simple: walk in them. It's not "Here's your assignment—good luck." It's step by step, walking with Him into what He's already prepared.

Read 1 Samuel 2:35

And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

—1 Samuel 2:35 ESV

What does God speak as His desire for His children to fulfill in His bigger story?

A faithful priest will be raised up to do what is IN God's heart and mind. If God wants us to do what's on His heart and mind, what must we know? We must be able to listen and hear what He has to say. And He'll give it to us and call us into that role.

Read John 5:18-20; 5:30; John 8:28-30

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing..." "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me."

—John 5:19-20, 30 ESV

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So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

—John 8:28-30 ESV

During His earthly ministry, how did Christ relate to the Father? How did He function on a day-by-day basis?

Jesus showed us how He functioned—by only doing the will of the Father. He did this by experiencing and knowing where the Father was working and by hearing His voice. He was clear that He did nothing except what He heard from the Father. He didn’t just know the big picture (the cross, the resurrection) and then figure out the details on His own. He had to know what to do every single day. If Jesus needed daily instruction, then the Father was speaking every single day. And if you’re not hearing God, the problem isn’t that He’s silent—it’s that we’re not listening.

Read John 15:5

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

—John 15:5 ESV

Based on what Christ says, how are we to function?

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John 15:5 reminds us that we are in the same position: apart from Him we can do nothing. The word “nothing” there means zero. We might be doing lots of stuff, but apart from Him, we’re not doing His assignment for us. Because we have Christ living within us through the Holy Spirit, we are to function in the same way that Christ related to the Father: by doing His will only and not our own.

Read through these examples: John 2:1-12; Luke 19:1-10. Consider how and why Christ only did what He heard from the Father versus His own will or the will of someone else (even His mother’s).

The Wedding at Cana

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

—John 2:1-11 ESV

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Understanding the Context:

Cana was about a four or five hour walk from Nazareth. Jewish weddings during this time were four or five day events, held in spring, summer, or fall because guests would sleep outside (families couldn't house everyone). Every guest brought the same gift: food—like a potluck, bringing enough for themselves and to share. The father of the groom was responsible for providing the wine for all the guests.

When the wine ran out before the celebration was finished, it was a serious problem. So Mary says to Jesus: "Take care of this." She didn't mean "go buy more wine"—she meant "make wine."

"How did Mary know to even ask that question? Because Jesus had done supernatural things at home before. This was His first PUBLIC miracle—not His first miracle."

Think about it: if the Father had already told Jesus, "Today you're going to make wine," then when Mary asked, Jesus would have said, "Yeah, I know." But instead He said, "My hour has not yet come." Why? Because He hadn't yet heard the Father say this was it. He purposely said, "I can't do that unless the Father tells me." After Mary spoke, Jesus went to the Father and asked: "Is this Your will?" The Father said yes—and Jesus made sixty gallons of the finest wine. Interestingly, only four people knew what happened: Jesus, Mary, the servants, and the disciples. The whole party didn't know. And notice: the disciples "began to believe"—not fully believed. This was the beginning of understanding what it meant to walk with Jesus and see God's will unfold.

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Jesus and Zacchaeus

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

—Luke 19:1-10 ESV

This story takes place as Jesus is heading into Jerusalem for Palm Sunday. The crowds are lined up, hailing Him as king. A little guy named Zacchaeus climbs a tree to see Jesus. And notice what Jesus says: "I MUST stay at your house today."

"The word 'must' is key. Jesus didn't say, 'I've decided to spend time with you' or 'Would you like to spend time with me?' He said 'I MUST'—because the Father told Him."

The Father said, "This is your assignment right now. I'm at work in this man. Spend time with him." Jesus operated by constantly asking: "What do You have to say to me? I know the path I'm on, but specifically, I need to know Your will." And He demonstrates it here.

LESSON 1:

GOD HAS A SPECIFIC WILL FOR EACH OF US, AND HIS PURPOSE IS TO DRAW US INTO HIS BIGGER KINGDOM STORY

THIS PLAN, WHICH IS TRUTH, IS ALREADY GIVEN TO US IN HIMSELF AND HIS WORD

Read John 14:1-6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

—John 14:6 ESV

What does Christ say about Himself with regard to our way of living life?

Jesus says: I am the way, the truth, and the life. The source of God's will is Jesus Himself. Because He is the source, we have to be with Him to receive it. He didn't just say, "I wrote the Scriptures—go read that and good luck." He said, "I AM the way, the truth, and the life."

Word Meanings: **Way:** road, a traveler's way, journey, traveling
Truth: what is true in any matter under consideration; moral and religious truth
Life: the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to
God; life real and genuine, active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed

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Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

—2 Timothy 3:14-17 ESV

What is the importance and significance of the Word with regard to how we live life?

The Scriptures are God-breathed—the Holy Spirit has put Himself into these words and revealed truth. We're going to receive the essence of what God speaks to us personally from the written Word (the logos). He's not going to violate what He's already written. So our first place as we start to hear His voice is: Is this in concert with what I've seen in Scripture?

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HIS PLAN IS SPECIFIC FOR US AND GIVEN TO US

Read Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 25:12; Psalm 32:8

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

—Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.

—Psalm 25:12 ESV

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

—Psalm 32:8 ESV

If we follow God, how specifically does He lead us? What exactly does He direct, show us, choose for us?

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Word Meanings: **Direct Your Paths:** make right, make smooth, make straight; to lead, direct, lead straight along

Path: road, specific way

Teach/Instruct: to point out, show, to direct, teach, instruct

Guide/Counsel: purpose, advise, devise, plan

What is the significance of God guiding our “path,” our “steps”? What then is to be our focus on being led along His will for us?

As we are processing from the written Word, or have a situation that the written Word does not address specifically, we can be assured that He still will direct us by offering exact step by step instructions in the way we are to go, the path we are to follow, the forks in the road we are to ignore, the actions we need to take. These are not principles, but steps to take—and He promises to give them!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Scriptural Understanding

1. In Luke 11, Jesus teaches us to pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.” Why must we ask for God’s will rather than assuming it happens automatically? What does this tell us about Christian fatalism?

2. In John 10, Jesus says “My sheep hear my voice.” What does this imply about what God is actively doing? How does this challenge the idea that God is sometimes “silent”?

3. How does John 15:5 (“apart from me you can do nothing”) connect to Jesus’s statement in John 5:30 that He did nothing on His own? What does this mean for how we should function?

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Deeper Understanding

4. What is the significance of Jesus saying “I MUST stay at your house” to Zacchaeus? How does this demonstrate day-by-day obedience to the Father’s specific instructions?

5. At the wedding in Cana, why did Jesus initially say “My hour has not yet come”? What does this teach us about waiting for God’s timing versus responding to human pressure—even from well-meaning family?

6. Jeremiah 29:11 says God’s plans are for “welfare and not for evil.” How does the Hebrew meaning of “evil” (things that annoy, frustrate, irritate) change our understanding of what God is and isn’t promising?

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Personal Application

7. Looking at your current decisions or struggles, in what areas have you been living with a “Christian fatalism” mindset—assuming whatever happens must be God’s will?

8. Jesus received direction from the Father every single day. What would change in your life if you truly believed God has specific instructions for you today—not just general principles?

9. The wedding at Cana shows Jesus checking with the Father before acting, even when asked by His own mother. What relationships or expectations in your life might be pulling you to act before hearing from God?



LESSON 2:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?



"The first principle in discerning God's will is to have a heart to do so."

"The first principle in discerning God's will is to have a heart to do so."

IN THE BEGINNING AND ALWAYS, WE WILL DISCERN HIS WILL ONLY WHEN WE SURRENDER OUR WILL TO HIS WILL

Read John 4:34; 6:38; Mark 14:32-42

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."

—John 4:34 ESV

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

—John 6:38 ESV

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

—Mark 14:32-42 ESV

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When Jesus operated during His earthly ministry, how did He function? What did He ultimately have to go through when faced with the final decision of going to the cross? What did He struggle with, and how did He process this?

Word Meanings:

Sorrowful: sad, overcome with sorrow so much as to cause one's death

Possible: having power for something

Pass By: take away, to remove

Will: have in mind, intend

Ready: willing

Weak: infirm, feeble

The first principle in discerning God's will is to have a heart to do so. Christ said His only desire was not to do His will but God's will. That has to be our first and continuing desire throughout our lives—seeking only the will of the Father.

As Christ struggled in the garden of Gethsemane, He battled between wanting to do the Father's will and desiring a different way. Jesus knew what was coming—the suffering, the cross. And He went to the Father and said, "I know You're sovereign. I know there isn't anything You couldn't do in a different way. Would You come up with a different way? Let this cup pass from me." And the Father said no. That is My will.

Why did Jesus go back into the garden a second time?

Because it wasn't settled in His heart yet. If we said to you, "Do you want to surrender your will and follow God?" you would say, "Yes, sure." But have you? Jesus knew this about Himself: "I know what I'm called to do. I even said I'm willing to do it. But I haven't actually gotten there. It's not in my soul. I'm not yet fully surrendered."

"As we read Scripture, we have a tendency to compress time. We think Jesus was in the garden ten minutes—three times He prayed and He was out. This was hours and hours of processing and surrendering."

Why did He go back a third time? Because it still wasn't settled. And Luke tells us that the third time, it was so intense that the blood vessels in His forehead burst—because of the intensity of the struggle, the suffering of coming to a willingness to follow God the Father. He had to work through it.

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And then finally, the third time, He says: “Let’s go. I’ve surrendered my will.”

So if we’re going to follow God’s will, we’re going to have to surrender our will. And it can’t be a “Yeah, sure.” It has to be real—so that you can receive God’s will. Otherwise, you’re still saying, “I’ll listen to what You have to say, and if I like it, I’ll do it. If I don’t, I’m still doing my will.” God says, “Then you haven’t surrendered your will. I’m not going to tell you. You have to get through Gethsemane.”

When? Unfortunately—all the time.

Read Matthew 16:13-28

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

—Matthew 16:13-20 ESV

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

—Matthew 16:21-23 ESV

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HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done."

—Matthew 16:24-28 ESV

After Peter was commended as having received the grand revelation from the Father that Jesus was the Messiah, what was he then called by Christ? Why? What is necessary for us to be able to follow Christ?

Word Meanings:

"Peter went from being the most holy person there—upon whom Christ would build the church—to being called Satan, all within about 20 minutes."

Think about what happened. Jesus says, "Beautiful, Peter. You didn't get this by your own logic. You got it by revelation. The Father gave you this revelation, and you received it. You're living in that very spiritual place. Upon this—the ability to hear God's will and receive revelation, and then understand that revelation and follow it—I'm going to build my church. And you'll have the power that goes with it."

Then Jesus says, "By the way, I'm going to suffer, die, and be resurrected." And Peter rebukes Him—forcefully saying, "Stop that! That's not going to happen! What You're saying is wrong!" If we asked Peter, "Do you think you're doing something right?" he would say, "Yes! Look at what I'm protecting. Of course I'm doing something right."

But Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan." Why? "Because you have the things of your own thinking in mind, not the things of God."

What was Peter's mistake?

He stopped going to God. He didn't say, "I really struggle with that statement. It doesn't make sense to me. Would You explain that to me?" That would be having the things of God in mind. Instead, he made a declaration: "I decided this." And Jesus said, "When you decide this on your own, you're actually

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following Satan—because you don't have the things of God in mind, but the things of your own thoughts."

Word Meanings: **Seek (set your mind):** to be of the same mind, cherish the same views, be harmonious; to direct one's mind to a thing; refers to the things of God, His counsels, interests

Man: with the added notion of weakness, by which man is led into mistake or prompted to sin

Come After Me: to come, to follow one

Deny Self: to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's own interests

Take Up the Cross: to appropriate what is taken; the crucifixion that Christ underwent

Follow: to join one as a disciple, become or be his disciple

The key thing Peter forgot was to ask God to explain further what He was revealing, rather than responding automatically with what he thought was good—which turned out to be the opposite of God's plan. This is a key lesson

for seeking God's will: Do not respond with what we consider to be good ideas, but instead always deny self, take up the cross, and follow Him.

THE PATHWAY TO GOD'S WILL: NEUTRALITY

If any of us want to come after Jesus and learn His will, we have to do three things: (1) Deny ourselves—put self to death and go to neutrality. (2) Take up the cross—live in the resurrection and stand on what He's given us. (3) Follow Him—learn His will in the kingdom.

What is neutrality?

Do you have a thought about what you would like to have happen? Sure. That's not a bad thing. "Here's what I think. Here's what I would like." And God will say to you, "Are you neutral? Willing to let Me guide you—maybe differently than you think?"

"Neutrality means: I still carry my thought, but if Your answer is different, I'm completely neutral. If You tell me the answer is different, I will follow You completely—because I've gone from my will to surrendering my will. I'm neutral to receiving Your will, which I'll then follow."

This isn't a one-time decision. We have to do this daily—sometimes multiple times a day. Why? Because we have a sin nature, and we can't overcome it permanently. We're like Peter—we want to take charge of our own lives, especially when it comes to protecting those we love.

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An Illustration: The Chicago Condo

Linda and I had wound up in Chicago. We'd bought a spectacular condo on the 33rd floor overlooking the lakeshore and downtown. Our grandkids called it "Three-Three Alma's house" because she made it so special for them. It was a block from the zoo, had a pool—all those great memories.

In January, during my prayer time, I asked God: "Is there anything You want to speak to me about this year?" He said, "Yes. I want you to sell the condo."

So I went to Linda and said, "In my prayer time, I heard God say we're supposed to sell the condo. What do you think?"

"No. I'm a block from the zoo. I walk there with the grandkids. The pool. All the great memories. No, I don't think so."

I asked, "Are you neutral?"

"No. Not neutral."

And that's okay. It's not about "you should be" or "you'd better be." It was honest. So I said, "Before we even worry about receiving God's will, we both have to be neutral. I'll go to neutral too—maybe I misinterpreted something, maybe I didn't hear correctly. You work on getting to neutrality, and I will too."

It took her a couple of weeks. Every day she'd wake up, think about it, and ask herself: "Am I neutral?" Not yet. She journaled, talked to God, said, "This is how I feel about it. The memories here are fantastic. I don't want to lose these memories. But I know Your will is best and better. I really do want Your will, even though I'm struggling with this." It was a battle between flesh and spirit.

My only comment during that time wasn't "Come on, get going." It was "How's it going? How's the neutrality going?" Because without neutrality, does it do any good to seek God's will? God says, "Because you're not willing to receive My will, you're still going to evaluate it relative to your will. So I'm not even going to reinforce it until you get to neutral."

A couple weeks later: "How's it going?" "I'm neutral. I think I'm neutral." I asked, "You're willing—if God said what He said—to do that?" "Yes." "Why?" "Because His will is best and none better. And I want to be in His best."

She still preferred not to sell. That's okay. But she was neutral. So we each prayed. God confirmed to both of us: "Yes, it's time to sell the condo." And there wasn't regret or "Okay fine, I guess I could do that." Her response was: "No, I'm ready. I'm okay. Let's go."

We put it on the market in April and sold it July 7th, 2008—right before the crash. Had we not sold it then, we would probably still own it at a much lesser value, with doubled taxes and expenses. God never told us why until after the crash. He said, "Do you understand now why I told you?" Oh yes.

"God knows more than we do. He said, 'I'm telling you what to do. I'll direct your steps.' And it requires neutrality."

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Read Acts 13:16-23

So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised."

—Acts 13:16-23 ESV

In this concise history of Israel, David was singled out. What were the important things said about him? Why?

This is a super-abbreviated description of Israel's history—very broad, very high-level. But in the middle of it, Paul specifically mentions David: "A man after my heart, who will do all my will." The most important thing to understand is: Do you have a heart to do all and follow God's will?

David didn't always follow God's will perfectly—he had serious failures. But because he still had a heart desiring God's will, when he was caught in his awful sins of adultery and murder, he repented. He said, "My will is still to return to You and restore the joy of my salvation." God isn't looking for perfection. He's looking for a heart that desires His will.

Word Meanings: **To Do:** to act rightly, do well, to carry out, to execute

Will: pleasure, delight, favor, goodwill, acceptance

Heart: inner man, mind, heart, soul

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Read Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-10

In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

—Psalm 40:6-8 ESV

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

—Hebrews 10:5-10 ESV

What does David say is the most important thing in life—what does he want to be known for?

David says, "May it be written of me in the scroll of life that I delighted to do Your will." The word "delight" means "I'm thrilled to do God's will." David—the great warrior, the great king, the builder of the temple through Solomon—could have said he wanted to be known for many things. But he said the only thing he wanted to be known for was delighting in God's will. Why? Because God's will is best and none better. So why not?

Could that be said of you right now? Could God say, "Of all the things you are and all you're becoming, you're known for delighting in My will"?

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Word Meanings: **Delight In:** take pleasure in, desire
Law: direction, instruction, body of prophetic teaching
Within: midst, middle
Heart: place of emotions or distress or love

**BASED UPON OUR ABIDING AND LIVING OUT HIS TRUTH
ALREADY REVEALED, WE WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE
IMAGE OF CHRIST**

Read John 8:29-32

And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

—John 8:29-32 ESV

What is the key to understanding the truth and living in freedom? Define what is "truth."

"As we actively pursue and enjoy abiding, we then are to have a passion for truth."

In John 8:28-32, we see that abiding brings truth, and truth brings freedom. Christ only did what the Father spoke—He only did the Father's will. And He tells us we can operate the same way by abiding in His Word. By abiding in His Word, we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free.

Abiding leads to TRUTH, which leads to FREEDOM. Truth is all truth—not just theological truth, but the truth about my situation and circumstances, the truth of my heart, the truth of my emotions, and the truth that He desires for us to understand and receive.

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We are called to develop a passion for abiding and truth. With this passion, we learn to “camp out” in His Word until we understand, receive, believe—and then become obedient to the truth. The Spirit continues to cause us to be unsettled until the truth is His truth settled in our hearts. The promised outcome is freedom, liberty, release—no longer caught up in bondage, but set free to enjoy the abundant life.

Read John 15:1-8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

—John 15:1-8 ESV

Define the different elements of how Christ is described in this analogy:

Vine: _____

Vinedresser: _____

Branches: _____

The Result: _____

The Choice: _____

What are the specific conditions to answered prayer, and what do they reveal about how we should pray?

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Word Meanings: **The Vine:** Christ, the source of life (the good, abundant life)

The Vinedresser: The Father. He makes all decisions of the vineyard. He directs all traffic in our lives. He has already planned out what the abundant life looks like for each of us.

The Branch: We are branches. Branches stay connected and not much else. We are not to attempt to be the Vine or the Vinedresser.

The Sap (Implied): The Holy Spirit. Flows from the life of the Vine into and through us branches to the fruit.

The Result: Fruit. More fruit. Much fruit.

The Choice: Abide. This is our choice. He does not force us.

Note: The Word here is “Rhema,” meaning His application of the written word (Logos) to us personally. He doesn’t say principles, ideas, theological truth, or broad strokes—He says specific words. “Like, you’re trying to find a house. I’ll tell you which house. My rhema will abide in you, and you can pray it.” When we have heard these promises and understand their application to our personal lives, we can expect to see God’s blessings happen in reality.

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Read John 12:42-50

Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

—John 12:42-50 ESV

What happens when we are more concerned with what man thinks than what God thinks? What does following Christ mean in this regard?

There were many who believed but didn't confess it because they loved the glory that comes from man more than from God. Jesus says He has come as light so we don't remain in darkness. His words will be our judge—because He speaks only what the Father has told Him. The question is: Will we receive His words and follow them, or will we care more about what people think?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Scriptural Understanding

1. In Mark 14, Jesus returns to pray three times in Gethsemane. What does this reveal about the process of truly surrendering our will versus just saying we've surrendered it?

2. In Matthew 16, Peter goes from receiving divine revelation to being called "Satan" within minutes. What was the specific mistake he made, and what should he have done instead?

3. According to John 15:7, what is the relationship between God's "rhema" word abiding in us and answered prayer? Why is this different from just knowing Scripture?

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Deeper Understanding

4. What is “neutrality” as described in this lesson? How is it different from not caring about the outcome or suppressing your preferences?

5. Paul’s summary of Israel’s history in Acts 13 highlights one thing about David: he was “a man after God’s heart who will do all my will.” Why would this be the most important thing to highlight about Israel’s greatest king?

6. Jesus says that His words will “judge” those who don’t receive them (John 12:48). What does this mean for how seriously we should take the process of hearing and following His specific will?

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Personal Application

7. Think of a current decision or situation in your life. Are you truly neutral—willing to follow God’s direction even if it differs from your preference? What would it take to get there?

8. The condo story illustrates that getting to neutrality can take time (weeks) and requires honest processing with God. What does your current process look like when you sense God may be leading you somewhere you don’t want to go?

9. David wanted to be known for “delighting” in God’s will—not just obeying it. What’s the difference? How would your life look different if you truly delighted in discovering and following God’s will?



LESSON 3:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.



“...we must believe He will tell us the wisdom we asked for and He will get us the answer if we ask for one.”

“We must believe He will tell us the wisdom we asked for and He will get us the answer if we ask for one.”

Read 1 John 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

—1 John 5:14-15 ESV

We are told that in order to pray and see our prayers answered, we must pray God’s will. If this is so, then what must God reveal to us? Why? How specific must this be?

God states that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And it will be done. Thus, He must reveal His will to us so that we can pray it and experience the fulfillment of it in reality.

Think about what He’s saying: “If you pray according to My will, I will listen. If you know that I’m listening, you will wind up having it and it’ll happen.” So if we’re going to pray according to His will, we must hear His will. That is where most of the energy really goes as we seek—are we hearing His will? Do we have clarity about His will?

What is God listening for?

He’s listening to see if we really understand His will. If we don’t—which is most of the time—what does He do? He reveals more so that we get the clarity. “I’m listening. Are you there? No? Then let Me help you further. I’ve got to give you more clarity. You’re not quite there yet.” Once He hears that we’ve got it, He says, “You don’t need to pray about it anymore. Now you pray: May it be so. Because what you know is My will.”

LESSON 3:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

Word Meanings: **Will:** what He desires to happen
Have: hold onto, own, possess

Read James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

—James 1:5-8 ESV

As we are seeking His specific will, what are we to ask for? What does He promise to give? What is the condition for us to receive this?

As you are seeking His will, He tells us to simply ask for wisdom; and then He promises to give it to us. But notice what the text actually says.

“The word ‘generously’ in English—in the Greek, it actually means ‘with great clarity.’ God will give you what you need with great clarity.”

This isn’t just about abundance—it’s about precision. God isn’t going to give you a fuzzy answer. He’s committed to making His will clear to you. And He does it “without reproach”—He’s not going to beat you up that you don’t know it yet.

But there is one condition: we must believe He will tell us the wisdom we asked for. There is not a requirement that we believe what He tells us at the first moment He tells it, because it may be too difficult to understand or too grand for us to say instantly, “Yes, of course!” He is the author and finisher of faith—He will finish the process by taking us to complete belief in what He has spoken. But we must believe He will give us the answer requested.

LESSON 3:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

Word Meanings: **Ask:** beg, call for, crave, desire, require

Generously (Greek): with great clarity; simply, openly, frankly, sincerely

Faith: conviction of the truth of anything, belief

Doubting: to oppose, strive with, dispute

Read Hebrews 10:19-25; 10:35-11:3

The Full Assurance of Faith

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

—Hebrews 10:19-25 ESV

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

—Hebrews 10:35-39 ESV

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

—Hebrews 11:1-3 ESV

LESSON 3:

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As we seek to receive and understand God's specific will for us, what is the special privilege given to us? On what basis are we given this privilege? How are we to experience this?

As we seek His wisdom and will, we have the special privilege of marching into the throne room with great confidence and boldness to dialogue with the Father directly. This access is available to all believers without partiality. The access was given because Christ died for us all—at His death, the curtain separating the holy of holies was torn in two, opening access for all of us.

He says: With bold confidence, march into the throne room where I'm seated with the Father, receiving His will to express it to you. Come with Me, processing clarity about His will. Come with a sincere heart—the word there is "authentic." "Here's where I am with this. I don't quite get it. How come? Why not?" Use that opportunity to ask for wisdom with great confidence that God will give it to you.

And notice verse 36: "When you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised." This implies something important—we take steps of instruction along His will, and as we do these steps, He fulfills what He told us He's going to do.

Word Meanings: **Confidence:** boldness, free and fearless speaking, assurance

Draw Near: to approach, come close

True Heart: authentic, sincere, genuine

Endurance: patience, steadfastness, constancy

Faith: assurance of things hoped for, conviction of things not seen

LESSON 3:

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AN ILLUSTRATION: JERICHO AND AI

Consider Joshua and Caleb. When they finally went to the Promised Land, God said, “I’m going to give you every place that you set your feet, and you’ll gain victory over the enemy over the entire land.” That was the promise. Joshua understood that.

The first city he went to was Jericho. And God said, “I want you to march around the city seven times and blow the trumpet. Then the walls will fall and you’ll defeat them all.” They did that. They won that city.

But here’s the key question: Did God tell Joshua, “Now that you know the system, go do that with every city”?

“No. We have a tendency to say, ‘Oh, that worked. So I’ll just do that again.’ But God says each step is unique. Each situation is unique. It’s all based on the forks in the road.”

The next city was Ai—and they failed. Joshua assumed the same approach would work. He said, “I got this.” And they had a failure.

Joshua comes back and God says, “You made two mistakes. First, you remember that after you do My will is when you receive the promise—and My will is the steps I’m asking you to take as you walk into it. Second, you decided on your own what step to take. You forgot to ask Me. And you’re going to have to ask Me every step.”

“You can’t assume that what worked last time will work this time. You have to ask every step.”

This is critical for understanding how God’s specific will works. The promise was clear: “I will give you the land.” But the steps to get there required constant consultation. Jericho required marching. Ai would have required something different. Each fork in the road requires a new conversation with God.

LESSON 3:

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Read Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

—Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

What is the key to having God direct our paths? What must we NOT do? Why is this so important?

This is what Joshua forgot at Ai—he leaned on his own understanding. “That worked before, so it will work again.” But God says: Trust in Me with all your heart. Don’t lean on your own understanding—don’t assume you know the next step. In ALL your ways acknowledge Me. Not just the big decisions—all the forks in the road. And He will make your paths straight.

Word Meanings: **Trust:** to have confidence in, to be secure
Lean: to support oneself, rely upon
Understanding: insight, intelligence, the act of understanding
Acknowledge: to know, perceive, recognize
Direct/Make Straight: to make smooth, straight, right

LESSON 3:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

Read Psalm 32:8-9

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

—Psalm 32:8-9 ESV

How does God promise to guide us? What warning does He give about how NOT to respond to His guidance?

God promises to instruct us, teach us, and counsel us—with His eye upon us. He's watching, guiding, directing. But He warns us not to be like a horse or mule that requires force to be directed. The horse and mule don't have understanding—they have to be controlled with bit and bridle. God is saying: I want to guide you with a glance, not with force. I want you to be so attuned to Me that you respond to My counsel, not resist it until I have to drag you.

Word Meanings: **Instruct:** to make wise, teach
Teach: to point out, show the way, direct
Counsel: to advise, consult
Eye Upon You: watching over, guiding with attention
Understanding: insight, discernment

LESSON 3:

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Read Isaiah 30:19-21

For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

—Isaiah 30:19-21 ESV

What does God promise regarding His guidance? How specific is this guidance, and when does it come?

This is one of the most beautiful promises about God's specific guidance. He says: Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it"—when you turn to the right or to the left. At every fork in the road, He promises to speak. Not just for the big decisions, but for every turn.

And notice: the Teacher will not hide Himself anymore. Your eyes shall see your Teacher. This isn't distant guidance—it's intimate, personal, present. He's right there with us at every decision point.

Word Meanings: **Teacher:** one who instructs, directs
Way: road, path, journey, manner of life
Walk: to go, proceed, move

LESSON 3:

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Scriptural Understanding

1. According to 1 John 5:14-15, what is God “listening for” when we pray? What does this tell us about the relationship between knowing His will and effective prayer?

2. In James 1:5-8, the Greek word translated “generously” actually means “with great clarity.” How does this change your understanding of what God promises when we ask for wisdom?

3. Isaiah 30:21 describes hearing a voice saying “This is the way, walk in it” at every turn. How specific does this passage suggest God’s guidance can be?

LESSON 3:

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Deeper Understanding

4. The story of Jericho and Ai illustrates a critical principle: what worked last time may not work this time. Why does God operate this way rather than giving us a repeatable system?

5. Hebrews 10:36 says "when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised." What does this teach us about the relationship between obedience to specific steps and receiving God's promises?

6. Psalm 32:8-9 contrasts being guided "with My eye upon you" versus being controlled "with bit and bridle." What's the difference, and what does God prefer?

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Personal Application

7. Think of a current situation where you're seeking God's direction. Are you asking Him for clarity at each step, or assuming you already know what to do based on past experience?

8. When you lack wisdom about a decision, do you truly believe God will give you clarity—or do you doubt that He'll answer? How does James 1:6-8 address this?

9. What would it look like in your daily life to "acknowledge Him in all your ways" (Proverbs 3:6)—not just the big decisions, but every fork in the road?



LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US



"As we seek God's will, we must understand that we cannot try to figure this out on our own through our own logic..."

"The Spirit will guide you into all truth—not just theological truth, but all the truth you need about your situation."

Read John 16:13-15

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

—John 16:13-15 ESV

Who is the Spirit of truth, and what is His role in guiding us into God's will? What does it mean that He will "declare to you the things that are to come"?

The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us. His role is to understand and receive the will of the Father and communicate that to us. Notice that "truth" here isn't just theological truth—it's all the truth you need to know about your situation and how God is going to guide you step by step into His answer.

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

THE GUIDE ANALOGY

Have you ever been to a museum where you've taken a tour with a guide? Why did you take the tour? Because the guide knows more than you do, and you wanted to learn. So you said, "I'll go with you."

But here's what the guide did NOT do:

He didn't take you to the museum cafeteria, hand you the museum Bible, and say, "Read it. I hope you figure it out. Good luck. I'll see you later."

"That's how we sometimes think it is with Scripture. God wrote it, we have it, and we sit in the cafeteria trying to figure it out. But God says, 'No—I'll guide you.'"

What did the guide actually do? He took you to the first picture and explained some things. Then you asked questions: "What did that mean? Where did it come from? What does that symbol mean?" And because the guide knew the answers, he responded to your curiosity. He didn't dump the whole load on you at once. He followed your questions, step by step, to get you to understanding.

And the beautiful thing is—God's not on a one-hour tour. He can take all day, all week, all month to guide you to the truth step by step. His role is to guide you and show you.

"He will declare to you the things that are to come"

We would like God to tell us everything that's going to happen—give us our fortune, map out the whole future. But that's not what He does. He gives us a heads up: "Pay attention. Be alert."

It's like saying, "When we go to dinner tonight, there's going to be a lady in a bright red dress, and she has something important to say to you." When you get to the restaurant, what will you do? Look for her. Pay attention. God didn't tell you what she's going to say—He just alerted you. And if He'd said nothing, you wouldn't have noticed her at all.

Word Meanings: **Guide:** to lead the way, show the path, conduct

Truth: reality, what is actual and real—not just theological but situational

Declare: to announce, report, make known

Things to Come: future events, what will happen—given as alerts to pay attention

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

Read Isaiah 30:18-21

Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

—Isaiah 30:18-21 ESV

What is the Lord waiting for before He can be gracious to us? What does it mean that His voice comes "from behind you"?

The Lord is waiting to give you favor and lead you in His will. What's He waiting for? For you to surrender and say, "I have a heart to follow Your will." He can't give it to you unless you have a heart to receive it.

And "blessed are those who wait for Him"—but the word "wait" doesn't mean stop and stand still. It means dance with Him. Let Him lead. He's moving you around until you see the next thing He wants to do.

Why does the voice come from behind?

Our tendency is to do what we see in front of us. We evaluate, do the pros and cons, make our list, and think, "That's a good way to go." But God says, "While you're looking at all that, I want you to pay attention to what I say." Because it's coming from behind you, you have to listen. You can't say, "Yeah, but I see that." The question isn't "What do I see?" It's "What am I hearing?"

"It's like being blindfolded and walked down the steps: 'Take a step down. Stop. Turn left. Stop. Turn right.' You get there by listening and following instructions—not by what you can see."

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

When helping someone discover God's will, they often say, "This is what I see. This is what I'd like to do." That's fine. But the question is: What have you heard? What has God said?

Word Meanings: **Wait:** to look eagerly for, to hope; implies active expectation, not passive standing

Teacher: one who instructs, points the way

Behind You: requiring you to listen rather than rely on what you see ahead

Read Isaiah 55:8-13

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

—Isaiah 55:8-11 ESV

Why are God's ways different from our ways? What does He promise about His word accomplishing His purpose?

God makes it clear: "My will, My instruction, what I'm going to do—these are not the same as what you can determine on your own. My ways are not your ways. Your natural response or thought about what you should do may not be the way I'm going." Why? Because He's thinking way bigger and more dimensionally. The impact you have here is going to affect someone five years down the road through dominoes you can't see.

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

AN ILLUSTRATION: THE ICELAND CONDO

We have friends, Heath and Rebecca, who learned abiding and learned to hear God's voice. And God said, "I want you to buy a condo in Iceland."

"What? Why?"

"I'm not telling you why. It's going to have some impact. Don't worry. Go where I tell you."

So they bought the condo in Iceland. Not to move there—just to spend time there. "What am I supposed to do?" "Just share your faith."

So they did. All they did was talk about the beauty of following God's voice to follow His will, which is best and none better. They told story after story of the supernatural things they were experiencing.

Here's what you need to understand about Iceland:

The church there is a national church that is literally a business. They don't even preach the Bible—it's just a social network with nice stories. They pay people to be pastors. And guess where they send the pastors to school? Not seminary—business school. To become a businessman to run the church.

But underneath that are "house churches"—groups of 20 to 60 people led by laymen who work regular jobs. Heath and Rebecca met these leaders and shared about abiding. The leaders started saying, "You can hear God's voice? Really? And He directs traffic and tells you His will? Can we learn that?"

So we went over and started doing retreats. And these people started hearing God's voice. They started getting told what to do. They started saying, "We've got to tell the rest of our church!" It's happening on a big scale—all because Heath and Rebecca were faithful to the instruction: "Go there and do what I tell you to do."

"My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. And My word is not going to return void."

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

Word Meanings

Read Acts 9:10-19

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem..." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

—Acts 9:10-19 ESV

How specific were God's instructions to Ananias? When Ananias questioned, how did God respond?

Notice: When God said "Ananias," Ananias didn't say, "Who are you?" He already knew that voice. He'd heard it before. He said, "Here I am."

Look at how specific the instruction was:

Go to that street. Go to that house. Look for this specific man. God didn't say, "He's somewhere in Damascus. Good luck finding him." His will isn't vague—it has to get down to specifics for the steps.

And when Ananias said, "Do you know who you're talking about? This guy is going to put me in prison!"—was that a legitimate response? Yes. Did God say, "That's absurd. I told you to do it. Go do it"? No. He said, "I understand. Let me help you further." And He gave Ananias more information: "He's a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name to the Gentiles."

"Ananias was the first person to hear that Paul would take the gospel to the Gentiles. God revealed it to him in the middle of following a specific instruction."

LESSON 4:

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God worked both sides. He could have just converted Saul directly and told Ananias about it later. But He wove them together—each one participating in His will, which is bigger than either story individually. And it strengthened both of their faith.

CONFIRMATION AND THE PROPHETIC

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-3; 2 Peter 1:20-21

Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

—1 Corinthians 14:1-3 ESV

knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

—2 Peter 1:20-21 ESV

What is the purpose of prophecy, and why should it not be a "private interpretation"?

Let others help you with prophecy. We think of prophecy as foretelling what's going to happen, but mostly it's forth-telling—truth-telling. "Here's what I'm hearing, and it's going to build you up, encourage you, and give you instruction."

But it's not to be a private interpretation. If somebody says, "I've heard this"—including you—what should you do? Offer it to others: spouse, people around you who have a heart to hear and follow. "I've heard this. Would you be willing to see if you can confirm that?"

Why would you want confirmation?

Because you'll learn what God's will actually is—which is best and none better. Why would you not want that?

LESSON 4:

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AN ILLUSTRATION: THE CEO'S QUESTION

A divorced CEO who was learning to discern God's will called me and said, "I heard God say I'm supposed to move in with my girlfriend and buy a house together."

Now, I could have said, "You're way off. That's absurd. No way." But all I said was: "I can't confirm that. Would you be willing to go further? Maybe you didn't quite hear right."

He said yes. So I gave him Scripture—it's not fuzzy on this point. I said, "Write out the verse. What does it say to you about the situation?"

He came back and said, "I'm not supposed to do this." Then he asked a great question: "What did I do to attribute that to God when He clearly didn't say it? Because I really want to know His will."

"That's the right heart: not defending what you thought you heard, but wanting to know what God actually said."

Read Psalm 16:7

I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

—Psalm 16:7 ESV

How does God give us counsel "in the night"? What should we do when we receive insight while sleeping?

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

The Lord gives instruction in the night. While you're sleeping, your heart is receiving from God. Your conscious mind is sleeping, but your subconscious isn't—and neither is God. He can speak to you, giving insight while you're asleep. When you wake up, something becomes conscious—or He wakes you up to make it conscious.

AN ILLUSTRATION: THE TESLA DREAM

One night God woke me up and said, "I have something to share with you. It's significant, and I'd like to give it to you right now."

I said, "I'm too tired." And I went back to sleep.

Then I had a dream. I was in a car—like a Tesla—that drives itself. I was in the back seat. No driver. The car was on a road, and the road took a left turn and went off a cliff. I started falling in the car. I was going to die.

Of course, you wake up before you hit the ground.

"You want to hear Me now?"

"Yes. I'm awake. Yes, I'm awake now."

Why does God use dreams?

Your subconscious can receive things your conscious mind isn't ready for yet. And in a dream, you can't reject it—you're not conscious to reject it. So it's pure.

But dreams aren't directing traffic for everything. They're a heads up: "Pay attention. There's a message for you."

What should you do?

Write it down immediately—in great detail. You will not remember it all tomorrow. You'll wake up and think, "I had a dream. I know it was about something..." Write it down. Then start asking God what it means.

"Don't read a book about dream interpretation—'Numbers mean this, colors mean that.' That's human interpretation. How about you just say, 'God, tell me what it means,' and let Him instruct you?"

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-17 (summarized)

AN ILLUSTRATION: JEHOSHAPHAT'S CRISIS

Jehoshaphat was surrounded by enemies—nations from the north, east, and south all formed together to eliminate Israel. He realized they were coming against him, and by any natural assessment, there was no way to win.

What did he do?

He decided to seek the Lord. "I've got a problem. What do You have to say?"

Then he did something important: He went back to Deuteronomy. He reminded God of what He'd already said—which means Jehoshaphat had been in the Word. "You said that when we have trouble like this, You're going to protect us. You said You'd keep giving us the covenant in the middle of it. Is that true?"

God said, "Yes, it's true."

"Okay, that promise is true. But what do I do about this specific problem? I need to know exactly what to do."

God's specific instruction:

"The battle isn't yours. It's Mine. Tomorrow, go down to this specific place. Act as if you're going to battle. Arm up. Get ready at that specific place. And you'll see what I'm about to do."

Now, if Jehoshaphat had said, "Great! The battle is Yours. I'll go back to Jerusalem and let me know when You beat them"—what would have happened? He would have thwarted God's will. Why? Because he wasn't willing to follow the instruction.

"You can't even take the promise God gives you and say, 'This is going to happen.' It's potential, not guaranteed. You still have to ask: What step do I take?"

He took the step. He went to that specific place the next day. And God defeated the enemy—He had them fight each other until they all killed each other. Jehoshaphat didn't have to lift a sword. And at the end, he had all their stuff—because they thought there was no way they could lose, so they'd brought everything to move in.

All he did was: "I've got a problem. What do You have to say?" And God gave him His will—specific instruction for that specific situation.

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Scriptural Understanding

1. In John 16:13-15, Jesus says the Spirit will “guide” us into truth and “declare things to come.” Based on the museum guide analogy, how is this different from just studying Scripture on your own?

2. Isaiah 30:21 says God’s voice comes “from behind you.” Why is this significant? What does it teach us about the difference between seeing and hearing in discerning God’s will?

3. In Acts 9, how specific were God’s instructions to Ananias, and what does this teach us about the level of detail God provides when we follow Him step by step?

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

Deeper Understanding

4. When Ananias questioned God's instruction, God didn't rebuke him but gave him more information. What does this teach us about how God responds when we have genuine questions about His will?

5. The CEO thought he heard from God but was wrong. How did the process of seeking confirmation help him discover the truth? Why is this safer than just acting on what we think we heard?

6. Why does God use dreams, and why is it important to write them down immediately rather than relying on dream interpretation books?

LESSON 4:

THE KEYS TO GOD GUIDING US

Personal Application

7. Think of a decision you're facing. Are you relying more on what you can see (pros and cons, logical analysis) or on what you're hearing from God? How might you shift to a more listening posture?

8. Is there an area where God may have given you a promise but you haven't asked Him for the specific steps to take? What would it look like to go back and ask?

9. Who in your life could serve as a confirmation partner—someone with a heart to follow God who could help you process what you're hearing? How might you engage them?



LESSON 5:

ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION



"So, as we are seeking God's will, He can use blocked circumstances or any other thing to ensure we continue to process, step by step, that which He is revealing."

"Process, process, process. Listen, watch, wait. What's the next step?"

In this final lesson, we bring everything together. God has a will—a good will—to lead you to a spectacular place in a world of trouble. His will is getting you through adversity, helping you understand solutions, make decisions, resolve conflicts. The key is that you have a heart to follow His will, surrender your will to His, and hear what He speaks—step by step.

Read Acts 16:6-12

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

—Acts 16:6-12 ESV

How did the Holy Spirit redirect Paul's plans? What did Paul do when he couldn't go where he thought he should go?

LESSON 5:

ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION

This was Paul's second missionary journey. He had already been to the southwest region and knew his calling was to initiate churches. He thought, "I'll go northeast into Asia." He started that direction—and the Holy Spirit blocked him circumstantially. Animals had problems. Roads were blocked. He couldn't go.

So he said, "Okay, I'll go north." Same thing—blocked circumstantially. Now he's at Troas, in the corner. He's already been east. He tried northeast—blocked. Tried north—blocked. What could he logically conclude?

He could have concluded: "I guess I didn't hear God's voice. I should go back to Jerusalem."

But he didn't do that. Why? Because he knew God's will. He just didn't yet know the details of the instructions for God's will. "I'm not going to quit just because it doesn't seem to be working. I still know His will—I just don't know what's next."

So he stayed and asked: "Father, I don't see anywhere to go. I know You want me to go, but I see nowhere to go. What have You got to say about this?"

And God gave him a vision—a man from Macedonia saying, "Come help us." Paul said, "I would have never thought to go there. Your way is not my way."

"Don't develop a system. God can use circumstances, open doors, closed doors, visions, dreams—all kinds of ways. The only question is: Is this You? Are You guiding me?"

Word Meanings: **Forbidden:** hindered, prevented—not necessarily a direct 'no' but circumstances that blocked the way
Did Not Allow: prevented circumstantially
Vision: supernatural sight, divine revelation

LESSON 5:

ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION

Read Proverbs 8:32-35

And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD.

—Proverbs 8:32-35 ESV

When you're in a place where you're not sure which way to go, what does this passage tell you to do?

LISTEN. WATCH. WAIT.

When you're getting blocked, when you're not sure which way to go—listen, watch, wait. Keep in process. Ask, seek, knock.

"Listen" means actively paying attention to what God is telling you. "Watch" means looking for signs—what happens next? What information does He give you? "Wait" doesn't mean stop and stand still—it means dance with Him. Let Him lead. He's moving you around until you see the next thing He wants to do.

Read Matthew 18:18-20; Romans 14:17

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

—Matthew 18:18-20 ESV

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

—Romans 14:17 ESV

LESSON 5:

ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION

What indicators does God give us that we're receiving and knowing His will?

When two of you agree—and your agreement is with the Holy Spirit—it will be done. How do you discover God's will? Unity. Unity with the Spirit. "I believe the next step is this. Do you confirm it?" If your spouse says, "Not yet," what does that mean? You don't yet have agreement on the step. So don't take the step. Go pray. Seek God. "What do You want us to know?" Listen, watch, wait.

The kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. So God gives you indicators: Are you at peace? Are you at shalom? Are you joyful? If the answer is "not yet," then you haven't gotten there. He'll trouble you—you'll experience something that's just not quite right, something is off.

ILLUSTRATIONS: PAYING ATTENTION TO THE INDICATORS

The Minivan

Years ago, we wanted a different car. There was a used minivan that looked brand new. The guy said, "Test drive it." We did. We said, "Do you mind if we drive it to the bank, get the cash, and come back?" He said, "Go for it."

So we pulled away—and instantly we started arguing, fighting, bickering. Out of nowhere. We're driving along and finally we said, "Okay, fine. We're not even going to buy this van. Let's go back." As soon as we turned back toward the dealer, peace showed up again.

We gave him the keys back. He said, "You weren't gone very long." We said, "No, we're not going to buy it." He said, "How'd you know?" We said, "Know what?" He said, "How'd you figure out it has transmission problems?"

We didn't notice. The transmission hadn't acted up at all. He said, "It's going to cost more to fix the transmission than the car is worth." We had no clue—except for the troubling.

The Crashed Car

On the other side, I can tell you a story where we bought a car and Linda said, "I don't think this is right." I said, "It'll be fine."

It turned out the whole thing had been wrecked and crashed. The bumper fell off. Water was splashing in the back of my head in a car wash. The paint on

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the doors wasn't original. Nothing on that car was original except two of the back doors. Everything had been replaced—badly—and they lied to us about it.

I called the dealer. "You got to take this car back." They refused. They'd scrubbed the records. A friend who's an attorney offered to represent me for free. I started getting ready to file a lawsuit.

And God said, "What are you doing?"

"I'm setting this right."

"No, you're not. It's going to waste all your time. What they did is wrong and they deserve to be sued. But you're not going to do it. You're just going to go buy a new car."

"That's going to cost me \$8,000."

"I know. Get ready to write the check. Linda gets a new car. This is your problem. You teach about going to unity of the Spirit, and you overrode it. How did that work out for you?"

"Pay attention to the troubling. Pay attention when your spouse says, 'I don't feel good about this.' That's often the Holy Spirit preventing you from making a mistake."

Read Psalm 133

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD commanded his blessing, life forevermore.

—Psalm 133:1-3 ESV

What does God promise when we come to unity?

When you come to unity, God will command blessing upon your unity. Why? Because the unity you come to is between Him and you and the others involved. What have you discovered? His will. And when you discover His will, He's going to command the good plan He has for you.

LESSON 5:

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Read Malachi 3:16-18

Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. "They shall be mine," says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him."

—Malachi 3:16-18 ESV

What were those who feared the Lord doing, and what was God doing while they did it?

Processing IS Prayer

Those who had a heart to follow God—what were they doing? They were talking to each other. Processing. And while they were talking, what was God doing? Paying attention. Listening.

"We thought, 'Oh, we've got to go pray—God, God, God, would You...' He said, 'Why don't you talk to each other? I'll listen. You're actually praying to Me while you're processing, because what do you want? My will. And I'm going to give you insight as you talk.'"

The more you talk about it with a heart to know, the more insight you get, the more wisdom you get. And as you talk, someone can say, "Hey, did you listen to what you just said? There's a clue there. You spoke it and didn't even know you spoke it."

I was with a C12 group once, and a guy stood up to talk about his business problem. He said, "I don't know what to do." He kept talking—and while he was talking, he actually said the answer. He didn't know it. I said, "Stop. Repeat what you just said." Everyone in the room saw it. God gave the answer through him speaking it. That's why processing works.

LESSON 5:

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AN ILLUSTRATION: DAVID AND KEILAH

Read 1 Samuel 23:1-13 (summarized)

David was being chased by Saul, hiding in caves. He found out that Keilah, a nearby city, was being attacked by the Philistines. He asked God: "Should I go help them?" God said yes. His men said, "Are you kidding? We're going to fight the Philistines who are way stronger than us? And Saul's going to find us!"

David could have overruled them: "God said it. We're going anyway." Or he could have backed down: "You're probably right. Let's not do it." Instead, he said, "I think I heard from God. Let's all go back to God and see what He has to say."

God confirmed it: "Yes, go. I will deliver you from the Philistines." His men heard that and said, "Okay, we confirm." They went, saved Keilah, and got to live in the city—real houses, real beds, no more caves. They were thrilled.

Then Saul found out where they were.

Keilah was surrounded by mountains with only one way in and out. If Saul trapped them there, they were done. David found out Saul was coming.

Now, what could David have done? He could have assumed: "I defeated Goliath. I just defeated the Philistines. Of course God will save me here too." That's what we do—we presume the next step. "Of course it's going to be this." And that's where we get in trouble.

But David went back to God: "Is Saul coming after me?" Yes. "Will the men of Keilah hand me over?" Yes.

"David, you've got to go. I'm not saving you in this case. My answer is for you to get out of here."

That wasn't what David wanted. But that was God's answer. They left—went back to caves. It was a while before they became king and had normal living again. But this was God's will. Now what? Now what? Now what? Every step of the way—not "Okay, great"—every step: "Now what?"

LESSON 5:

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AN ILLUSTRATION: FROM ICELAND TO SWITZERLAND

Remember Heath and Rebecca who went to Iceland? At one of our retreats there, a pastor couple started hearing God's voice. And the first thing God said to him was:

"Close the church."

If that was your instruction as a pastor—and you believe you're following God's best—how would you look at that? "That can't be right. I didn't hear from God."

All we said was: "Stay with it. If you think you heard, see if it's confirmed. It's okay that you struggle, but don't reject it. Maybe that's what God's saying."

They went back. God confirmed it. They got unity. Peace. Joy. And they shut the church down—really, really well. Everyone in the church said, "If that's what God said, that's what we're supposed to do." And they all went to other places.

"Now what?"

"Sell your house."

"No, we like it here."

"Sell your house."

"Why?"

"Not telling you."

"Process, process, process. They had to get confirmation. Unity. Peace. Joy. They took it. And all they were getting was steps."

They sold their house.

"Now what?"

"Move to Switzerland."

"What?"

They had family there. Their parents were dual citizens. There were things lining up. So they put everything in storage and moved to Switzerland. He's able to work remotely, so they have good income. They have a couple of kids. They're enjoying being in Switzerland.

"Now what? What are we supposed to do here?"

While they were asking God, He said to them—and to Linda and me and Heath and Rebecca: "They're going to bring abiding to Switzerland."

We got together to process. "What are you guys hearing?" "We think we're supposed to do ministry here. Maybe teach people abiding." We said, "God told us you're supposed to bring abiding to Switzerland. Let's go do that."

And we knew enough to say: "Why don't you go confirm that? We'll confirm it. There's not a program for this. It's just step by step. Our question right now is: What's the first step?"

LESSON 5:

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We believe the first step is to do what Heath and Rebecca did—just tell people about abiding with no agenda. God will take it from there.

The story is bigger than we know. And all they had to do was be obedient to the step. Be obedient to the step. Be obedient to the step.

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15

And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God.

—Deuteronomy 28:1-2 ESV

But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

—Deuteronomy 28:15 ESV

What is the promise for those who hear and follow God's voice? What is the warning for those who don't?

If you hear His voice and follow it and do His instructions, the blessings will come upon you—from behind you, so you can't chase them. You will have great success and blessing.

But if you don't, He can't force you. Unfortunately, you're going to walk back into the awful world, and it's not going to go well for you.

God sets before you life or death, blessing or cursing. If you're going to follow His will—which is specific—you've got to hear what He has to say, come to a conclusion about those steps, take those steps, and it will go well for you.

"Think of God's will as spectacular. You'd like to know the whole thing. He says, 'Don't worry about that. How about if I just tell you My promise—where I'm headed—and direct your steps? Go to the next step.'"

LESSON 5:

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Scriptural Understanding

1. In Acts 16, Paul was blocked circumstantially from going where he thought he should go. What did he do instead of giving up, and what does this teach us about holding onto God's calling while remaining flexible about the specifics?

2. Malachi 3:16-18 describes people talking to each other while God pays attention and listens. How does this change your understanding of what "prayer" can look like?

3. In 1 Samuel 23, David asked God again after already receiving victory at Keilah. Why was this necessary, and what does it teach us about not presuming the next step?

LESSON 5:

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Deeper Understanding

4. The indicators of God's will include peace, joy, and unity with others who are seeking Him. Why are these relational and emotional indicators trustworthy guides?

5. The car stories illustrate both listening to the "troubling" and ignoring it. What's the difference between healthy caution and unhealthy fear, and how do you tell them apart?

6. The Iceland-to-Switzerland couple received instructions one step at a time with no explanation: close the church, sell the house, move to Switzerland. Why does God often work this way instead of revealing the whole plan?

LESSON 5:

ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION

Personal Application

7. Think of a situation where you've been blocked from doing what you thought you should do. Have you asked God "Now what?" or have you assumed the blocking means you heard wrong?

8. Is there a decision you're facing where you've been processing alone instead of processing with your spouse or inner circle? What would it look like to invite others into the conversation while God listens?

9. Looking back over this entire course, what is the most important thing you've learned about discerning God's will? What is one specific step you will take this week to apply it?



History of **Abide Ministries**



In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit.

In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit. They had been believers for most of their lives and regularly attended church and Bible studies, but began to realize that, despite knowing the Bible intellectually, their personal experiences seemed disconnected from the promises and truths found in scripture. As they then learned these essential truths through their abiding and hearing God's voice – and began to see the grand life play out in their lives God called them to give that knowledge away. In 2001, God initiated the ABIDE ministry at a retreat with friends in Austria, and through their personal experience of this abiding life, their friends noticed the change in their lives and inquired if Rich and Linda could host a similar retreat the following year. This was repeated three years in a row, and then God called them to host weekend retreats in their home in Colorado.

Through the formal development of the truths revealed by God with Abiding and additional electives, they founded All for Jesus – Living Waters Ministries, now Abide Ministries – and have seen it grow exponentially since then, with 24+ retreat leaders all over the world, 29 online courses, eight books on various aspects of living life with Christ, and a daily podcast. Rich and Linda have also worked with various churches to strengthening them with the truths of an abiding life in Christ, and seeing Christ bring reconciliation and new vision to desperate situations.

Their heart is to bring the truths and promises of God to as many people as possible, showing everyone that when you abide in Christ and seek Him daily, your life can be completely and utterly transformed – enabling you to experience the grand life promised by God.



Vision

At our core, we believe in walking along God's path and connecting to the vine (abiding). As we walk in unity with others and understand God's Word as the truth, we are sure to experience His promised grand life and thus, willingly accept God's will as our chosen path.



Mission

1. Live out and invite everyone to experience the grand, spectacular, abundant life by hearing God's voice.
2. Share God's majesty, a close relationship with us as he yearns for our restoration.
3. God is majestic, grand and pure goodness, so that we can experience His nature in real life.
4. Communicate to everyone, irrespective of their condition, that all are meant to experience God's Divine Life (grand, majestic), by receiving His personal plan for us.
5. God delivers this life for us in a SUPERNATURAL way, transcending human comprehension, and thus, becoming normal in our life.
6. Teach that personal truths are revealed to us by God, grounded on His word – the embodiment of Truth.
7. Recognize that abiding in Christ changes our life in tangible, real ways, and is not just learning about or studying this life.
8. Teach that as we abide in Christ, we learn to understand and follow God's will for our lives, as He leads us personally into His grand, Divine plan for us. His personal plan calls us into His bigger story with our best interest at heart (blessed to bless others).

Statement of Non-Profit Status

Abide Ministries is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization that has been fully funded by our founders, leaders and retreat participants since its inception.

Tax-ID number: 27-1731819

Testimonies

"If I'm not abiding, I feel like I'm dying. Abiding is living...It's powerful to know that you have God's perspective on something."



Steve

"This was the first time that I understood what people meant by God's living Word. And I've been a Christian for a lot of years, but this was the first time it really came alive for me and I really could experience that."



Dan

"It doesn't matter where you are at in your walk. If you just got saved yesterday or if you've been a 20+ year believer like I have, learning how to hear God's voice and learning His will is just as important in day one as it is in day 3,426. You wanna hear God's will and this course has helped me hear Him more clearly."



Bob

"Abiding turned out to be the most transformational thing I've ever had since salvation in my Christian walk and in our marriage, and it's just been amazing. God has a path for us and He is there and He's showing it to us."



Heath

"Before, in my quiet time, it was more of a checklist thing for me to do in the morning, and, honestly, some mornings it was the thing that went if I was busy, and some days it didn't even happen. Now, it's become so personal to me and the time flies by in the morning and God speaks so directly to me and I just never felt that way on a daily basis before. That has been life-altering for me."



Rebecca

"I heard about people living in peace, I heard about people living in joy, and realizing all kinds of things around them are happening. And then we realize, wait a minute, we're there, we have peace beyond understanding."



Brad

Giving to the Ministry

Have you experienced abundant blessing from your time with Abide Ministries?

Pay it forward by donating at abideministries.com/donate and help us support others in learning how to seek Christ and abide in Him! We appreciate your desire to help us share the Abundant Life with the rest of the world.



Learn More at abideministries.com

Podcast

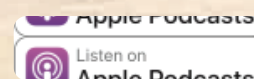
Escape the chaos and uncertainty of the world with our podcast, ***“Come and See, Finding Truth in a World of Chaos,”*** available on YouTube, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.



CHANNEL



PLAYLIST PAGE



Tune in five days a week as our hosts, Rich Case and Kathy Rocconi, dive into the scriptures and discuss what it looks like to live an abiding life with Christ. Join us as we seek God's truth in a world of turmoil and darkness.

Online Courses



Abide Ministries online courses uncover life-changing biblical truths, with practical application and wisdom. Our courses are joyful and life-giving and are perfect for small groups as well as individuals.

Each course has an accompanying workbook. Join us as we learn about biblical topics like Hearing God's Voice, Discerning God's Will, the Covenant, Living in Forgiveness, Living in the Kingdom of God, Living in the Supernatural, Christ, Clutter and the Calendar, Living the Grand Life, and many, many more.



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Abide Retreats



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Do you have friends or a small group that you would like to experience what you just experienced?

Would you be interested in attending another retreat, which we call electives to go deeper in your walk with God?

See the various options on our website.
The topics for retreats and courses are the same.

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