

How To Know The Will Of God

Overview

Do you know what God wants you to do?

In TONIGHTS LESSON, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU about how to know the will of God for your life.

Introduction

If you were to meet Jesus Christ physically, face to face, what would you want to ask Him?

Many people have been asked that, and the most common answer received is, "I'd want to know what the Lord would have me do." Of course, that encounter has happened already to one man, and he asked Jesus that very question.

Acts 9:1-6

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Discussion

In our scripture passage Paul asks the two greatest questions we all need to know.

First, he asks, "Who are you, Jesus?"

Then he asks, "What do you want me to do?"

We live in a generation of misguided men, clever people who know much, but have lost their way.

The good news we learn from Saul's experience is that guidance is promised. Jesus promised Saul that, if he arose and went into the city, he would be told what to do. We

have that same Spirit within us, impressing our hearts with the leadership and guidance of God.

1. The Will Of God

There are at least three ways in which we may understand the will of God.

First, there is His sovereign will.

God's sovereign will is always done; there's nothing you can do to stop it. God is God, and accomplishes what He desires.

His sovereign will is mysterious, known entirely by God alone.

2. There Is God's Moral Will

There are things God tells us that we must do, and things He considers wrong.

Love is right, and honesty is right, and kindness is right, and they are part of God's moral will.

But lying and murder and pride are wrong, and that is also part of God's unchangeable moral will.

He has fixed the standards of right and wrong in His moral will.

3. His Particular Will

God has a special will for you, just as He had a particular will for Saul. Acts 9:15 describes God's will for Saul:

Acts 9:15

The Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

God had a special plan for Saul, and He has a special plan for each of us.

I can see all three aspects of God's will at work in my life.

It was His sovereign will that set His love upon me and saved me. I'm saved because God sovereignly decreed that I am part of the elect.

It Was God's Moral Will That I Marry A Christian.

The Bible says we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, so I knew that God's moral will was for me to marry a believer. And God had a particular will for me in that He had me meet and marry my wife Karen. He gave me my special partner as part of His particular plan for my life.

The Reason God Is Interested In Me Is That He Loves Me.

I might be one small, insignificant man in the sea of humanity, but God knows my comings and goings.

The very hairs of my head are numbered.

He loves me and calls me His own.

And because He does, He has designed a particular plan for my life.

He has promised to guide me.

Unfortunately, we Christians sometimes get confused because we believe some of the myths about the will of God.

- Myth #1--"God will give you a roadmap."

God never provides a special roadmap for your life. Instead, He provides a relationship. When the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, God didn't give them a roadmap of where to go; He provided a pillar of fire and told them to follow it. He set up a relationship with the people. Christians want God to send them a simple map to follow that will outline everything they are supposed to do in life, but that's not how He works. That would take the romance and the excitement out of the Christian life.

When I was in college my roommate once told me how he had stopped into the Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, and had visited with the pastor, R.G. Lee. I was astounded. Reverend Lee was one of the giants of his day, and the thought that this kid could just stop in and see him was akin to my saying I was going to stop by the White House and chat with the President! Little did I know that someday I would follow R.G. Lee as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. And I'm glad I didn't know it as a young man, or I would never have been able to get anything done the rest of my life until that time when I became pastor. God's will is a relationship, not a roadmap.

- Myth #2--"God doesn't want you to have fun."

Some people view God as a cosmic killjoy: that if you do His will, it will be a hard and unhappy life. Some people are afraid to find the will of God because of what they'll be asked to do. But put yourself in the place of God. If a son or daughter you loved very much came to you and said, "I'll do whatever you want me to do," do you suppose you would want to make him or her miserable? Of course not, because you love your children, and you want what's best for them. Don't be afraid of the will of God. God is good and He loves you.

- Myth #3--"God only speaks to the holy."

Many people seem to think that God is only speaking to pastors and missionaries and special luminaries of the church. But God has a will for every person, pastor, or plumber. His will isn't limited to a certain kind of person. He has a will for your life.

- Myth #4--"I'm waiting for an experience like Saul's."

Some people think that they have to have a dramatic experience like Saul on the road to Damascus for God to speak to them.

Saul's experience was certainly sensational, but it is not the norm for all Christians. Sometimes God speaks in earthquakes, but other times He speaks in a still, small voice. Don't buy into the myth that you have to have some life changing, exciting experience for God to speak to you. The Scriptures are full of people who were led quietly by the Spirit, rather than dramatically by an earthquake.

- Myth #5--"God reveals His will only to the young."

The church has had a tendency to encourage young people to find the will of God because their lives are ahead of them, but every person regardless of age should be seeking the will of God.

The fact is if God were finished with you, He would have taken you to heaven.

God has a plan for your life, no matter what age you are.

Occasionally someone will say that they missed God's calling.

God had wanted them to be a missionary or something, but they didn't obey.

To that I say, "So what?" You can't change yesterday, but you can choose to obey Him today.

He has a will for your life, no matter what age you are.

- Myth #6--"God's will is hidden and we have to find it."

You would never say to your son, "There is something I want you to do, and it's very important.

If you obey, you'll be rewarded.

If you disobey, you will suffer the consequences.

But there's one catch: I'm not going to tell you what it is that you are to do."

No loving father would say that!

God doesn't hide His will from us.

The Scriptures talk about God revealing His will, not hiding it. He wants you to know His will.

This isn't like a cosmic Easter egg hunt.

You don't "discover" the will of God so much as you build a relationship with the Father.

The Guidance Of God

God has promised you guidance, and that guidance has certain provisions that come into play.

For example, you must be willing to obey Him and His Word.

When Saul first saw encountered Jesus, he said, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" Saul assumed that God had something in mind.

The Lord hadn't gotten his attention for nothing.

Unfortunately many Christians ask God to rubber-stamp (and approve) the plans they have already made.

They've already designed the house, now they want the architect to put his seal of approval on it.

If you really want God to guide you, you have to be willing to listen to His guidance and obey whatever He calls you to do.

Another aspect that must be in your life is meekness. When Saul responded with "What would you have me do," he displayed his teachability. He allowed God to be in control. **Psalm 25:9** says, "**The meek He will guide.**"

If you aren't meek, you won't know His will.

A third provision for God's guidance is openness.

You must earnestly, sincerely pray for God to guide you.

You report for duty as a Christian soldier, rather than wait around for the Commander to grab you.

If you have been waiting a long time for God to guide you, you need to consider how much time you spend with Him in private. If you spend time with the Lord in quiet time every day, praying and reading His Word, you'll discover God speaking to you.

He's probably speaking to you already, but you just aren't listening.

You also must be yielded to the Lord if He is going to guide you. What happened to Saul after his dramatic encounter with Christ?

Acts 9:8-9 Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

Others now led this tough guy, who had been taking others captive, like a little child.

He was totally yielded to the Lord.

If you really want to know God's will, make sure you are ready to obey Him.

Why should God reveal His will to someone who isn't going to obey it anyway?

Examine yourself and see if you are willing to listen, ready to learn, and anxious to obey His leading.

All of those things were evident in Saul when he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The Practical Guidance Of God

God has given some very practical ways that you can know His will.

One way is through miracles.

What happened to Saul was a miracle, and God still works this way.

There are examples in Scripture of God leading through dreams and visions, or even speaking in an audible voice.

He doesn't always guide this way, but God still uses miracles to guide His people.

A very common way God guides us is through His Word.

Saul was a man steeped in the Scriptures, so when Jesus appeared to him, the Lord said, "It's hard for you to kick against the goads of God's Word."

God's Word was being made plain to Saul, and it was in direct contrast to what he thought was right.

But God's Word sometimes works that way.

Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

When you are facing a situation and you wonder what you should do, I urge you to go to your Bible.

Read God's Word and see what He has to say about your circumstances.

Any solution that comes to you will be in accord with Scripture.

Another way that God guides us is through His people.

When Saul arrived in Damascus he was introduced to a Christian, Ananias, who had been sent by God to preach the truth to Saul.

When God wanted to show Saul His will, He used another Christian to do it.

That's why the Proverbs teach, "in a multitude of counselors, there is safety" (Proverbs 24:6).

Don't be so proud that you're afraid to listen to the counsel of others.

God will also guide you by His Spirit.

The Spirit of God will confirm His will to you.

Acts 9:17 Ananias went his way, and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him; said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, has sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

From that time forward, the Spirit of God led Saul.

The Spirit leads the people of God.

We know His voice, and He leads us.

Saul recognized the voice, and immediately began obeying what God had instructed him to do.

He began preaching that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah sent from God.

He was willing to obey the Lord, because He knew God had a purpose/will for his life. If you are meek, teachable, open, and yielded to God, He will guide you too.

I want to encourage you...

Spend time in His Word; seek the wise counsel of other Christians, and listen for the Spirit's leading.

God has a plan for your life, and He wants you to know what it is.