

MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

How God Guides, Part 1

Greg Wheatley: Welcome to Radio School of the Bible. This program is a ministry of the Distance Learning Center at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. I'm Greg Wheatley. Now we happen to be in a topical study of God's will for your life. Our instructor for this final quarter, Dr. Bill Thrasher, Professor of Bible and Theology at the Graduate School of Moody Bible Institute.

Well Dr. Thrasher, as we jump back into today's study we're talking about knowing God's will. How to pray, we've covered that. How to walk in the light. How to read God's word and we're gaining some very valuable insight. So thanks for your good teaching and let's continue today.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: Thank you Greg, it's been a pleasure to be here. We've said that a person who wants to know God's will needs to realize that God is eager to guide them. Now we've looked at some errors to avoid, an unwillingness to think ahead in regard to consider the long-term consequences of the decision. An unwillingness to take advice, all of these errors to avoid, an unwillingness to suspect one's self, the idea that to realize not every strong urge is a prompting from God; an unwillingness to discount personalities or realize that just because someone says it doesn't automatically mean it's God's will for one at a given time; an unwillingness to learn from experience, an unwillingness to wait on the Lord; and an unwillingness to follow the guidance that God has already given.

I'd like to transition now and talk about some specific ways that God does guide. How does God guide? And now these presuppose the idea of a person presenting their bodies a living and holy sacrifice. I think anything we say about the will of God without that presupposition certainly will only bring confusion into a life. In the words of Jesus, the epitome of submission to God there in Gethsemane where it says, "Yet not my will but thine be done." I think that presupposes the way we come to these insights. It presupposes that we are pursuing His will above all else in life.

But let's start with just some general principles. The first way God guides or we said certainly is through His scriptures. He gives us instructions to heed. He gives us instructions to heed. He's given us His word that He has inspired men to write and given us a permanent written record of it. All of His scriptures inspired by God and it's profitable for teaching and for correction as I just quote the familiar 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17, "For it's profitable for teaching for teaching, for approved for correction for training and righteousness that the man of God may be equipped, may be adequate equipped for every good work."

So the instructions of God's Word will certainly, are the primary way in a sense, God guides one. For example, certain things are explicitly said to be God's will. In other words God wills or desires all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. He's not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance. We'll quote that 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9.

So if a person wanted to know God's will, obviously the first thing about God's will is for a person to – what – to be saved. God wants to deliver us, save us, deliver us from the guilt of our sin. Deliver us continually deliver us from the power of sin. And one day obviously deliver us from the presence of sin as we go to be with Him in heaven. Now also how can that help? Is that for okay, I'm a Christian; I've obeyed God's will up to that point. Well also the Lord wants us to be an instrument of salvation to other people. God desires all men to be saved.

I think a person can ask themselves this question, it may affect such things as marriage. Lord, would I be a better instrument if you're single or married? Obviously marriage is a wonderful gift of God. There is a place in a sense for singleness in the will of God which scripture also talks about.

Yet this idea of God desiring others to be saved, it certainly deserves some consideration in regard to a person's vocational choice. Doesn't mean that God guides everyone directly into vocational ministry. Obviously that's not true. But certainly one should not be indifferent in a sense to the souls of men, no matter what their calling in life [may] be.

It may involve in a sense what neighborhood to live in. There may be a number of considerations in regard to where to live but that would not be something that would be, to be ignored. Purchases to make; you know you realize that God, that is the big thing He's doing on this earth now is – what – saving people and building His church. And so certainly we wanna fit in with God's purpose and God's plan if we really consider, take seriously the consideration of His will. Also He tells us, He says, now, he gives us the command, He says, "Don't be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is." And he says, "But don't get drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit."

So it's God's will I'm quoting there, Ephesians 5:17 and 18, "It's God's will that I live under the control of His Spirit." Well if that's clearly His will, it's His will obviously that I refrain from anything in my life that weakens my thoughts about Jesus and the Spirit's control over my life. If there's something in my life that's definitely weakening the Spirit's control of my life, it's not the will of God. And if I'm tolerating that and then "seeking God's will," I have to come to grips with the hypocrisy in my life. God desires me – what – to understand His will and to live under the Spirit's control. And from that vantage point God is able to guide us.

Scripture has given us some other things too. This is the will of God, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, "This is the will of God, your sanctification." And there he's talking about moral purity. Certainly any thought of, you know it's God's will for me to do this or that, to be unfaithful to one's wife or husband. That's not God's will. That may be a deceitful emotion or whatever out of hurt or anger, but that's not God's will. God's will is for our sanctification.

Those things that aid us in being set apart for God and being available to Him and living a pure life, that's the will of God. He also tells us, those three very short terse commands but very meaningful, He says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." So it says it's God's will to learn to develop a rejoicing heart. And I think that's why we've spent so much time we did on the character of God. The only way I think to rejoice always is to learn the things that are unchangeable, that joy somehow has to be deeper in a sense than circumstantial if I'm to do it always.

In fact, we appreciate scripture that tell us that sometimes you can be distressed in a trial but you can still rejoice. So evidently that joy, whatever it means, the biblical term obviously can be experienced in a lot of different emotions because circumstances will legitimately affect my emotions but they're just not to control me to the extent that it wipes out my rejoicing and those things that do not change. So this idea of rejoicing always, praying without ceasing, anything that hinders my communication with God, obviously when I'm angry scripture says I can't – I'm not able to pray. So it's God's will to get in touch with my hurt, to get in touch with my pain and let the Lord Jesus put His healing touch upon that and to learn to develop gratefulness. That's the will of God.

You know, it's interesting. As a person will pursue these generally clear things, which usually when a person asks about the will of God, this is not their question. They know that, but if they will pursue this with their energies, the other – what – the other does come. As we said, God's guidance comes within the framework of present obedience.

Greg Wheatley: You know it's interesting, because you said something there that I was thinking. It's almost as if these are general overarching principles from God's Word that really require no debate. God's Word says you ought to be thankful, you ought to be faithful, you ought to be morally upright. If those are the general categories, it's almost as if these other things that we have questions about really are almost secondary, take care of themselves items. Like you're saying, if we're seeking God, if we're cultivating a thankful spirit, it's almost as though we find ourselves not worrying about these little minutia that we so often ask our questions about.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: Well certainly those things are not to be primary and it gives us a place to focus in regard to this cause let's face it, anybody listening to us certainly your life, my life, they're always a lot of uncertainties. We really don't know tomorrow and there are questions that we have in regards to tomorrows of our life, how is this gonna work, how has that gonna work out. So I need a place to focus.

Obviously uncertainty is a stress and there's uncertainty in every life. There may be more at certain times and they're more in some people's lives at any given time, but that's that in every life. And so God is merciful to give us a place to focus on. I think it's what Jesus was saying when he says, "Don't be anxious by what, here's what you focus on. You seek to live under my control. That's seeking first my kingdom and live according to my standards and seek first my righteous, the other things will be added unto you."

So these instructions to heed certainly are the beginning part and the fundamental part in regard to seeking the will of God. I'd say with that briefly there are also examples to follow. That's why much of scripture is, at least a significant part of scripture is written in regard to biblical biography. We learn, we tend to identify with people's lives, we learn from people's lives and of course our supreme example is the Lord Jesus. A number of lessons ago we looked at the Lord Jesus and about how He pursued the will of God as a supreme thing in His life.

We went through the Gospel of John maybe oh, 10 or so verses where it says, “Even in a moment of great hunger,” it says, “I have food to eat that you know not of. To do the will of God and to accomplish His work. I’ve come down not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me.” And he says, “I only speak the words the Father gives me to speak. I do the deeds the Father has prompted me to do.”

So he sought to live in that incredible communion with the Father. And so our supreme example that is the Lord Jesus Christ, have this mind in you which is also in Christ Jesus. His example in regard to pursuing it and also depending upon the Father for everything certainly is – says a lot to us in regard to pursuing the will of God.

Greg Wheatley: Some great words as we conclude today’s session here in Radio School of the Bible with our instructor, Dr. Bill Thrasher. Dr. Thrasher is Professor of Bible and Theology in the Graduate School at Moody Bible Institute. Radio School of the Bible is a production of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

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