

6. Thy Will be done

In the Lord's prayer, right after the words "thy Kingdom come", comes the phrase "thy will be done". We have already seen that in order to pray Your Kingdom come, it must also include Your Will be done. Jesus is our ultimate example of this. In the garden of Gethsemane, he prayed; **"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."** (Luke 22:42)

How often do people have a list of things they pray for, things they would like to have God do. However, notice the prayer of Jesus, it is prefaced by: Father if it is your will. Here in the Lord's prayer, Jesus starts off by praising God, then he prays that his kingdom come, and then that his will be done. Only after that does he ask for benefits. Is that the order of our prayer? Do we praise God and thank him in our prayer? Do we pray for his kingdom, for his church, for his will to be done first, or do we begin with our concerns? It is important to pray according to God's will. Not only is it pleasing to God, but it also has a great promise associated with it. We read: **"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him"** (1 John 5:14).

How do we discern the will of God?

You may say: how can I determine if something is the Will of God or not? In order to do the will of God, we first must know what the will of God is. So how do we determine the will of God? How does God show us his will? Let me give you four answers.

1. Through His Word

God reveals his will to us through his Word. In Hebrews we read: **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2).** And what His Son has spoken is recorded in the Gospels. We can read it for ourselves. On the mount of transfiguration we see Jesus with Moses, who gave the law, and with Elijah, who represents the prophets. In times past God spoke through them, and we can read their accounts, but now the law and the prophets have been fulfilled in Christ (insert scripture here). And so on the mount Jesus is transfigured **“and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone” (Luke 9:35-36a).** It is this Jesus, who has revealed the will of the Father to us. In fact, in John chapter 1 we see that He is the Word of God himself, which became flesh and lived among us. God reveals his will to us through his Word.

In the Bible we read that God does not wish anyone to be lost, but wants everyone to repent and receive forgiveness for their sins (Matt 18:4, Acts 2:37-38, 2 Peter 3:9). We know this is the will of God. We also know that God wants us to be baptized (Mark 16:16). Concerning sanctification we read: **“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess 4:3-4).** In Romans 12:2 we read: **“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).** These scriptures show us

what the will of God is. Peter also reveals to us that **“this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15).** And one more thing. It is the will of God that we be thankful. Paul writes: **“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:16-18).** That these things are the will of God is shown to us in God’s Word. God’s Word contains the will of God. Let us read our Bibles and we will know what the will of God is.

2. Through the Holy Spirit

The other way that God’s will is revealed is through his Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:26 we read: **“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27).**

Consider these awesome words from 1 Corinthians: **“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we**

might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

We do not need to rely on our own strength and on our own interpretation. God has promised his Holy Spirit to those who ask. Jesus himself said: **“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13).** God reveals his will to us through His Holy Spirit. If you hear His gentle voice, act upon what He is telling you.

3. Through Opportunities and Circumstances

Often we have plans for our future, but things do not work out the way we planned things. We should not forget that **“all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).** When God closes a window, he will often open a door. Sometimes these opportunities present themselves to us for a reason. Yet we should constantly strive to walk in God’s will, not to live according to our own agenda. James warns us not to boast of our future plans. **“Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that’” (James 4:15).** If we have a strong desire to do something, it is often hard for the Lord to show us his will, when we have already made up our own mind. If a young man is madly in love with a non-Christian girl, it will be hard for the Lord to show him that it is not the right one for him despite what is written in 2 Corinthians 6:14. We can pray for God’s leading, but let us first follow his will in the things he has already shown us. If we are not willing to do that which we already know as God’s will, do not expect him to

reveal more to us. Once we have taken the steps we know are the right ones to take, then he will lead us further. Often when we look back in our lives, we can see God's leading much more clearly. Hindsight is clearer than foresight. In my own life, I have sometimes been disappointed that things did not work out the way I wanted them to, only to find that God had a much better way for me which would not have materialized if my original wishes had been actualized.

Sometimes God puts us into a situation for a reason, but we are oblivious to it. Sometimes we pray for God to send help, where he wants us to be the help we are praying for. If I know how to swim and someone is drowning nearby, and there is no one else around, do I need to ask God to show me if I should try to help? Why am I in this situation? God put me there for a purpose! Often we are overwhelmed by our weaknesses. But God says **“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9a).**

4. If we are willing

We will find out what God's will is once we are willing to walk in his ways. Jesus says: **“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17).** According to John 6:30, the people who demanded a sign so that they might believe were not given the sign they asked for. But the disciples who believed Jesus, they were the ones who came to know that He is indeed the Christ. We often focus on the doing instead of on the being. The Bible says: **“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).** By

being in the will of God, his will is being done. He is the vine and we are the branches, by being in him fruit will follow.

Jesus says: **“He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5b).** That is the secret in doing the will of God. If we are not in Christ, our works will be our own. If we are in Christ we are not our own, but his. Just calling him Lord and disobeying him is useless. Jesus says: **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).** Now we have come full circle. Jesus teaches us to pray: thy will be done because it is those who do the will of the Father that enter the kingdom of heaven. And only by doing the will of God does his kingdom come. We do the will of God by being in him. If we rest in him, he works through us.

Putting it into practice.

Practically speaking what is the will of God? On the one hand Solomon sums it up by saying: **“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccl. 12:13).** And in the epistle to Titus we read: **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11).** So holiness is the will of God. Holy living is the standard we are to strive for.

Secondly,” **in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:18).** Being thankful when all is well is easy. But being thankful in all circumstances is something we cannot do unless we live in the will of God.

That is evidence that we draw on a higher power than ourselves. Job is a shining example of thankfulness when after his major catastrophes he says: **“The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21b).**

Happiness may be dependent on outward circumstances, but the joy in the Lord is something that the world has not given us and so that joy no one can take away from us. That is why Paul could write from prison: **“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say rejoice” (Phil 4:4).**

And finally, Jesus sums up the will of God for us in these words: **“ ‘You shall love the LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).** Paul adds: **“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).** We love to sing and praise God, but the love of God also includes bearing one another’s burdens. There are so many practical ways to do this. And the needs are so great, we can never finish the task. But it is love what motivates it all. I am convicted every time I read Matthew 25:31-40. Here Jesus says :**“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty**

and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:31-40).

A social gospel without the love for God, is deficient, but the love of God without a social conscience is impossible. And that is the will of God because **"you yourselves are taught by God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).**

Questions

1. Do you precede your petitions in prayer by: Thy will be done?
2. How do we discern the will of God?
3. What are some things that the Bible shows us to be the will of God?
4. How does the Holy Spirit reveal the will of God to us?
5. How does the Lord show his will to us through circumstances?
6. When will the Lord reveal more of his will to us?
7. When is it hard for the Lord to show us his will?
8. How does Solomon sum up God's will?
9. How does Jesus sum up God's will?
10. What are some practical ways to bear one another's burdens?

