

The Parchment

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Knowing God's Will, Part II

*...be joyful always; pray continually;
give thanks in all circumstances, for this is
God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In the last Parchment, I raised the question of how we can know God's will. The answer is not as easy as one, two, three, but there are some principles we can follow in the process of seeking God to follow His will.

Many times Christians feel frustrated and confused in wanting to know God's will. But when they do find out God's will, they do not wish to follow. Remember my friend's difficult job situation? His first instinct was to find a new job. But staying in the job certainly could be God's will. How? He could learn patience, compassion, and humility for his coworkers. He could share his faith with unbelievers. After much prayer and personal struggle, he chose to wait on God's timing and remain at the job.

What my friend learned is our second principle: Practice what you already know of God's will. God may move my friend to a new job; but, while God allows Him to be there, he can grow personally and share the Gospel with a godly attitude. He can also continue to integrate other aspects of what God has already revealed in the Scriptures.

The Bible governs our relationship with our God and our world. We cannot ignore what God has already communicated to us while seeking answers to our current decisions. If we are truly serious about knowing God's will, we must cultivate a desire to put into practice what God has already revealed to us.

I have a mentor who has helped me grow in pastoral ministry and Bible teaching. In my early days of seminary I would ask him many questions ranging from interpreting a Bible passage to handling difficult pastoral counseling questions. After graduating from seminary and becoming a pastor myself, I would email him often. I appreciated how he pointed me back to the Bible. Awhile ago, I faced another dilemma. My first inclination was to ask my teacher. However, this time I went straight to a Scripture that I knew applied to the circumstance. I had my own answer. We will always need spiritual advisors to help us guide our decision making process. At the same time, though, we should grow in our own ability to think through our circumstances biblically. As we come to know the Scriptures, we will begin to develop a Godly perspective on our toughest decisions.

God's will is not only that we are saved, but that we live a holy life: *It is God's will that you should be sanctified* (1 Thessalonians 4:3a). Paul goes on to explain that being sanctified (set-apart, holy) is a process of both avoiding sinful activity and adopting self-control that honors God. Take a moment to consider if God is asking you to stop doing something that is not edifying and take on something that would glorify Him instead.