

12 Foundation Stones—Class 12B

What Is His Will?

Going God's Way, Part 2

Section 1: God's Will for You

➤ **We should desire to please the Lord**

1 Thessalonians 4:1—Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.

John 14:15—If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 14:23a—Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word."

Throughout these classes, we've talked and learned a lot together about the close relationship the Lord wants to have with us. He wants to bring satisfaction and joy into our lives. We've talked about the gifts He offers—the gifts of healing, joy, of hearing from Him, of love, of strength, of help in times of trouble, of His very presence.

Until now we haven't talked much about what He is expecting in return, besides our praise and our love for Him, a love so abundant that our hearts should be so full of love that it overflows upon others.

So now we want to talk about giving Him more of ourselves so that He can fulfill His plan in our lives.

➤ **The Lord's expectations**

We know from the Word that the fundamental thing that the Lord expects from all of us is love: to love Him and love our neighbors.

What else have we learned over the past months about the Lord's expectations? (Spend a few minutes considering what you have learned since embarking on the 12 Foundation Stones course.)

➤ **Making the right decisions**

We can see from our discussion that we know general principles, but do you know specifically what He wants you to do? When you are faced with a decision, how do you determine what would most please the Lord? We've learned about hearing from Him in prophecy, and that is one of the ways to know His will, but there are additional ways that will help you make the right decisions and that's what we'll look at today.

➤ **A sense of priorities is essential for making the right decisions.**

No man is a great man, and no woman is a great woman, unless they have a sense of priorities. If we keep from doing the better thing because we're so occupied with things that are secondary, we will not find the fulfillment that we seek nor will we achieve the great potential He has placed in each of us.

There is a very true saying: "Only one life, it will soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."

1 Corinthians 3:14—If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

Matthew 6:33—But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

2 Corinthians 4:18—We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Busy on the way

There was an older woman who arranged to travel by train through the mountains in the south of Austria. She had always wanted to take that trip, knowing the grandeur of the Alpine scenery she would pass as the train made its way. She boarded the train and decided to make sure she was comfortable. For the next few hours the woman fussed with her handbag and her little bag, trying to arrange things—adjusting a little pillow she had brought along for her back, and fussing about, never looking out at the scenery. Ordering tea, opening her sandwiches, checking the timetable, and the time went by. She had always talked about wanting to see what it looked like, but she didn't deal with the main purpose of her

trip at all! She forgot what it was all about and just fooled around with those little, inconsequential things. It was a misplaced attention, a false priority. The emphasis was in the wrong place. The mountains passed her by...

What's important?

It was reported that eleven millionaires went down on the RMS Titanic. Major A. H. Peuchen left \$300,000 in money, jewelry, and securities in a box in his cabin. "The money seemed a mockery at that time," he later said. "I picked up three oranges instead."

Keep the lights burning!—He knows his priorities!

The keeper of a lighthouse at Calais, France, was boasting of the brightness of his lantern, which could be seen ten leagues away at sea. A visitor said to him, "What if one of the lights should chance to go out?"

"Never! Impossible!" he cried, horrified at the thought. "Sir," said he, pointing to the ocean, "yonder, where nothing can be seen, there are ships going out to all parts of the world. If tonight one of my burners went out, within six months would come a letter, perhaps from India, perhaps from America, perhaps from some place I never heard of, saying, 'On such a night, at such an hour, the light of Calais burned dim, the watchman neglected his post and vessels were in danger!' Ah, sir, sometimes in the dark nights, in stormy weather, I look out to sea and feel as if the eyes of the whole world were looking at my light. Go out? Burn dim? Never!"

➤ **God has plans for you!**

1 Peter 4:10—As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Romans 12:6–8—Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; (7) or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; (8) he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

God has gifted each of us with certain qualities and abilities. When we are making decisions and seeking God's will, we should ask ourselves, what are we doing with the gifts we've been given? Are we using them for what is most important?

Consider this passage:

"In all the ages there never has been and never will be a man or woman just like you. You are unique and have no double. No two leaves, no two jewels, no two stars, no two lives are alike. Every life is a fresh thought from God to the world. There's no one in the entire world who can do your work as well as you. There is a need for you. God has a plan for you. And if you don't find and enter into God's purpose for your life, there will be something missing from the glory that would otherwise have been there. Every jewel gleams with its own radiance, every flower distills its own fragrance, every believer has his own particular bit of Jesus' radiance. Has God given you a different personality? He has also created a particular circle of individuals who can be reached and touched by that personality only, and you can do it as none other in all the world."

No matter how weak you feel, God can use you!

It was advertised long ago in a large city that a great violinist would play on a violin worth a thousand dollars—at that time, a considerable amount of money. The theatre was packed. Many came as much to see the fine violin as to hear the music. The violinist came out and played, and the people were enraptured. But suddenly he threw the violin down and stamped on it, crushed it into matchwood and walked off the stage. The people were shocked, and thought the man must have lost his mind to destroy such a lovely and costly instrument. Then the manager came on and addressed the audience, saying, "Friends, the violinist has not been playing on the thousand-dollar violin yet. The instrument you have heard he bought at a second-hand store for 65 cents. He will play on the thousand-dollar violin now."

And so he did, and there were few people in the audience who could tell any difference. He simply wanted to show them that it is the violinist, rather than the violin, that makes the music. You may be a 65-cent fiddle, but the Master will make music upon you if you are yielded to Him. (Acts 4:13–14; Romans 12:1–2.)

God will use you, if you let Him!

A water bearer in India had two large pots, hung on each end of a pole, which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made.

But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by

the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, the Lord will use our flaws to grace His table. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste.

➤ **The first step in finding His will: Yield to Him!**

The choice to do God's will should come from a willing heart. God wants volunteers, not draftees!

2 Corinthians 9:7—So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Chronicles 28:9a—As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.

The first step in finding God's guidance is to yield to God. You need to be willing to let go of your ideas of what you think is best in order to find God's plan.

Proverbs 3:7—Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.

Matthew 6:10—Your kingdom come. Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

In His care

A young lady stood talking to an evangelist on the subject of consecration. "I dare not give myself wholly to the Lord," she said, "for fear He will send me out to China."

The man of God said: "If some cold, snowy morning a little bird should come, half frozen, pecking at your window, and should let you take it in and feed it, thereby putting itself entirely in your power, what would you do? Would you grip it in your hand and crush it? Or would you give it shelter, warmth, food, and care?"

A new light came into the girl's eyes. "Ah, I see, I see!" And her face shone as she went away. Later she again met the clergyman and recalled to him the incident. With a countenance all aglow with joy, she said, "And, do you know, I am going to China!"

Accepting your calling

It is said of Henry of Bavaria that at one time, becoming weary of court life, he determined to enter a monastery. When he presented himself to Prior Richard, the faithful monk gave him the strict rules of the order. The king listened eagerly and enthusiastically expressed pleasure at the prospect of such complete consecration.

Then the prior insisted that obedience, implicit and expressed was the first requisite of sainthood. The monarch promised to follow his will in every detail. "Then go back to your throne and do your duty in the station God assigned you," was the prior's word to him. The king took up his scepter again, and from then until he died, his people said of him, "King Henry has learned to govern by learning to obey."

➤ **Follow the Guide**

Psalms 143:10—Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness.

An experienced guide of many years in the jungles of Africa once said, "It's hard to lead those who are willful. It's very difficult to guide them. They don't trust their guide, they're always wanting to have their own way, and I've seen many such people in my days of guiding who ran into dangerous situations and serious accidents because they wouldn't follow the guide."

Is it strange then that God's people, the sheep of His pasture, need a Shepherd to guide them? We shouldn't go a day without the presence and guidance of the Lord.

Psalms 100:3—Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

➤ **Finding God's will for us and for our possessions**

Finding God's will for ourselves includes finding His will for the possessions He has given us stewardship over.

As we learnt in our classes on the "Golden Rule," the Lord expects us to give of ourselves in loving service for Him and others. Part of this giving includes sharing of our material possessions and finances with the needy, and also supporting other believers in their work for the Lord.

➤ **"Every good gift comes from above"**

James 1:17—Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Psalms 136:25—Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever.

Ecclesiastes 5:19—As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God.

We work for a living yet ultimately the blessing of our material possessions comes from the Lord. If we acknowledge Him as the Giver, then we acknowledge that we're really just stewards, taking care of that which He has given into our hands. This puts our financial decisions into better perspective. We should be seeking God's will not only for what we do, but also for how we use our money and belongings.

Stewards of that which we possess

Some years ago a couple of livestock buyers in the South rode up to the home of an old man and noticed a fine milk cow grazing in the yard. One of them said, "Uncle, we would like to buy this cow. Is she yours?"

The old man replied, "No, sir, boss, that isn't my cow. She's the Lord's cow. I'm just keeping her for Him."

That old man had grasped the great principle of stewardship. We really do not own anything. Whatever we seem to possess is just loaned to us for a little while, for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness" (Psalm 24:1).

➤ **The believers' duty to support God's work**

Whether we ourselves can work for the Lord or not, we should be helping those who are.

Galatians 6:10—Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Romans 15:26–27—It pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. (27) It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.

1 Corinthians 9:6–11—Is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? (7) Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? (8) Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? (9) For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? (10) Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. (11) If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

➤ **No matter our financial state, believers are encouraged to give**

Mark 12:41–44—Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. (42) Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. (43) So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; (44) for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

2 Corinthians 8:1–4—Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: (2) that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. (3) For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

1 Kings 17:9–16—[A poor widow of Zarephath gave sacrificially, and God blessed her with unending supply of food in famine.]

➤ **Example of giving to needy fellow-believers**

Romans 15:26—For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

God will pay us back for sacrificial giving:

Luke 6:38—Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Proverbs 28:27a—He who gives to the poor will not lack.

2 Corinthians 9:6b-7—He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (7) So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Biblical example of a giving spirit

See 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9.

The blessings of giving

Charlie Page was a young man, broke, penniless and jobless. One day he stopped on the street to listen to a Salvation Army service. When the tambourine was passed around for the collection, he told the girl who held it out before him that he would like to give something but had nothing himself, even for his food. She gave him a dollar, saying, 'Take this: put ten cents in the offering, and hereafter give a tenth of all you get to God. Keep this up all your life, and you'll never be penniless again.' He did so, got a job, and began giving his tenth regularly. By and by he became a millionaire, and gave much more than a tenth, building hospitals and helping in many ways to carry on the work of the Lord.

Malachi 3:10—"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of Heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

➤ **Choosing God's will is not necessarily easy**

When we do what the Lord wants us to do, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we are pleasing the One who loves us and laid down His life for us.

But fulfilling what the Lord wants you to do is not always going to be easy. You could face discouragement and other trials.—We talked about this in the "Three Steps to Victory" class.

One challenge you may face when you choose to do God's will is that it won't necessarily make you popular and could even sometimes bring you into conflict with those around you.

For instance, if you determine that it is not God's will for you to spend so much of your weekends hanging out with your friends, they may not be happy about this.—Or if you decide it is God's will for you to pass out tracts or help at a food bank, maybe your family or colleagues won't be happy about it.

While we hope that you won't have problems like this, don't be surprised if this sometimes happens!

John 15:18–20—If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Galatians 1:10b—For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Standing up! (Humor with a message!)

There is a true story of a young man who was a very courageous young believer. After leaving school, he went to a university near his home. During the first few weeks of class, an atheistic professor asked his class if any students considered themselves to be Christians. It was obvious that the professor intended to embarrass anyone who raised his hand. This young man looked around and saw that none of the two hundred students was going to admit his faith. What should he do? He either had to admit his Christianity or deny it, like Peter did when Jesus was about to be crucified. He suddenly held up his hand and said, "Yes, I'm a Christian."

The professor made him stand in front of the class and said, "How could you be so stupid to believe that God became a man and lived here on earth? That's ridiculous. Besides, I read the Bible and it didn't say a thing to me."

This young man looked right at the professor and said, "Sir, the Bible is God's letter to Christians. If you didn't understand it, that's what you get for reading somebody else's mail!"

➤ **Rewards for doing God's will**

The promises and rewards for doing God's will are numerous!

John 15:14—You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Hebrews 10:36—For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

1 John 2:17—And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Ruth 2:12—The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.

2 Chronicles 15:7—But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!

Daniel 12:3—Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Matthew 5:12—Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 16:27—For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Matthew 25:21—His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

1 Corinthians 3:8b—Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Galatians 6:7b—For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Ephesians 6:8—Knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

2 Timothy 4:8—Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Hebrews 6:10—For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Revelation 2:10b—Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 2:23b—All the churches shall know that I am He Who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Revelation 3:11–12—Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (12) He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

Section 2: Seven Ways to Know the Will of God

How can you find God's will specifically for you? Here are seven ways.

➤ **1. The Word**

2 Timothy 2:15—Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The first place we look for the will of God is in the Word of God. This is the known, sure, absolute, revealed will of God. You don't have to have any doubts about it. This is it! If God never tells you another thing than what He has already written, if you just operate according to the Bible, you'll get along great!

➤ **2. The voice of the Word**

Psalms 119:130—The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

The second way to know God's will is by the voice of His Word. God speaks not only in His Word, but He speaks through the voice of His Word. The psalmist said,

Psalms 103:20—Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His Word.

Have you ever had the Lord speak directly to you with the voice of His Word? You're reading a passage of Scripture when all of a sudden a verse or phrase or even a single word comes alive and hits you between the eyes? "That's for me! That's the answer!" Or perhaps you've been praying about a certain situation when the Lord reminded you of a verse or passage that was exactly the answer you needed. It was so loud and clear that God couldn't have spoken any more emphatically if He'd yelled it out!

That is the voice of His Word, speaking through His tried and proven written Word. It may have been originally given for somebody thousands of years ago, and yet, all of a sudden, it speaks to you personally.

So the first way to know God's will is through His Word, the Bible. Then there is the voice of the Word—a specific verse, phrase, or passage from the Bible, which speaks to you personally.

➤ **3. Revelations**

What do you think would be the next surest indication of the will of God?—A direct revelation: a prophecy, dream or vision.

The Lord sometimes reveals His will through prophecy and revelations.

Ezekiel 3:10—Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears."

1 Corinthians 14:31—For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

God sometimes reveals His will through dreams:

Job 33:15, 26—In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds ... (26) he shall pray to God, and He will delight in him, he shall see His face with joy, for He restores to man his righteousness.

Acts 2:17—And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

Caution regarding determining God's will only by dreams:

Ecclesiastes 5:3—For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool's voice is known by his many words.

God sometimes reveals His will through visions. A vision is when God flashes a picture in your mind's eye:

Numbers 12:6—Hear now My words: if there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.

Hosea 12:10—I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.

However you receive your revelation—whether through a prophecy, a dream or a vision—you have to measure your revelation against the Word. Be sure that direct revelation does not contradict the Word of God.

In these last days the Lord is using prophecy more than ever to help us not only determine His will and guidance but also to provide feeding instruction. Prophecy is an enormous subject on its own and so we have covered it in detail in an earlier class. In this class we are pointing it out as only one of three ways of receiving direct revelation. This should be taken in relationship to this particular class. Prophecy should not just be relegated to a minor role in your lives but rather given the prominence that the Lord is emphasizing today.

"Watch for the man with the pitcher!"

(As told by a missionary family traveling in a camper van:)

The Lord told us to go to one town we'd never been to before: Albany, New York. We didn't know anybody, we didn't have any place to stay, but the Lord said to go into this town and watch for a man carrying a pitcher of water, and he was to be the man who would help us.

We parked in front of a little Italian Pentecostal church. The children got out to stretch their legs and play on the lawn. We'd been sitting there for about an hour and out comes the gardener. It turned out he was like the janitor. He was carrying a big watering can, watering the flowers. Mother said, "Look! A man with a pitcher!" We were expecting to see someone carrying one of those old Bible pitchers, but after all, how many men carry pitchers? But it just dawned on us, one of those watering cans with the long spout is a pitcher!

My son in law went over there and started talking to him. He put us in touch with the preacher who invited us to help with a revival meeting that very night, and through all of this, we were offered places to stay.

So that's how we began our visit and how the Lord supplied for us—through "the man with a pitcher"!

➤ **4. Advisors and counselors**

Proverbs 11:14—Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Proverbs 15:22—Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

When possible it's wise to seek out good advice. This is not calling on others to make the decision for you; this is seeking out information and guidance.

Don't hesitate to call on others when you need advice about a major decision you're about to make or a large project that you're about to embark on. Often the Lord uses the things we each experience not only to teach us, but also so that our experiences can be a blessing to others. Sometimes it's difficult for us to admit that we don't know everything and that others have wisdom or insight that we don't. But even this helps us walk humbly before the Lord and others, realizing that we don't know everything and need help.

Who should you seek counsel from? If I wanted to learn how to play the piano, I wouldn't go to business college; I'd go to a pianist who knows how to play well. If I wanted to learn how to cook, I wouldn't go to see a computer technician, but to somebody who knows how to cook, whose meals I've enjoyed. If you need some spiritual advice about finding God's will, go to someone who loves the Lord, and whose life shows the good fruit of living close to Him. Godly counselors are people whom you can trust because they have good spiritual fruit.

"By their fruits"

See Matthew 7:15–20.

➤ 5. Circumstances and Conditions

2 Corinthians 2:12—[Paul wrote:] Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord.

1 Corinthians 16:9—For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Revelation 3:7–8—And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: (8) I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.'

Matthew 7:7—Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Circumstances and conditions are generally a poor means in themselves of finding the will of God, but in combination with the other steps they can be a good indication.

If things just seem to be working out a particular way or moving in a certain direction, without your trying to make them go that way, or even when you've tried to push in the opposite direction, this could be a sign or a confirmation of the way that the Lord is leading you.

If something is God's will for you, He'll make a way for you to do it. He'll set up the conditions, and help things to flow. He'll open doors for you to walk through and show you plainly, through physical circumstances, that you're doing the right thing and making the right decision.

Other times, if something you're planning on doing isn't the Lord's will, He'll make it clear to you through closing the door and making it so that you can't go through with it. He might change the circumstances that had at first seemed to be "just right" for what you had in mind, to make you reconsider.

Imagine a long hallway lined with doors. Which room are you going to enter? You walk down the hallway knocking at doors, trying the handle. You can only go through the door that opens.

This is the principle of finding God's will by "open and closed doors." Sometimes it takes awhile to find God's will and it takes searching through different possibilities. On the other hand, sometimes obvious circumstances indicate God's leading.

For instance, if you are considering whether it is God's will for you to visit a relative in another city, but there is a fuel strike and you can't get fuel in your car and the buses aren't running, then it is most likely a "closed door."

However, you can't base your decisions solely on whether or not the circumstances and conditions around you jibe with what you believe to be God's will. You've got to use the other ways of finding God's will in conjunction with this.

➤ 6. Personal desires

Psalms 37:4—Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Proverbs 16:1—The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

At times when you feel a strong desire or longing to do something, go somewhere, or see someone, it may be that God put that feeling in your heart. When you are pleasing the Lord, He often puts the desire within your heart to do the thing that will make both you and Him happy. He is willing to fulfill your particular wishes as a part of His plan for you.

When our desires, wants and wishes are good for us, then He usually gives them to us. Or when our dreams, goals, ambitions, and aspirations will bring us and others happiness, He usually lets us fulfill them. However, if our personal desires aren't a part of the Lord's plan for us, and He knows that something won't be good for us, then it's wise to listen to Him and follow Him, because He knows best. He can see the past, the present, and the future. He's the only One who's all-knowing, all powerful, all seeing, and ever present to help us in our times of need, and in our times of decision making.

If you have a special dream or desire that you want to fulfill in your life, if you're following God, your wishes may very well be within His will. Why not ask Him?—He'll show you what to do! He'll show you what's best!

➤ **7. "Fleeces"**

Sometimes to find God's will you can ask for a specific sign or indication. This we call a fleece, a term taken from the story of Gideon in the Old Testament.

Gideon was one of the more notable leaders of the children of Israel in the period following their conquest of Canaan. When God called him to fulfill a certain mission, he argued with the angel God sent, because he didn't think he was the right man for the job. He eventually consented, but in order to be sure that it was God that was speaking to him, he asked God for a sign.

Judges 6:36–40—So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said—(37) look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said." (38) And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. (39) Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." (40) And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

The Lord doesn't always give signs like He did for Gideon, but sometimes He uses them to give us a needed boost. You can't always expect such a confirmation, nor can you rely on "fleeces" alone, as they aren't always a sure indicator of God's will. However, if you have tried all of the other ways to find God's will and believe He is leading you in a certain direction, "fleeces" can be helpful as a confirmation.

If you ask God for a sign, you need to ask in faith, being willing to act upon whatever the outcome is. Asking God for a sign or "putting out a fleece" is equivalent to making a contract, an agreement between you and the Lord, and you need to fulfill your part of the bargain.

➤ **Summary of seven ways to find the will of God**

1. The Word
2. The Voice of the Word
3. Revelations (prophecies, dreams, visions)
4. Advisors and counselors
5. Circumstances and conditions
6. Personal desires
7. "Fleeces"

➤ **How God shows His will**

God does not necessarily follow any particular order when revealing His will through these means.

He may speak to you through a prophecy first, then you may confirm that prophecy by the Word. Or He may speak to you through the voice of His Word, and then you search other Scriptures and see what the Lord generally has to say about the subject. We can't put God in a box and say He's got to speak to us in this or that way, in this or that order. But these are ways we know He works, not only from our own experience, but also from what He has said in His written Word.

➤ **Sometimes we want to know what God's will *isn't!***

The same principles apply!

➤ **You don't find God's will by just sitting around doing nothing.**

If, after trying all these ways, you still can't find the will of God, go ahead and do something. You will soon find out whether it is His will or not. Pray for God to lead you, and start. A boat has to be in motion before the rudder can take effect.

➤ **You should also bear in mind that sometimes God's will and plans are conditional.**

For instance, perhaps you have prayed and feel that it is God's plan for you to start a Bible study group and include a certain friend. You offer him a New Testament to help him in his search for truth. But if your friend refuses the book and doesn't want to read it, the Lord may show you an alternative route for starting the Bible

study. In this case the overall plan the Lord gave you is still applicable, but because of your friend's choice, the details change.

Matthew 10:13—If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

➤ **God often gives His children alternative choices.**

The Lord lets us choose within the boundary of His overall will.

1 Kings 3:5—At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

① *There is more counsel in the Making Great Decisions book. You can also find several relevant Bible studies in Discovering Truth—Bible Basics: "How to Find the Will of God" (pages 85–95) and "Giving" (pages 80–84).*

➤ **Let's do it!**

May God help us all to not only find His will, but to do it!

John 13:17—If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.