

Navigating Life's Tough Decisions

Knowing GOD'S WILL

School?
Career?
Missions?
Marriage?

What
is God's
will?

How does
God speak
to us?

What
does God do
with our
failure?

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Which way do I go?

When we face the big decisions in life, we often just want someone smarter than us to tell us what to do! God does have a purpose for each of us, but God is not some big vending machine in the sky or a genie in a lamp that must be rubbed the right way to produce the answers we want. God created us for relationship with Himself, and He delights in drawing us closer to Him through the questions we ask and the answers He gives.

Warning: There are no easy answers ahead! No formulas or surprises, either. God does have some very specific things to say about how we can know His will for our lives; as always, it begins with communication. Ask! The better we know a friend, the easier it is to find a gift that will please that friend. The better we know God, the clearer His intentions and desires for us become.



The Right Path

1. Pray to know God's will—not to give a laundry list of things you want God to do! The One who loves us knows exactly what you need, so ask God to make His will your own. That's a terrifying prayer—one with the real possibility of changing our lives completely—but the only prayer that counts.

“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.” Psalm 143:10

Jesus taught his followers to pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:9, 10

2. Imitate Jesus Christ—this means finding out who He is and what He has said and done. It means living with His words; and it means working on a living relationship with Him.



“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Ephesians 5:1, 2

3. Get and stay connected to the body of believers—the Church. By rubbing elbows (and rough edges) with others on the same path, we find the nourishment and the encouragement for the lifelong task of learning God's will.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24, 25

4. Be willing to accept and act on what God makes clear.

The Apostle Paul said it best: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1, 2

What is God like? Is He trustworthy?



God meets our deepest needs when we trust Him!



Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Psalm 37: 3-6, 8 (Written by King David—a man whom God said was “after My own heart.”)

When people are cruel and things are terrible, God has big plans: He can take what seems to be great evil and from it create great good!

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish . . . the saving of many lives. Genesis 50:20 (Spoken by Joseph—20 years after his brothers betrayed him, threw him in a pit, and sold him as a slave. God made him second ruler of Egypt; Joseph saved Egypt, his brothers and his whole family from starvation.)

When trouble threatens, God's people need to turn their eyes and their attention on God. Praise God ahead of time for His solution—God can turn a terrible threat into a great blessing!

We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. 2 Chronicles 20:12 (King Jehoshaphat's prayer as Israel faced attack from multiple armies.)

God forgives our sins. He heals us and redeems our lives from destruction. He sets His love and compassion over our spirits and satisfies us with good things so that we feel as strong as a soaring eagle!

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalm 103:2-5 (King David, listing the good things God does for us.)

God is able to do more than we can ever dream through His power at work within us!

Now unto him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:18-20 (The apostle Paul, at the end of a prayer for believers.)

No matter how bad things seem, God holds onto us—even when we're at our worst.

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel and afterward you will take me into glory. Psalm 73:21-24

Even when we feel threatened or are in danger, He holds us and can make us strong!



So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (God's words to Isaiah, a prophet in constant danger from the rulers of his day who didn't like the message from God he delivered to them.)

Jesus promises us life at its best—an incredibly good life that last forever, secure in Him.

I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. . . . My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. John 10:10, 11, 27 (Jesus' words.)

God can bring good out of anything—and He's proven that He's on your side!

And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. . . . If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:28, 31, 32 (Paul, who had once despised Jesus and persecuted believers.)

What does God say about me?

If I have joined God's family and belong to Christ, the Bible tells me:

I am chosen and loved by God; therefore, I am loved more deeply than I can imagine! (Colossians 3:12; see 1 John 3:1)

I am forgiven of sin. God will continue to restore me when I repent. (1 John 1:9)

I am at peace with God, my Father; therefore, I can have peace in any situation. (Romans 5:1; see John 14:27)

I am God's own child; therefore, I have a new family. (John 1:12, Ephesians 1:5)

I am God's own creative work of art; therefore, I can be glad and grateful for the person God has made me to be. (Ephesians 2:10)

I am a new creation; the old life is gone; therefore, I am no longer a slave to old ways of thinking. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:5-7)

I am a citizen of heaven; therefore, this world is not the end. I have a divine destination! (Philippians 3:20)

I am a child of the light, able to please the Lord; therefore, my heavenly Father is pleased as He watches me becoming more like Jesus. (Ephesians 5:8-10)

I am part of a royal priesthood and a nation that belongs to God; therefore, what the world says about me is not God's opinion of who I am. (1 Peter 2:9)

I am reconciled to God and I display God's reconciliation to others; therefore, I have a valuable role to play in God's work here on earth. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

I am able to give my worries to God, because He cares about me; therefore, I can rest in knowing that He will do what is best for me. (1 Peter 5:7)

God is for me, on my side, in my corner; therefore, nothing or no one can overcome the power of my Father! (Romans 8:31)

God is working everything in my life for my good and for His glory; therefore, when I am confused by circumstances, I trust His loving promise. (Romans 8:28)

God has prepared good things for me to do; therefore, I have important work to do—God has made me a part of His family business! (Ephesians 2:10)

