



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

COURSE WORKBOOK

*"Teach me to do Your will,
for You are my God
May Your gracious Spirit lead me
on level ground."*

—Psalm 143:10

*Also used for
Retreat/Small Group Leader Guide*

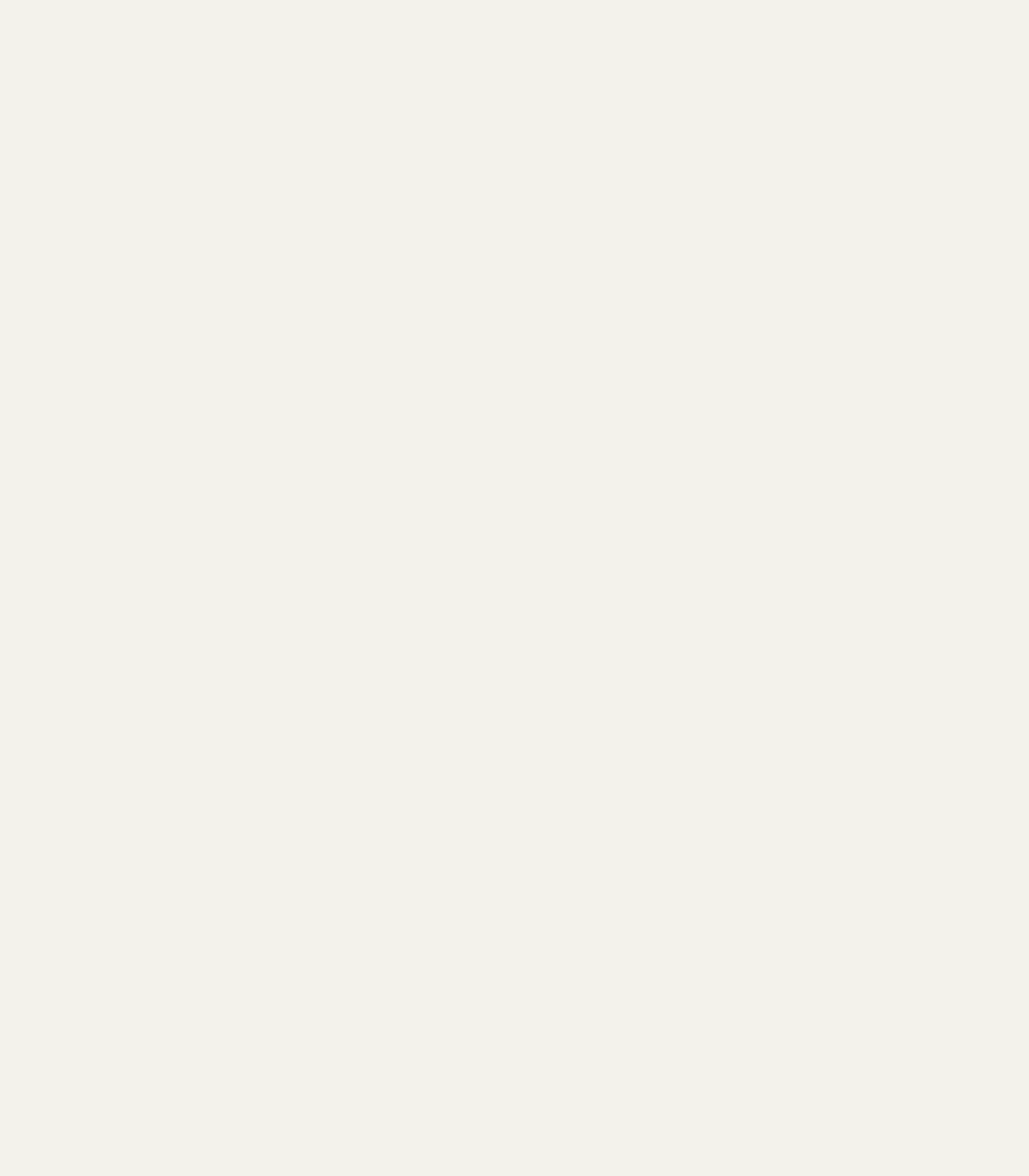
Discerning God's Will

Retreat Leader Guide

WORKBOOK

RICHARD T. CASE





Endorsements

Realizing that God's will is as much about who I am becoming as about what I'm doing has given me such freedom. God's promise to get His specific will for me, to me with great clarity has become an exciting reality for me. As I process with Him and my spouse by persistently asking for His will in a specific situation, really seeking it and then knocking on the door that's in front of me, His will becomes clear. This study has given wings to the whole process of discerning God's will.

— Nancy Hoover

Discerning God's Will has brought insight into God's word I had not experienced before. My relationship with Jesus is deeper and more personal. I'm thankful for *Discerning God's Will* and to see His will for my life.

— Allyson Weinberg

As a follower of Jesus, my ultimate hope is to hear Him say "well done good and faithful servant" as I enter into Heavenly eternity. How do I serve Him well if I don't know what He wants me to do today or this week or this season in my life?

This course on *Discerning God's Will* showed us how to apply Scriptural principles in practical, day-to-day ways to hear His voice. We better understood how God works and how He guides us into His perfect will. This course is not built on formulas but understanding how staying in relationship with our loving Father yields insight to our present and our future. And it is fun, not religious or laborious!

— Joel Gunn

One of the most, if not the most, asked question is how can I know God's will with confidence?" Is it really possible to know God's will and what He has to say about big things and even little decisions as we walk out a Spirit filled life? The answer is a resounding yes which may surprise most people. Nearly every one of us grew up reciting The Lord's prayer - which says "Thy will be done on earth" (in my life). The Truth is the Father does have a will for each and every one of us - for both big issues and small. *Discerning God's Will* walks through the Word and unpacks these Truths in a way that Rich Case and Living Waters makes so clear. Enjoy the journey of discovering God's will.

—Dave Dunkel

The All for Jesus study on *Discerning God's Will* has been so important in my life. To know without a doubt that God wants to speak to me and tell me about what lies ahead is a fundamental truth. The study walks one through the bible and reveals this truth in scripture. Brace yourself for the realization that God's ways are not of this world, but are supernatural. One learns how to lean into God to have revelation and peace from Him for our decision making process. God loves us as dear children. If we lean into him, he will reveal our next steps.

— Kathryn L. Bielik, D.D.S.

*To my wife, Linda, who has greatly showed me the heart
to seek God's will together for everything in life.*

*She knows for certain that God's will is: Best and None Better!
She always encourages us to work through the process of what we have
learned and now teaching others, no matter how long it takes,
or no matter that we both begin with differences of views and
perspectives. Though we may disagree, and it is normal as it is for any
couple, we have learned together to never let it ruin our night, our week-
end, our week—she reminds us that we just have not yet fully received
and understood God's will. She often wakes up in the morning and says:
I received a new thought about... and I know it will be quite fun to pro-
cess what she heard or thought. She is truly a joy and because of her joy,
it is a joy to seek and walk into God's will together.*

Best and None Better! Thank you, honey!

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These leaders are:

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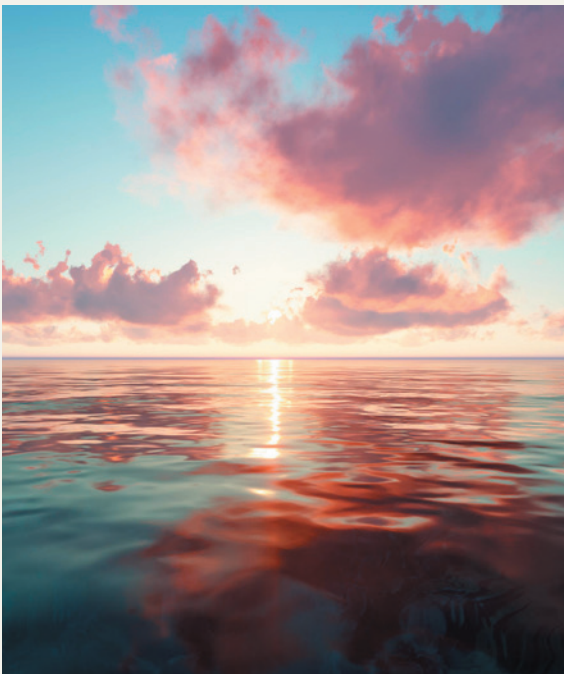


Discerning God's Will



*"Teach me to do Your will,
for You are my God
May Your gracious Spirit lead me
on level ground."*

—Psalm 143:10



LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:



“Isn’t God in control of everything, so isn’t all that happens to me already His will?”

Why is it so challenging to discern God’s will? Most Christians struggle with understanding God’s will (particularly as it relates to them specifically) for a variety of reasons:

- They think His will is unknowable
- They cannot hear clearly His voice on personal things (even though the Bible gives us principles that would enable us to apply His word properly)
 - They believe His words are not specific to our situation, and isn’t it up to us to just do our best?
 - They wonder if God really cares to the level of specificity to us individually. Isn’t God’s will just a matter of following Biblical life principles that are important?
- Isn’t God in control of everything, so isn’t all that happens to me already His will?
- Isn’t it just a matter of open and closed doors; God directs us by these circumstances?
- They believe their situation is too complex and thus requires special wisdom that only a few possess
- They think back to past situations remembering a time when they sought God’s discernment, but it didn’t pan out
- They see no relation between their character and how that fits in to understanding and receiving His will

Read Psalm 106:13-14.

¹³ But they soon forgot his works;
they did not wait for his counsel.

¹⁴ But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the desert.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

What does it say about the reason we do not receive God's will?

In what ways do you struggle with this?

Word Meanings:

Wait: tarry

Counsel: advice, purpose, deliberate with plan

Lusted: desire, incline, covet (intensely—bad sense)

Test: try, prove, tempt, assay, put to the proof or test

Leanness: scantness, wasting

In Psalm 106:13-14, we see that humans are impatient. We are not comfortable waiting for His word. Because our lives are fast-paced and busy, we think we must make our decisions in the same manner. We therefore believe we don't have the time to wait for God's counsel. So, we wind up testing God by asking Him to bless our plans, ignoring whatever blessings God may have had planned for us. The result is that we experience the exact opposite of what He had planned for us: leanness. In this course we are going to learn what it means to wait on God's word. You will be gifted with tools that teach you how to receive God's will and thus experience all the blessings He has planned.

Which decisions or issues are you currently facing? What questions do you have as you seek to discern God's will?

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF GOD'S WILL?

Read Luke 11:1-13.

The Lord's Prayer

11 Now Jesus^[a] was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,^[b]

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation."

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence^[c] he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for^[d] a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

- What are the first two things we should ask for?

1. _____

2. _____

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

What is the reason we must ask for this versus it being given to us automatically?

His Kingdom Come **Kingdom:** royal power, kingship, dominion, rule, not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom, of the royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah, of the royal power and dignity conferred on Christians in the Messiah's Kingdom
Word Meanings:
Come (into being): arise, come forth, show itself, find place or influence, be established, become known, to come (fall) into or unto

His Will to Be Done **Will:** what one wishes or has determined shall be done, of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ, of what God wishes to be done by us, commands, precepts, will, choice, inclination, desire, pleasure
Word Meanings:

- What does it mean that the Kingdom is to come and Thy will to be done on Earth as in Heaven?

Jesus tells us to "ask for thy kingdom to come and thy will to be done." Thus, since we have to ask for the Kingdom to come and His will to be done, His will is not automatic for our lives, to be lived in a fatalistic way of whatever happens, happens. Otherwise, He would have not included it in His Prayer; we would have assumed that everything that happened in our lives was His will, but that is not the case. We have to request it, seek it, and learn to receive it. One of the key elements of prayer is to learn how to ask for His Kingdom and to ask for His will. This will be one of the foundational truths of this course.

HIS will is PERSONAL, from a God who is personal.

- To whom are we asking this (Luke 11:2)? _____

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

Word Meanings:

Our Father: omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient—loving, caring
Father (of the stars): the heavenly luminaries, because He is their creator, upholder, ruler, of all rational and intelligent beings, whether angels or men, because He is their creator, preserver, guardian and protector, of spiritual beings and of all men, of Christians, as those who (through Christ) have been exalted to an especially close and intimate relationship with God, and who no longer dread Him as a stern judge of sinners, but revere Him as their reconciled and loving Father, the Father of Jesus Christ, as one whom God has united to Himself in the closest bond of love and intimacy, made acquainted with His purposes, appointed to explain and carry out among men the plan of salvation, and made to share also in His own divine nature, by Jesus Christ Himself, by the apostles

Hallow: to set apart as sacred, consecrate, dedicate, to observe as holy, keep sacred to honor as sacred

Name: is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is aroused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering the name, (i.e., for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds, etc.)

Read Psalm 139:1-10; 15-18; 23-24.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
³ You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.
⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.
⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the Earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake, and I am still with you.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!^[a]

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!^[b]

- What does this speak to regarding how personally God knows and directs my individual life?

In these two sets of verses (Luke and Psalms), we see that God is “Our Father,” not just some distant almighty creator, but my personal, loving father who knows me intimately, including my patterns; He is always with me; has already written (ordained) my days, as they are specific to me and fashioned for me; He knows my heart and desires to lead me in the way everlasting (His bigger story).

Word Meanings:

Knows: to be made known, be or become known, be revealed

Way: road, distance, journey, manner, path

Day: time, year

Ordained: to frame, pre-ordain, plan (divine purpose of a situation)

Thoughts: purpose, aim

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

As we pray and seek God's will, it is important to know that we are praying to and seeking the will of "our Father," who is personal, loves us, cares for us, and who knows everything about us. He has planned out our days and has only good things in order for us. We can count on that and know that He is our wonderful Father, who wants only the best for us.

Read Psalm 23:1-6; John 10:3-5; 10:27.

A Psalm of David.

23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.^[a]

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness^[b]
for His name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,^[c]

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely^[d] goodness and mercy^[e] shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell^[f] in the house of the Lord

forever.^[g]

³ To Him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear His voice, and He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When He has brought out all his own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

- What does this speak to regarding how personally God knows and directs my individual life?

My Shepherd (Psalm 23:1-6; John 10:3-5; 10:27) cares for me, leads me, knows me by name. I am special to Him.

List the benefits to “us” sheep as offered to us from the Good Shepherd:

- MY Shepherd
- I shall not want (Why? Because He offers an abundant life)
- Makes me lie down in green pastures—rest and refreshment
- Leads me beside still waters—nourishment, sustenance
- Restores my soul—heals my deep wounds and hurts
- Though I walk in a difficult world (an enemy against me as I walk in enemy territory):
 - I need not fear (He will take care of me, so the enemy will not be able to succeed against me)
 - I can experience that He is with me—I am safe
 - His rod and staff (weapons against the enemy) will protect me and I can be comforted completely
- I am able to feast with joy and peace all prepared by Him even in the middle of this difficult world
- I will be anointed—set apart to experience the Holy Spirit fully—and my life will be overflowing (all of the Spirit in me)
- Goodness (His good for my life) and mercy (freedom and joy as I walk with Him, not burdened by my mistakes and failures) will be my life—all the days of my life
- I am able to dwell (abide) with Him all the time

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

We have wonderful benefits and know that He, as our Shepherd, is going to take care of us since we are His sheep. He will be our provider, He will restore us, He will take care of us in trouble, and we will experience His goodness all the days of our lives, knowing that we will dwell with Him all the time. As we seek His will, we can always count on this fundamental relationship as being the basis of His will for us.

"...there is a unique sound, a unique quality, a resonating with the truth and the application of that truth through the Spirit within us."

- As His sheep, what is our amazing privilege? In John 10:3-5; 10:27, we see that we can
- hear His voice. He speaks to us personally, without using theology or concepts, so that we can actually hear HIM.
- If we are hearing His voice, what is He doing? Speaking, talking to us, discussing with us, and communicating personally.
- What are the characteristics of personally hearing His voice? He calls us by name (knows us and all about us), He leads us, He makes it clear that it is Him and not something else, and He gives us clarity to follow HIM.
- How will we recognize the difference between His voice and others (Satan's, ours, other peoples' well-meaning advice)? We will know the difference because there is a unique sound, a unique quality, a resonating with the truth and the application of that truth through the Spirit within us. His words will not be fuzzy or confusing, they will be clear and distinctive, always lining up with truth from the Word and create in us righteousness, peace, and joy.
- What is necessary to recognize His voice? We must spend time in His presence, experiencing hearing His Voice. Think of a baby who quickly learns to recognize the voices of his/her mother and father right away. How does the baby do this? By hearing their voices over and over again. The same is true as we seek to hear Christ. When we spend time with Christ, hearing His voice over and over again, we begin to fully recognize His voice versus the enemy's, our own, or other peoples' good advice that is given to us in the flesh.

Christ is our Shepherd, and we have the privilege of hearing Him speak to us personally.

- What does all this say regarding how personally God cares about and directs our individual life?

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

One of the privileges of being His sheep is that we get to hear His voice. This means that He is speaking; and we are hearing. As we spend more time with Him, we will come to understand and recognize His voice. It will be clear that it is His voice and no one else's, including our own thinking (internal voice). Thus, we need to know that His will is that we know Him through a personal relationship. It is not a principle or set of "to dos" or "do nots." It is walking with Him.

HE HAS PLANS FOR US—TO LIVE OUT HIS BIGGER STORY.

Read Jeremiah 29:11-14.

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare^[a] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

- What do these verses speak about God's plans (thoughts) for us?

Jeremiah 29:11-14: His Plans: a hope and a future.

Word Meanings:

Plan: purpose; hope

Peace (shalom): welfare, health, prosperity, quiet, tranquility, contentment

Evil: bad, unpleasant, evil (giving pain, unhappiness, misery) displeasing, bad (of its kind - land, water, etc.), bad (of value), worse than, worst (comparison), sad, unhappy, evil (hurtful), distress, adversity

Future: ahead

Hope: positive expectation, good outcome

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

Read these verses regarding God's Covenant with His people: Genesis 12:1-3, Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

12 Now the Lord said^[a] to Abram, "Go from your country^[b] and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."^[c]

Blessings for Obedience

28 "And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the Earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. ³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

⁷ "The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. ⁸ The Lord will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ⁹ The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰ And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹ And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. ¹² The Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³ And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, ¹⁴ and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

- What is the essence of the Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3)?

- List the specific blessings promised of the Covenant listed in Deuteronomy 28:1-14:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Word Meanings: Covenant: Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 28:1-15; Blessed to be a blessing.

Blessing: prosperity, to do or give something of value to another and in turn we surrender

Curse: slight, be swift, be trifling, be of little account, be light, contempt, dishonor

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

Read John 10:10; Psalm 65:11.

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

- What is the life that Christ has promised us? When will it come? How would you describe this life?

We read in John 10:10 and Psalm 65:11 that the abundant life is exceedingly good. It is God's intent to give (deliver to) us superabundant life. This life, and the path of this life, are intended for us to experience the fullness of all that God has planned for us. We think abundance centers around material things; but God's definition is "all of life," meaning all those things that God values: relationships, work, provision, health, identity, communion with Him, ministry (giving it away), experiencing the supernatural that He does in our abundant life—all aspects of life that He plans for us to live in abundance now, and along the path that He will take us.

Word Meanings:

Have: own, possess, hold firmly

Life: full, genuine, real, active, vigorous, fullness of life of God

More Abundantly: exceedingly, supremely, extraordinary, more remarkable, more excellent

Goodness: tob-adonijah equals "my Lord is good"; pleasant, agreeable (to the senses), pleasant (to the higher nature), excellent (of its kind), rich, valuable in estimation, glad, happy, prosperous (of man's sensuous nature), good understanding (of man's intellectual nature), benefit, welfare, prosperity, happiness

Paths: track

Abundance: become prosperous, anoint

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

It is truly amazing that He is offering to us, NOW, an exceptional life in all regards. Many of you are thinking about the mistakes you have made, maybe worried that you have blown it too badly or are not in a great place. Now is the time to allow Him to give you the abundant life, one that comes when we abide in Him. This is why we are gathering! To seek an intimate relationship with Him.

One of the key methods to learning His will is recognizing that His will will not be centered solely on our own wants and desires. His will includes a far bigger story, which is to be blessed and thereby blessing others. It is a flow-through process. The abundant life is not centered around gaining material things but rather enjoying the fullness of life in all things, including financial freedom, beautiful relationships, adventure, helping others, and giving things away, serving the purposes of God. His will always leads us to bless others: blessed to be a blessing.

Read Mark 1:14-18.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;^[a] repent and believe in the gospel."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."^[b] ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

- What is the purpose of following Him and joining Him in His Kingdom?

In Mark 1:14-18, we read that to gain the Kingdom, we are to repent from self, follow Him (the person), and be drawn into His bigger story.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

- Word Meanings:**
- Kingdom:** royal power, kingship, dominion, rule
 - Repent:** turn around, to change one's mind
 - Believe:** to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in of the thing believed
 - Follow:** come hither, come here, come
 - Fishers:** salt

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

- What is always our bigger mission, our bigger purpose?

In Matthew 28:18-20, we are taught to transfer His authority to ourselves as we join Him in making disciples (followers of Him into His bigger story and His specific plan for them) and teaching (dialoguing with) others to follow His instructions (His will).

- Word Meanings:**
- Power:** authority
 - Given:** to grant, give to one asking, let have, to supply, furnish, necessary things to give over, deliver
 - Teach:** instruct, disciple (walk along side of)
 - Obey:** hold fast, pay attention to what I have instructed and given you

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION:

Read Ephesians 2:10.

¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- How does joining Him in His bigger mission, bigger purpose, bigger story play out specifically for us?

Ephesians 2:10 teaches that His workmanship—created IN Christ Jesus for good (exceptional) works—was prepared beforehand and that we should walk in them (His will).

Word Meanings:

Workmanship: that which has been made, a work, of the works of God as creator

Good Works: Works that God establishes that are pleasant, agreeable (to the senses), pleasant (to the higher nature), excellent (of its kind), rich, valuable in estimation, glad, happy, prosperous (of man's sensuous nature), good understanding (of man's intellectual nature), benefit, welfare, prosperity, happiness

Ordained: to prepare before, to make ready beforehand

Walk: to make one's way, progress; to make due use of opportunities

As we join Him in the Kingdom by following Him, He asks us to make disciples of others by teaching them to do the same thing that we are learning: to join Him in the Kingdom both by following Him and by living out our lives according to His will. The process of learning His will is wonderful because we then learn how to teach others to do the same. And as Ephesians 2:10 says, we are His workmanship to fulfill His will—the works that He has already prepared in advance for us to live out; and because He is our good Shepherd, our Father, we know that this life is going to be grand. We just have to learn to ask for it, receive it, and live it out.

LESSON 2:

HIS PLAN IS AN INVITATION FOR US TO JOIN HIM IN HIS BIGGER STORY.



“As we consider joining Him in His bigger story, He wants us to learn to be faithful as He reveals what is on His heart and mind.”

Read 1 Samuel 2:35:

³⁵ And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

- What does God speak as His desire for His children, His people, to fulfill in His bigger story?

A faithful priest will be raised up to do what is IN God’s heart and mind, and then walk with HIM!

Read 1 Samuel 12:14-15:

¹⁴ If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. ¹⁵ But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king.^[a]

Raise: confirmed, established, fulfilled, become powerful

LESSON 2:

HIS PLAN IS AN INVITATION FOR US TO JOIN HIM IN HIS BIGGER STORY.

Word Meanings: **Faithful:** reliable, trustworthy

Priest: minister

Do: fashion, accomplish, make, act with effect

Heart: inner man, mind, will, heart, soul, understanding

Mind: seat of emotions and passions, activity of mind to refresh

Walk: proceed, move

As we consider joining Him in His bigger story, He wants us to learn to be faithful as He reveals what is on His heart and mind. Not only will He then tell us what He wishes us to do, but He will likewise explain the deeper purposes behind the activities in our lives—the things on His heart and mind.

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20:

The Choice of Life and Death

¹¹“For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹²It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

¹⁵“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God[a] that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules,^[b] then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

LESSON 2:

HIS PLAN IS AN INVITATION FOR US TO JOIN HIM IN HIS BIGGER STORY.

- What choice does God set before us about joining Him in this bigger story and following His will for us? What is the key to this for us?

“We have a tendency to believe that disobedience is doing awful things. Rather, it is simply not following completely the instruction of what God is setting before for us regarding His will for us.”

In Deuteronomy 30:11-20, the message is about choice: life/death or blessing/cursing. We are to choose His way or not.

God sets before us a blessing and a curse. The instruction through God’s Word is not too difficult: We are to read and interpret Scripture simply and then trust that the Holy Spirit will bring to us revelation of His Scripture in a way that we can understand. We do not need someone else to give us answers but can receive them directly from God. Then, God presents to us by clarity of a blessing and a curse. The Word is a double-edged sword that if we follow and are obedient to what God is instructing us, we will receive the promised blessing. However, if we choose not to follow His Word, we walk into the curse and the negative effects and consequences of being disobedient.

We have a tendency to believe that disobedience is doing awful things. Rather, it is simply not following completely the instruction of what God is setting before for us regarding His will for us. He makes it clear that there are blessings and benefits being offered when we follow Him versus the awful consequences if we choose not to follow. When we aren’t hearing His voice, it is because our heart has turned away. This basically means that we have chosen to walk our own way and not truly surrender and follow Him. As a result, we stop hearing His voice and thus enter into a time of confusion. The resolution to this is to confess and then return by desiring to walk with Him, which will then stimulate our ability to hear His voice and thus hear His instruction, the way to walk.

God desires us to choose life by choosing Him. Because it is a choice, it is not forced upon us, and we will either suffer the consequences or enjoy the blessings of our choices. Remember what we have learned from abiding: The fundamental choice that is asked of us is to abide, because as John 15:5 says, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” So, abiding is a critical choice that everyone must make every day because that is where we will be in relationship to God, hearing His voice and being able to follow His ways by walking with Him.

Word Meanings: **Hidden:** not too difficult to understand
Life: full, genuine, real, active, vigorous, fullness of life of God
Good: pleasant, agreeable (to the senses); pleasant (to the higher nature), excellent, rich valuable in estimation: glad, happy, prosperous

LESSON 2:

HIS PLAN IS AN INVITATION FOR US TO JOIN HIM IN HIS BIGGER STORY.

Death: decay

Evil: full of labors, annoyances, hardships; pressed and harassed by labors, bringing toils, annoyances, perils; of a time full of peril to Christian faith and steadfastness; causing pain and trouble; bad, of a bad nature or condition; in a physical sense: diseased or blind

In 1 Samuel 12:14-15 we learn that we should continue (not once but always) to follow God or expect that the hand of God will come against us. (Why would we ever foolishly choose this?)

Word Meanings:

Serve: to make oneself a servant

Listen: to hear, listen to, obey, to hear (perceive by ear), to hear with attention or interest, listen to

Rebel: contentious, be rebellious, be refractory, be disobedient

Command: instruction, counsel

Follow: continually

Against: not go well, oppose

Based upon the choice that we are asked to make, the way of life is laid out very simply—if we hear and follow God, we will experience the wonderful plan of God; but if we do not hear and follow God, we actually experience God working against us. It is our choice.

Read John 5:18-20; 5:30; and John 8:28-30:

Jesus Is Equal with God

¹⁸ This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

The Authority of the Son

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^[a] does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

³⁰ "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

LESSON 2:

HIS PLAN IS AN INVITATION FOR US TO JOIN HIM IN HIS BIGGER STORY.

²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” ³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

- During His Earthly ministry, how did Christ relate to the Father? How did He function on a day-by-day basis, how did He make His decisions?

In John 5:18-20; 5:30; and John 8:28-30, we see that through Christ is where God is at work, what He speaks, which is always and only what pleases the Father.

Word Meanings:

Nothing: nil, zero, not even

See: discern; to act rightly, do well

Do: to carry out, to execute, working

Shows: show by words or teach

Will: what one wishes or has determined shall be done

Speak: teach; to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver

Pleases: to accommodate one’s self to the opinions, desires, and interests of others

Jesus showed us while He was on Earth how He functioned—by only doing the will of the Father. He did this by experiencing and knowing where the Father was working and by hearing His voice—doing only what the Father spoke. He was clear that He did nothing except what He heard from Father—because He didn’t do His own will but instead only the will of the Father.

Read John 15:5:

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

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- In the same way that Christ functioned on a day-by-day basis, and based on what Christ says in relation to God, how are we to function?

John 15:5 reminds us that we are in same position: apart from Him we can do nothing.

Because we have Christ living within us through the Holy Spirit, we are to function in the same way that Christ related to the Father: by doing His will only and not our own. We also are to do nothing apart from Him—by hearing and responding to what He speaks and reveals to us—His will.

Read through these examples: John 2:1-12; Luke 19:1-10; Christ turning water to wine and Christ with Zacchaeus. Then consider how and why He only did what He heard from the Father versus His own will or the will of someone else (even His mother's).

The Wedding at Cana

2 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.^[a] ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

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¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers^[b] and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

Jesus and Zacchaeus

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

THIS PLAN, WHICH IS TRUTH, IS ALREADY GIVEN TO US IN HIMSELF AND HIS WORD.

Read John 14:1-6:

I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life

14 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;^[a] believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going."^[c] ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

- What does Christ say about Himself with regard to our way of living life?

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John 14:1-6: He is TRUTH!

Word Meanings: **Way:** road, a travelers way, journey, traveling

Truth: what is true in any matter under consideration, truly, in truth, according to truth, of a truth, in reality, in fact, certainly, what is true in things pertaining to God and the duties of man, moral and religious truth

Life: of the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God, and through him both to the hypostatic “logos” and to Christ in whom the “logos” put on human nature, life real and genuine, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17:

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom^[a] you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God^[b] may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- What is the importance and significance of the Word with regard to how we live life?

In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, we learn that the Holy Scripture is inspired (God breathed) for doctrine (living) and instruction (His specific will), so that we are complete and EQUIPPED for every good work.

Word Meanings: **Inspired by God:** God breathed

Profitable: for our advantage

Teaching: instruction

Reprove: by conviction to bring to the light, to expose, correct

Correction: restoration to an upright or right state

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Training: the whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions)

Complete: perfect at this moment

Equipped: furnish perfectly

Good: pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable

Work: business, employment, that which any one is occupied, that which one undertakes to do, enterprise, undertaking

Read Romans 15:4:

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

- What does the Scripture provide us? Why?

Romans 15:4 reminds us that Scripture is to be learned and that it provides hope.

Word Meanings:

Writing: to delineate (or form) letters on a tablet, parchment, paper, or other material

Instruction: information, directions

Persistence: steadfastness, constancy, endurance

Encouragement: exhortation, admonition

Hope: to anticipate, usually with pleasure

Read Matthew 5:17-20:

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and Earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law

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until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

- What does Christ say about all of Scripture, especially the Old Testament? Why is this important to us in living life?

Matthew 5:17-20: All is truth, and all is fulfilled in Christ.

Word Meanings:

Abolish: dissolve, disunite, (what has been joined together), to destroy, demolish
Fulfill: to make complete in every particular, to render perfect, to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out (some undertaking)
Accomplish: to become (i.e., to come into existence)

As we consider learning His will, we must recognize that much of His will is already put forth through His written Word, which He does not violate. Our highest standard and absolute truth can be found in God's Word. Christ is the Word, and is the Truth, and has fulfilled all the written Word—both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. We can count on the Word as being truth and our guide for life, (i.e., the basis of His will for our lives). So then, our first place to seek His will is the Word, which speaks to many issues of our lives and for which we can count on what it speaks is true and right. This will be God's will, and He does not violate what He has spoken already through the written Word, meaning what you hear Him say today will not contradict what His Word has already revealed.

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Read John 6:63; 6:68; 17:3:

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life..."

³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

- What does Christ say about the Words that He speaks (notice who speaks them) to us? How does He define eternal life? Why is this all so very important to how we live life?

In John 6:63; 6:68; and 17:3 we learn about the Spirit and Life, and how we are to experience God in real life.

The Words from Scripture are Spirit, and they are Life.

Word Meanings:

Life: real and genuine, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed, in the portion even in this world of those who put their trust in Christ

Active and Stimulating: quickening of our hearts, by spiritual power to arouse and invigorate, to restore to life, attractive to us, interesting, life giving

Knowing: understand, perceive, have knowledge of, to understand

Rhema: Logos applied to our specific situations—promises, wisdom, insight, etc.

When you are abiding in the Words being spoken to you by the Father through the Holy Spirit, they are more than concepts, ideas, principles, rules, etc. Rather they are the essence of God transferring into us the very power and life of these Words. They are active and stimulating—they are a quickening of our hearts, thus, if the Words are the ones being spoken to us, they will have a life-giving quality, meaning we would do well to camp out there. If not, then do not strive to get something out of it, just move on to where there is life being spoken.

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If the Father needs us to receive something that we miss, we are not to worry—He will get us back there. These Words are the words of eternal life.

Ask the group to define “eternal life,” which almost always means life after death. However, Christ defines eternal life in John 17:3 as knowing the Father and the Son. When? Now. Knowing is not knowing about or studying, rather it is experiencing God in our everyday life. How do we experience Him—through His life-giving, Spirit-filled Words that He speaks to us through Abiding.

As we then process the Word and it becomes “Rhema” to us, the Words that He speaks to us spiritually as we are listening and processing, are Spirit and they are life, and they are eternal life. And, as Jesus defined eternal life, the Words are meant to have us experience the Father and the Son, the very life of God in our everyday life, and day by day. So, the written Word goes from being just principles of truth to personal, meaningful, and specific steps of God’s will for us—as we seek the truth in His written Word.

HIS PLAN IS SPECIFIC FOR US AND GIVEN TO US.

Read Proverbs 3:4-6; Psalm 25:12; Psalm 32:8.

⁴ So you will find favor and good success^[a]
in the sight of God and man.

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

¹² Who is the man who fears the Lord?
Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

- If we follow God, how specifically does He lead us? What exactly does He direct, show us, choose for us? Why is this important for how we live life?

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Word Meanings: • Proverbs 3:4-6:

Understanding: discernment

Direct Your Paths: make right, make smooth, make straight; to lead, direct, lead straight along

Path: road, specific way

- Psalm 25:12: Teach the way He chooses for us (we are learners)

Direct: teach, instruct

Chosen: selected

- Psalm 32:8: Instruct and teach the way we are to go; with His eye (He sees all)

Instruct: to give attention to, consider, ponder, be prudent

Teach: to point out, show, to direct, teach, instruct

Way: road, distance, journey, manner

Counsel: purpose, advise, devise, plan

As we are processing from the written Word, or have a situation that the written Word does not address specifically, we can be assured that He still will direct us by offering exact step by step instructions in the way we are to go, the path we are to follow, the forks in the road we are to ignore, the actions we need to take, etc. Again, these are not principles, but steps to take, and we need direction on these steps—and He promises to give them!

IN HIS UPPER ROOM PRAYER TO THE FATHER, JESUS LAYS OUT HIS PROCESS BEFORE HE MARCHES TO THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION.

Read John 17:1-19:

The High Priestly Prayer

17 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on Earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

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⁶“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.^[a] ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them^[b] in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself,^[c] that they also may be sanctified^[d] in truth.

- As you process through Christ’s prayer to the Father, what important truths do you understand regarding how He leads us into His will for us. Notice and define each of the following:

Authority:

Eternal Life:

Finishing the Work:

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Manifesting the Name of God:

Keeping His Word Given to Us (Received and Believed):

Glorify Him:

Being One with Him:

Receiving His Joy:

Receiving His Word:

Being Delivered from the Evil One:

Sanctified by Truth:

Oneness Causes the World to Believe:

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Become Whole:

Know and Love Him and Declare Him:

Word Meanings: • John 17:1-2:

Authority: the ability or strength with which one is endowed, which he either possesses or exercises, the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege), the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed)

• John 17:3: Eternal life

Know (experience) the Father and the Son: to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of to understand

• John 17:4-5:

Finish the Work: determined by the Father, communicated to us so clear

Accomplished: carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end

Work: business, employment, that which any one is occupied, that which one undertakes to do, enterprise, undertaking, the what, the when, the how

• John 17:6-19:

Manifest His Name: make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown

Name: the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything thought or feeling of which is aroused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering the name (i.e., for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds)

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Word Meanings: **Keep:** attend to carefully, take care of

Word: logos

Given: bestow a gift, to grant, give to one asking, let have, to supply, furnish

Receive: to take what is one's own, to take to one's self, to make one's own to claim, procure, for one's self

Words: Rhema

Given: same

As we thus understand that Christ prays to the Father about us living out His will for us, He wants us to receive the following truths:

- His will is from receiving, believing, and keeping His words, as given to us by the Father.
- As we follow His will, the purpose is to glorify the Father, meaning the Father will be doing things in our lives that only He can do—supernatural things beyond the natural things that we might do.
- His will is discovered and known when we are One with the Father and the Son; so, when we get to unity and have confirmation in the Spirit that we now understand and have clarity about His will (oneness), we have His will.
- Knowing and living out His will is for our joy—this, then, is to be His exceptional will—best and none better and full of rejoicing.
- He has us live out His will, not in a bubble, but to be carried out in enemy territory—the world; so, we will be encountering trouble, but He promises us to be kept from the evil one—not function in the kingdom of enemy but in God's Kingdom, where the wonderful will of God will be carried out.
- His primary purpose of His will is to Sanctify (purify) us by Truth, which is the Word (Logos). He will show us how to live this out (as we've already mentioned); He will give us instruction for the good work already prepared.

Word Meanings: **Truth:** what is true in any matter under consideration; truly, in truth, according to truth; of a truth, in reality, in fact, certainly

Read John 17:20-26:

²⁰“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory

LESSON 2: HIS PLAN IS AN INVITATION FOR US TO JOIN HIM IN HIS BIGGER STORY.

that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

In John 17:20-26, we see that a oneness is required so that the world may believe and that when we become whole (through salvation), the world will know who we are. We shall declare His name revealing all dimensions of who God is through our changed nature (sanctification) and through the mighty works that He does in our lives.

As Christ prayed this beautiful prayer for us all, He clearly states that He will reveal the work we are to complete through speaking His Word; He will protect us, He will sanctify us, He will bring us into unity with Him, and through it all, He will share His will for us, and we will declare the power of His name. He will reveal what He is doing through our lives so that the world will know our lives are being lived out by and for the glory of God. He will draw us into His bigger story as He blesses us to make us a blessing.

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?



"The first principle in discerning God's will is to have a heart to do so."

In the beginning and always, we will discern His will only when we surrender our will to His will.

Read John 4:34; 6:38; Mark 14:32-42:

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

³² And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."^[a]³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

- When Jesus operated here during His earthly ministry, how did He function? What did He ultimately have to go through when faced with the final decision of going to the cross? What did He struggle with, and how did He process this? Why is this so significant?

Word Meanings: **Sorrowful:** sad, overcome with sorrow so much as to cause one's death

Possible: having power for something

Pass By: take away, to remove

Will: have in mind, intend

Ready: willing

Weak: infirm, feeble

The first principle in discerning God's will is to have a heart to do so. Christ said His only desire was not to do His will but God's will. That has to be our first and continuing desire throughout our lives—seeking only the will of the Father. As Christ struggled in the garden of Gethsemane, He battled between wanting to do the Father's will and desiring a different way of fulfilling the purpose of God. Even though His mind said He was surrendering to God's will, He had to return three times into the Garden to continue the battle because He knew that His soul—His will—was not entirely surrendered. Because of His intense desire to do God's will, He stayed with it until He won the battle of self, overcoming His will until He truly surrendered to the Father's will. This is what is going to be required of us: We each are going to have to go through our Gethsemane (and unfortunately for us not just once but all the time) to truly surrender our will to the Father's. If we wish to follow God's will, we first must desire to follow His will and then surrender our will to His.

Read Matthew 16:13-28:

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

the Christ, the Son of the living God.”¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^[a] I will build my church, and the gates of hell^[b] shall not prevail against it.¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[c] in heaven.”²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord!^[d] This shall never happen to you.”²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance^[e] to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.²⁵ For whoever would save his life^[f] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

- After Peter was commended as having received the grand revelation from the Father that Jesus was the Messiah, and being himself super spiritual (it is said that upon his faith and ability to receive revelation that Christ would give him the keys to the Kingdom and build the church), what was He then called by Christ? Why? What is necessary for us to be able to follow Christ?

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

- Word Meanings:** **Seek:** to be of the same mind, i.e., agreed together, cherish the same views, be harmonious, to direct one's mind to a thing, to seek, to strive for; refers to the things of God, his counsels, interests, things due to him
- Man:** with the added notion of weakness, by which man is led into a mistake or prompted to sin
- Come After Me:** be established, become known, to come (fall) into or unto, to go, to follow one
- Deny Self:** to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's own interests
- Take Up the Cross:** to appropriate what is taken; the crucifixion which Christ underwent
- Follow:** to join one as a disciple, become or be his disciple

In Matthew's story, Peter went from being someone who received wonderful revelations as a man of God and upon which Christ was going to build the church, indeed even given the keys to the Kingdom (revelation and faith) to someone who was called Satan by Christ. He explains that though Peter's personal thinking was probably considered worthy by Peter, it did not have the things of God in mind. Rather, it had only the things of man in the world, all of which were prompted by the enemy.

The key thing that Peter forgot was to ask God to explain further what He was revealing as opposed to respond automatically in ways that he thought was good—which was opposite of what God had planned. This is a key lesson for seeking God's will: Do not respond with what we consider to be good ideas or thoughts, but instead always to do as Christ teaches: to deny self, take up the cross, and follow him. It always starts with denying self (i.e., surrendering), seeking His will above ours, and then being willing to follow what He reveals as we discover what He has in mind for His purposes (which are best and none better).

Read Acts 13:16-23:

¹⁶ So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:
"Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. ¹⁷The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸ And for about forty years he put up with^[a] them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²² And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' ²³ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.

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HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

- In this, the most concise history of the nation of Israel in all the Bible, David was singled out. What were the important things said about him? Why?

Acts 13:16-23: Do ALL with God's heart (our heart).

Word Meanings:

To Do: to act rightly, do well, to carry out, to execute

Will: pleasure, delight, favor, goodwill, acceptance

Heart: inner man, mind, heart, soul

Understanding: anoint (as consecration)

Read Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-10:

⁶In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted,
but you have given me an open ear.^[a]

Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.

⁷Then I said, "Behold, I have come;
in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

⁸I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."

⁵Consequently, when Christ^[a] came into the world, he said,
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"

⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

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- In his writings, what does David say is the most important thing in life—in fact, what is he wanting to be known for?

Word Meanings:

Delight In: take pleasure in, desire

Will: pleasure, delight, favor, goodwill, acceptance

Law: direction, instruction, (human or divine) body of prophetic teaching

Within: midst, middle

Heart: place of emotions or distress or love

Everything written by Paul with regard to Israel specifically points out that David was a man after God's own heart and that he only sought the will of God. Think of how significant that statement is of all the things that Paul could've shared about anybody in the Old Testament. He highlights that the most important aspect of life is seeking the will of God. Interestingly, David writes the same about himself. It was his desire that people know he wished to seek and know the will of God. So, as you think of your life and desire to seek the will of God, know that you are in the best of company. Perhaps it will be written of you that you always desire to seek and know the will of God.

**BASED UPON OUR ABIDING AND LIVING OUT HIS TRUTH
ALREADY REVEALED, WE WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE
IMAGE OF CHRIST.**

Read John 8:29-32:

²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

The Truth Will Set You Free

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

- What is the key to understanding the truth and living in freedom? Define what is “truth.”

"As we actively pursue and enjoy abiding, we then are to have a passion for truth."

In John 8:28-32, we see that abiding brings truth, and truth brings freedom.

As we’ve learned, Christ only did what the Father spoke, meaning He only did the Father’s will. And He tells us that we can operate in the same way by abiding in His Word. By abiding in His Word, we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free.

Abiding leads to TRUTH, which leads to FREEDOM. Truth is all truth, not just theological truth, but the truth about my situation and circumstances, the truth of my heart, the truth of my emotions, and the truth that He desires for us to understand and receive.

We are thus called to develop a passion for abiding and truth; we are called to develop a passion to abide in HIM—all the time (not just a few minutes before we go to work or on Sundays). As we actively pursue and enjoy abiding, we then are to have a passion for truth. With this passion, we learn to “camp” out in His Word to us until we understand, receive, believe—and then become obedient to the truth. We do not accept something just because we can read it, hear a sermon or message on it, or read a commentary on it. Instead, we are to continue abiding until the truth is known and resonates in our hearts (our souls). The Spirit is to continue to cause us to be unsettled until the truth is His truth settled in our hearts. This then drives us to stay abiding until the truth is known and received. Realize, this is not a striving or working on our part, rather, the joy of the relationship as He walks us into the truth. What a privilege!

The promised outcome is freedom, liberty, release. We will no longer be caught up in bondage or restriction, but rather set free to enjoy the abundant life He promises to deliver to us. This blessing is astonishing!

This means you can enjoy a life that is relaxed, free from anxiety and fear, without worry about outcomes or what may happen (particularly the negative). It is restful, peaceful, has a good pace, provides margin in our lives, is active in participating in giving it away to others, and allows us to see the joy of transformation as others get connected to the Vine. It comes to us as His promise to us: IF we abide in His Word, we WILL know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH will set us FREE.

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Read John 15:1-8:

I Am the True Vine

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

- Define the different elements (Who is it, and what does this do?) of how Christ is described in this analogy:

Vine: _____

Vinedresser: _____

Branches: _____

The Result: _____

The Choice: _____

- What are the specific conditions to answered prayer, and what do they reveal to us about how we should pray?

John 15:1-5; 15:7-8 teach us that when we abide, we see God's will.

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

Word Meanings:

The Vine: Christ, the source of life (the good, abundant life)

The Vinedresser: The Father, He makes all decisions of the vineyard. He directs all traffic in our lives. He has already planned out in great detail what the abundant life looks like for each of us, and how He wants to deliver this to us. The Vinedresser is the one who takes care of all issues—and no one else (especially us).

The Branch: We are branches. Branches stay connected and not much else. We are not to attempt to be the Vine and especially not the Vinedresser. We are incapable of creating our own abundant life. He has to deliver it to us. It is our job to BE a branch.

The Sap (Implied): The Holy Spirit. Flows from the life of the Vine into and through us branches to the fruit.

The Result: Fruit. More fruit, much Fruit. The Vinedresser actually cares about this, as the objective of the vineyard is to have fruit that remains and fulfills the purposes of the Vinedresser. In this study, we will explore what this fruit is and how is it created in and through our lives.

The Choice: Abide. This is our choice. He does not force us.

Note: The Word here is “Rhema,” meaning His application of the Written Word (Logos) to us personally. As we hear from Him (His Rhema Words to us from the Scripture), we can expect that as we fully understand the application of these promises to our personal lives that we will see God’s blessings happen in reality. We are to pray these with great boldness and confidence, knowing that the Father will change and bring about circumstances to fulfill what He has now promised us.

What can we do to ensure our prayers are answered? We are to believe that all the promises are YES in Christ. We are to be in Christ through abiding in Him. Once we have heard these promises, we understand that His Words that have now been spoken to us abide in us (get into the midst of our hearts where we understand them, receive them, believe them, and then can pray them to be so. AMEN). This illustrates the importance of abiding: We are not to just pray anything and expect to do what we want (we then become God and the center); rather we are to seek His will, what He has to say and promise. Our role is to hear, process through to understanding, receive what is true and has been spoken to us, believe, and then pray in expectation that it will happen.

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Read John 12:42-50:

⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Jesus Came to Save the World

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

- Jesus says He has not come to judge; but, what does judge us? What does that mean to us, and why is it significant?

John 12:42-50: Truth, when it stands on its own, can be a double-edged sword.

Light: God is light because light has the extremely delicate, subtle, pure, brilliant quality of truth and its knowledge, together with the spiritual purity associated with it, that which is exposed

Darkness: due to want of light, used of ignorance of divine things, and its associated wickedness, and the resultant misery in hell

Hear: to attend to, consider what is or has been said, to understand, perceive the sense of what is said

Sayings (Word): Rhema

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

Word Meanings:

Keep: observe

Judge: pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong

Receive: to receive what is offered; take as one's own, welcome

Word: Logos (what stands behind Rhema)

Speak: articulate; disclose

Jesus says He hasn't come to judge but rather that the words themselves that He speaks judge; so again, as we are seeking His will, we need to understand that His Words as truth are going to judge us because they are absolute. His Word stands on its own, and no one is exempt. We must understand His will is important and that His heart for us is to hear the truth, receive and learn the truth, follow the truth, and then experience the blessings and freedom that the truth brings. We can thus count on the truth and trust that it will fulfill God's plans for us.

Read John 3:20-22; Psalm 25:1-5; Ephesians 5:8-14:

²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

John the Baptist Exalts Christ

²² After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing.

25 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in you I trust;

let me not be put to shame;

let not my enemies exult over me.

³ Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;

they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord;

teach me your paths.

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all the day long.

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⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

- In order for us to live in His will, the light, what is important for us to seek, be guided into, walk in? Why? What does that mean to our individual life?

Word Meanings:

- John 3:20-22: Come to light, the truth, always
 - Evil:** easy, slight, ordinary, mean, worthless, of no account
 - Hate:** pursue with hatred, detest
 - Light:** God is light because light has the extremely delicate, subtle, pure, brilliant quality of truth and its knowledge, together with the spiritual purity associated with it
 - Exposed:** call to account, show one his fault, demand an explanation
 - Practices:** act rightly, do well, to carry out, to execute
 - Truth:** manifest, make actual and visible, realized
 - Wrought by God:** to cause to exist, produce

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- Psalm 25:1-5: Guided into truth
 - Way:** road, distance, journey, manner, path
 - Teach:** instruct
 - Road:** way of living
 - Lead:** to cause to go, lead, march, tread, firmness, faithfulness
 - Truth:** sureness, reliability
 - Wait:** look for, hope, expect

- Ephesians 5:8-14: Walk in light, truth (work of the Spirit)
 - Walk:** to make one's way, progress; to make due use of opportunities
 - Love:** affection, good will, benevolence, love feasts
 - Children:** the name transferred to that intimate and reciprocal relationship formed between men by the bonds of love, friendship, and trust, just as between parents and children
 - Light:** to shine or make manifest
 - Circumspectly:** exactly, accurately, diligently
 - Wise:** skilled in letters, cultivated, learned
 - Understand:** to set or bring together
 - Will:** what one wishes or has determined shall be done
 - Filled:** to make full, to fill up, (i.e., to fill to the full); to cause to abound
 - Furnish:** to supply liberally abound, liberally supplied; to render full, (i.e., to complete); to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim

As we pursue the truth, we must walk in the light and always be willing to let Him show us new information, expose new things to us, including our own hearts and how we are responding to the truth. We must never be afraid of what He reveals to us and always come to the light in truth as He reveals it to us. It is always meant for our good.

Read Proverbs: 4:5-12:

⁵Get wisdom; get insight;

do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

⁶Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;

love her, and she will guard you.

⁷The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,
and whatever you get, get insight.

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⁸ Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;
she will honor you if you embrace her.
⁹ She will place on your head a graceful garland;
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”
¹⁰ Hear, my son, and accept my words,
that the years of your life may be many.
¹¹ I have taught you the way of wisdom;
I have led you in the paths of uprightness.
¹² When you walk, your step will not be hampered,
and if you run, you will not stumble.

- What is our action and responsibility as we seek the truth, the life, the wisdom of God’s will? What does that practically mean?

Proverbs 4:5-12: Go after it.

Word Meanings:

Attend To: hearken, pay attention, listen

Heart: inner man, mind, will, understanding

Retain: to grasp, hold, support, attain, lay hold of, hold fast

Words: word, speaking, thing

Speech: saying, utterance

The key is to pay attention to what the Lord is speaking to us—not just by doing a devotion or our own idea of Bible study—but rather by listening and processing what He is speaking and has on His heart to reveal to us. As we pay close attention, there is a word or idea shown to us over and over (we might hear it at church, see it on TV, read in a book, etc.) and we have a strong desire to pursue it further because it is stimulating our hearts. We are called to stay with it (pay attention) until the Words and the truth of the living Words get into the middle of our hearts (souls) where we understand them, receive them, process them, and then believe them to the point that we can pray the promise of these Words with complete expectation that they will be so (AMEN) in our real lives (both in circumstances and in the transformation of our hearts that lead us to freedom).

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GOD'S WILL IS AS MUCH OF WHO WE ARE BECOMING AS WHAT WE ARE DOING.

Read Romans 8:26-29; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18:

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^[a] the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^[b] for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

¹⁶ But when one^[a] turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord^[b] is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^[c] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.^[d] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- While we tend to think of God's will of what we are supposed to "do," it is as much of what He is transforming us into. What does that mean to be transformed? Write out the difference between being transformed (metamorphosis) and just managing the issues of our lives.

- When do we get freedom? Why is this important in the process?

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

Romans 8:26-29 reveals how the Spirit is transforming us.

- Word Meanings:**
- Intercede:** to go to or meet a person, especially for the purpose of conversation, consultation, or supplication, to pray, entreat
 - Work Together:** help in work, be partner in labor, to put forth power together with and thereby to assist
 - Good:** useful, salutary, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable
 - Purpose:** a setting forth of a thing, placing of it in view, the showbread
 - Predetermine:** decide beforehand
 - Conformed:** having the same form as another; image of the Son of God, into which true Christians are transformed, is likeness not only to the heavenly body, but also to the most holy and blessed state of mind, which Christ possesses

Second Corinthians 3:16-18 shows a metamorphosis or changed nature. When we allow the Spirit to speak life from the words to us, we receive life and power. It is stimulating, changes us, gives us hope and confidence that God is ready to perform His promises in our lives and give us the promised Abundant Life. This is so because the Words are Spirit themselves. They are not concept, nor good ideas (and definitely not rules), so as they get into the midst of our soul, we will experience the fruit that comes from the Words that He is speaking to us.

He desires to transform us, to truly change us and our nature. The Word here is metamorphosis, like a caterpillar to a butterfly. Can a butterfly go back to being a caterpillar? No, why not? Because its nature has been metamorphosed into a new nature, one that cannot go back. That is what Christ offers and will do for us. He will truly change us into His nature, one that does not manage our sinful nature or try to get better through performance, but rather through real change as we hear, receive, and believe more of HIM, HIS Ways, HIS promises to us. It will look like a heart that truly forgives, truly has compassion, is truly able to speak the truth in love, etc. It is not fake or untrue, but authentic and who we truly become. This happens not all at once, but step by step (from glory to glory). He does not want us to think we need to expect full transformation to enjoy life now, but to enjoy each step that He ordains for us. Just as we would want for our own children, He wants us to enjoy life as a true child of God. This is a step-by-step process, just as we first enjoy first grade, and then enjoy second grade, and then third, etc. We are not worrying about needing to finish high school to enjoy life, but to enjoy the place we are in, knowing we have further to go. It is not something we ever finish, but rather something we will experience more of as we age; and He knows the path He wishes us to move along—and each step will be joyful.

"When we allow the Spirit to speak life from the words to us, we receive life and power."

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

We will discover that where the Spirit is operating in our lives, there is liberty or freedom. Our lives will not be burdened, or filled with fear, anxiety, anger, etc. Instead, we will be able to enjoy moment by moment our walk in the Spirit as He gives us this day our daily bread. It occurs now—the Spirit of the Lord is ruling and leading in our lives.

This happens not after we are transformed but during the journey. We will be transformed all our lives, in each step of the journey. We can have freedom now, not when something has been fulfilled, but now, as we walk with Him. This is important because we do not have to think there is a specific objective or maturity point that must be reached to have this freedom. It can indeed happen now. We can remain both in that interesting place of freedom and also in the “not yet” of being fully transformed. A beautiful truth that encourages us in our walk is the realization that the quality of the walk is to be freedom. If we are not experiencing this, it means we are back in the flesh and not abiding. This is a good indicator for us to realize that we need to return to the abiding relationship and then continue on the journey with freedom.

Read Galatians 5:22-26:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- The fruit of the Spirit is a result of our abiding and walking with God in His will versus trying to achieve these on our own? Why is this significant? When, then, will we experience the Fruit of the Spirit?

Galatians 5:22-26: The fruit of the Spirit is character.

What are the elements of our character transformation?

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

Word Meanings:

Love: brotherly love, affection, good will, benevolence, love feasts

Joy: gladness, the cause or occasion of joy

Peace: peace between individuals, i.e., harmony, concord, security, safety, prosperity, felicity—because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous

Patience: endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance

Goodness: integrity

Gentleness: humility

Self-control: the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites

The word fruit is singular, not plural, meaning not many fruits, but one fruit. Our character will be transformed into the nature of Christ as we abide. We are not to decide to obtain these qualities on our own; the more we try, the more we will fail. These failures will cause us to become discouraged and stifle our transformation. We, our spouses, and our family will be able to testify if the fruit is becoming stronger in our lives or not. There is no standard by which to judge, so we must not judge each other by some arbitrary definition, but simply noticing if we are growing in our character month after month. It should be obvious and a key indicator if we are abiding. We should care as much about this as we care about what we are to do.

The Spirit is living out His life through us. We, as sheep and branches, are to have the same quality of character that He has. As His nature begins to reside in us, those around us will see how attractive the fruit is. It will become clear that our responses are actually His responses. Eventually, they will become second nature, as if straight from our souls. It's then that our hearts will be in sync with His and the joy comes easily.

We will know we are on the right path, being transformed, if our spouses or close friends (if not married) say that my character is clearly being transformed. Is this clear to them? Why or why not? Think about where you are in your transformation process and why it is so important to relax in the abiding and let the Spirit do the work of your soul.

Read Isaiah 45:9-13:

⁹“Woe to him who strives with him who formed him,
a pot among earthen pots!

Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’
or ‘Your work has no handles?’

LESSON 3: HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

¹⁰Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?'
or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'"

¹¹Thus says the Lord,
the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him:

"Ask me of things to come;
will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?[a]

¹²I made the earth
and created man on it;
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their host.

¹³I have stirred him up in righteousness,
and I will make all his ways level;

he shall build my city
and set my exiles free,
not for price or reward,"
says the Lord of hosts.

- What is the responsibility of the potter and the role of the clay? Why is this significant in what God is creating in and for us?

Isaiah 45:9-13: Clay is always being formed.

Word Meanings: **To Frame:** pre-ordain, plan (Divine) purpose of a situation

Clay: mud

Potter: divine activity to form and fashion

It is clear that God is the Potter, and we are the clay; and that we are in the continual process of being formed into something beautiful by the Potter. We are not to complain or evaluate where we are in the process but instead take comfort in knowing that we will be transformed into the nature of Christ and will enjoy the character of the fruit of the Spirit.

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

Read Daniel 1:5-21; 3:8-30; 6:1-28. These examples from the life of Daniel illustrate how he and his friends were transformed:

⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

Daniel's Faithfulness

⁸ But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So, you would endanger my head with the king." ¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore, they stood before the king. ²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. ²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

LESSON 3: HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

The Fiery Furnace

⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.⁹ They declared^[a] to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So, they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good.^[b] But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.^[c]¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics,^[d] their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent, and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

LESSON 3: HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside[e] the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way."³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Daniel and the Lions' Den

6 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom;² and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. ³Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

LESSON 3: HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

⁶ Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement[a] to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!" ⁷ All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared^[b] to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" ¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

LESSON 3: HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

¹⁹ Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So, Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,

for he is the living God,
enduring forever;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues;
he works signs and wonders
in heaven and on earth,
he who has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions."

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

As we consider our living in God's will and our character/nature being transformed, consider a simple question:

Are we living in:

Forgiveness versus anger and revenge

Unity

Praise

Worship

Thankfulness

An enjoyable work life

An exceptional marriage

A life that exhibits a servant's heart

Humility

Integrity

Love

Peace

Joy

Kindness and tenderness

Respect

Patience

Freedom

Trust

Faith

A life alongside the Spirit

A position to hear His voice

Obedience?

If we are growing in these, then we know we are living in God's will. If we are always struggling in these and actually experiencing moving away from these, then we know we are not living in God's will.

Also, as we are facing specific situations, the Word has already spoken His will to us, and we can spend time in His Word to receive how His Word applies to this situation so we do not miss His will.

LESSON 3:

HOW DO WE DISCERN THIS PLAN (HIS WILL)?

Are we understanding how to live out His will in specific situations such as:

Being wronged by someone
Lawsuits
Guilt, past failures
Tithing
Saving
Get rich quick schemes
Marry or partner with unbelievers
Division
Parenting
Judgment
Addictions
Authority
Perseverance
Trials?

Thus, we do not need to figure these types of situations out on our own, or even ask the opinion of others. Instead, we first must go to the Word and seek the truth. That truth will guide us to the answers that will set us free and reveal God's perfect will for our individual lives.

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.



"...we must believe He will tell us the wisdom we asked for and He will get us the answer if we ask for one."

Read 1 John 5:14-15:

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

- We are told that in order to pray and see our prayers answered, we must pray God’s will. If this is so, then what must God reveal to us? Why? How specific must this be? (How do we connect this to our prayers?)

He promises to speak it and make it known by us as told in 1 John 5:14-15.

God states that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And it will be done. Thus, He must reveal His will to us so that we can pray it and experience the fulfillment of it, in reality. Our role is to continue to seek His will until it becomes clear to us. We do not ask God to do something for us, but rather for us to receive and understand His will so that we can pray it and then expect the fulfillment of it. In all of our prayers, we are to begin with a critical first step—by asking His will, and thus it becomes His will for us.

Word Meanings: **Will:** what He desires to happen
Have: hold onto, own, possess

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

Read James 1:5-8:

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- As we are seeking His specific will, what are we to ask for? What does He promise to give? What is the condition for us to receive this? Why?

As you are seeking His will, He tells us to simply ask for wisdom; and then He promises to give it to us with great clarity. But there is one condition: we must believe He will tell us the wisdom we asked for and He will get us the answer if we ask for one. There is not a requirement that we believe what He tells us at the first moment He tells us, because it may be too difficult to understand or believe, or too grand for us to say instantly, "Yes, of course!".

He is the author and finisher of faith, so He says that once we have heard what He says (what He authors), He will finish the process by taking us to complete belief in WHAT He has spoken—the answer to our questions that require wisdom; but it is required that we believe He will give us the answer requested, and we will receive it, the wisdom we seek. If we do not have this settled, then He cannot give us the wisdom we need to understand His will.

- Word Meanings:**
- Ask:** beg, call for, crave, desire, require
 - Liberally:** simply, openly, frankly, sincerely
 - Faith:** conviction of the truth of anything, belief
 - Doubting:** to oppose, strive with dispute

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

Read Hebrews 10:19-25; 10:35-11:3:

The Full Assurance of Faith

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers,^[a] since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For,

“Yet a little while,
and the coming one will come and will not delay;
³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith,
and if he shrinks back,
my soul has no pleasure in him.”

³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

By Faith

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

- As we are seeking to receive and understand God’s specific will for us, what is the special privilege given to us in this process? On what basis are we given this privilege? Thus, to whom and when is it available to us? How are we to experience this, and why is it so important?

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

And as we seek His wisdom and will, we have the special privilege of marching to the throne room with great confidence and boldness to be able to dialogue with the Father directly. This access is available to all believers without partiality. The access was given because Christ died for us all, and through the symbolism of the holy of holies, at His death, He spoke: "It is finished." At that time the curtain, which separated the holy of holies from the rest of the sanctuary (temple) and into which only the high priest could go (and could only stand and perform an annual sacrifice for himself, his family, and the nation as atonement for sin since that was never complete), was torn in two and opened the access for all of us to now enter with great confidence and boldness to dialogue with God and hear His will. We are to enter with a sincere or authentic heart by sharing everything we are thinking and feeling, and then dialoguing about every question we have regarding God's will until we receive answers and clarity. He tells us not to throw away this boldness and confidence as He actually rewards us to come. How does He reward us? With answers, clarity, and wisdom, all of which relate to His will for us. We will see this information is necessary for us to live out the plans He has for us, which are good. (Remember, He is our good shepherd, and we as His sheep have wonderful promises and benefits to being His). This leads us to faith: the certainty of what He speaks to us will happen; as what He speaks is superior to circumstances, and we can know that nothing is impossible for Him since the spiritual Word (which is how the world was created) is superior and trumps the material, and your circumstances.

- Word Meanings:**
- Boldness:** freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, openly, frankly, (i.e., without concealment, without ambiguity or circumlocution)
 - Enter:** the place or way leading into a place (as a gate)
 - New:** lately slaughtered, freshly killed, recently made
 - Living:** to enjoy real life, to have true life and worthy of the name, active, blessed, endless in the Kingdom of God
 - Way:** a traveled way, road, a traveler's way, journey, traveling
 - Consecrate:** to renew, to do anew, again
 - Enter Into:** to come into being, arise, come forth, show itself, find place or influence
 - True:** that which has not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature corresponding to the name, in every respect corresponding to the idea signified by the name, real, true, genuine, opposite to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated, or pretended
 - Heart:** the vigor and sense of physical life, the center and seat of spiritual life, the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavors

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

Confidence: boldness, freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, openly, frankly, (i.e., without concealment, without ambiguity or circumlocution)

Reward: payment of wages due

Patience: perseverance, steadfastness, constancy, endurance

Done Will of God: do, to act rightly, do well, to carry out, to execute

Receive: to carry, bear, bring to, to carry away for one's self, to carry off what is one's own Promise: a promised good or blessing

Draw Back: to withdraw one's self, (i.e., to be timid, to cover, shrink)

Read Psalm 37:23; Psalm 119:133; Deuteronomy 7:21-23; 1 John 2:24-27:

²³The steps of a man are established by the Lord,
when he delights in his way;

¹³³Keep steady my steps according to your promise,
and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

²¹ You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. ²² The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You may not make an end of them at once,^[a] lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you. ²³ But the Lord your God will give them over to you and throw them into great confusion, until they are destroyed.

²⁴ Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that he made to us^[a]—eternal life.

²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

- How is God's will revealed to us? Why is it so important that the Father reveals His will to us in this way versus how we might want to receive it (all at once)? What is God's purpose for Himself and for us in this process?

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

One of the keys to understanding God's will is that He reveals it step by step, not all at once. We would prefer that we just get the entire story and the entire answer upfront. However, we need to understand that His will comes as we walk with Him along our path. We just need to accompany Him as He explains His will for us. During this time, He will get us to the right place at the right time with the right people for Him to fulfill all that He is promising. This will take a step by step, decision-by-decision process that keeps us close to Him through listening, abiding, and continuing to seek wisdom as He discloses each step.

Word Meanings:

- Psalm 37:23: Here, the steps are ordered and established, and GOD delights in our way. (Why? His will is done.)
 - Step:** march, stride
 - Ordered:** to be fixed, be securely determined, be prepared
 - Delighted:** delight in, take pleasure in, desire, be pleased with
 - Way:** road, distance, journey, manner, path
- Psalm 119:133: steps
 - Order:** to be fixed, be securely determined
 - Steps:** footsteps – one at a time
 - Word:** Rhema
 - Iniquity:** trouble, sorrow
 - Dominion:** domineer, exercise power over, dominate, have mastery, be master
- Deuteronomy 7:21-23: little by little (can't handle it all at once)
 - Little:** fewness
 - Occupy:** complete, bring to an end, finish
- 1 John 2:24-27: progressive on what we know
 - Promise:** promised good or blessing
 - Teach:** to hold discourse with another, dialogue, Q&A; receive
 - Truth:** loving the truth, speaking the truth, truthful

PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS. ASK, SEEK, KNOCK.

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Read Luke 11:5-13; Colossians 1:9-12:

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves,' ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?' ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence^[a] he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for^[b] a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks^[a] to the Father, who has qualified you^[b] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

- What is the process in seeking God's will (ask for His will, not what we want Him to do for us) laid out as Christ taught us to pray?

- Seek – define this:

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- Knock – define this:

- As we process, process, process, what does He promise?

- Why can we be assured of this?

As we consider the step-by-step revelations that God continues to give us, we must always be willing to process, process, process. That means that we are always to be open to asking for more information, looking for more information and truth, and never being afraid of what that new information and truth show us regarding the new step for the new action that God wishes us to take. This is important so that we do not get focused on our own natural thinking or action plans and miss a new turn that is necessary to follow God's will. That's why we are always to stay in the seeking and knocking mode as we ask for God's will. Always remember that He knows best and knows all. Why wouldn't we be willing to follow the One who knows the answers?

Word Meanings:

Ask: beg, call for, crave, desire, require

Given: something to someone, of one's own accord to give one something, to his advantage, to bestow a gift, to grant, give to one asking, let have, to supply, furnish necessary things, to give over, deliver, to reach out, extend, present

Receive: take with the hand, lay hold of, any person or thing in order to use it, to take up a thing to be carried, to take upon one's self, to take in order to carry

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away, without the notion of violence, (i.e., to remove, take away, to take what is one's own, to take to one's self, to make one's own, to claim, procure for one's self)

Seek: in order to find, to seek a thing, to seek [in order to find out] by thinking, meditating, reasoning, to enquire into, to seek after, seek for, aim at, strive after, to seek (i.e., require, demand, to crave, demand something from someone)

Find: to come upon, hit upon, to meet with, after searching, to find a thing sought, without previous search, to find (by chance), to fall in with, those who come or return to a place, to find by enquiry, thought, examination, scrutiny, observation, to find out by practice and experience, to see, learn, discover, understand, to be found (i.e., to be seen, be present, to be discovered, recognized, detected, to show)

Knock: knock at the door

Know the goodness of the Father as He gives the Spirit.

Word Meanings: **Good:** useful, salutary, good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable
Filled: make full, to fill up, (i.e., to fill to the full), to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally, I abound, I am liberally supplied, to render full, (i.e., to complete, to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim)
Wisdom: skill (in war), wisdom (in administration), shrewdness, prudence, understanding
Understanding: perception with the thing perceived
Fruitful: bear fruit
Good: constitution or nature, useful, salutary, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable
Work: business, employment, that which anyone is occupied, that which one undertakes to do, enterprise, undertaking, anything accomplished by hand, art, industry, or mind
Might: power, authority, dunamis
Longsuffering: patience, endurance, perseverance
Joy: gladness

He assures us that He will never bait and switch us; He will always give us only what is good; and since we have the Holy Spirit within us, we can be assured that we will always receive the best and the truth, those that God wants to give us. Our role is to have "Persistence"—always seeking His will—and staying with it until we find it. Think of it as a lost treasure; and do not give up, get lazy, or just decide it is easier to do what we want to do because we do not have the time or courage to wait. Instead, be persistent and keep with Him and with the process until we get the answers.

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- Written Activity:**
1. Write out what the question at hand is: the decision, problem, issue, what is on your heart.
 2. Write out what we know: that which is true, certain, and clear.
 3. Write out what we do not know: fuzzy; uncertain; not clear; info needed.

Seek, receive, and then understand His instructions.

Read Matthew 23:10:

¹⁰ Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.

- Who is only our teacher/instructor? Why is it important to keep that as our primary thought in seeking His will?

Remember, only He is our instructor! (No one else is our instructor, and especially not ourselves.) We are seeking HIS will, not our own, not our friend's, our church's, etc. We are to seek only GOD's will, as He is the one who promises to teach and instruct us. If we fully understand that, then we will always with great delight seek HIS will from HIM.

Word Meanings: **Teacher:** guide, a master, instructor

Read Proverbs 2:1-12:

The Value of Wisdom

2 My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
² making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
³ yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
⁴ if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,

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⁵ then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
⁷ he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
⁸ guarding the paths of justice
and watching over the way of his saints.
⁹ Then you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
¹⁰ for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
¹¹ discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you,
¹² delivering you from the way of evil,
from men of perverted speech...

- Again, what is our action, our role in the process? What does this look like in a practical sense?

- What are the promised benefits we are to receive when seeking God's specific will for us?

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Consider carefully this major if/then statement: If we walk with God according to the requirements set forth, then we will receive the blessings promised.

Requirements:

1. receive His words
2. treasure His instructions
3. desire to process and receive wisdom and understanding
4. cry out for discernment
5. seek God's wisdom as if it was hidden treasure

Promised blessings:

1. understand and live in the fear of the Lord
2. find out what it means to know and experience God
3. receive wisdom, knowledge, and understanding
4. be protected and guarded
5. understand righteousness, fairness
6. understand every good path that we are to walk on that will lead to goodness
7. wisdom will enter our souls and be pleasant
8. we will be delivered from the way of evil and from those who oppose us

We are called to "go after it" with great diligence, to seek it, seek it, seek it. This is not to be done with blind information, but instead with understanding and discernment. Then God promises to show us "every good path," the way we are to go, which will be pleasant.

Word Meanings:

Receive: to take, get, fetch, lay hold of, seize, acquire, buy

Word: utterance, speech, saying, promise, command

Incline: hear, be attentive, heed

Wisdom: skill (in war), wisdom (in administration), shrewdness, prudence

Understanding: insight; seek to find

Equity: evenness, level, smoothness

Path: track

Read Matthew 25:21 (parable of the talents):

²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.^[a] You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

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- What is critical for us regarding following God's will? Why?

Being faithful is following what we know to be true—those steps God has asked us to take, believing what He has spoken to us, and thus following His will. That is our simple role—to hear what He tells us, understand it, and then be faithful to it. Are we clear on what He has asked us to be faithful to (be obedient to)? Can we stay on the path that we are called to—following the steps He has ordained—and believing what He says He will do—demonstrating faithfulness at every level? If we do, we will be given the “well done, faithful servant,” and then be given even more as God moves us forward toward more wonderful things that He knows He can trust us with as we show ourselves faithful.

Word Meanings: **Faithful:** of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, the execution of commands, or the discharge of official duties

Read 2 Corinthians 1:18-24:

¹⁸ As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.^[a]

²³ But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

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- We have been looking at understanding God’s will, and our usual perspective is: “What am I supposed to do to live out God’s will?” Actually, His will is primarily about what He is going to do in our lives, what He promises to fulfill that only He can do. What does He say about His promises to us, and how does He want us to respond to His promises?

Know that His will is primarily what He promises to do for, in, and through us (and what He does is supernatural!). What He is doing is the essence of His will.

In 2 Corinthians 1:18-24, ALL promises are true IN Christ Jesus.

We begin with an important truth about promises: All the promises of God are “yes” in Christ Jesus. There are two key principles with this simple statement:

1. God’s promises are not *yes* and *no*, but all are completely *yes*. This means that they are not *perhaps* or *maybe*. This is important as we realize that there aren’t just a few lucky people to receive promises or that His promises are only available to us once in a while. They are always *yes* and available to all of us without partiality. Thus, if we receive a promise from God, we can have confidence that it is meant for us and fully available for us.
2. The promises, that are always *yes*, are available to us only as we are “in Christ.” If we are not in Christ, we automatically are disqualified from receiving the promises. Thus, though they are all *yes*, they can only be realized as we walk in Christ. When we hear *maybe* from somebody, we tend to believe the answer is actually *no*. If we think that God’s promises are *maybe*, then we likewise generally think the answer is *no*. God wants us to recognize that He does not say *maybe* but *yes* and that this important principle is key to us understanding and desiring to experience the fullness of His promises to us.

Word Meanings: **One Yea:** verily, truly, assuredly, even so

Nay: no, not

Promise: to announce that one is about to do or furnish something, a promised good or blessing

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Amen: at the end, so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled. It was a custom, which passed over from the synagogues to the Christian assemblies, that when he who had read or discoursed had offered up solemn prayer to God, the others responded *Amen*, and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own

Glory: magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace, majesty, a thing belonging to God, the kingly majesty which belongs to him as supreme ruler, majesty in the sense of absolute perfection of the deity

Read Ephesians 3:15-21:

¹⁵ ...from whom every family[a] in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- What does He want us to expect as we pray and as we think and imagine the very things He is revealing to us?

God is working in us, through us, and around us (circumstances), and wants us to understand that what He will provide and perform are far more and exceptional than we could ever imagine or think. This is why He wants to draw us into His will and not just let us develop our own plans or ideas, since we will think naturally and in ways that will limit the outcomes. He wants to show us great and mighty things that only He can do, which He will reveal to us as we begin to understand His grand will!

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Word Meanings:

- Family:** lineage running back to some progenitor, ancestry
- Name:** to bear the name of a person or thing
- Grant:** to give something to someone, of one's own accord to give one something, to his advantage, to bestow a gift, to grant, give to one asking, let have, to supply, furnish necessary things, to give over, deliver
- Riches:** wealth
- Glory:** honor, splendor, majesty
- Power:** strength power, ability, inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth, power for performing miracles, moral power and excellence of soul, the power and influence which belong to riches and wealth
- Inner Man:** soul
- Dwell:** settle, metaphor for divine powers, influences, etc., are said to dwell in his soul, to pervade, prompt, govern it, to dwell in, inhabit
- Rooted:** to render firm, to fix, establish, cause a person or a thing to be thoroughly grounded
- Grounded:** to make stable, establish
- Love:** agape, brotherly love, affection, good will, benevolence, love feasts
- Comprehend:** to lay hold of so as to make one's own, to obtain, attain to, to make one's own, to take into one's self, appropriate, to seize upon, take possession of
- To Know:** understand, perceive, have knowledge of, to understand, Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, to become acquainted with
- Surpass:** to transcend, surpass, exceed, excel
- Filled:** to make full, to fill up, (i.e., to fill to the full), to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally, I abound, I am liberally supplied, to render full, (i.e., to complete), to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim
- Exceedingly:** beyond, more than more, over
- Abundantly:** over and above, more than is necessary, superadded, exceeding abundantly, supremely, something further, more, much more than all, more plainly, superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon
- Pre-eminence:** superiority, advantage, more eminent, more remarkable, more excellent
- Ask:** beg, call for, crave, desire, require
- Think:** to perceive with the mind, to understand, to have understanding to think upon, heed, ponder, consider
- Power:** authority, dunamis
- Works:** to be operative, be at work, put forth power

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Read Hebrews 2:1-4:

Warning Against Neglecting Salvation

2 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

- As God bears witness to our lives because we do not neglect so great a salvation by living out His will, what does God want us to experience as a normal, regular part of our everyday lives? Why?

His will is for us to experience supernatural miracles, signs and wonders. He tells us not to neglect so great a salvation by ignoring that God wishes to bear witness to the wonderful life He has planned for us through miracles, signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. It will not be just us telling about Jesus and a "ticket to heaven" but normal for us to experience and demonstrate the wonderful supernatural things that only God can do as part of His will for us. It will happen all the time, and we will openly share that it was God's doing and not our own. How fantastic will that be!

Word Meanings: **Neglect:** careless, negligent
Honor: dignity, riches, abundance
Wonders: miracles
Miracles: same word as power, dunamis
Gifts: distributions to us

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Read Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11:

Gifts of Grace

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members,^[a] and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads,^[b] with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Spiritual Gifts

12 Now concerning^[a] spiritual gifts,^[b] brothers,^[c] I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

- As you process through both these lists of God's works in our lives, He says He will manifest them as He so chooses. What does that mean? When will He manifest these? For what purpose? Who should be experiencing these manifestations of the Spirit? Why?

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Gifts being manifested means they are carried out as the Spirit so gifts us at a specific time to exercise a special manifestation for the sake of building up the body. But it does not mean that certain people have these gifts permanently, but that we all will have these gifts at certain times when so designated by the Spirit and thus will be part of us joining His will. For example, some of these gifts are wisdom, which we have previously learned we are to all ask for and will receive; or faith, which He says we must have to please Him.

This list cannot mean that certain believers are given these gifts and others are not (otherwise the other verses about wisdom or faith are not true and would put us in an impossible situation whereby we could not meet the condition set forth for living out the life of God). What this list means, then, is that these gifts are special manifestations given at specific times when God's gifting is needed for the body. We all can and will experience these as He so chooses. We just need to be open to these and realize that since He directs our lives with His will, we are to willingly be used with these gifts and look forward to these gifts being exercised for His purposes.

Read through the definitions to understand what they mean:

- Word Meanings:**
- Gift:** a favor with which one receives without any merit of his own; different, varying in kind; prophecy a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; especially by foretelling future events
 - Teach:** to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver
 - Manifests:** make actual and visible, realized, to make known by teaching to become manifest, be made known, of a person
 - Word:** uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea, what someone has said, the sayings of God
 - Wisdom:** the act of interpreting dreams and always giving the sagest advice, the intelligence evinced in discovering the meaning of some mysterious number or vision, skill in the management of affairs, devout and proper prudence in intercourse with men
 - Knowledge:** knowledge signifies in general intelligence, understanding, to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of perceive, feel
 - Faith:** conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it
 - Healing:** to cure, heal, to make whole, to free from errors and sins, to bring about (one's) salvation
 - Miracles:** strength, power, ability, inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth, power for performing miracles

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Prophecy: a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; especially by foretelling future events

Discernment: to separate, make a distinction, discriminate, to prefer, to learn by discrimination, to try, decide, to determine, give judgment, decide a dispute

Tongue: the language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations

Interpretation: to translate what has been spoken or written in a foreign tongue into the vernacular

Read Daniel 4:1-3; 6:25-28:

Nebuchadnezzar Praises God

4 ^[a] King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! ² It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

³ How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,

for he is the living God,
enduring forever;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues;
he works signs and wonders
in heaven and on earth,
he who has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions."

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

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- What does Daniel state about experiencing signs and wonders? Why is this important for us?

As Daniel fully understood that signs and wonders were normal; he expected them, experienced them, and enjoyed them when they happened in his life. He fully knew God to be a God of signs and wonders.

Word Meanings: **Signs and Wonders:** miracles

Read Acts 2:40-46; 4:23-31; 5:12-16:

⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe^[a] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts...

The Believers Pray for Boldness

²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant,^[a] said by the Holy Spirit,

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“Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
²⁶The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed^(b)—

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Many Signs and Wonders Done

¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. ¹³ None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵ so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

- As the early church grew, what did they experience normally? Why? What then should we be experiencing in our lives as we live out God’s will?

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

The church grew because it saw miracles daily. It was normal, and as they sought God's will and looked to God to fulfill His will in everyone's life, they experienced more miracles; and were in awe at God's wonders. As a result, people were drawn to the work of God and wanted to further experience what was happening in the church groups. Remember that His will is to draw us into His bigger story of giving blessings away and having others come to His Kingdom and learn to follow Him—and then give more blessings away; and so on and so on. This is how it happened in the early church. People came not just to learn about Him but to experience His will, which He also revealed through signs and wonders.

Word Meanings:

sign: prodigy, portent, (i.e., an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature)

boldness: freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, openly, frankly, (i.e., without concealment, without ambiguity or circumlocution), confidence

Read John 14:10-18:

¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me^[a] anything in my name, I will do it.

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,^[b] to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be^[c] in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

LESSON 4:

KNOW HIS SPECIFIC WILL FOR US. THEN EXPECT IT AND RELY UPON IT.

- What did Jesus state that we, as His followers, will be experiencing as a normal part of our lives? Why? On what basis?

His will is that we join His mighty works, which we all will be doing! He desires us not to just sit on the sidelines and pray that He might do works for others, but that we are actively involved in seeking His will for supernatural works needed for situations, circumstances, etc. How will we do this? By seeking His will, His word, and His promises that we can pray and believe and then see happen. This is His will.

Word Meanings: **Work:** business, employment, that which anyone is occupied, enterprise, undertaking
Do: to be the authors of the cause, to make ready, to prepare, make a thing out of something
Believe: think to be true
Ask: beg, crave for
Name: the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is aroused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, (i.e., for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds, etc.)
Glory: honor, splendor, majesty

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS "SECRET PLACE"— HIS WILL IS A SECRET (KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).



"As we seek God's will, we must understand that we cannot try to figure this out on our own through our own logic..."

Read Proverbs 3:32; Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 25:14; Psalm 91:1; 91:14-16:

³²for the devious person is an abomination to the Lord, but the upright are in his confidence.

²⁹"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

The friendship^[a] of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

My Refuge and My Fortress

91 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

"Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.

¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

- What does God promise to reveal to us, His children who are seeking His will? What exactly is this? Why is He revealing this to us, and why is this so important to us?

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS “SECRET PLACE”— HIS WILL IS A SECRET (KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).

As we seek God’s will, we must understand that we cannot try to figure this out on our own through our own logic, but must receive Revelation, which is spiritually discerned. These are considered secrets because they are unknown to us but known to God. Since He knows the future and knows things that we do not know and cannot know, we need to be open and receive His secrets, which He willingly wishes to (and will) communicate to us.

Word Meanings:

- Proverbs 3:32: secret counsel
Secret Counsel: familiar converse, intimacy (with God), to be found
- Deuteronomy 29:29: reveals His secret things (which are His) to us
Secret: to be hidden, be concealed
Revealed: uncovered
- Psalm 25: 14: secrets revealed for those surrendered to Him
Secret Counsel: familiar converse, intimacy (with God), to be found
- Psalm 91:1; 91:14-16: place of answers
Secret: shelter, protection, hiding place
Answer: respond, testify, speak, shout
Trouble: distress, being vexed, difficulty
Deliver: for war, rescue, be rescued
Honor: make honorable, honor, glorify
Satisfied: fulfilled

Read Daniel 2:1-23; 2:30; 2:47; 4:9; Amos 3:1-8:

¹⁶ And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS “SECRET PLACE”— HIS WILL IS A SECRET
(KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).

²¹ He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;

²² he reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and the light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my fathers,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and might,
and have now made known to me what we asked of you,
for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”

³⁰ But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

⁴⁷ The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.”

⁹ “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation.

Israel’s Guilt and Punishment

3 Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

² “You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities.

³ “Do two walk together,
unless they have agreed to meet?

⁴ Does a lion roar in the forest,
when he has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from his den,
if he has taken nothing?

⁵ Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth,
when there is no trap for it?

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS “SECRET PLACE”— HIS WILL IS A SECRET (KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).

Does a snare spring up from the ground,
when it has taken nothing?
⁶ Is a trumpet blown in a city,
and the people are not afraid?
Does disaster come to a city,
unless the Lord has done it?
⁷ “For the Lord God does nothing
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.
⁸ The lion has roared;
who will not fear?
The Lord God has spoken;
who can but prophesy?”

- What type of things will God reveal to us that are unknowable to us? Why is this so important to us as we seek His will? What does He state to Amos? What does that mean to us and why is it so important to us to receive these secret things?

These secrets that He reveals are deep things unknowable to us, so we cannot even pretend to know them or figure them out. Thus, as He speaks these surprises and new and interesting things, we are not to reject them, but to openly receive them, and then process further so that we understand with clarity what He is saying and how it all applies to us and His will for us. Further, He does nothing unless He first reveals His secrets to us. We are called to follow His will, and He invites us to join Him in His work (being an integral part of His will being fulfilled). This is what is so important for us to grasp—His will is not completely independent of us but rather is actually an invitation to us to join Him as He reveals what He is doing (realizing that in a broad sense and with sovereignty God does act and fulfill His purposes regardless of our choices to join Him).

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS "SECRET PLACE" – HIS WILL IS A SECRET (KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).

Word Meanings:

- Amos 3:1-8:

Speak Words: Rhema

Revealed: uncovered

Secret Counsel: familiar converse, intimacy (with God), to be found

HIS SECRETS ARE REVEALED THROUGH HIM SPEAKING AND OUR HEARING.

Read John 16:13-15:

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

- How does the Spirit work to reveal His secrets, His will to us? How are we to practically process these?

His role is to guide us into all truth (not just theological truth, but all truth about our circumstances, our hearts and our response to circumstances, our emotion, our understanding, and then His truth that He desires us to hear, receive, understand, and follow). He also is to tell us of things to come—foretelling what is ahead. This normally alerts us to things to pay attention to. For example, if I told you that this Sunday after your church service, an elderly gentleman in a blue suit with a red tie was going to join you in the lobby and say something very significant to you, you would be watching for the man with the suit and tie and pay attention to what he says. If I did not alert you, you would not know that this man in the blue suit and red tie was important and you'd probably not care about what he says.

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The Spirit is alerting you to what is ahead, so you can hear more about where He wants to lead and guide you. Further, His job is to transfer all that is Christ's to you. Christ is living in the resurrection where all has been given to Him. He wants to give us the abundant life here and now. The Holy Spirit is to be the transfer agent of this. It happens through abiding.

Word Meanings:

Guide: to be a guide, lead on one's way

Show: to announce, make known

Glory: to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate to honor

Receive: to take up a thing to be carried

Take: same word as receive

Read Isaiah 30:18-26:

The Lord Will Be Gracious

¹⁸ Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.

For the Lord is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.

¹⁹ For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. ²⁰ And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. ²¹ And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. ²² Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!"

²³ And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures, ²⁴ and the oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.

²⁵ And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. ²⁶ Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS “SECRET PLACE”— HIS WILL IS A SECRET (KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).

- What does the Spirit promise to do in speaking to us? How does this work, and how are we to hear and process this?

God is waiting for us to surrender our lives and will to Him and be willing to listen to what He has to speak to us. We then wait for the fulfillment of what He is speaking to us. As we call, He answers and speaks to us through the Spirit (and we are no longer to put the Spirit in the corner striving to walk the Christian life alone and studying the Bible on our own in our own intellect—or not at all). Rather, we are to allow the Spirit to lead us step by step. He will tell us whether to turn to the right or to the left (very direct and specific). He speaks from behind, implying that we are not to rely on our senses (what we can see, hear, and understand with our limited logic), but rather to just listen and follow. If I told someone that I was going to blindfold them and walk them to the car, he would have to listen completely and take the steps that I speak (because I know the way, and he does not). The same is true with the Holy Spirit. We must hear His voice and be led, step by step, into the wonderful plans of giving us the abundant life that God has prepared in advance to give us. Why would we not?

Read Acts 9:1-19. Use this example of Saul and Ananias, paying attention to how God directed both through speaking His will and working both sides of His will for each:

The Conversion of Saul

9 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

LESSON 5:

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⁸Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷ So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened.

Read Ezekiel 12:25-28:

²⁵ For I am the Lord; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord God."

²⁶ And the word of the Lord came to me: ²⁷ "Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.' ²⁸ Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord God."

- What does this say about the Word that He has spoken will be done, will be fulfilled? Why is that important to us?

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In these verses, God says over and over again that what He speaks will be performed or will be done. We can have confidence that God's desire when He speaks is to perform what He says; and thus, there should never be any question as to whether or not He will do as He says. We can be assured that He does not change his mind nor arbitrarily bait and switch us. We need to learn that once He speaks, we should truly be ready to do as He instructs. This is an important concept so that there is never doubt about the integrity and follow through of God.

Word Meanings:

Word: same as Rhema

Pass: to be done; to be made; to be produced

Perform: pass, to be done; to be made; to be produced

Spoken: same as Rhema Word

Done: same as perform and same as pass

Read Isaiah 55:8-13.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

12 "For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the Lord,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS “SECRET PLACE”— HIS WILL IS A SECRET (KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).

- What does this say about the ways and thoughts of God in relation to how we think or how we would like the way to be set up for us? Why is this so important as we learn to understand what is the will of God for us?

It is critical to understand that God’s ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts. Thus, we are not to view the resolution to our circumstances in light of how we would resolve them—rather that God’s ways and God’s thoughts are so much broader and bigger than ours that we are simply to listen to what He speaks without judging whether it makes sense to us or not. This is important as we are reviewing promises since often the promises given will be so grand or so big that it will be hard for us to see the possibility of them. Further, we are not to apply logic or natural cause-and-effect to what He says but rather just to receive what He says. It does not have to make sense to us, and our focus should be strictly on hearing and clarifying and not in evaluating. Again, when God speaks of His word, He will not return void, and what He speaks will indeed come to pass. This is another reminder that we can have every confidence that His promises will turn to reality.

Word Meanings:

Thought: device, plan, purpose

Ways: road, distance, journey, paths

Word: Rhema

Void: empty, without effect

Accomplish: pass, perform, done

Please: delight in doing

Prosper: to advance, make progress, succeed

LESSON 5:

HE REVEALS ALL THIS IN HIS "SECRET PLACE"— HIS WILL IS A SECRET (KNOWN BY HIM AND WILLINGLY REVEALED TO US WHO WISH TO RECEIVE).

Read Isaiah 14:24-27:

An Oracle Concerning Assyria

²⁴The Lord of hosts has sworn:

"As I have planned,

so shall it be,

and as I have purposed,

so shall it stand,

²⁵ that I will break the Assyrian in my land,

and on my mountains trample him underfoot;

and his yoke shall depart from them,

and his burden from their shoulder."

²⁶ This is the purpose that is purposed

concerning the whole earth,

and this is the hand that is stretched out

over all the nations.

²⁷ For the Lord of hosts has purposed,

and who will annul it?

His hand is stretched out,

and who will turn it back?

- As you consider this amazing statement, there is actually someone who can annul God's will. Who is that? What is the significance of this and why is this important?

LESSON 5:

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These verses state both that God’s Word will stand but also ask the question, “Who can annul it?” Our usual answer is: nobody. But, actually, the answer is yes, there is somebody. We, ourselves, can annul this. It won’t be circumstances, Satan, principalities, or power that can cancel out God’s works for us, only we can do it. In the next section, we will explore the reasons why we can annul it, but also discuss the key principles to actually embracing and possessing it.

- Word Meanings:**
- Thought:** imagine, think up
 - Purpose:** devise, plan
 - Stand:** established, be confirmed
 - Annul:** frustrate, make ineffectual



LESSON 6:

HOW DO WE RECEIVE AND STAY IN PROCESS TO HAVE GOD "FINISH/PERFECT" FAITH?



Read Romans 10:17:

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

- We know that our receiving and walking in His promises (His will for us) is by faith—believing with certainty of what He speaks to us be true for us. How does faith come, and thus where do we spend our time to receive the faith that He will give us?

First, faith comes by hearing, hearing the Word (Rhema). As we are hearing what God is telling us is His will (and what He will do, His secrets, His grand promises to us), His primary questions to us are: Do you have faith? Do you believe it? This is not a matter of us getting or working up more faith, but rather receiving faith. How? By continuing to hear what He says and by processing what we are hearing by abiding in His Word that He has spoken to us. Faith comes from hearing and hearing from His Word! So, abide, abide, abide. Stay with it, and the faith will be given through clarity as He helps us overcome our doubts and uncertainty. It is a gift from Him.

Word Meanings:

Hear: to attend to, consider what is or has been said; to understand, perceive the sense of what is said

Word: Rhema

LESSON 6:

HOW DO WE RECEIVE AND STAY IN PROCESS TO HAVE GOD "FINISH/PERFECT" FAITH?

Read Matthew 18:3-5; 19:14; Mark 10:14-15:

³ ...and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.

¹⁴ ...but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

- Where do we receive this faith? What kind of a heart is required to be in this place? What choice must we make?

To receive this faith, we must enter His Kingdom, and to enter His Kingdom (be with the King by being surrendered to the King—allowing Him to be the King and not us), we must have the hearts of children by choosing to enjoy life with Him as a child would. Here we will have freedom, excitement, and adventure as we follow where He takes us.

Word Meanings:

- Matthew 18:3-5; 19:14: entered and experienced as a little child

Converted: to turn, turn around

Children: young toddler

Humble: soul bring down one's pride

- Mark 10:14-15: choice we are to make

Receive Favorably: give ear to, embrace, make one's own

LESSON 6:

HOW DO WE RECEIVE AND STAY IN PROCESS TO HAVE GOD "FINISH/PERFECT" FAITH?

What follows requires discernment:

Read 1 Kings 3:5-9; Hebrews 5:14:

⁵ At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you."⁶ And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. ⁷ And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. ⁹ Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

- What kind of a heart must you have to receive discernment of the nuances of God's will as He reveals it to us as it applies specifically to us? What are we to discern? How and why?

When God gave Solomon the opportunity to ask for anything, he first stated that he would approach every decision as if he was a little child not assuming that he would bring his own great skills in thinking into the process but always seek God's will. Then, because he was always going to seek God's will, he asked for a sincere heart, which means a hearing heart. He knew that the key to receiving God's will was to hear what God would speak to him so that he could discern between what was going to be best versus something that would eventually frustrate and annoy him (even though, at the outset, he might think it looked good). Why these two requests: approach everything, big and small, as though

LESSON 6:

HOW DO WE RECEIVE AND STAY IN PROCESS TO HAVE GOD "FINISH/PERFECT" FAITH?

he did not know the answer (since actually he did not); and always to have a hearing heart to hear all that God will reveal so that the answers were clear and understandable. This way he would stay on the good path and live in God's best and none better will!

Word Meanings:

Loved: appetite for

Walked: proceed, move, go with

Appeared: become visible, present

Ask: beg

Give: bestow, grant, permit, ascribe, employ, devote, consecrate, dedicate, pay wages

Not Know: by experience or have wisdom

Understanding: hearing, listening with a heart to agree

Good: constitution or nature, useful, salutary, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable

Evil: full of labors, annoyances, hardships; pressed and harassed by labors, bringing toils, annoyances, perils; of a time full of peril to Christian faith and steadfastness; causing pain and trouble; bad, of a bad nature or condition; in a physical sense: diseased or blind

Pleased: glad, joyful

Discern: hear, listen to obey; perceive truth

Wise: the act of interpreting dreams and always giving the sagest advice, the intelligence evinced in discovering the meaning of some mysterious number or vision, skill in the management of affairs, devout and proper prudence in intercourse with men

Understanding: hearing, listening with a heart to agree

Riches: wealth

Honor: dignity, splendor, reputation

- Hebrews 5:14: practice using all our senses

Reason Of: by use of, practice, pattern

Senses: faculty of the mind for perceiving, understanding, judging; exercise vigorously, without inhibition

Discern: distinguish

Good: constitution or nature, useful, salutary, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable

Evil: full of labors, annoyances, hardships; pressed and harassed by labors, bringing toils, annoyances, perils; of a time full of peril to Christian faith and steadfastness; causing pain and trouble; bad, of a bad nature or condition; in a physical sense: diseased or blind

LESSON 6:

HOW DO WE RECEIVE AND STAY IN PROCESS TO HAVE GOD "FINISH/PERFECT" FAITH?

Read Ephesians 1:15-21; Jeremiah 33:3; 1 Corinthians 14:1-3:

Thanksgiving and Prayer

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[a] toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

³ Call to me and I will answer you and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.

Prophecy and Tongues

14 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.² For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.³ On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

- What are the two basic definitions of the prophetic?
 1. _____
 2. _____
- Why is it so important that we are receiving this for understanding God's will and what should we expect that God will reveal to us?

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- What are the three characteristics of the prophetic that we can be assured are thus being revealed to us from God?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- How do we apply this to our everyday discernment of understanding God's will?

- Word Meanings:**
- Ephesians 1:15-21: Spirit of wisdom and revelation, supernatural
 - Wisdom:** manage affairs with God's perspective, interpret things spiritual
 - Revelation:** disclosing things not know naturally, laying open, laying bare
 - Knowledge:** correct truth
 - Understanding:** thoughts and emotions (heart, soul), getting it
 - Enlighten:** give light, clarity
 - Hope:** confident and expectation
 - Calling:** invitation to feast
 - Riches:** wealth
 - Honor:** dignity, riches, abundance
 - Glory:** splendor, beauty
 - Inheritance:** possession
 - Power:** (dunamis) authority
 - Toward:** ours to have
 - Might:** external force, mighty might, to do, mighty authority
 - Power:** (exousia) – governing power
 - Jeremiah 33:3: great and mighty things we could never know – Spiritual
 - Call:** summon, invite, call for
 - Answer:** respond to

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Show: declare, make known, expound, to inform of, to publish, declare, proclaim

Great: to grow, become great or important, promote, make powerful, praise, magnify, do great things

Mighty: secrets, mysteries, inaccessible things

Knows Not: do not have (the power of) understanding, to discern mentally, observe, perceive, discover, understand

- 1 Corinthians 14:1-3: instructive, encouraging, comforting

Prophecy: to be a prophet, speak forth by divine inspirations, to predict, to prophesy with the idea of foretelling future events pertaining especially to the Kingdom of God, to utter forth, declare, a thing which can only be known by divine revelation

Edification: building, building up

Exhortation: admonition, encouragement, instruction

Comfort: for the purpose of persuading, or of arousing and stimulating, or of calming and consoling, consolation, comfort

Prophecy is either forthtelling (bringing God's word and truth to a particular situation) or foretelling (giving a word, a vision, or picture of what is ahead). The qualities of God's prophetic are always comforting, edifying, and instructive. Since His desire is to take us along the good path of covenant blessing, prophecy is always encouraging—even when it is convicting or asking us to repent and turn from where we are headed. It may reveal some difficulties ahead, but those revelations will always help us to work through the difficulty, to reach the other side, based upon His promises to us. This requires the spirit of wisdom and revelation and will show us great and mighty things that we otherwise could never have known. This wisdom and revelation may come to us directly or through other believers who are used by the Spirit to speak truth (forthtelling) or foretelling (insight into God's path down the road) to us. We should be open to what He is speaking to us, regardless of the source; and always seek confirmation in the Spirit so we are reliant on Him to confirm and not just looking to others to tell us what to do. We must learn to trust the process as we seek and receive clarity of God's will. Remember what Solomon did and do the same: prayed for and expected to have a hearing heart.

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Read 2 Peter 1:16-21:

Christ's Glory and the Prophetic Word

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

- As we are working to understand God's will and we are receiving revelation (the prophetic) from God, why is it so important to be willing to offer what we are hearing to public interpretation and not limit this to just our own private understanding? Why is this so valuable and useful as we seek God's will?

As we are receiving prophetic insights and information, we always are to open it up for confirmation, and not leave it to private interpretation. The Holy Spirit is One, meaning He is One in all believers. If this prophetic insight and wisdom is from God, we will be able to confirm it in our connection to the Holy Spirit. If it is confirmed, there will be a peace, a joy, a "yes" that everyone involved will receive. If it is not received, there will be a troubling, a discomfort, and a lack of confirmation that we are to pay attention to. We will feel that something is not right. Since we desire to know the true and only will of God, then keep going, and continue to seek the truth. We need not worry or be concerned that we will miss it—He will get us the truth and the confirmation since the burden is on Him. Remember the conditions we mentioned earlier? Come to Him with the heart of a child, let Him be the King in the Kingdom, surrender our will to His, seek truth, and keep

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processing. It is not arduous and should not be difficult. If it is, then likely we are operating in a self-mode, one that the Spirit is working to prevent. When others are also working in the "flesh," He will show us that as well. Never be afraid of the public process; rely on God's people who share God's heart to help in hearing from God. This will serve you well.

Word Meanings: **Prophecy:** a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproof and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; especially by foretelling future events
Private: pertaining to one's self, one's own, belonging to one's self
Interpretation: to explain, loose, (what is obscure and hard to understand)
Spoken by the Holy Spirit: of the mind, to be moved inwardly, prompted

Read Joel 2:28-30; Psalm 16:7:

The Lord Will Pour Out His Spirit

²⁸ ^[a] "And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹ Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and
columns of smoke.

⁷ I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.^[a]

- What other forms does God use to give us revelation about His will for our individual lives? How are we to receive these and then process these in healthy ways? Why are these such wonderful ways for God to communicate revelation to us?

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God also uses dreams and visions to get us input regarding His will—we are to receive and expect them. The reason He can use dreams is that our consciousness is out of the way, and He can thus get messages directly to us. When He wakes us such that these dreams become conscious, He is alerting us to something that is important for us to receive. Though He uses people, locations, and details that are known to us, the messages in the dreams are not usually directly related to these details. Rather, they are simple messages about information, warnings, something to pay attention to, or new thoughts that God is revealing regarding His will for us. Thus, after you wake up and remember the dream, write down all the details (since the next day you will not remember much of it at all), and then ask God to help you interpret the simple message of the dream. Do not over analyze or get into too much detail but keep it simple. Even if you consider it a nightmare, God can help interpret it. (Note: My recommendation is to avoid buying dream interpretation books since I believe there is no system.)

The Holy Spirit gives dreams and visions uniquely and will give you messages uniquely. If you need assistance, ask your spouse or good friend to help interpret. If you really get stuck and would like to know more about your unique dream/ vision, email us and we can assist (as can lots of people—we are not special, but just willing to help). The same thing applies to visions and pictures that you might get in prayer or other times during the day. Draw them out or write them down and then seek the simple messages of what they are speaking to you. As you experience this more and more, you will appreciate the beauty of God communicating to you in this way. He will lead you down His path, asking you to pay attention to new thoughts and ideas. Do not reject this but embrace it and enjoy it!

Word Meanings:

- Joel 2:28-30:

Prophetic: see 1 Corinthians 14

Dreams: prophetic

Visions: prophetic

Wonders: signs, miracles

- Psalm 16:7: happens while we sleep

Counsel: advise, the Holy Spirit gives dreams uniquely, give counsel, purpose, devise, plan

Instruct: teach, admonish, correct, inform

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Read the account of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30:

Jehoshaphat's Prayer

20 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites,^[a] came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^[b] from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). ³ Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

⁵ And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, ⁶ and said, "O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. ⁷ Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, ⁹ 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment,^[c] or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.' ¹⁰ And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— ¹¹ behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. ¹² O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

¹³ Meanwhile all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. ¹⁴ And the Spirit of the Lord came[d] upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. ¹⁵ And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you."

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¹⁸ Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. ¹⁹ And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

²⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." ²¹ And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say,

"Give thanks to the Lord,
for his steadfast love endures forever."

²² And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. ²³ For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

The Lord Delivers Judah

²⁴ When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there^[e] were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much. ²⁶ On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah,^[f] for there they blessed the Lord. Therefore, the name of that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day. ²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the Lord. ²⁹ And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

LESSON 7: ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION AND NEW INSTRUCTION, AND BE WILLING TO INTERPRET NEW OR EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES—PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS.



Read Acts 16:6-12:

The Macedonian Call

⁶ And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ And when Paul^[a] had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

The Conversion of Lydia

¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the [b] district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.

"So, as we are seeking God's will, He can use blocked circumstances or any other thing to ensure we continue to process, step by step, that which He is revealing."

- As we seek to understand God's will and be directed by Him, He promises to use all kinds of different ways to show us His way and the specific steps He wishes for us. In this situation with Paul, what are some of the ways that God revealed His will to Paul? How might He do this for us?

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As Paul notes, he tried to go north with what He knew was His call (start new churches on a mission for the Gospel); but was blocked. He then tried to go northwest into Asia but was blocked there, too. He was not going east since he had already come from there and had started churches there, and he could not go south since that was the Ocean. At this, He could have given up, thinking: “I guess God’s will is for me to stop, and go no farther since there is nowhere to go based upon what I see and understand.” But because he was walking step by step, he knew the mission was still a “go” as he clearly understood his call. He would not give up on the call or ask God for a new call, a different will from God. He stood on what he already knew, even though he had been blocked, and waited for further information (perhaps some secret) to be revealed. He did not follow his own ideas as he waited for the revelation. He then received a message—a vision from Macedonia (Philippi), which was a surprise to him. He immediately went. (Notice he did not even stop to build churches in other cities after reaching the other side of the Grecian Sea. He followed God’s instructions completely and immediately.)

So, as we are seeking God’s will, He can use blocked circumstances or any other thing to ensure we continue to process, step by step, that which He is revealing. He is helping us put to practice what we are learning – step by step. We are to stand on what we know, and continue to process, process, process. During these times of processing, remember to look for His shared visions, secrets, dreams, etc. Ask for clarity and follow what you are hearing.

Word Meanings:

Forbidden: to deny or refuse one a thing, hinder

Not Permit: not allow

Permit: let, to allow one to do as he wishes

Vision: a sight divinely granted, can be in a dream

Read Proverbs 8:32-35:

“And now, O sons, listen to me:

blessed are those who keep my ways.

³³ Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.

³⁴ Blessed is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.

³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the Lord...

LESSON 7: ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION AND NEW INSTRUCTION, AND BE WILLING TO INTERPRET NEW OR EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES—PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS.

- As we continue to process receiving God’s specific will, His steps for us, what are the three ways we are to keep processing what He is showing us?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- How does this practically work for us?

As we are processing, we are always to stay in listen, watch, and wait mode. This means that we must pay attention to new data, that which God is telling us (listen) and watch for new information to emerge. See what happens next and consider any questions He might give us to help us sort out our answers. Also look for those people or circumstances arising from our due diligence that bring us new data or new information. Wait until we get further clarity on the next step or the next piece of the puzzle that He is showing us. Do not get ahead and always be willing to be patient until we get the confirmation, the unity with others, that He shows us. Listen, watch, wait. Process, process, process.

Word Meanings:

Blessed: happiness

Listens: hears, yield to obey, be obedient

Watching: be alert

Waiting: keep, guard, dance with

Life: flowing, fresh (of water), lively, active (of man), reviving

Favor: pleasure, delight, goodwill, acceptance

Read Psalm 143:8-12:

Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love,
for in you I trust.

Make me know the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.

LESSON 7: ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION AND NEW INSTRUCTION, AND BE WILLING TO INTERPRET NEW OR EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES—PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS.

⁹ Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord!

I have fled to you for refuge.^[a]

¹⁰ Teach me to do your will,

for you are my God!

Let your good Spirit lead me

on level ground!

¹¹ For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life!

In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

¹² And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies,

and you will destroy all the adversaries of my soul,

for I am your servant.

- What are we to keep asking God to provide for us, and what are we always willing to be able to receive?

It is important to keep our hearts in a receiving mode as we continually pray for Him to speak to us; for Him to show us the way we are to go; for Him to protect us in the process (not to be confused by the enemy or drawn away into self); for Him to teach us to do His will and be led onto His good path; and to know that we are being restored in the process. Keep praying for open, supple, and hearing hearts so we are always willing to receive as we process, process, process.

Word Meanings:

Hear: listen to, obey

Loving-Kindness: goodness, kindness, faithfulness

Know: to perceive and see, find out and discern

Way: road, distance, journey, manner, path

Walk: way and steps to proceed

Deliver: rescue, save

Teach: be trained

Do: act, act with effect, effect

Lead: guide

Uprightness: level place

LESSON 7: ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION AND NEW INSTRUCTION, AND BE WILLING TO INTERPRET NEW OR EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES—PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS.

Read Acts 10 for an account of Peter and Cornelius:

Peter and Cornelius

10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ² a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ³ About the ninth hour of the day^[a] he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius.”⁴ And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.”⁵ And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.”⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, ⁸ and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Peter’s Vision

⁹ The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour^[b] to pray. ¹⁰ And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹ and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.¹² In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³ And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”¹⁴ But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”¹⁵ And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.”¹⁶ This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

¹⁷ Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood at the gate ¹⁸ and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. ¹⁹ And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation,^[c] for I have sent them.”²¹ And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?”²² And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.”²³ So he invited them in to be his guests.

LESSON 7: ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION AND NEW INSTRUCTION, AND BE WILLING TO INTERPRET NEW OR EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES—PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. ²⁸ And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

³⁰ And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour,^[d] and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.'³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

Gentiles Hear the Good News

³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree,⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

LESSON 7: ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION AND NEW INSTRUCTION, AND BE WILLING TO INTERPRET NEW OR EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES—PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS.

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

CONFIRM WITH THE FATHER’S INDICATORS.

Read Romans 14:17; 2 Corinthians 3:17:

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ Now the Lord^[a] is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

- What are the indicators, the specific and tangible ways we can receive confirmation that we are receiving the exact and specific will of God?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

- If we do not receive this (recognizing that our own spirit is troubled), what do we understand, and how do we proceed? If we do receive this, how do we proceed?

LESSON 7: ALWAYS BE WILLING TO RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION AND NEW INSTRUCTION, AND BE WILLING TO INTERPRET NEW OR EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES—PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS.

God gives us beautiful indicators that we are receiving clarity about understanding His will: righteousness (living in Christ in His Kingdom), peace, joy, and freedom in our Spirit. He uses all of these together to confirm that we are hearing right, receiving what He is communicating to us regarding His will and giving us these indicators; He ensures we know what He wants us to know and gives us confidence in the steps we are receiving regarding His will. If we do not have these (we should pay attention to the absence of these indicators), He will trouble us (He will cause us to feel uneasy, lacking peace, feeling something amiss, knowing something is not right) until we pay attention. You should not expect something as dramatic as a club over the head as He does not force us. (Many people believe that those who are united with God will always have His watchful eye on them so that they never make some terrible mistake or work in opposition to the plan He has set for them or that He will block them before they make some grievous error.

As shown many times throughout the Bible, this is not the case. David, who was known for his beautiful connection with God, on several occasions, acted according to his own plan and will. This happened both when he sinned with Bathsheba, as well as when He had Uriah murdered. He lost his willingness to seek God in his decision-making so God let David proceed to his own detriment. God didn't stand in his way. Similarly, the Israelites, who were told that God was taking them to the promised land, chose to disregard His offer, thinking it would be too difficult. Had they simply continued to seek to have God confirm what He had intended, they would have known that God would be with them as they entered this paradise. Instead, they made their own assumptions, refused to seek further assistance and clarification from God, and did as they pleased. They ended up wandering around for 40 years with God angry at them the entire time. All, except Joshua and Caleb, who were willing to receive confirmation, but died in the wilderness outside of God's will. We must understand that God's will is by invitation, and He gives us the conditions to seek it (already given in previous sessions); and gives these beautiful indicators to understand so that we can know exactly what He is revealing. We just need to be sensitive to these and practice with confidence when we are in righteousness, peace, joy, and freedom, versus when the Spirit is troubling us. What a privilege we have that He gives us these indicators to use as we seek confirmation.

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Word Meanings:

- Romans 14:17

Righteousness: integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling, and acting

Peace: shalom

Joy: be glad, to rejoice exceedingly, to be well, thrive

- 2 Corinthians 3:17: freedom

Liberty: free, exempt, unrestrained, not bound by an obligation

Read Matthew 18:18-20; Psalms 133; Philippians 2:1-6; Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12:

¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[a] in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

When Brothers Dwell in Unity

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

133 Behold, how good and pleasant it is

when brothers dwell in unity!^[a]

² It is like the precious oil on the head,

running down on the beard,

on the beard of Aaron,

running down on the collar of his robes!

³ It is like the dew of Hermon,

which falls on the mountains of Zion!

For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,

life forevermore.

Christ's Example of Humility

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in

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Christ Jesus,^[a]⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped...^[b]

¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.[a]

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts...

²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them..."

Many Signs and Wonders Done

¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.

- What is the importance of going to unity with our spouse, partner, friends who are walking with us? What does unity mean? Why does God use this as such an important indicator of understanding and moving forward with His will for us? How does this confirm God's will?

When we reach unity together in Christ (through abiding), we discover His will, walk with Him into this will, and there He COMMANDS BLESSING. Remember, it is not negotiation or compromise, but rather seeking together with another like-minded partner or friend (who also is abiding) what God speaks and desires. True unity with God means we are both coming to a place where we see together His will. He uses this beautiful way of coming to confirmation to help us know that we

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know. It is why we do not want our spouse or another friend to negotiate or agree with us for the sake of unity with us, but rather to stay in process with God until we both see what God wants to show us is His will. If we continue to process, process, process, He promises to get us there 100 percent of the time, all the time. We can be assured we know His will through this beautiful process of unity, which is why He asks us to rely on each other in the Spirit to continue to seek His will until we actually have it. Why then would we not seek unity?

Word Meanings:

- Matthew 18:18-20: Unity
 - Agree:** come to unity, firm agreement without doubt
 - Done:** come to pass, happen
 - Gathered Together:** joined together in unity
 - Name:** authority
 - Bind:** tie, fasten, to bind, fasten with chains, to throw into chains
 - Loose:** to loose one bound, (i.e., to unbind, release from bonds, set free)
 - Heaven:** order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings
- Psalm 133: It is good and pleasant to dwell (live out in everyday life) in unity with those close to us (most importantly spouses).
 - Good:** pleasant, agreeable (to the senses); pleasant (to the higher nature), excellent, rich, valuable in estimation, glad, happy, prosperous
 - Pleasant:** delightful, sweet, lovely, agreeable; delightful
 - Dwell:** remain in
 - Unity:** union, united-ness, agreement, oneness
 - Commanded:** ordered
 - Blessing:** gifts, prosperity
- Philippians 2:1-6: One accord, harmony, agreement. What is necessary to look out for both our own interests and other's interests?
 - Like-mindedness:** to be of the same mind (i.e., agreed together, cherish the same views, be harmonious, of one mind, of one accord)

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These words: “one accord, harmony, agreement, like mindedness” are made up of other words “sun” (together with) and “psuchos” (soul, self, inner life, or the seat of the feelings, desires, affections). So, the words refer to being united in spirit or harmonious. We are not called simply to give in to avoid conflict or compromise, as these short circuit open and frank discussion. Rather, we are to look out for the other’s interest as we also look out for our own. We must stay true to our own view, our own feelings, our own thoughts—but openly, with respect and honor, consider the other’s view, feelings, thoughts. Then, together, seek the will of the Father until both reach agreement at the soul level (your spirit agrees and buys it), not just in the intellect. Stay with it until that happens. You will then find God’s will. This is a beautiful thing with either our partner or a close friend.

Word Meanings:

- Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12: One accord, agreement
one accord: with one mind, with one accord, with one passion

A unique Greek word “one accord,” used 10 of its 12 New Testament occurrences in the Book of Acts, helps us understand the uniqueness of the Christian community. Homothumadon is a compound of two words meaning to “rush along” and “in unison.” The image is almost musical; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ’s church.

Read Proverbs 11:14; 19:20; 24:6:

¹⁴ Where there is no guidance, a people falls,
but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

²⁰ Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom in the future.

⁶ for by wise guidance you can wage your war,
and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

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- As you continue to seek God’s will and are struggling with coming to a complete understanding of God’s specific will or are stuck in the process, it is healthy to bring in outside advisors. Why? What is the benefit of this?

- What kind of counselors do we need to bring in?

1. _____
2. _____

- How will these benefit us and help us get to unity and clarity in receiving God’s will?

We often can get stuck when we are seeking unity with our spouse or friends, and thus need some third-party counselors who will help us further understand God’s will. The two counselors we need are:

1. Godly counselors who will not tell us their opinions or worldly advice (which is easy to pursue with well-meaning Christian friends) but rather those who are willing to seek God’s will with us and go to unity with us. They are going to ask us good questions; give us new thoughts, new perspective; help us to listen, watch, wait, and continue to confirm what we are hearing as they also hear. The key is that they walk with us together to seek unity in the Spirit until we all see with confirmation what God is revealing to us. These people are those who give us the needed spark to help us get “un-stuck.”

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2. Professionals who have the expertise to provide us information needed in the next step of the process. This person must be “neutral” with no vested interest in the outcome. This professional is hired because of his/her expertise. From them, we should expect the very best information possible to help us receive what the Lord wants us to know about this next step. Their information will guide us further to proceed, to stop, or to seek more information, etc. With them, we are not relying upon our own thoughts or interests because this is something technical and beyond us. The key is to get the very best we can (can even be an unbeliever), someone who is neutral and not trying to persuade us either way to an answer and will help us arrive at an answer that will truly help us take the next step in God’s will. Never be afraid of using counselors, as they can provide the help we may need to bring God into the process.

Word Meanings: **Counselors:** advisors, consultants
Safety: salvation, deliverance
Disappointed: broken, frustrated
Established: fixed, confirmed

Read Malachi 3:16-18:

The Book of Remembrance

¹⁶ Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. ¹⁷ “They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

- The key to seeking, understanding, and receiving clarity of God’s will is to continue to openly process, process, process. What does God tell us to do, and what will He lead us to?

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- How does talking it through with others become a form of prayer to God? How does He use others to open up our hearts to further insight and discernment so that we are able to get the “ahas” needed to see exactly what He is showing us? What kind of discernment can we expect to receive? Why is this important as we seek to know God’s will?

It is interesting to know that as we openly process, process, process by talking things through with others, that God is listening—it is actually a wonderful form of prayer. Through this, He gives us new thoughts and ideas (aha, oh, now I see, etc.). This gives us discernment to know what He is revealing to us. Through this dialoguing, we are opening up the process to this creative thinking or new connections with original ideas, etc. It is truly remarkable how this form of prayer works, so begin practicing it.

Word Meanings: **Spoke:** to speak with one another, talk, converse, discuss, process
Heard: listened to, pay attention to
Heed: hearken to
Discern: see, look at, inspect, perceive, consider

Read 2 Samuel 7:18-29. Stay with it until it becomes clear and understood:

David’s Prayer of Gratitude

¹⁸ Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? ¹⁹ And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God. You have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God! ²⁰ And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God! ²¹ Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it.²² Therefore you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. ²³ And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a

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name and doing for them^[a] great and awesome things by driving out before your people,^[b]whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? ²⁴ And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God.²⁵ And now, O Lord God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. ²⁶ And your name will be magnified forever, saying, 'The Lord of hosts is God over Israel,' and the house of your servant David will be established before you. ²⁷ For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore, your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. ²⁸ And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. ²⁹ Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever."

- David had received a promise from God that was not clear or completely understood to him. What did he do to better understand God's will for him?

- As David did, why do we need to continue to pray and seek God's will until we get to the certainty of knowing that He is God, that His Words are true, and that He has shown and promised this will to us personally?

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- Once we know His will with clarity for us personally, what then are we to pray? Why?

The context here is that David had decided that it would be a good idea for him to build God a permanent temple in Jerusalem. He went to Nathan, the prophet, to confirm, and Nathan agreed that it was a good idea. Then God took Nathan aside and said that they had not come to ask Him, and that David was not going to be allowed to build his temple. However, God said, I have a promise for David: that God would build David a temple, and through him, would come the Kings of Israel, and ultimately the Messiah, the Christ. How did David respond to this promise? He found it in his heart to pray this promise, and he stayed with it until he understood and received three important ingredients of our prayers to possess the promises:

1. The giver of the promise was God Almighty—fully capable of fulfilling His promise, because of His nature, and His power.
2. The word (the promise) was true—everything that God speaks is true, and His word and promises are absolutely true. There is no variation, nor variability to His promises.
3. This promise has been now given to and applied to David specifically, it is his personally.

So, he stayed in this prayer until he fully understood the clarity of God's will (the promise), that God himself was fully able to fulfill it, because He is God Almighty; and that this promise was specifically intended for him to possess. Based upon this process and reaching this point in his prayer life, he then could easily and confidently ask God to fulfill what He has spoken—in other words, to bring to reality what He had spoken in the spirit. This is a wonderful process of prayer that must be adopted and followed. In our prayers as we receive promises, we must follow the same three points until we reach the settling of these in our hearts, so that we can then ask God to fulfill what He has spoken.

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Word Meanings:

Revealed: uncover, discover

Jehovah: “the existing One”

To Occur: come to pass, be done, be brought about, to be done, be finished

Word: speaking, thing, speech, saying, utterance

Truth: sureness, reliability, stability, continuance, faithfulness

Promise: speak, declare, command

Good: pleasant, agreeable (to the senses), pleasant (to the higher nature), excellent (of its kind), good, rich, valuable in estimation, glad, happy, prosperous (of man’s sensuous nature), a good thing, benefit, welfare, prosperity, happiness, bounty

Pleased: to resolve, be pleased, be determined

Read 1 Samuel 23:1-13 for an account of David and the city of Keilah:

David Saves the City of Keilah

23 Now they told David, “Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors.”² Therefore David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the Lord said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”³ But David’s men said to him, “Behold, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?”⁴ Then David inquired of the Lord again. And the Lord answered him, “Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand.”⁵ And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

⁶ When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech had fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand. ⁷ Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, “God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars.”⁸ And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. ⁹ David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.”¹⁰ Then David said, “O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. ¹¹ Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O Lord, the God of Israel, please tell your servant.” And the Lord said, “He will come down.”¹² Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the Lord said, “They will surrender you.”¹³ Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.

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- Though David had heard God’s will, his men, with good reason, thought it was not logical or a good idea to go to Keilah to fight. They knew they were likely to be defeated themselves and also then be open to being pursued and defeated by Saul. With this opposition and natural thinking that was certainly legitimate, what could David have done?

- What did he do? What does this tell you about God in relation to our continuing to seek God’s will?

- Based upon God’s confirmation and as God so directed, they ended up going and defeating the enemy as promised. David and his men were now living in a real town, under ideal conditions with normal food, beds, fellowship, etc. However, it was discovered that Saul was now coming to attack them, and they could certainly be defeated. With this new information, what could David have assumed based upon prior experiences of success in defeating the enemy? What did he do, and what exact questions did he ask? What does this tell us about seeking God’s will about everything?

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- What did God say that led to David’s questions, and how did David respond to God’s direction, though it was not his nor his men’s personal preference?

This is a great example of David using what we have learned to seek God’s will. He listened, sought confirmation through unity, and continued step by step to seek God’s will even when he could have assumed that based upon prior experience or what God has already done, that it was right to do what was good for him and his men. Rather, he sought God in everything, then continued to surrender his will, listened, and followed what God revealed to him—knowing that God’s will is best and none better. This is a beautiful example for us to follow always.

LESSON 8:

ONCE A STEP IS CONFIRMED, OBEDIENCE IS REQUIRED.



Read John 14:19-24: Obey equals love and invites residence of God fully in me.

¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

- If you love God, what is your response? Why?

- And as a result of obeying (keeping) His Words (His instructions, His will to/for you), what is His promise to you? Why is this important for your life in continuing to receive His will?

LESSON 8:

ONCE A STEP IS CONFIRMED, OBEDIENCE IS REQUIRED.

It is important to understand that following His will means we must be obedient to what He speaks. This is a matter of the heart, which illustrates our love for Him. If we love Him, we have a heart to obey. This is not out of duty but rather out of the belief that His will is good, best, and none better, and that our following will lead us to the best. It shows our love and reinforces our intimate relationship with Him, which draws us closer and raises our sensitivity to keep hearing and following. This is a wonderful circle of growing in processing His will.

Word Meanings: **Keep:** to attend to carefully, take care of, follow carefully

Read John 15:9-15: Obey equals joy to the fullest (His will).

⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants,[a] for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

- As you abide in His love through obeying His instructions, what will you experience? What does this mean to you?

LESSON 8:

ONCE A STEP IS CONFIRMED, OBEDIENCE IS REQUIRED.

- What is the basis of obedience as to how we treat each other? What does this show about our heart toward God and our willingness to follow His will?

As we obey what He is revealing to us, we will have His joy fulfilled in us. Why? We are joining Him in His bigger story of receiving and giving it away (loving others as He asks us to share the truth with others, which is real love). This is not trying to live out His will for ourselves but actually understanding that we are part of the Kingdom of God and called to give away real love, which brings His joy to us. When we live in pure joy, we are fulfilling His will for us. How does this occur? By being obedient. Which again is love. Not duty, but a heart of joy as we follow Him.

Word Meanings: **Keep:** to attend to carefully, take care of, follow carefully
Do: to act rightly, do well, to carry out, to execute

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-2; 28:15: When we hear and obey, we receive blessings, not cursing.

Blessings for Obedience

28 “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.

Curses for Disobedience

¹⁵ “But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

LESSON 8:

ONCE A STEP IS CONFIRMED, OBEDIENCE IS REQUIRED.

- What are the conditions to receive the blessings, the promises of His will? Why is this important in our relationship with God?

- What is the consequence if we are not willing to hear and follow God's will for us? Why?

The conditions to receiving all that God has planned for us is clear: Hear His voice and understand what He has to speak to us concerning His will about something that is of interest to us (a decision, a circumstance, a situation, etc.) and then follow what He says (obey). To put into practice all that we are learning is pretty simple. If we hear what He says, and then follow what He says, the blessings—the promises of His will—will come upon us! So instead of following our will (chasing the blessings), we are to seek Him always as we walk into His grand and wonderful will. If we refuse to hear and do not obey, then the problems beset us. Discerning His will, then, is clearly important and will change our lives!

Word Meanings:

Diligently Obey: hear, listen to

Keep: guard, observe, give heed

Do: fashion, accomplish, make

LESSON 8:

ONCE A STEP IS CONFIRMED, OBEDIENCE IS REQUIRED.

Read Joshua 24:14-15; 24:24: It is a choice of the heart.

Choose Whom You Will Serve

¹⁴“Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.”

- As we consider what Joshua spoke before the nation and all the people of Israel, what did he ask them to choose? Why is it important for us to understand that we have this choice to make?

- What choice are you making for your life? Why?

Joshua states the whole issue very clearly: Who are you going to serve: either God or not? That is the real question regarding His will. Are we going to follow His will or our own? That is THE choice we must make, and not just once or once in a while, but all the time, every day. Why? Because His will is all the time, every day. It is best and none better. Do this all the time, every day. Choose to serve Him.

LESSON 8:

ONCE A STEP IS CONFIRMED, OBEDIENCE IS REQUIRED.

Word Meanings: **Serve:** to work for another, serve another by labor
Sincerity: sound, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity
Truth: sureness, reliability, stability, continuance, faithfulness
Choose: elect, decide for
Obey: hear, listen to

Spend time reading through the example of Joshua's life and how he experienced hearing and living out the will of God: Read Joshua 1:1-9; 1:16-18; 5:13-15; 6:1-21; 7:1-8:2; 8:26-35.

God Commissions Joshua

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. **3** Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. **4** From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. **5** No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. **7** Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success^[a] wherever you go. **8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

16 And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. **17** Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses!

18 Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous."

The Commander of the Lord's Army

13 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went

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to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"¹⁴ And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped^[a] and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"¹⁵ And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

The Fall of Jericho

6 Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in.² And the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor."³ You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days.⁴ Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.⁵ And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat,^[a] and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him."⁶ So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord."⁷ And he said to the people, "Go forward. March around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord."

⁸ And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Lord went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them.⁹ The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets, and the rear guard was walking after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually.¹⁰ But Joshua commanded the people, "You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout."¹¹ So he caused the ark of the Lord to circle the city, going about it once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.

¹² Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.¹³ And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord walked on, and they blew the trumpets continually. And the

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armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the Lord, while the trumpets blew continually.¹⁴ And the second day they marched around the city once and returned into the camp. So they did for six days.

¹⁵ On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times.¹⁶ And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city.¹⁷ And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction.^[b] Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.¹⁸ But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it.¹⁹ But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord."

²⁰ So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.²¹ Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.

Israel Defeated at Ai

7 But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel.

² Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai.³ And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few."⁴ So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai,⁵ and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

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⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord God, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! ⁸ O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?"

The Sin of Achan

¹⁰ The Lord said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. ¹² Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction.^[a] I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. ¹³ Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you."' ¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the Lord takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the Lord takes shall come near by households. And the household that the Lord takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel."

¹⁶ So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. ¹⁷ And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸ And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. ¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise^[b] to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." ²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from

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Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels,^[c] then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. ²³ And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the Lord. ²⁴ And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ And Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today.” And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.^[d]

The Fall of Ai

8 And the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. ² And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. Lay an ambush against the city, behind it.”

²⁶ But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction.^[a] ²⁷ Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the Lord that he commanded Joshua. ²⁸ So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. ²⁹ And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day.

Joshua Renews the Covenant

³⁰ At that time Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,³¹ just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the people of Israel, as it

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is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings.³² And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.³³ And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel.³⁴ And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived^[b] among them.

UNDERSTAND THERE IS A CRITICAL CONCLUSION ABOUT HIS WILL, OBEDIENCE, AND EXPERIENCING HIS SUPERNATURAL WORK.

Re-read Hebrews 10:33-39. After we do His will, His promises are fulfilled.

³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.³⁷

For,

“Yet a little while,
and the coming one will come and will not delay;
³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith,
and if he shrinks back,
my soul has no pleasure in him.”

³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

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- When are God’s promises fulfilled? Why? Why is it then so important for us to hear, receive, and follow God’s will?

Do not throw away our privilege of being in the throne room and seeking His will, for after we do His will, we receive all the promises of His great and wonderful plan for us.

Word Meanings:

Confidence: freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, openly, frankly, (i.e., without concealment, without ambiguity or circumlocution)

Reward: payment of wages due

Patience: perseverance, steadfastness, constancy, endurance

Done Will of God: do, to act rightly, do well, to carry out, to execute

Receive: to carry, bear, bring to, to carry away for one’s self, to carry off what is

one’s own Promise: a promised good or blessing

Draw Back: to withdraw one’s self, (i.e., to be timid, to cover, shrink)

Read Galatians 5:22-26. See how we are transformed while walking in the Spirit.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- As we live out God’s will, what will be one of the beautiful results (fruit) that will happen to our nature, our character? Why is this by itself God’s will and so important in our life walk with Him?

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And while we are walking in His will, we will be transformed into the character of Christ and enjoy the wonder and beauty of our nature becoming sweeter and sweeter—not through our efforts but just through living in His will—what a wonderful result.

Word Meanings:

Love: brotherly love, affection, good will, benevolence, love feasts

Joy: gladness, the cause or occasion of joy

Peace: peace between individuals (i.e., harmony, concord, security, safety, prosperity, felicity, because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous)

Patience: endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance

Kindness: goodness: integrity

Goodness: uprightness of heart and life

Gentleness: humility

Self-Control: the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites

Remember: The word fruit is singular, not plural, meaning not many fruits, but one fruit. Our character will be transformed into the nature of Christ as we abide. We are not to decide to obtain these qualities on our own; the more we try, the more we will fail. These failures will cause us to become discouraged and stifle our transformation. We, our spouses, and our families will be able to testify if the fruit is becoming stronger in our lives or not. There is no standard by which to judge, so we must not judge each other by some arbitrary definition, but simply noticing if we are growing in our character month after month. It should be obvious and a key indicator if we are abiding. We should care as much about this as we care about what we are to do.

Read Romans 8:5-11; 8:12-17: supernatural work while we are walking in the Spirit.

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus[a]from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Heirs with Christ

¹² So then, brothers,^[a] we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons[b] of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

- Remember, we are not obligated to live in the natural and with a life of mediocrity. What can we expect regarding living a life led by the Spirit and experiencing supernatural things that only God can provide? Why is this such a beautiful way to live?

As we walk in His will, our experiences will be supernatural as we are led into grand adventures and life with Him. We are not going to be obligated to live a life of mediocrity or struggle; but it will be part of God’s bigger story, His covenant life where we will be blessed to be a blessing and experience His joy and wonder—His will, which is best and none better.

Word Meanings:

Life: of the spirit, quickening as respects the spirit, endued with new and greater powers of life

Led: to lead by accompanying to (into) a place

Heir: joint participant