

Sources of God's Will (Part 1)



Week Two

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
1 Kings 17:1-9; 18:1

GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER

You might have heard the anecdotes that warn against the dangers of random Bible study. One person flipped through her Bible and pointed to a verse to determine what was God's will for her. She came to Matthew 27:5: "Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself." Incredulous, she tried again only to arrive at Luke 10:37: "Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" With another prayer and random stab, she concluded at John 13:27, which read, "Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'"

In another anecdote, the man uses the same method to decide God's choice for a future wife. He comes to one of Paul's verses that reads, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father." Later that morning, he walks into the church service, where a praise team is getting ready for song service. The praise leader introduces her team and then herself. Her name is Grace. At that moment, the man knows whom God wants him to marry.

Numerous questions arise after we hear these anecdotes. Were they true or just urban myths? Did the woman follow through after finding those verses in the first account? Did the man ask Grace to be his wife in the second account? What would have happened if he met another woman named Peace? Would God have allowed for polygamy in this instance (God forbid!). Is there a method to reading and studying the Bible? How is the will of God ascertained from Scripture? These are the issues we will touch on in this week's lesson.



inScribe

Write out 1 Kings 17:1–9; 18:1 from the translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?



Memorize your favorite verse in 1 Kings 17:1-9; 18:1. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How does your approach to the Bible interact with your method of making decisions?



Read more at www.inversebible.org/will2-3

ACCORDING TO THE CONTEXT OF THE TEXT

The clearest revelation of the will of God is found in the Bible. Paul's second letter to Timothy states, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). While some may think this limits God and His will, it is important to note where one establishes one's sources of knowing God's will.

If you do not have any source of knowing, then you cannot know the will of God at all, resulting in a true limitation. Many Christians live this way, believing in some deistic form of God, where He exists and loves us but there is no communication or interaction between Him and humanity. In that way of thinking, we are all in this world randomly, forced to make decisions but never fully knowing how we are to live. As a result, there is no devotion, praise, worship, judgment, or repentance. We merely float in this life without experiencing the joy, purpose, and life God intended for us.

At the other extreme is the idea of sources of knowing God's will in every random thing, resulting in open interpretation without coherence, correspondence, or practicality. This is the other ditch of a limitation that we can fall into. Instead of the deist mode, these adherents believe in a pantheistic God who is everywhere, in everything, and within everyone. Life transcends logic, rational thought, and any form of coherent thinking. Every large and little occurrence in life is infused with divine meaning. Accordingly, decisions do not correspond to reality, and life decisions become difficult to make and to live out. We either become paralyzed to act or end up following some random car into a random part of the country.

God's perfect will is most clearly revealed in the Scriptures. It isn't the only source, but it is the plainest one. Now, God's will is not ascertained from the mere reading of the Bible. This method disregards the context in which the passages are written. This is an incorrect method and an irresponsible (and life-threatening!) reading and interpretation of the Bible. As critics say that the Bible can be construed to mean anything, this is partially true. When read either without context or with imposition on the text, the resultant conclusions can be, at best, comical and, at worst, deadly.

The desire for instant answers must be suspended and each passage must be studied within its own context. The principles behind the narratives must be extracted. During the actual study of the Word, the Holy Spirit changes our hearts. During the study of the context, God impresses our minds with heavenly principles. During time spent in the Bible, Jesus points our lives in the right direction by applying the principle to our life contexts. The more we prayerfully study, the more principles we collect and apply.

One amazing miracle is that the principles align to create a composite picture of God's will. Where there are seemingly contradicting principles, a further and deeper study will guarantee a larger and grander perspective. Because every individual is different, the application of the biblical principles will also be different. So while the will of God is the same, the resultant application may be different for differing contexts.

APPLYING THE WORD OF GOD

Some revelations of the will of God are universal and immutable. For example, the second coming of Christ is a sure event that will happen in the near future of earth's history. Nothing can change this reality. This is called the sovereign will of God. Complementary to the sovereign will of God is the revealed will of God. These are revelations of God for the individual, contextualized for the local setting. The principles extracted from the Bible are to be applied and enacted by the individual making the decision prayerfully and under the Holy Spirit's guidance.

When a decision needs to be made, one should come to God in prayer, asking for help from the Holy Spirit. Then the Bible should be consulted for scenarios and narratives that are similar. What are the principles that can be gleaned from the narrative?

Let's take this week's Scriptural passage, 1 Kings 17:1–9; 18:1, as an example. What principles from the passage can be applied to your situation? Are there other biblical passages that can be compared and contrasted with this one? The repeated phrase and the principle in the passage is that Elijah always waited for the Word of the Lord. Rather than looking at the external circumstances of persecution and politics or the internal state of fear and hunger, he waited for guidance from heaven. Every time Elijah waited for the Word, he heard and obeyed it. Unfortunately, after the Mount Carmel episode, Elijah took his life into his own hands when he ran from the persecution of Jezebel. Nowhere in that passage is the phrase, "according to the Word of the Lord."

Prayer is needed not only to ask God formally for help but also to prevent the deception of our hearts. As the Lord says in Scripture, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9, 10). It is not the complexity or indiscernibility of God's will that is a problem, but the dishonesty of the human heart. Even in the midst of Bible study, the human heart can be selective about what it wants to know and to do. Rather than selecting the principles we want to obey or forging together selected verses for a specific result, we are to seek God's will with all of our hearts, as we discussed last week.

While some principles require more study, others are unambiguous. Some are part of His sovereign will, while others are prescribed just for your circumstance. Some passages will require a lifetime to understand, while the meaning of other verses will be supernaturally uncovered by the Holy Spirit. Regardless of category, more important even than understanding the will of God is following through and obeying the will of God by His grace and strength.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What are some permission promises that God is revealing to you?

What are some prohibition promises that God is revealing to you?

What is the reaction of your heart to these promises?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/will2-4



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Ezra 7:10

2 Chron. 7:14

2 Tim. 2:14-16

Acts 2:14-39

Ps. 119:50, 88, 93, 165



What other verses/promises come to mind in connecting the Bible with the will of God?

Review your memorized verse from 1 Kings 17:1-9; 18:1.

BEYOND THE REVELATION

Beyond any art of interpretation or systematic method of ascertaining truth, studying the Bible for God's will is, in essence, the discovery of the mind and heart of God. While religious and theology books (and even Bible study guides such as this one) might get bogged down with the mechanics of it all, the greatest revelation is not the actual direction of the decision but the Revealer of the direction Himself.

Oh, how He longs to reveal His full mind and heart to us! He did so at Creation in revealing the beauty of His creations and creatures to Adam. He did so to Israel when revealing the instructions to build the Sanctuary so that He might dwell with them. He did so through the messages of the prophets who pointed people back to God and away from our selfishness. He did so at the Incarnation in unfolding the mystery of divinity as humanity. He did so at the Cross when the issues that tore apart the universe were resolved as they also tore apart the heart of God. He did so at the creation of the early church as the apostles revealed the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He did so throughout Christian history in revealing what Christ was doing in the heavenly sanctuary as our Intercessor. He did so in 1844, revealing transparently the process of judgment to all the angels and the universe. And He does so every day, not only revealing His mind and heart in the large movements of biblical history but also in the small decisions of our lives.

Just as, in the time of Israel, God "went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day" (Deuteronomy 1:33), He does the same for us today. Although questions of which route, what time, how long, and by what means are needed, they are mechanical in nature. They may grant temporary direction, only for the follower to ask again later. The experience of the revelation of God's will must be embraced and reflected upon. He who has granted direction in the past will also grant direction in the future. Therefore the spiritual ramifications should be the absence of anxiety, worry, distress, and angst from our lives. Just as the ancient Israelites plodded step by step in the desert following the leading of the fiery/cloudy pillar, we too should read morning by morning in the Scripture, following the leading of the Holy Spirit.



inVite

Meditate on 1 Kings 17:1-9; 18:1 again and look for where Jesus is.



Where has Jesus led you through thus far?

What is He saying to you through this lesson?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/will2-6

Sources of God's Will (Part 1)



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?



After this week's study
of the chapter, what are
personal applications you
are convicted of in your life?

What practical applications
must you make in your
prayer life?



Read more inSight from the
Spirit of Prophecy at
www.inverseible.org/will2-7

NO NEED TO GUESS

“God has given us His word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. . . . It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul’s salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything.

“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God. . . .

“We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can never be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed by the truth.

“Many a portion of Scripture which learned men pronounce a mystery, or pass over as unimportant, is full of comfort and instruction to him who has been taught in the school of Christ. One reason why many theologians have no clearer understanding of God’s word is, they close their eyes to truths which they do not wish to practice. An understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness.

“The Bible should never be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wresting truths difficult of comprehension. It is the office of heavenly angels to prepare the heart so to comprehend God’s word that we shall be charmed with its beauty, admonished by its warnings, or animated and strengthened by its promises. . . .

“Jesus promised His disciples: ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’ John 14:26. But the teachings of Christ must previously have been stored in the mind in order for the Spirit of God to bring them to our remembrance in the time of peril. ‘Thy word have I hid in mine heart,’ said David, ‘that I might not sin against Thee.’ Psalm 119:11.” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 598-600)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



Concerning the individuals in the inTro stories, were they following God's will or not?

How is Elijah's following of God's Word similar to our following of God's Word? How is it different?

How have you applied the principles of God's Word to a major life decision?

What is an example of where a principle was extracted from a passage?

What are some supposed sources of God's will that are dangerous to our spiritual walk?

Why is it so easy to lose sight of the forest for the trees (or, lose sight of Christ for His will)?

Why is studying the Bible day by day so difficult? How do we endure the absence of immediate results?