

## The Seven Means of Discerning God's Will

*"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:17).*

**1. The Bible.** The single most important question to ask is, "Has God already spoken on this matter?" The Bible is chock full of commands (which are duty) and principles (which are wise). We don't have to wonder if not reporting \$1,800 of incidental income to the IRS is God's will. We know it is. As the Bible says, "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). Obedience is the trademark of a biblical Christian. Talk over the Scriptures with other believers.

**2. Prayer.** Jesus said, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 16:24). Over and over and over again we are invited to present our requests to God. Prayer is the currency of our personal relationship with Christ. Spend it liberally. Pray over major (why not all?) decisions.

**3. The Holy Spirit.** God lives in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is our counselor, convicter, comforter, converter, and encourager. Consciously depend upon Him and He will both guide you and intercede for you. "The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:27). The Holy Spirit is the one Who clothes us with power from on high. The Holy Spirit will never lead in contradiction to His written Word.

**4. Conscience.** In seeking God's will we must live by the pledge of a good conscience toward God and other people. "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God" (1 John 3:21). Keep in mind that while a guilty conscience provides clear evidence you are not in God's will, a clear conscience may not guarantee you have correctly discerned God's will. Conscience is more effective as a red light than a green light. To go against conscience is neither wise nor safe.

**5. Circumstances.** Some people are born short, some tall. Some black, some white. Some in America, some in Argentina. Some to poor parents, some to rich. God's will is often revealed clearly by the circumstances in which we live. "He determines the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17: 26). If you want to purchase a house which will require a \$100,000 mortgage and you can only qualify for \$75,000, then circumstances have told you God's will.

**6. Counsel.** "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22). Often we need nothing more than a good listener to help us crystallize our thoughts into coherent words. Other times, we need the advice of a trusted friend. Seek out each other's counsel.

**7. Fasting.** Fasting is a lost spiritual discipline in this age. Fasting slows down the physical functions so that the mind can be more in tune with Christ. Fasting demonstrates a seriousness about your desire to hear from God.

## Chart Explaining God's Revealed Will

The object of transformation is to know God's will—"his good, pleasing, and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

Let's take some of the mystery out of God's will. The chart below starts by showing that God's will is made up of *the things revealed* (revelation) and *the secret things* (inscrutable) (Deuteronomy 29:29). What is revealed has either been *decreed* or *not decreed*. God's decrees, like his decrees to create the earth and knit you together in your mother's womb, are the sovereign decisions of God which cannot be altered. Free will is not a factor.

What God does not decree, He either *prescribes* or *does not prescribe*. For example, God prescribes to love your neighbor and not commit adultery, but God does not prescribe which job to take or home to purchase. Both require the exercise of free will—obedience in the case of what's prescribed and making wise choices in the case of what's not prescribed.

Choices that God does not prescribe may be *beneficial* or *not beneficial*. Paul wrote, "Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial" (1 Corinthians 6:12). If not beneficial, choices may be *not sinful* or *sinful*. And sinful choices may be *intentional* or *unintentional*.

### God's Will



