

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL

STUDY TWO

Moving from Theory to Reality

Selected Scriptures

We come to the fact that we must determine God's will for today in specific areas of our lives that are not spelled out in the Scriptures—even though we wish they would be spelled out.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE Bible tells us everything we need to know but not necessarily everything we want to know.

For example, you receive two great job offers. How do you know which to choose? A relationship with a friend recently imploded. He or she won't answer your calls. How do you know if you need to attempt an in-person visit to try to reconcile or if you should wait and let him or her approach you when ready?

Such situations abound! Life presents each one of us with decisions, massive as well as minuscule, that we must make because the Scriptures offer no concrete direction.

Some folks solve this conundrum with the close-open-jab method. Close your eyes. Open your Bible. Jab the page. Read the verse your finger hits for direction. But what if the verse is about Judas hanging himself (Matthew 27:5), boiling a young goat in its mother's milk (Exodus 23:19), Daniel's seventy sets of seven (Daniel 9:24), or Jesus' spitting in the blind man's eyes (Mark 8:23)?

Surely there's a better way . . .

There is, and this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study explores how to move from theory to reality for following God's will in situations not spelled out in Scripture. Discover how all you need to know truly is all you need to know . . . because Christ is with you through it all.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you prepare your heart to engage His Word today, join the psalmist David in offering this prayer to God from [Psalm 143:8, 10](#).

*Let me hear of your unfailing love each morning,
for I am trusting you.
Show me where to walk,
for I give myself to you. . . .
Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
May your gracious Spirit lead me forward
on a firm footing.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Facets of God's will always remain a *mystery* on this side of heaven. As we discovered in the first study, however, God's will isn't *completely* mysterious. The psalmist David, our Messiah Jesus, and Jesus' half-brother, the apostle James, were expectant in discerning and doing God's will. Review a biblical reference for each to learn how.

What truth did David offer us in [Psalm 32:6–9](#)? What specific promise can God's people anticipate?

What image did Jesus use in [John 4:34](#) regarding knowing and doing His Father's will? What point did Jesus make by using that image?

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Read [James 4:13–15](#). What did the apostle say about living humbly in view God’s will?

Now let’s dig in and consider Scriptures which serve as *signposts* for knowing God’s will today.



Observation: God’s Signposts

Many Christians hunger to know and to do the will of God in each aspect of their lives so they can live a life fully pleasing to Him. For that reason, it may be tempting to look for the miraculous, wait for visions and dreams, or listen for an audible voice. But God rarely uses such forms to communicate His will to us.

Scripture offers four reliable methods for knowing God’s will. We explore these in *observation*, the first step for studying God’s Word. Observation requires you to slowly and carefully read what the passage says. Use your observation skills to answer the questions below.¹

Signpost One: The Written Word

First and foremost, we have Scripture itself. When God’s Word clearly addresses a decision in our lives, we follow it. Read [Psalm 119:105](#) and [119:130](#) and describe the imagery the psalmist employed to demonstrate the clarity and reliability of God’s Word.

Now, observe a specific example on remarriage. What did the apostle Paul say about remarriage in [1 Corinthians 7:39](#), and how does this passage illustrate a clear example of God’s will furnished by His Word?

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Signpost Two: The Prompting of the Holy Spirit within Us

Then, there are additional nonbiblical (note: *not* unbiblical) signposts to help us know His will. According to [Philippians 2:12–13](#), under whose power and direction are God’s people to work out their salvation?

Jude, another half-brother of Jesus, wrote a short New Testament letter. In [Jude 3](#), how did Jude allude to the way the Holy Spirit prompts us within to follow His leading?

What does [Proverbs 16:9](#) tell us about God’s involvement in our plans?

Signpost Three: The Counsel of the Wise

Other times, God helps us know His will through counsel. Review [Proverbs 15:22; 19:20; 20:5; 27:17, 19](#). What common thread did the writer disclose about the counsel of the wise, and how does this relate to doing God’s will?

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Signpost Four: The Peace of God

In *Colossians 3:15*; *Philippians 4:6–7*; and *Romans 8:6*, what did Paul teach these local churches about what to expect from God as they wholeheartedly followed Him? How is this teaching related to doing the will of God?

Nothing wrong with planning. Nothing wrong with thinking it through. Nothing wrong with setting it out, doing your charts, and talking it over. But stay sensitive. God is in the midst of your planning as you're moving. It's easier to steer a moving car. Just get the car rolling and stay open.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: A Deeper Look at the Written Word

Each of God's signposts above is taught in the written Word. Some Scriptures are black-and-white and their application is straightforward. Others require discernment to understand and apply.

We can frame these two types of Scripture as specific **precepts** and general **principles**. Precepts are concrete, such as a "Speed Limit 35" road sign which gives the exact speed to drive safely. Principles are general, such as a "Drive Carefully" road sign which tells drivers to use discernment to drive safely. "Do everything without complaining and arguing" (Philippians 2:14) is an example of a precept. "Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves" (2:3) is a principle.

The apostle Paul planted the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey and possessed a real fondness for them. Read *1 Thessalonians 4:3 and 5:18*. Do these verses reflect *precepts* or *principles*? Why do you think so? How are those precepts or principles related to the will of God?

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The apostle Peter wrote his first letter to foreigners scattered throughout Asia Minor who faced persecution. Read [1 Peter 2:13–15](#) and note whether it reflects *precepts* or *principles*? What do these verses teach about God’s will for Christ-followers under hostile governments?

There are precepts in Scripture. But there are mainly principles that tell you to be wise . . . discerning. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Spiritual Conditions Enhancing Awareness of God’s Signposts

God’s chosen leaders and teachers desired that their followers discern and live out God’s will. Certain spiritual conditions aided that process. The verses below describe how to place your heart before God and better sense His leading.

Perhaps the most crucial condition is that you are born again. How does [Romans 8:14](#) teach this truth as it relates to being led by the Holy Spirit?

In [John 7:14–18](#), Jesus roused the concern of Jewish leaders. What does this passage teach about having the necessary spiritual condition to follow God’s will?

Regarding family and work relationships, Paul penned [Ephesians 6:5–6](#). What do these verses teach about singleness of purpose and doing God’s will?

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An old Welsh hymn provides eloquent verses that help us position our heart to know and do God's will:

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy pow'rful hand;
Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven
Feed me till I want no more.²



Application: Following the Signs

A careful reading of Scripture reveals just how much God desires that we read, meditate on, desire, discern, and digest His precepts and principles. He makes Himself and His ways known to His people.

Which one of the four signposts above best apply to you in your current season of life? Why? How is God leading you by that signpost?

Reflect on one of the scriptural precepts or principles we examined above. Is there a certain one that spoke to you in a fresh way? Do you find any of them challenging to apply? How is the Holy Spirit empowering you to implement them in your life?

Positioning ourselves to best discern and live out God's will requires two spiritual conditions. First, *we must be children of God to comprehend the will of God*. Second, *we must have a single-minded focus on the things of God*. These two conditions give us access to all we need to know from God's Word and keep us close to the God of the Word who walks with us through it all.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Close your study by making Pastor Chuck Swindoll's prayer your own.

Thank You, dear Father, for directing our thoughts. Thank You for blowing away some of the fog and clearing out some of the nettles and overgrown vines that tradition or bad habits or sloth have allowed to grow. Thank You also, Father, for the excitement that builds within us as we think of the fun it is to walk with You upon a risky path, knowing that You will protect us all the way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. William Williams, "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," trans. Peter Williams, William Williams, *Celebration Hymnal* (n.p.: Word/Integrity, 1997), hymn 682.

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1998, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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