



Christian Questions

Think about the Bible like you never have before

Dear Melody,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions. You asked how we could determine what God wants us to do.

Before we can conclude what God's will is for us in any life situation, we must first establish what God's will is *not*. God's will is not so precise that there is no room for individuality or creativity. Rather, because we humans are a collection of diverse free moral beings, it makes sense to picture God's will as a circle with definite borders or boundaries. Are the borders of our decisions within the borders of God's judgment? Proverbs 3:3-6 helps us make this determination.

“Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.”

The principles of these Proverbs are repeated throughout Scripture. We need to ask ourselves if they are the centerpiece of our thinking. What are our motivations in our decision-making process? Are we following our own desires or are we following the will of God as described in the Scriptures? “We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:3-6)

To be different and separate from the world is a very difficult task, especially in a society that expects everyone to be politically correct and comply with the prevailing ideas that everything is good and acceptable. These are the borders that man has set; they are not the borders God has set. Therefore, we need to be honest with ourselves when making decisions and ask if our motivation is actually self-serving.

We must also guard against impatience. Impatience can be a cover for selfishness, since what we want is usually our first choice. “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” (James 3:13-16)

James then tells us the wise and patient approach to determining God’s will. “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.” (James 3:17-18) Spiritual thinking derived from God’s holy word needs to be a priority in our decision-making process. Spiritual thinking will help us slow down and make reasonable choices according to God’s will.

How can we determine what God wants us to do? God wants us to make our decisions within the boundaries (or circle) of his will as defined in Scripture. Even when our decisions sometimes fall outside His borders, God will still help us. He will show us our errors with gentleness, pruning experiences, wisdom, kindness and direction. When we are being corrected, we must take our troubles to the throne of grace in prayer. “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16) Next, we need to focus on God’s mercy and overruling in our lives. “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) Third, we need to see that there is value in our fallen experiences. “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.” (2 Corinthians 4:7-11) Finally, we need to focus on getting back up! “For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.” (Proverbs 24:16)

Each of us needs to ask, “Do I have the courage not only to admit my mistakes, but also to refocus my priorities and place myself back within the borders of God’s will? Am I willing to do whatever it takes to get back there?” If so, **then I have learned much about what God wants me to do!** “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you

will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

We hope we have shed some light on your question. We did a detailed program with many scriptural references on this topic on May 1, 2016 entitled, “How Do You Know What God Wants You to Do?” You can find this program on our website www.christianquestions.com under “Archived Programs.” While on our website, please sign up for CQ Rewind. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with the written summary of each CQ program. It is a great tool to read along as you listen. .

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