

## "Discerning God's Will"

There are few sights this time of year that are as captivating as watching geese flying south for the winter. They glide along in "V" formation with the grace and elegance of synchronized swimmers while giving their honks of encouragement to those in the lead. They possess the accuracy and precision of the mighty Blue Angels because they travel during the day when their vision is clear. However, on autumn nights while we are peacefully asleep in our beds, millions of songbirds are quietly traveling under cover of darkness heading south for warmer climates as well. Have you ever wondered how all of these birds know when it's time to move or even where they are supposed to go? The answer is found in the weather patterns that speak to their instincts. When cold northern winds begin to pass through, the instincts of the birds tell them it is time to move. Once the birds rise in the air, they discover a warm southern jet stream that draws them accurately to a warmer destination.

One of, if not the most, difficult disciplines in our lives is learning how to discern God's perfect will for our lives. It seems many people will use methods and formulas in their pursuit of God's will as if God were a celestial Easter bunny who hides His will from us and then courteously lets us know we are getting warmer the closer we come to finding His will. What makes this such a troubling matter is the fact Paul noted in Romans 12:2 that our lives should "...prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." A sense of regret and failure can dominate our lives when we are unable to come to a peaceful resolve over God's will. Perhaps the real detriment to our lives is not that we do not desire God's will or we cannot discover God's will, but rather we are not honestly prepared to do God's will. God will never flatter nor entertain us with a burning bush or an angelic visitation if our hearts are not firmly committed to doing His will. George Truett once said, "To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge. To do the will of God is the greatest achievement." It would do us well to remember the will of God is not something we have to do, but it is something we are privileged to do! How can you accurately discern God's will for your life?

God speaks **through the wisdom of Scripture**. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:105, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." God speaks to our lives, first and foremost, through His Word. Within His Word are revealed the heart, mind, and character of God which enables our lives to develop spiritual instincts of right and wrong. A person who does not maintain consistency in the Word of God will find their lives lived on hunches, suspicions, and feelings. All of those emotions can be misleading, but the Word of God is never misleading. It is always safe to ask ourselves, "Is any part of this decision in violation of any principle revealed in the Word of God?" D.L. Moody once said, "The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives." A life that is ordered by God's Word will always find perfect timing in life. Abraham ordered his steps by the Word of God and found a ram waiting in the thicket. David ordered his steps by the Word of God and found a discarded slave who led him to his captive family. A life that is not aligned with God's Word will be out of alignment everywhere else.

God speaks **through the witness of His Spirit**. In Colossians 3:15, Paul writes, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts..." The word, "rule," is the picture of an umpire making the judgment determination if something is fair or foul, safe or out. Several years ago, I purchased a G.P.S. navigation system to help give me accurate direction on trips. Inside the system is an internal standard of direction, and anytime I stray from that path, a "voice" warns me I'm going in the wrong direction. In much the same way, the Holy Spirit guides us through peace and warnings. When Paul was seeking God's will in Acts 16, he was twice "forbidden by the Spirit" to go in certain directions. He then received the Macedonian call "...assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us." The unsettled warnings had been replaced with unusual peace! One of the tasks of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in John 16:13, is to "...guide you into all truth..." Rest assured that the Holy Spirit will never lead our lives in contradiction to the Word of God. It is that peaceful assurance that instills confidence and courage to move forward even against insurmountable odds.

God speaks **through the work of His Sovereignty**. In Psalm 32:8, David writes, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." How does this work toward helping us find God's will? There were moments as a child when I was being the typical rambunctious and mischievous boy, and my mother gave me "the eye." No words were

ever exchanged, but I clearly knew the will of my mother! When God gives us His eye, He opens our eyes to His leading amidst the providentially arranged circumstances and conditions of our life. Do you think Jonah clearly understood God's will after "the Lord sent a wind" and "the Lord prepared a great fish"? Do you think Balaam could clearly see which direction to go once the Lord opened his eyes to the peril of an angel with a drawn sword? I like what pastor Michael Catt said, "You will never miss God's will as long as you only drive the train where God has already laid the tracks." Wherever you find God's providence at work is the place you will most likely find His plan and pathway for your life.

God speaks **through the words of His Saints**. Solomon writes in Proverbs 11:14, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." God will often use trusted friends as an extra set of eyes to give us perception of what we are clearly missing. It is always wise to seek counsel from godly people who are walking fresh and intimate with the Lord. The classic example of this would be Mordecai's convicting, yet confirming, counsel to Esther. Esther knew in her heart what was right to do, but fears and self-preservation were overtaking her will. Mordecai's words added confirmation to what she already knew, and it gave her the courage to follow through with God's will. Adrian Rogers said, "Ninety percent of God's will is found between your ears." He was describing sanctified common sense! A man is only as wise as his ability to recognize, receive, and react to the wisdom he is given.

Former diplomat Bernard Edinger made this observation, "Inside the will of God there is no failure. Outside the will of God there is no success." Success in the Christian life is no accident and it never "just happens." When the perfect will of God intersects with the complete obedience of man, life will be a flowing transition rather than a forced transaction! So, do you really want to know God's will for your life? It is not that difficult if you have the sense God gave a goose!

Your Most Proud Pastor,  
© 2010 Alan Stewart