

Fil-Am Community Church  
Pastor Rolly Estabillo  
10 Jan 2016  
Key Verse: Ephesians 5:15-17

## **Clearing Up the Confusion: What is God's Will for My Life?**

Today, we're going to start a new series in line with our theme for the year which is "Enlarging the Place of Our Ten". Last week, I said that God wants us to prepare and be ready if we would like to receive the blessings he has upon Fil-Am. And this preparation starts with each of us individually. It is when we grow spiritually that the whole church can grow. So, I think, the first thing we need to ask ourselves is "What is God's will for my life?"

It's an important question because there's nothing more important than knowing and doing God's will. Success is knowing the will of God and being right in the center of it. He wants us to know His will.

*Ephesians 5:15-17 "Be very careful how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is."*

God wants you to understand what his will is. But why is it so difficult? How come it's so confusing? Why do we have a fog so much of the time?

I think the reason is that there are some basic misconceptions about God's will. Some myths surrounding God's will. I want us to look at those this morning and try to dispel them. Then, we're going to look at what it takes to know God's will for our lives.

Here are some of the myths regarding God's will.

Myth #1: If I feel it, it must be God's will.

This is where most of us get confused. We think that we have to feel it, get goose bumps, be emotional about it, or our hearts should go like 100 miles per hour. “That handsome guy makes my heart beat fast. He must be God’s will for me.” Some even say, “God’s best for me”.

The problem with this approach is feelings are very unreliable, highly suspect. They come from many sources. Your feelings could be based on fatigue, illness, on a TV show you watched, a book you read, a bad pizza you had last night. Maybe you just need some Pepto-Bismol, Roloids. Feelings are highly unreliable.

Myth #2: There’s a formula to knowing God’s will.

Most of the books on God's will are this approach -- this formula approach. Do this and this, mix it together and you get God's will. We like that because we live in a fast-paced world and we're in a push button, microwave society. We like doing something in 5 easy steps.

Have you noticed how many "easy steps" there are to everything - Cooking Made Easy, Flying Made Easy, Swimming Made Easy. Everything's made easy these days. We don't want a long drawn-out process. We want a formula.

The problem with this approach is that if you missed one important step, then you get bad results. And you think you miss God’s will and you become frustrated and beat yourself up. It doesn’t take into account that we make mistakes and that God makes allowances for mistakes. If he didn’t, Moses, David, Joseph, Paul, etc. would have missed God’s will for their lives.

Myth #3: God Doesn’t Want You To Have Any Fun .

Some see God as a cosmic killjoy. That is, if you surrender to do his will, you will have a hard and an unhappy life. Many are afraid to find his will because they are afraid of what they might be asked to do.

Myth #4: God only speaks to a certain, few chosen people.

You know, God's will is not limited to those with position or talent. He just doesn't speak to the Pauls, the Spurgeons and the Grahams. He has a will for every Christian. He speaks to every Christian. But only those who listen and obey are able to do his will to the hilt.

But even those who disobey, God still speaks to them. He speaks to us and wants us to understand his will at every turn of our lives.

Myth #5: You have to wait on a Damascus Road experience.

Saul's experience on the road to Damascus certainly was dramatic, but it wasn't normal. We don't have to wait on something like that to know if it's God's will. God spoke to Saul and Silas in the jail through an earthquake, but more often, he speaks in a still, small voice, just like when he spoke to Elijah in the Old Testament.

Myth #6: God only reveals his will to the young.

Truth is, God speaks to people of all ages. He never stops using his people. If he were finished with you, he would have called you home. If you are sitting on the sidelines, I can guarantee you that you need to seek his will! It is never too late to do the will of God.

Myth #7: God's will is hidden.

Some think that God hides his will and we must search it and find it like a child in an Easter egg hunt. God drops clues along the way and if you missed a clue, then sorry, you missed his will. God never hides his will. He reveals it! He wants you to know His will so you can get about doing it.

Now, that we've put aside these myths, we can start afresh. We can look at what constitutes God's will. And then, we can look at what it takes to understand God's will. There are three kinds of God's will.

First of all, there is what is called

1. God's Sovereign Will

This is a decision of God that is always carried out. Nothing in the universe is ever able to stop it. God is God and he accomplishes what he wishes. Ephesians 1:11 says that God is the one *“who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will”*.

And in Job 42:2, Job says to God *“I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you.”* (NLT) You see, nothing happens that is beyond His control.

This understanding of His sovereign will does not imply that God causes everything to happen. Rather, it acknowledges that, because He is sovereign, He must at least permit or allow whatever happens to happen. This aspect of God’s will acknowledges that, even when God passively permits things to happen, He must choose to permit them, because He always has the power and right to intervene. God can always decide to either permit or stop the actions and events of this world. Therefore, as He allows things to happen, He has “willed” them in this sense of the word. God’s sovereign will is often hidden from us until it comes to pass.

Then, there is also

## 2. God’s Moral Will

Unlike God’s sovereign will, God’s moral will is plain to us and revealed to us in his word. This is forever settled and is unchanging. For example, it is the will of God that we do not steal, we do not lie, we do not commit adultery, we do not get into a relationship with an unbeliever, we do not gamble or get drunk with wine, we love our enemies, we forgive, and a whole lot of things that are as clear as daylight and we don’t even need to wonder whether it is right or wrong. “Lord, should I date this girl although she’s an unbeliever?” You don’t even seek God’s will for that because his word explicitly tells you not to. “Lord, should I buy a lotto ticket?” Maybe, if you know you’re going to win. But, of course, you don’t. His word says to use your money wisely.

And, the third kind of God's will is

### 3. God's Particular or Specific Will

He has a will that is particular and specific to your life. For example, God says to Ananias that he has chosen Paul to accomplish his plan, *"But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.'"* (Acts 9:15 NIV) God has a specific will for each of us. It varies from person to person. Which brings us to the third part of this message which is how to know God's will for my life.

As I mentioned earlier, God's will is not a feeling or a formula but it is a fellowship. What I'm saying is that unless you have a real, personal relationship with God then knowing his will for your life is futile. The key then is getting into a right relationship with God. If you are rightly related to him and your relationship grows, then you'll know him and you'll know what his desires are for you. Just like when my wife and I first got married, she had to explain to me so many times what she wants me to do. Now that we've been married for more than ten years, she just looks at me and I know what she wants me to do. I immediately get her specific will for my life. Like maybe taking out the trash. Or watching a movie at AMC Hoffman. You get my point.

How do you become rightly related to God? How do you become so intimate with him that you don't get lost or confused with respect to knowing his will for your life? This is Paul's advice in Romans 12:1-2, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 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."*

To know God's will, Paul advises you to first

1. Surrender your life to his will.

The first step to knowing the will of God is the step of surrender. "*Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.*"

You see, you cannot say to God: "Tell me what you want me to do, and then I will decide if I want to do it." God only writes His will on a blank sheet of paper that you have already signed at the bottom. I want you to learn this principle: Before God will reveal His will to you, you must surrender your life to Him. You must literally "make a present" of your life to God.

Now why should you surrender your life to God? Why should you present your body as a sacrifice to God? The reason is found in two words at the beginning of verse 1, "God's mercy". If someone had your life in their very hands, and they were justified in taking your life, but mercifully spared your life, would you not agree that you owed that person your very life? Of course, you would.

This mercy has been made possible by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. What Paul is saying is this: Because Jesus died for us we ought to live for Him. Because Jesus gave His life for us, we ought to give our life to Him.

That's why we are told to present our bodies as "a living sacrifice." Now, that phrase "living sacrifice" is an oxymoron. An oxymoron is a figure of speech where you find two words together that are mutually contradictory. For example, the following phrases are oxymorons:

Pretty ugly

Working vacation

Same difference

Government organization

You see, when you sacrifice something you give up all possession and all ownership. In the Old Testament there was no such thing as a partial sacrifice.

When you sacrificed a lamb you sacrificed all of the lamb, not just one leg. It was always a total sacrifice with no strings attached. One thing more, Paul was obviously referring to Old Testament sacrifice where an animal is killed.

That is precisely what the Lord demands from us; a total sacrifice of our life every day, killing those things in our lives that are not pleasing to him and doing all things that please him while still living on earth. That's why He calls it a "living sacrifice." I went into a store one time that was having a going-out-of-business sale. As I walked in the building they had a huge sign out front that said, "No Refunds, No Returns, All Transactions Final." That is the kind of sacrifice that God wants from us.

Paul says that this sacrifice "is your true and proper worship". You see, offering a sacrifice connotes worship. When the ancient Israelites sacrificed a lamb, they were worshipping God. God demands complete worship. If you give only a part of yourself then that's partial worship and there's no such thing as partial worship in the eyes of God. He demands complete sacrifice, complete worship.

Now, Paul uses a word for worship that can also be translated "service." That's why other versions say, "*your reasonable service*" (KJV). I believe God intended for that word to have a double meaning on purpose. You see, we have made the mistake of differentiating between worship and service. We think worship is what we do on Sunday morning and service is what we do during the week, whereas God has bound the two together. We serve the Lord as we worship Him on Sunday, and we worship the Lord as we serve Him on Monday.

Let me tell you what that means. You can worship God in school by doing your best being obedient to your teachers, and sharing the Lord with your classmates. You can worship God in your job by giving a full day's work for a full day's pay; by going over, above, and beyond your duty of being kind to your boss

or to your co-workers. Worship is something we are to do every moment of every day. That is the first step of finding God's will - surrendering your life to His will.

The second step is

II. Separate yourself from the world.

Verse 2 says, *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* I like the Philips version, *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold."* I guess that captures the essence of what Paul was trying to convey.

Have you ever seen a chameleon? A chameleon is an animal that changes colors with its surroundings. It takes on the color of whatever is around it. In other words, it conforms. The word conform means to give an outward expression that does not reflect an inward condition.

The point is, we are not to follow the ways of the world. The world says it's OK for two people of the same sex to get married. The Bible says it's not OK and so we are not to do what the world does. The world says it's OK to cheat on your income tax return because the government has been taxing us too much anyway. But the Bible says that's being dishonest and so we don't do what the world does. And the list goes on. Let us not let the world squeeze us into its mold. God is looking for people who will live on Monday what they say they believe on Sunday.

We are not to be conformed, we are to be transformed. The Greek word for transform can be translated into English as the word "metamorphosis." A metamorphosis is a change on the outside that comes from the inside.

For example, the butterfly is the result of a metamorphosis. It is hard to believe but that slimy grimy caterpillar that crawls its way around on the ground forms a cocoon around its body, and before long within that cocoon wings and legs and a body sprouts forth, and out of that cocoon comes a beautiful butterfly. It was changed on the outside because of a change on the inside.

When Jesus Christ comes into your life a transformation takes place. When Jesus comes into your life, the world should see on the outside of you a reflection of the Jesus that is on the inside of you.

Let me give you the difference between conformation and transformation. If the world looks at you and sees a mirror, that is, its own reflection - that is conformation. But when the world looks at you and sees a window, and in that window sees Jesus - that is transformation.

This transformation, we are told, must be in the "renewing of your mind." The mind is the key. As Zig Ziglar says, we need to get rid of "stinking thinking." That's why we must saturate our minds with the word of God because it is the word of God that fills our minds with the wisdom of God, and it is the wisdom of God that gives us the ability to discern the will of God. Next week, Pastor Dave will talk more about getting guidance from the Word of God.

And this brings us to the last part of second verse. Because, folks, when you do the two steps that Paul tells us, you will then begin to know the will of God for your life. Paul says, "*Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

So, it's all about having a right relationship with God in order to understand or know his will. God made you for a purpose and the starting point for that purpose is to get in the center of His will by first establishing a relationship to God through his son Jesus Christ. If you don't have a relationship with Christ, you miss God's will, which is to save your from death and separation from God.

2 Peter 3:9 says, "*God is not willing that any should perish.*" God's will is that every person comes to know Him in a personal way. It is His will that you come to know Him. You'll come to know him through his son Jesus who is the exact representation of God as the Bible says. He is God who came in the flesh to die for our sins. He loves us so much he went to the cross to be nailed between two

criminals even though he did not sin or was not guilty of any crime. He died for you so that you may live. Then he rose again from the dead to conquer sin and death forever.

You too can rise from the dead if you believe in your heart that Jesus died and rose again for you. If you haven't made that decision, do it today. That's the starting point. That's what you need to settle.