



One of the most asked questions is, “What is God’s will for my life?” In this study, we will learn four principles for discerning God’s will. If you are facing a major challenge for which you need God’s wisdom and direction, this teaching is for you!

1. **Colossians 3:15–17** – “[15] Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. [17] And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”
2. Context
 - a. Two directives from **Colossians 3**
 - i. “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts” (**Colossians 3:15**).
 - ii. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (**Colossians 3:16**).
 - b. **Romans 12:1–2** – “[1] I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
 - i. The word “prove” is sometimes translated as “test.”
 - ii. The word “acceptable” is sometimes translated as “pleasing.”
 - c. Why we seek God’s will
 - i. We often seek to discern God’s will regarding decisions that will impact our life’s trajectory.
 1. When we make decisions without God, thinking we can figure it out on our own, we make a mess of our lives.
 2. **DISCUSS**: What does it mean to seek the Lord? When have you sought the Lord for direction? What was His answer?
3. God’s good and acceptable and perfect will
 - a. Even as Christ-followers, we will not always correctly identify the will of God, but that should not discourage us because of three reasons:
 - i. God’s will is like a target.
 - ii. God can redirect us.
 - iii. God can use our difficulties for His glory.
 - b. God’s will is like a target.

- i. **Romans 12:1-2** – “[1] I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
 - 1. Sometimes we do not hit the mark of God’s perfect will, but we can still land on the good or acceptable will of God.
 - 2. If we are submitting to God, we will still be on target.
- c. God can redirect us if we step out of His will.
 - i. We should not place all the emphasis on ourselves—God is bigger than our failures.
 - ii. We do not need to be fatalistic because if we accidentally step out of God’s perfect will, we can step back in.
 - 1. **DISCUSS:** Do you tend to be fatalistic toward figuring out the will of God? How are you learning to trust God to help you, both in finding His will and in redirecting you if you miss the mark?
- d. God can use our difficulties for His glory.
 - i. God can use our mistakes to teach us.
 - ii. We may have misinterpreted our difficulties as a sign we stepped out of God’s will when, in reality, God wanted to send us on a short-term mission trip or equip us for the next step in His will.

4. How to discern God’s will

- a. **Romans 12:1-2** – “[1] I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that** you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
 - i. The word “that” makes verse 2 a conditional statement.
 - 1. Some versions translate “that” as “then.”
 - 2. We cannot expect God to reveal His personal will for us if we are not obeying His general will as revealed in Scripture.
- b. Requirements for discerning God’s will
 - i. A holy life (**Romans 12:1**)
 - ii. A renewed mind (**Romans 12:2**)
 - iii. The counsel of God’s Word (**Colossians 3:16**)
 - iv. The comfort of God’s peace (**Colossians 3:15**)

5. A holy life

- a. The importance of holiness

- i. **Romans 12:1** – *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”*
- ii. Holiness is not emphasized in the world, or even the church.
- iii. But holiness is so important that it’s the only attribute of God the angels say in triplicate form to describe the Lord.
 1. **Isaiah 6:3** – *“One [angel] cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’”*
 2. **Revelation 4:8** – *“The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’”*
 3. **DISCUSS:** Do you meditate on the holiness of God? Are you pursuing holiness in your own life? (Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15–16). What does it look like?
- b. The definition of holiness
 - i. In the Old Testament, God’s people offered the sacrifice of dead animals.
 - ii. But in the New Testament, God’s people are called to be living sacrifices as part of our worship.
 1. Our bodies do not belong to us, but to God.
 2. **1 Corinthians 6:19–20** – *“[19] Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; [20] you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”* (1984 NIV)
 - iii. We honor God with our bodies by:
 1. Obeying God’s will for our sexuality
 - a. **1 Thessalonians 4:3** – *“This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.”*
 - b. Biblical sexuality requires faithfulness in marriage and abstinence in singleness.
 2. Obeying God’s will with all our senses:
 - a. The images or videos we let our eyes look at
 - b. The influencer or gossip we let our ears listen to
 - c. The words we let our lips speak
 - d. The food we let our mouths eat
 - e. The path we let our feet walk
 - f. **DISCUSS:** Is there a part of you that you need to submit to God? What does this look like in application?

- c. The requirement of holiness
 - i. You cannot expect to know God's will if you are not living God's way.
 - ii. **1 Peter 1:16** – *"It is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"*

6. A renewed mind

- a. Worldly thinking differs from God's thinking.
 - i. **Romans 12:2a** – *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*
 - 1. Some versions translate *"this world"* as *"the pattern of this world."*
 - ii. We are constantly exposed to worldly thinking, so we must wash our thinking in God's Word.
 - 1. **Colossians 2:8** – *"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."* (1984 NIV)
 - 2. **DISCUSS:** What is one area where you have been tempted to conform to this world? What Bible verses can you meditate on to be transformed and renewed instead?
- b. You cannot find God's will with worldly methods and approaches.
 - i. The world sees relationships as transactional, promotes hook-up culture, and seeks relationships in bars.
 - ii. But Believers should look for people who love God and find relationships in different places.

7. The counsel of God's Word

- a. We renew our minds with the counsel of God's Word.
 - i. **Colossians 3:16a** – *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."*
 - 1. We should be learning *"richly"* from God's Word, not lightly or occasionally.
 - 2. **DISCUSS:** Are you abiding richly in God's Word? What does that look like in your everyday life?
- b. We must read God's book to understand His mind.
 - i. God calls us to apply His wisdom to our lives.
 - ii. **Psalms 119:105** – *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*
 - 1. God's Word is a lamp to our feet because it guides us in the near future.
 - 2. God's Word is a light to our path because it guides us in the far future.

iii. **Psalm 32:8** – *“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.”*

1. God’s Word guides us directly and indirectly.
2. Some of our life situations are answered directly in Scripture.
3. Some of our situations are answered indirectly through the principles we learn from Scripture.
4. **DISCUSS**: What is one way God’s principles have guided you in making decisions in areas where Scripture does not have a specific chapter and verse?

8. The comfort of God’s peace

a. **Colossians 3:15a** – *“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”*

- i. The Greek word for “rule” is **brabeuō**, meaning “to act as umpire, to arbitrate, or to decide.”
- b. We should learn to listen to the presence or absence of God’s peace, letting it be our guide.
 - i. Do not go against your peace.
 1. **DISCUSS**: What does it mean to let the peace of God rule in your heart? How has the presence or absence of God’s peace affected your decisions?
 - ii. God can redirect us despite our mistakes, but we get ourselves into needless trouble when we move despite the absence of God’s peace.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)