

# God and the Rest of the Week

Title: Part 3 – Walking in God's Will

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Transition: Band Continues / Blackboard Set Up

How many of you are glad you came to church today? Holiday weekend, could have gone to the beach, could have gone on the boat, could have used those Disney passes BUT instead you got up, got the kids ready, got yourself ready, and you came to church so give yourself some love!

I believe God wants to bless you today. Not because you came to church, but because He loves you. I believe He wants to do something in our lives over these next moments as we open God's Word. So, let's pray and ask Him to speak clearly to us and give us the courage to obey. Pray with me.

## [PRAYER TIME]

As you grab a seat high five two people and tell them happy 900th Sunday! Thank you worship team. Welcome to everyone joining on our app or social channels. I believe God wants to bless you today too, thanks for spending some time with us.

Well, it's hard to believe, but today is the 900th time our church has gathered. That's a lot of coffee and donuts and songs and a lot of really bad Pastor jokes you have had to endure. But over that time, we have also seen, get this, 429 people who have let us know they said yes to Jesus and His offer of salvation and new life here in one of our services! How cool is it to be a part of a move of God that about every other weekend someone experiences Jesus for the first time!

Speaking of the weekend, this weekend marks the unofficial end of summer. I know that's wishful thinking here in Florida to think that fall is right around the corner. Cheryl has had our fall decorations up for a week already. But one of the things we usually do every fall is a corn maze. How many of you have ever done a corn maze before? Corn mazes are basically where you pay some guy \$60 so that your family can wander around in his field for 45 minutes pretending this is fun. Amen? Our girls take off at like Mach 2 while we try to keep them in sight only to end up lost with me carrying Ella after 15 minutes and someone complaining, "It's hot and I'm hungry." **But a corn maze is how I think a lot of people view God's will for their lives.** That there is only one way to get there and if you make a wrong turn its nothing but dead end after dead end.

For the past few weeks, we have been in a collection of messages called "God and the Rest of the Week." The big idea is that we tend to ghetto God into a couple of hours on the weekend but then the rest of the week we are busy running our lives. AND the goal of saying that is not to make anyone feel guilty, God doesn't want to be in the REST of your week because you feel some sense of obligation. The goal in highlighting this is because God wants to be so much more TO you and has so much more FOR you!

SO, we are diving into some of these areas that consume us outside of church, things like work, family, our schedules, our finances... and how Scripture gives us insight into how we can bring God into the REST of our week. If you missed part 1 or 2 you can catch those on our app or website...

BUT today I want to talk about:

## Walking in God's Will

If we are going to bring God into the rest of our week then we need to learn how-to walk-in God's will. And I want to show you something today that might set some of you free from the feeling like you are in a corn maze, and you are starting to panic because you are afraid you've taken a wrong turn.

I believe most people want to know God's will deep down. If you believe in a personal God that is active in our world today then you probably are at least curious if He has a plan for your life. But I also believe many followers of Christ are also confused by this because it can be a little overwhelming when you really stop and think about it.

It's kind of like going to the gas station today. All I want to do is put gas in my truck but now it's pop quiz time: What grade do I want? Am I a rewards member? Do you want to join our rewards program? Is this a credit card or a debit card? What is my zip code? What is my pin number? Do you want a car wash? Do you want to round up to the nearest dollar to help stray cats that are missing a toe? Hey, have you tried our new food specials inside... ah!! I just want gas; I don't have time for all this!

I think a lot of people kind of feel this way when they come to Jesus. I want to follow Jesus; I want to live for Him. So, I make the decision to accept Jesus and receive God's gift of forgiveness and salvation. But now there are squillion decisions that follow that decision. And I want to follow Jesus, but it just seems so overwhelming. I know the Bible is supposed to be full of guidance, but I can't find anything on should I get yet another COVID vaccine -OR- what school should we send our kids to. It would be fine if I could just pull up, get some Jesus in my tank, and be gone. But there are all these questions and decisions to make. What about this, where should I that, do I go here or there... Can anyone relate today?

As you do read and study Scripture though, it becomes obvious that God does want us to know His will. As overwhelming a task as it seems, the Biblical authors do plainly tell us that God's will is for us to know His will. Lots of places we could start with but check out Ephesians Chapter 5. Here is what the Apostle Paul writes about this to the early Christ-Followers shortly after Jesus, Ephesians 5:17:

**Therefore do not be foolish, but UNDERSTAND what the Lord's will is.**

So, as we begin to do what the Apostle Paul says and "understand" what God's will is, I think we need to begin by defining what we are even talking about when we talk about the will of God. How can we really understand God's will if we don't even fully understand what the will of God is? What does that even mean you know? What are we really talking about?

I know we all are at different places on our spiritual journeys, that is what I love about our church, so without getting too bogged down in the theology of all this, I want to break down God's will as simply as I know how. I want to take what the Bible clearly teaches about God's will, all these big theological terms, and compress it down into a little diagram you can copy down in your service guide. There are going to be three concentric circles so leave yourself room for that when you draw the first circle.

**[BOARD: Draw Circle - "WORKS"]**

When we talk about God's will one of the things we are talking about is the WORKS OF GOD. Theologians call this the **Sovereign Will** of God. And the big thing you need to know about this is, no one can stop God when He sets out to accomplish something. Turn to someone around you and say, "*God handles His business...*" When God wants to do something, He does it, every time! There are certain things about creation that God just does whether you like it or not, whether you agree with it or not, whether you get on board with it or get run over by it, God's just going to do certain things.

Take creation for an example. God didn't take a vote. He didn't have to get a bill through congress. He just did it. God didn't ask anybody's opinion when He chose Abraham to be the father of a great nation that would, through Christ, be a blessing to all nations. Abraham was old, that's what he told God, I am too old for this, in fact my wife is laughing at the thought of us being able to have a child. God said, "Don't care, this is My will, it's done." Moses had all kinds of excuses too for why there was no way he was the right person to set the Hebrews free from Egyptians slavery, God said I will take care of it, this is my sovereign will,

nothing can stop it. Just like nothing could stop Jesus and His birth! Against all odds, at just the right time the Bible says, nothing could stop God coming near in the form of a baby born to die for the sins of all. My point is when God decides to do something, He gets it done!

And sometimes it doesn't make sense at all. Take Jesus for example, He was born to die. Every year at Easter people debate about who really killed Jesus, you want a verse that will bust your view of God wide open? Look at this, this is Peter, one of Jesus disciples, preaching, Acts chapter 2: (v.23-24)

**This man** [Talking about Jesus] **was handed over to you by GOD'S DELIBERATE PLAN and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.**

Even if it doesn't make any sense at all, God's will can't be stopped. That's the first thing I want us to get.

But look at verse 23 for a second because I want you to see something. Notice this verse says, "God's deliberate plan" put Jesus on the cross, but then Peter adds the phrase, "with the help of wicked men." On the one hand it was God's will and nothing can stop it, but then on the other there was wicked men who took the action of nailing Him to the cross.

So, that brings us to the second thing I want us to see, there are the works of God, then there are:

## **[BOARD: Draw Circle - "WAYS"]**

The WAYS OF GOD. Theologians would call this the **Moral Will** of God. You know stuff like the 10 Commandments... But it goes beyond commandments written on stone, it goes to the conditions of our hearts, the things Jesus taught on and the things the New Testament authors spelled out, how God wants us to live practically on a day-to-day basis. God wants us to walk in His ways; He has a moral will for our lives. Does that make sense?

Because here is what I want to show you from the verse we just looked at in Acts Chapter 2. God can use things that are outside of His "**Ways**" to accomplish His "**Works**." That's what Peter was saying about the crucifixion of Jesus. I think we all can agree that killing an innocent man is wrong. We can all agree on that, right? But God had already planned on using what these evil men did to Jesus before time even began. God can use things that are outside of His *WAYS* to accomplish His *WORKS* that no one can stop, delay or change.

Remember, I also said how the "Works" of God sometimes don't make sense and we don't always know what God is doing, BUT the "Ways" of God are perfectly clear as given to us in Scripture. I didn't say they were easy, but they are clear. God wants us to be loving, and kind, and generous, and thoughtful, truthful, caring, pure and passionate about reaching out to others. We don't have to question what God's will is in any of those things. The *ways* of God are clear.

"Thou Shall Not Kill" always true, don't have to question God's will, always true. "Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery" always true, you don't have to pray about having an affair. God wants us to keep the marriage bed pure, one man, one woman for life. "Thou Shall Not Bear False Witness" always true, you don't have to wrestle with God's will when it comes to gossiping about someone. His will is always the same. You sound like a ssssssnake when you gossssssip. I didn't say the *ways* of God are always easy, but when it comes to the Moral Will of God, it is clear for your life and mine. It is not always convenient, or cool, but it is clear, we don't have to wrestle with knowing what God wants here.

AND hear me, I know we are at all different places, and this church is a place of grace, so receive this in that way. But so much of what you and I wrestle with when it comes to the will of God is not so much wrestling with the will of God as it is wrestling with simply being obedient to what we already know God's will is.

So, there is the WORKS of God, the WAYS of God, but then there is one more part that IS mysterious. This is what so many people want help on. There is another part we can call:

## **[BOARD: Draw Circle - "WILL"]**

The personal WILL OF GOD. Theologians sometimes call this the **Will of Disposition**. It reveals what is pleasing to Him.

In week one we read that kids are a blessing from God. Yours may disprove that from time to time I know, but the Bible teaches children are a blessing from God. But the Bible doesn't say anything about how many kids you should have. So, what is God's will there? The Bible says in Genesis to be fruitful and multiply, but it doesn't say how many God wants you to multiply by personally. Do we stop at two since that would replace the two of us, or does multiply mean at least three because maybe the third one would end up changing the world? Or maybe the third one ends up being a total loser since we didn't have enough time to give them, and they end up selling meth out of the back of an RV! What do you want us to do God? Right?

Now we are getting somewhere. This is what we came to church looking for answers for, the:

**When, Where** and the **What** questions of life. There is not a single person in this room or watching online that doesn't need some divine answers to these questions. When should we sell this house? Where should we send our kids to school? What does God want me to do with my life? I need to know the will of God. This is the part we get so freaked out over.

And it's natural to freak out over this because there are so many options to choose from, and we don't want to blow it and miss God's will for our lives, I mean it's terrifying to think that in a moment of weakness, in a moment of poor decision making, in a moment of confusion we could miss the will of God for the rest of our lives!

Take marriage for an example. People want to know whether they are single, or find themselves single again after being married, is this person THE ONE, is this person the one for me? How many of you have ever wondered that at some point in your life, is this person the one for me because I don't want to miss the will of God? I think we all have. But stop and think with me for a moment, I am about to leave the kiddie pool and jump into the deep end so get ready, but think about that idea of THE one. It implies that there is only one person for you in the entire world to marry and if you don't find them and persuade them to marry you then you have somehow missed the will of God for your life. That's problematic if you think it through isn't it?

IF there is only ONE for you to marry and you missed them for whatever reason, you stopped to tie your shoe at the moment you were supposed to lock eyes with her. But let's say you were supposed to marry Britney, but you didn't because of the shoe thing, so now you marry Jill. Well, who is Britney supposed to marry now? The wrong person that's who? And who was Britney's new husband supposed to marry since now he is with the wrong one? The wrong one! And then you have kids, but they are the wrong kids! And because of your one bad decision you have created a tear in the entire fabric of reality and inadvertently released the Demogorgon into our world! That's a lot of pressure!

But so many of us walk around in a prison wondering, "God should I do this, or should I do that? Do I do this, or do I do that? And, when? When God should I do this, or that?" "Should I work at this company or that company" "Should we have kids before or after" "Should I marry him or not?" "Should we put more money

into our retirement, or should we pay off our debt first?" Do you know what I think would be God's auto-response if God communicated by e-mail? To so many of the questions we ask Him, do you know what I think His most popular auto-response would be?

## **IT DOESN'T MATTER!**

You pick! It doesn't matter. That sounds so foreign doesn't it? That's why I want to free some of you up today from your preconceived ideas of what God's will is all about.

Because yes there are those times when God has an assignment for your life and there is no option B. Jonah, you know Jonah and the whale, that guy, his life comes to mind as someone who God had an assignment for his life and there was no option B no matter how hard he tried to run from it. You can go to Nineveh on a boat or in the belly of a fish, I don't care, but either way you are going to Nineveh. I felt that way about what I do for a living. I feel like I have an irrevocable call on my life to preach the Good News about Jesus. But, where God, when, for how long... "It doesn't matter... but you are going to preach." There are sometimes when God has specific assignments and there is no option B. BUT there is another sense in which God's will is completely different than what we may think it is.

If you have a Bible with you or on your mobile device check out Colossians 3, verse 17. This will be key to understanding this. Some context for this verse is it is a letter that Paul wrote to a church in modern day Turkey where Paul lays out some really deep and profound ideas about who Jesus was and what He did for us on the cross, and then as he begins to wind down this letter, this is how he brings it to a more practical level. Here is Paul saying how we bring God into the REST of the week. Check this out, Paul writes:

**And WHATEVER you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

Read that again out loud with me...

{ADDRESSING BOARD} Here we have so much agony, so much deliberation over what is God's will for my life. Should I take this job or that job? Should I go to this college or that college or not even go to college? So many questions we wrestle with, but then here comes the Apostle Paul, in a letter about how Jesus is the head of everything, and he says when you live with Jesus as the central focus of your life then *WHATEVER* you do whether in word or deed, whatever you do, whatever... say whatever... What if God's will for your life is whatever?

Let me show you what I mean. {ADDRESSING BOARD} What if we have been spending too much of our time and energy and focus looking for personal guidance, the "will of God," trying to know what He wants in the specifics of life, when what God really wants to do is teach us His...

## **[BOARD: Erase "WILL" and replace with "WAYS"]**

*WAYS*, and if we learn God's ways then maybe He will guide or lead us into His good, pleasing, and perfect...

## **[BOARD: Erase "WAYS" and replace with "WILL"]**

*WILL*. What if that was really what mattered to God? What if God in whatever I do... say whatever... what if God in whatever I do is not as concerned about when and where and what as He is about **HOW** I live my life. What if it doesn't matter as much to Him about what college you end up going to as it is how you live once you are on that campus! What if to God He cared more about **WHY** you do something than where you do it? What if God cared more about why you want to take this other job than it does where you work? And what if

**WHO** mattered more to God than when. What if who you date and marry matters more than when you decide to get married or get married again? What I am saying is what if God's WAYS come before His WILL?

What I am suggesting to you is that:

**If you are walking in God's ways then you are always in His will.**

Write that down. If you are walking in God's ways then you are always in His will. In whatever... whatever! If you are walking in God's ways then you are always in His will.

Let's take some of the mystery out of this. Let's take some of the pressure off. Let's experience some freedom in Jesus. God wants you to know His will more than you do! God's not up in heaven laughing, "Ha ha, they will never find my will here!" That's not what God is like. David, at the end of his life, in 2 Samuel says this: (22:31)

**As for God, HIS WAY IS PERFECT; the LORD's word is flawless. He shields all who take refuge in him.**

Our ways aren't perfect. Our decisions aren't perfect. We will think we got it right, but really we got it wrong. But David says when you walk in God's WAYS, He shields, He protects, He guides you into His will.

We spend all of our time trying to reveal the concealed part of His will when God really wants us to obey the revealed part of His ways so that He can guide us into His will! God will reveal what is concealed when I obey His will that is revealed! Is that helpful? God will reveal what is concealed when I obey His will that is revealed. Is that freeing to anyone today who walked in all freaked out you had missed the will of God and your life was over now? If you are walking in God's ways then you are always in His will.

AND yes God still guides us through circumstances and opportunities and impressions and advice from others, I am not saying you can't do that or shouldn't try to do that. But what I hope you see today is all of us, new believer or followed Jesus for 35 years, all of us can bring God into the REST of our week by walking in God's ways, what we do know, and trusting Him to guide us through what we don't know.

I'm telling you, when you begin to read the Bible through this lens, verses you might be familiar with begin to come alive like never before. Take Proverbs 3:5-6. One of the top 5 most googled verses in the Bible, look at this now through this understanding of God's will:

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;** [Be encouraged, you are not supposed to know it all! You are not supposed to have it all figured out! But...] **in all your ways SUBMIT TO HIM, and he WILL MAKE YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT.**

Isn't that good? Do you see it? If you are walking in God's ways, being submitted to Him, then He will make your paths straight, you will be in the center of His will!

Here's why this matters so much and why this should be our focus instead of trying to figure out all the details. What good would it do if God brings you the right person to marry if you are not the right person to marry? Are you with me? What good would it do to show you the perfect job if you are not going to be the perfect employee? What good would it do to show you the right time to sell your house if you are just going to make the same wrong financial decisions all over again?

When we are submitted to the ways of God He will lead us into His will.

So, here is the take home today. This is my prayer for all of us. As we head into the fall that we will focus our spiritual time and energy less on the when, where and what. And instead, spend our time and energy focused on HOW WE LIVE, and WHY WE DO THINGS, and WHO WE ARE BECOMING. So, three quick things for you to take home today and we are done, I would encourage you to write these down:

## 1. Realize God's will is present more than future.

It's HOW more than when. We spend all of our energy speculating about the future and it drains our passion for the present. Paul said whatever you do, not whatever you might do... whatever you think might happen. No, Paul says whatever you are doing right now! Whatever you get up and do tomorrow morning (or for the rest of the week), it can become God's will when you do it according to God's ways.

So many of us want to discover God's will when we have already been given what to do to walk in God's will. But here is what I hope you see today; you can't discover God's will until you do God's will! Because we discover God's will as we do God's will!

Don't tell me about all the great things you think God is calling you to do one day if you aren't even showing up and putting in the work today! When Moses was called by God by the burning bush what was he doing? Anybody know? He was tending to his father-in-law's sheep! Come on, when you tend sheep passionately God knows how to burn bushes appropriately to show you what He wants for your life!

You can't control the future, but you can prepare for the future God has for you. Realize God's will is present more than future. It's HOW more than when.

## 2. God's will is motive before action.

It's WHY before what. Paul said whatever you whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. What does it mean to do something in Jesus name? It means to do it in dependance on Him, with confidence in His authority, and in submission to Him. It's all about the motive of our heart!

Listen to me; I believe this is for someone today, God wants to get you to a place where you can show up for a job that seems totally insignificant, but do it in Jesus name, according to His ways, because when I do the *why* God can take care of the *what*. It's motive before action.

Last thing I want to leave you with:

## 3. God's will is a person more than a place.

In whatever you do, wherever you are today, God has a plan for your life, and His plan is that you would do it all in the name of who...? The Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. God's will is not a place, it's not a destination that if you never arrive at means you have missed God's plan, God's will is a person, and His name is Jesus.

St. Augustine said, "Love God and do whatever you please: for the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved."

Some of you think because you took the wrong exit at some point in your life then you are outside of God's will and that God is through with you or could never use you. But hear me. The moment you turn your life over to Jesus, the moment you surrender to Jesus, the moment you come back to Jesus, that becomes His will! Let me give you one last Bible verse to give you some hope today. Romans 8:28 says:

And we know that in ALL THINGS God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Some of you may feel like you are outside of God's will today, but I promise you, you have never been outside of the loving care of your Heavenly Father! The Bible says, "all things." Whatever you have done, whatever you didn't do, whatever you didn't know that you wish you had known, the moment you surrender to Jesus you are at the center of His will! AND God is able to take "all things" and work them out according to His purpose!

Come on, praise Him for that! Praise Him if you are glad He can take all things! Let's pray.