

# The Will of God

## Why are we here? What is our purpose in life?

- God's ultimate will for our life is for us to glorify Him in every action of our lives (1 Cor. 10:31)
  - However, there are specific tasks and paths that are unique to every individual child of God for us to accomplish God's purpose for us to glorify Him.
- We were created for God's glory and His praise
  - Isaiah 43:7,21 – *"(7) Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him... 21) This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise."*
    - Jer. 13:11, Ps. 102:18, Isaiah 49:3-5
  - Rom. 9:23 – *"And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory."*
- God created us for His pleasure and because it seemed good in His sight
  - Rev. 4:11 – *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*
    - Gen. 1:27-28, Gen. 2:7, Prov. 16:4
- All of God's creation was for the declaration of His glory, and His praise
  - Ps. 19:1-4 – *"(1) The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 2) Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3) There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. 4) Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,"*
    - Ps. 97:6, Ps. 145:10, Ps. 89:5
- Why did God choose to save sinners?
  - To the praise of the glory of His grace, according to His own good will and pleasure
    - Eph. 1:5-14 – *5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved... 9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself... 11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ... 14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."*
      - 1 Pet. 5:10 – *"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."*
        - Rom. 9:23
  - God established a "chosen generation" to show forth His praise
    - 1 Pet. 2:9-10 – *"(9) But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; 10) Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."*
      - 1 Thess. 2:12 – *"God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory"*

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- God requires that every action of our lives be carried out for the purpose of God's glory
  - 1 Cor. 10:31 – *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”*
  - 1 Cor. 6:19-20 – *“(19) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”*
  - Col. 3:17,23 – *“(17) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him... 23) And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”*
  - Eph. 3:21 – *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*
  - Praising God is a full-time job
    - Ps. 34:1 – *“I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”*
  - All of our actions should exhibit the preeminence of Christ in our lives
    - Col. 1:18 – *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*
- We do good works, not to have men pat us on the back, but for God's glory
  - Matt. 5:16 – *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*
  - John 15:8 – *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye by my disciples.”*
  - 1 Pet. 4:11 – *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”*
  - Phil. 1:11 – *“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”*
  - John 17:10 – *“And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.”*
  - 2 Thess. 1:11-12 – *“(11) Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12) That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*
    - 2 Cor. 9:13, 1 Pet. 2:12, Rom. 4:20, John 21:9, 2 Cor. 14:5, Rom. 15:9
  - Gal. 6:14 – *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”*
- The central theme and activity of heaven is giving glory to God (so it should be the same for us here on earth as well)
  - Rev. 4:9-11 – *“(9) And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever... 11) Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*
  - Rev. 5:12-13 – *“(12) Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13) And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”*
    - Rev. 7:12; Rev. 11:13; Rev. 15:4,8; Rev. 19:1

# The Will of God

## Three Types of God's Will in Scripture

- **1) God's Sovereign Will** – or Decretive Will – Anything that God sovereignly decrees shall come to pass and has no possibility of failure
  - God's sovereign will is to save His people from their sins
    - John 6:38-40 – “38) *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* 39) *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.* 40) *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*”
    - John 17:2-4 – “2) *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* 3) *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* 4) *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*”
  - God predestinated and chose the elect according to His will, pleasure, and purpose
    - Eph. 1:4-11 – “4) *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:* 5) *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,* 6) *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved...* 9) *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself...* 11) *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*”
    - Rom. 8:28-30 – “28) *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* 29) *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* 30) *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*”
    - 2 Tim. 1:9 – “*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*”
  - God's sovereign will shall ultimately be accomplished and cannot be thwarted or frustrated. Anything that God sovereignly decrees shall come to pass, but He does not decree everything that happens in this world.
    - Isaiah 46:9-10 – “9) *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,* 10) *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*”
      - Isaiah 14:24, Job 23:13, Prov. 19:21
    - Isaiah 55:10-11 – “10) *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:* 11) *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it*

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*shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."*

- Dan. 4:35 – *"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"*
  - Ps. 115:3 – *"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."*
    - Dan. 2:39, Ps. 59:13, Ps. 135:6
- **2) God's Proscribed Will** – or Preceptive or Commanded Will – God has commanded by his "precepts" for man to do certain things according to his will. However, God's proscribed or commanded will for His people in time is not always carried out perfectly according to God's purpose and plan because we are sinners who mess up God's perfect will.
    - God expects His children to carry out and perform His proscribed will in their lives
      - Rom. 12:1-2 – *"1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*
      - Phil. 2:13 – *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*
      - Heb. 13:21 – *"Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*
        - 1 John 3:22, 1 John 2:17, Matt. 7:21
      - Matt. 12:50 – *"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."*
    - God's will is for us to submit to God's purpose, plan, and pathway in our lives (not our own will) and have a sincere desire for God's will to be accomplished in this world
      - Matt. 6:9-10 – *"9) After this manner therefore pray ye... 10) Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."*
      - 1 John 5:14-15 – *"14) And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15) And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."*
        - Compare to James 4:2-3 where we do not receive what we ask because we are asking the Lord according to our own lusts
      - Prov. 3:5-6 – *"5) Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*
        - Eph. 6:6, Ps. 40:8
      - Jesus submitted to the will of God the Father and accomplishing His will was Christ's chief purpose here on this earth. How much more then should it be our desire to fulfil the Father's will in our lives, following Jesus' example?
        - John 4:34 – *"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."*
          - Heb. 10:7-9; John 5:30, 6:38; Mark 14:36

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- God's will is for us to be sanctified from sin and use our vessel (our bodies) for the glory of God, to be transformed from this world by the renewing of our minds.
  - 1 Thess. 4:3-7 – “3) *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4) That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour... 7) For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*”
  - 1 Cor. 6:19-20 – “19) *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*”
  - Rom. 12:1-2 – “1) *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*”
- God's will is for us to do good works and serve God in our lives
  - Heb. 13:21 – “*Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*”
  - Eph. 2:10 – “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*”
  - Eph. 6:5-6 – “5) *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6) Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*”
- God's will is for us to give thanks in every thing
  - 1 Thess. 5:18 – “*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*”
    - Eph. 5:4,20, Heb. 13:15, 2 Thess. 1:3
- God's will is for us to submit to earthly authority, which is ordained by God
  - 1 Pet. 2:13-15 – “13) *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14) Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15) For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:*”
    - Rom. 13:1-8, 1 Pet. 2:17
- Sometimes God allows His people to suffer trials, according to His will, for us to be refined and grow in our commitment to Christ
  - 1 Pet. 4:19 – “*Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*”
  - 1 Pet. 3:17 – “*For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*” (Compare Job 23:10)
- We need to submit to and trust in the will of God in our lives because we do not know what the future holds for us
  - James 4:14-15 – “14) *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then*

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*vanisheth away. 15) For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."*

- Acts 21:14 – *"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."*
- **3) God's Providential Will** – God has an individual will for each of His children, and the Lord will providentially guide his children in that will if we pray, seek God, and submit to his providential will and guidance in our lives.
  - God gives us a framework in scripture for making godly decisions in his proscribed will – live godly, don't fornicate, give thanks, submit to authority, etc. However, most of our life is not lived out by simply following a list of dos and donts. The major decisions of life where we seek God's will the most – school, job, spouse, home, etc – are typically not just black and white, right and wrong decisions. We need God's providential guidance in our lives to discern God's will for our lives in our daily decision.
  - There are most likely quite a few different paths in our lives that we could take and be very happy and glorify God. The providential will of God in our lives is not simply good and bad but rather "good, better, and best". God does have a "best" case providential path for your life. The challenge for us to discern God's will for what the "best" course of action is in our lives. Thankfully, even if we make mistakes and don't choose the "best" path in our life, God is still loving and gracious to still bless us with good and better in our lives as well.
  - God will providentially guide his children with his own eye
    - Ps. 32:8 – *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."*
    - Ps. 37:23 – *"(23) The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way."*
    - Ps. 25:12-14 – *"(12) What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. 13) His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14) The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."*
    - Prov. 16:9 – *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."*
    - Isaiah 48:17 – *"Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."*
    - Isaiah 58:11 – *"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."*
    - God led Jacob (picture of all his elect) by his will as the "apple of his eye". The Lord will providentially guide all his children as the apple of his eye
      - Deut. 32:10-13 – *"(10) He found [Jacob] in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. 11) As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: 12) So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. 13) He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."*

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### What is God's Providential Will for My Life?

- How do we discern God's providential will for our lives then, when the direct pathway that we should individually take it is not expressly stated in scripture?
  - God gives us a framework for making godly decisions, but that does not mean we are told expressly in advance what decision to make in every circumstance. We must seek God and pray for God's guidance within His will that we do have revealed in scripture to find how we each should carry out God's will and purpose in our individual lives.
    - Why does God not tell us in advance the full itinerary of His will for our lives?
      - One of the main reasons that God does not give us a full script for exactly every decision we will ever make, is that if that were the case, we would be lackadaisical and would then be "walking by sight". Instead we have to walk by faith, trusting God, and thus growing in our relationship and dependence upon our heavenly Father.
      - 2 Cor. 5:7 – *"(For we walk by faith, not by sight.)"*
    - The most basic framework we have for making godly decisions and following the will of God is our primary purpose to glorify God and do the things that are expressly stated as His will: to be thankful, to live sanctified godly lives, to respect authority, etc. As long as our course of action does not directly contradict our purpose or God's will in scripture, then there are multiple paths we could each take to glorify God in our lives.
    - Take choosing a career or taking a particular job for example. You obviously don't need to be a loan shark or a drug dealer or some other thing that is directly contradictory to the word of God. However, beyond that, does God care if you are a doctor, lawyer, teacher, carpenter, or plumber? Generally, I would say no. Now, since we will spend a significant amount of our adult life in our profession, you should certainly pursue a career in something you enjoy and also something that fits your natural skill sets, but beyond that God does not "call" you to a specific profession. Rather, God calls you to *"whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."* (Col. 3:23) Whatever you end up doing, your responsibility is to give it the best you have, to do it with all your heart, and serve God by doing a great job in whatever your hand works at. We can most likely serve God and glorify God through a multitude of different professions, but we have to seek the will and guidance of God for the "best" situation and career pathway for us.
    - Next, consider choosing a spouse to marry. God gives us a framework for making decisions for marriage, but does not expressly give us a divine revelation about who to marry. We have the framework that they should be of the opposite gender (Matt. 19:4-6), should be a believer in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 6:14), and should be pursuing the same purpose in life as you are – to glorify God. If someone does not believe in Jesus Christ, then in God's mind, that person should be marked off your prospective suitors list. However, after that, we aren't given a formula in scripture to determine who to marry. The scriptures do not teach there is a "predestinated soulmate" for every person, that God created one person for everyone, and there is only one person you could ever be happy with and would be miserable otherwise. Rather, within God's framework of believers in Christ, we have a good degree of liberty of who to marry, and we could most likely have a great and happy marriage with quite a few people. At the same

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time, you need to choose someone who you enjoy spending time with, your personalities mesh well, who provokes you to growth in your discipleship with Christ, and other practical considerations that are ingredients for a happy marriage. After considering God's scriptural framework, we have to pray for wisdom to make such an important decision as choosing a spouse that will allow us to glorify God more fervently together in our marriage relationship than we can as single individuals.

- Another major decision in everyone's life will be choosing where to live. Where you ultimately live will be heavily affected by your job/career and your spouse, so you especially need to prayerfully and diligently seek God's will as those two decisions will essentially affect every other major decision in your life. How do I know where to move? God commands His children to "*seek ye first the kingdom of God*" (Matt. 6:33). We are also commanded to take up our cross and be baptized as disciples in the Lord's church (Matt. 28:19-20), and the intimacy of the church environment is vital for our continued growth in serving God. Therefore, since the kingdom of God is supposed to be #1 on our priority list, all major decisions we make must be filtered through that framework.
- Take the first two examples we've considered, placing the kingdom of God first in our priority listing. If the kingdom of God and the church is my first priority, then if I am considering a career or job, and if that job requires me to work on Sundays or have significant travel requirements to where I cannot contribute to the local church assembly, that job should be marked off my list, even if I have to take a job with less pay to be more attentive to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God should come first, not my paycheck, not my wealth, not the next promotion.
- In choosing a spouse, if you place the kingdom of God first in your priority listing, then you will not consider pursuing marriage with an unbeliever, as is expressly condemned in the New Testament (2 Cor. 6:14) and condemned by God's commandment in the Old Testament (Deut. 7:3-6). Instead, you will not just look for the bare minimum requirements (a believer), but look for someone who is wholly invested in the kingdom of God first and foremost just like you are. Practically speaking, common doctrinal beliefs will aid in your common pursuit of the kingdom of God. ("*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*", Amos 3:3. For two people considering "walking together" for the rest of their natural lives in marriage, is anything more important to "agree on" than the kingdom of God that should be our first priority? I would say your agreement upon doctrinal principles of the kingdom of God is of the utmost priority). Therefore, if at all possible, it's certainly helpful to consider someone who already holds the same beliefs as you, who has already submitted to baptism and joined the church and has the same desire to pursue the kingdom of God first and foremost the same as you. That's not to say that inter-denominational marriages are off the table – history has shown many fruitful marriages (and subsequent conversions to the church) have worked out – but be aware there are definitely more hurdles to overcome in those circumstances than when you are already agreed on the major doctrinal tenets of the kingdom of God with your future spouse.
- In regards to where to move and live, again it will be heavily influenced and most likely determined by your job and your spouse, but how do I go about deciding



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where to live? The church is integral to the growth and abundant life of the child of God in this world. Simply put, the child of God will not be as happy as he ought to be if he is not intimately involved in the Lord's church. Therefore, moving any place (whether because of a job, spouse, or any other reason) where there is not a church within a reasonable distance, that destination should be crossed off your list. Moving to any location where you cannot enjoy the fellowship, strengthening, and accountability of fellow believers and the local church will ultimately stunt your growth in the kingdom of God. Therefore, for one who is seeking the kingdom of God first and foremost in their lives and making decisions through that scriptural framework, there are many destinations that will be automatically excluded from consideration. However, if there are local churches in the area and that place is not initially excluded, then there are many places we could live and serve God in a profitable manner. It's in those circumstances, when there's a multitude of good and reasonable paths to take, that we have to prayerfully seek God's will and determine what the "best path" for us to take is in that situation, hopefully in accordance with God's guidance and leadership in His will.

- Even in the not-as-major decisions in life, we need to filter the possible outcomes through seeking the kingdom of God first and by the word of God. Buying a house, buying a car, making a business investment, what school or college to send your kids to, etc. These are all situations that the word of God gives us principles and a framework to filter those decisions through. However, whether we ultimately follow through with each of those is dependent upon our prayerful seeking the leadership of the Spirit in the individual situation, as long as they do not violate the word of God or another principle we have already addressed.
- We are all unique and different and the ultimate path that God's will takes in each of our lives will be different, so we do not need to judge ourselves by the route that others take.
  - The working out of God's will in each of our lives usually takes a different route within God's prescribed framework. We cannot gauge God's will and path for our lives by comparing ourselves to others. See the example of Peter trying to compare his path that would be in accordance with God's will to John's future that was much different (John 21:18-22):
    - Jesus tells Peter he will be ultimately be martyred and lose his life for God's glory (John 21:18-19). Peter appears to be very unnerved by this news and attempts to deflect the attention. Instead of embracing God's will for his life, he begins to try to compare his path to someone else's. Peter (referring to the Apostle John) says, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John 21:21). Essentially, Peter immediately asks Jesus "Well, what about John? Will he be martyred too? You told me my future, what's his future?"
    - Jesus essentially tells Peter that John's future is none of his concern. "*If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*" (John 21:22) Jesus reminds Peter that his only focus should be on his own calling from God. "*Follow thou me.*" (John 21:18,22)
    - We cannot gauge ourselves by other people but only by ourselves. Each person is their own measuring stick of success or failure, because we all have different callings and gifts. My measure of success is determined by fully manifesting God's gifts and will in my life to the "best" of my

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potential, which might work itself out differently in my life than in someone else's. It's important to understand, there's nothing wrong with that. That's why God gave members of the church individual spiritual gifts, and gave us unique personalities and skill sets. It wouldn't be a body if all the members were the same, so we should embrace our uniqueness in the kingdom and not try to fit into a cookie cutter mold or judge ourselves by someone else's measuring stick.

- It takes a great deal of discernment to follow the will of God for our individual lives because we will all inevitably take a unique path in following God's will. Therefore, we need God's grace at each stage of following God's will:
  - **A) Patience** – to wait for God's will to be accomplished in God's time. It may not be time yet for us to know His will and have a strong impression of what path we need to take. Therefore, God must give us grace during this time of waiting to confidently, faithfully, and patiently wait on His will and guidance.
    - Faith – to not doubt God when things don't turn out as we wanted it; faith to believe that even if we don't understand all the circumstances, that our heavenly Father has all the information – whereas we only have a limited perspective and vision – and that our Father always has our best interest at heart, working things for our benefit not for our harm
      - Matt. 6:8,11 – “8) *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him...* 11) *Give us this day our daily bread.*”
      - We have to believe that even if we ultimately don't get what we were asking for right away or what we wanted, that our Heavenly Father still has our best interests at heart and that what He has seen fit to give me (or not give me) is actually the best for me in the long run.
  - **B) Wisdom** – when the time comes that we actually have to make a decision, we must rely on God to give us wisdom to make the decision that's in accordance with his will and realize the time has come.
    - While we have waited patiently for the door to open or for us to have peace that the Lord is in a certain situation, then we also have to pray for wisdom and the leadership of the Holy Spirit (more on that later) to be confident that God has blessed this and know when the right time has arrived and also be confident about what course of actions we should take
  - **C) Courage** – to boldly act and do what God has told us to do when the time has come and God has actually opened the door.
    - We have waited patiently for God's will to be manifest and been given wisdom to know when the right door to be opened. However, it might be very uncomfortable for us to step out on faith when the time is right. In those moments, when the time to act has arrived, we also need to have courage to boldly carry through with God's will for us.
    - We don't need wisdom when the time has not come to actually make a decision, but we do need patience to wait and faith in God while we are waiting. We don't need patience anymore when the time comes to fruition, but we do need wisdom and courage to act.

## The Will of God

- The Holy Spirit will guide us in the will of God
  - The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, according to the will of God
    - Rom. 8:27 – *“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*
  - God will guide or lead our hearts when we are walking in the Holy Spirit
    - Rom. 8:14 – *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*
  - We can discern God’s word (through the Spirit) when we are doing God’s will
    - John 7:17 – *“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”*
  - The apostles were fasting and praying for the leadership of the Spirit, and when they were taking those steps to seek the will of God, God’s will was clearly revealed to them when the Holy Ghost “said” to them to ordain Paul and Barnabas. They were seeking God’s will, and He clearly revealed to them His will through the Spirit.
    - Acts 13:2-3 – *“2) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”*
- God will grant unto us spiritual wisdom and understanding when we ask Him to guide us in His will
  - Col. 1:9 – *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;”*
    - Why does Paul pray that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of His will? Col. 1:10-12 – *“10) That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11) Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; 12) Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:”*
  - Eph. 1:8-9,17 – *“8) Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself... 17) That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:”*
  - Eph. 5:15-17 – *“15) See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise... 17) Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”*
  - James 3:13-18 – *“13) Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom... 17) But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”*
    - It takes the wisdom of God to discern His will, and his wisdom is “pure, then peaceable” (v. 17)

## The Will of God

- Prov. 3:13-17 – *“13) Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding...17) Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”*
- When we are acting in accordance with God’s will, there is a great measure of peace that will sooth our anxious and doubting heart. Peace in our soul is a great assurance that we are following and walking in the will of God.
- One aspect of the kingdom of God is manifested in our hearts (Luke 17:21), and the manifestation of the kingdom is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Therefore, when the kingdom is abounding in our hearts – which it certainly will when we are living out the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God (Rom. 12:1) – then we will experience a great measure of peace and joy in our hearts when we are “in the way” (Gen. 24:27).
- God tells Moses how he will know His presence is with him and that he has found grace in the sight of God is that God would give him “rest” (Exod. 33:14).
  - Then when we follow the leadership of God’s spirit, His presence is manifested in our lives, and we know that God’s presence is in our lives from His “rest”.
- We need to be in fervent prayer to God seeking His will
  - Matt. 6:9-10 – *“9) After this manner therefore pray ye... 10) Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”*
    - In every prayer, our desire should be for God’s will to be done in earth, as it is in heaven
      - God’s will is done perfectly in heaven, where every command is perfectly obeyed by the angels and every inhabitant of heaven
      - However, on earth because of our sinful condition and rebellious nature, God’s will is not done perfectly in earth
      - Our desire should be for God’s will to be done perfectly in earth, as His will is done perfectly in heaven. Therefore, for this to happen, we need to pray for God’s children here on earth to submit to God’s will, deny themselves, and be willing to accomplish God’s will in their lives
  - Ask God to teach us His will and pray for wisdom
    - Ps. 143:10 – *“Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.”*
    - Ps. 86:11 – *“Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.”*
    - James 1:5 – *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”*
      - We need spiritual wisdom to discern the will of God, but God has promised to grant us that wisdom when we ask Him to grant it
    - Abraham’s servant prayed for a very specific answer to prayer (Gen. 24:12-14), and God answered the prayer before he was done offering the prayer (Gen. 24:15)
    - The church prayed and fasted before the Holy Spirit commanded the apostles to ordain Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3)

## The Will of God

- Israel proclaims a fast and prayer, to seek *“a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance”* (Ezra 8:21)
- Moses asks for God to show him *“the way”* (Exod. 33:13)
- You must be closely in tune with God Himself – in prayer, meditation, and possibly even fasting – to discern and “hear” God’s direction of His will
  - 1 Kings 19:11-12 – *“11) And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: 12) And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.”*
    - God was not in the cataclysmic events that Elijah saw (the “signs” most people look and ask for), but rather God spoke to him in *“a still, small voice”*. We are prone to look for outward miraculous displays of His will in our lives (“Lord, give me a sign”), but usually God will answer us in our heart.
      - Prov. 16:1 – *“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.”*
    - We have to be listening very intently to hear a “still, small voice” in the midst of all the “noise” of the world. That’s why we have to go into our secret prayer closet to hear when God speaks directly to us.
      - Ps. 46:10 – *“Be still, and know that I am God...”*
  - When God does speak to us, oftentimes in the quiet confines of our heart, we have to be attentive and willing to listen and hear what God is saying to us and directing us in, instead of trying to chart our own course and not being submissive to the direction of the Lord
    - 1 Sam. 3:10 – *“And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.”*
  - God will speak to us to show us the way if we earnestly seek His will
    - Isaiah 30:21 – *“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”*
- Spend time in God’s house and time in close communion with just you and God (in our “secret closet” with God) to be able to hear when God speaks to you
  - Jesus separated Himself from all of the apostles and the multitudes at crucial, important moments of His ministry to commune with God one-on-one
    - Before the choosing of the 12 apostles – Luke 6:12-13
    - Before the crucifixion – Matt. 26:36-44
    - In the morning, before dawn – Mark 1:35
  - Moses separated himself from the people to ask God to show him “the way” (33:14) because the tabernacle was outside the camp (33:7)
    - He was in the house of God when the Lord spoke to him “face to face as a friend” (33:11)
      - God will oftentimes answer your prayer by sending a minister to preach a sermon to give you an answer to your prayer, but we

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have to be in the house of God to hear that when God answers our prayer in that way

- Where should we be to discern the way of God for us? In God's house and in close communion with just me and God.
- Study God's word, along with prayer and attending worship services
  - 2 Tim. 2:15 – *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*
  - Isaiah 26:3-4 – *“(3) Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4) Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”*
- **God's guidance** – God is faithful to direct the pathways of His children who are diligently seeking His will in their lives. We can take great comfort in the fact that even if we don't know the path, God will providently guide His children who are diligently seeking Him and His will.
  - Ps. 37:23-24 – *“(23) The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. 24) Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.”*
  - Ps. 32:8 – *“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”*
  - Ps. 25:12-14 – *“(12) What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. 13) His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14) The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”*
  - Prov. 16:1,9 – *“(1) The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord... 9) A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.”*
    - Jer. 10:23-24, Prov. 19:21, Prov. 20:24, 1 Sam. 2:9
  - Isaiah 48:17 – *“Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.”*
  - Isaiah 58:11 – *“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”*
  - Job 23:10 – *“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”*
  - The congregation of Israel had to follow behind the ark of the covenant 2,000 cubits (3,000 ft.). They could not go before it because they *“have not passed this way heretofore”* (Josh. 3:4) – they had to follow the ark because they didn't know the way that the Lord would have for them to take.
    - We cannot get ahead of Jesus (the ark), but must patiently follow Him because we do not know the way or path that the Lord would have for us to take.
  - We trust and depend upon God even though we don't know the final pathway that the Lord will have us to take.
    - Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, speaking as he petitioned God for guidance in a military battle – *“...neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.”* (2 Chron. 20:12)
  - Commend the outcome of the matter over to God, having faith that God will guide us into the best outcome of us, even if we don't understand it at the time.

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- Ruth 3:18 – *“Then said she (Naomi), Sit still, my daughter (Ruth), until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man (Boaz) will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.”*
- Sometimes God will restrict or prevent us from making certain decisions to guide us into the correct path and into God’s will by the leadership of the Holy Spirit
  - Acts 16:6-7 – *“6) Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7) After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”*
    - Paul had a sincere desire to preach the gospel in Phrygia and Galatia, but he was “forbidden of the Holy Ghost” to go into that area. We do not know exactly how the Holy Ghost restricted him from going into this area. Most likely Paul felt a strong impression that the Holy Ghost was not in his journey, but he also could have been physically prevented in some manner from going to that region.
    - Then, Paul regrouped and desired to go into Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit “suffered them not” to go into that region at that time. God restricted Paul from preaching the gospel in these regions at this particular time.
      - This does not mean that God did not care for His children in this area or had totally forbidden anyone from preaching the gospel there. Actually, just a few chapters later (and probably 2-3 years later after he was originally restricted from preaching in Asia) *“all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord”* (Acts 19:10). They heard the gospel, it was just according to the Lord’s timing, not Paul’s timing.
      - Also, the gospel was later preached and a church was established in Bithynia because Peter addressed his epistle *“to the strangers scattered throughout...Asia, and Bithynia”* (1 Pet. 1:1).
      - Furthermore, Paul’s first convert when he went to preach in Macedonia was a native of Asia (the same place that he had been previously forbidden to preach in that physical location). God in His knowledge and understanding knew that there was a native of Asia – Lydia, a seller of purple, from Thyatira, a city of Asia – who was in Philippi on business. Therefore, after Paul followed the leadership of the Holy Spirit to go into Macedonia, his first convert was actually an Asian.
      - Therefore, in both of these instances, it was just simply not God’s timing for the gospel to be preached in these areas but they did later hear and joyfully receive the gospel. (See “God’s Timing” section below)
    - God can guide our path by His providentially opening or closing doors, or allowing certain opportunities to come our way. This was the case with Paul – God did not allow him to go where he intended by “closing the door”. Therefore, we need to submit to the will of God, but also pray for God to open or close doors according to His will.
      - Col. 4:3 – *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ....”*
        - 1 Cor. 16:9, 2 Cor. 2:12
  - Num. 22:13 – *“...the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.”*
    - Balaam would not go with the Moabites because God had not given him leave (or divine permission) to go with them

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- God must give us “leave” (permission) to do certain things here in this world. We can’t just go our own way and do our own thing and expect God to bless it. Furthermore, if we do not have permission to do something and we do it anyway (even if it seems to us to be a good thing), we will be punished by God for it.
  - A person in the military must request “leave” from his commanding officers. The inferior officer does not have the liberty to go and do as he pleases, but must follow the commands of his superior officers and submit to their authority.
  - If a military person, goes somewhere without the proper permission or leave from his superior officers, he will be considered AWAL and will face reprimand or court martial from his superior officers.
  - We do not have the authority to just go and do as we want here in this world and then pray for God to bless all of it, when we are not submitting to the authority of His will.
- *“I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.”* (Num. 22:18)
  - We cannot do more than we have been commanded by the Lord. That is disobedience and sin.
    - Since Jonah was commanded to go to Nineveh, he couldn’t go to another city because he preferred to preached to them instead. We cannot supplement God’s will with our own will. He could only lawfully do that if he had received a commandment from the Lord to do so. Jonah disobeyed the direct command of God and was chastised for his sin (Jonah 1-2).
  - Also, we cannot do less than we have been commanded by the Lord
    - Anything less than our commandment from God, is sin too. Doing less than we have been commanded is just as egregious as doing more because both are disobeying God’s commands
    - If Jonah was commanded to go to Nineveh, but he only went halfway and stopped before completing his mission, he would receive judgment from God for doing such
  - What is wrong for one person may be right for someone else, and what is right for someone may be wrong for you to do
    - The future and the pathway for the apostle Peter, was not right for the apostle John (John 21:18-23), so we cannot compare ourselves to others to find out God’s will for our lives.

## The Way

- It takes a great deal of discernment to follow the will of God for our individual lives to “maximize God’s glory” in our lives. There are paths we can take that God will bless us in spite of ourselves, but also there is also a “best path” for us that God will providentially guide us towards when we are diligently seeking Him. This best path oftentimes, described as “the way” in scripture.
  - Isaiah 30:21 – *“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left.”*
  - Isaiah 48:17 – *“Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.”*



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- The Way will always be in accordance with a righteous and holy life, which is pressing into the strait gate and the narrow way
  - Matt. 7:13-14 – “13) *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*”
- Abraham’s servant, when seeking a wife for Isaac, was providentially led by God to a godly, young woman who the Lord intended for Isaac to marry. However, there were some very distinct markers of “the way” that the servant was walking in when God led him providentially to fulfill God’s will.
  - Gen. 24:27 – “*I being in the way, the Lord led me*” – Abraham’s servant declares his own affirmation of “the way” of the Lord just after he meets Rebekah and becomes convinced that God has blessed his journey and answered his prayer. God will guide us when we are walking in “His way”.
  - What are the characteristics of “the way” in God’s guidance of Abraham’s servant finding Rebekah?
    - Prayer
      - He prayed for a very specific answer to prayer (Gen. 24:12-14), and God answered the prayer before he even was done saying it (Gen. 24:15).
    - Faith in God
      - Abraham had already been told by God that an angel would guide the servant’s search for a wife and would give him success to find the right woman (Gen. 24:7).
      - Abraham’s servant also had faith that God would answer and guide him based on his wording in his prayer (Gen. 24:12-15).
    - Obedience to the command of his master
      - The servant perfectly followed the command of his master, not deviating from it to go to another land or choose a different wife from a family other than Abraham. In like manner, if we are following the command of God (the command of our Master) we will be successful in the way.
    - Enthusiasm
      - The servant “ran” to meet Rebekah when he saw her (Gen. 24:17), showing a genuine excitement for his task.
      - Rebekah “hasted” in her service of others as well (Gen. 24:18,20).
    - He was seeking God’s will in the right place
      - He was seeking a wife among Abraham’s brethren not among the Canaanites who worshiped false gods (Gen. 24:3)
      - We need to be with the Lord’s brethren, in the church, when we are earnestly seeking God’s will, not out in the world. This is certainly true when we are seeking a godly spouse as well (not unequally yoked with unbelievers – 2 Cor. 6:10).
    - He praises and worships God for success and answered prayers
      - He glorified and worshipped God when he saw that God had answered his prayer and had providentially guided him (Gen. 24:26)
- God communed with Moses in such an intimate way that God spoke to Moses “*face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend*” (Exod. 33:8). Moses displays the type of sincere desire to pursue and follow the will of God that we must have to be lead in “the way” (Exod. 33:8-17)
  - Moses prays to God for guidance (33:12-13)

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- Moses desires to:
  - Know “*the way*” of God (33:13)
  - Know God Himself (“*know thee*”, 33:13)
  - To feel God’s presence (33:15) – he did not want to be separated from God’s presence
  - To find grace in the sight of God (33:13)
  - To see God’s glory (33:18)
    - That is God’s ultimate will: for Himself to be glorified. That is our main purpose in life, and it should be our chief desire as well.
- God promises for His presence to go with Moses, and He would give him “rest” (33:14)
  - We will have “peace” in the Holy Ghost when we are following the will of God (Gal. 5:22-23, James 3:13-18)
  - The children of God are led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:15)
- Moses didn’t want to do anything or go anywhere that the presence of God is not with him (33:15)
  - We should be fearful of going anywhere that the presence of God is not with us or the Holy Spirit leading us. If we don’t know what to do in a specific situation, it’s better to just stand still, rather than hastily try to drive our own cart.
- Moses craves the presence of God because he knows that the only “separation” between Israel and all the rest of the world is the presence of God (33:16)
  - That means that if God removes His manifest providential presence from us, we are just like the rest of the world, which is a horrible and miserable place to be for a child of God. (Look how miserable Saul (who was a child of God) was because of how he continued to sin and God removed His presence from him.)
- Moses separated himself from the people because the tabernacle was outside the camp (33:7). In the times when we are sincerely seeking the will of God, we must seclude ourselves from the world, to be able to hear when the Lord speaks to us.
  - He was in the house of God, with intimate, personal communion with the Lord, when the Lord spoke to him face to face as a friend (33:11)
  - Where should we be to discern the way of God for us? In God’s house and in close communion with God.
- We need to be very prayerful to seek and petition God to guide us in the way that He would have us to go, in every individual circumstance of our lives. Not just for ourselves, but for our families and for all our household, and the possessions that we have.
  - Ezra 8:21 – Israel proclaims a fast and prayer, to seek “*a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance*”
    - We need to seek God’s will through prayer and even fasting for ourselves, our children, and our families.
    - We also need to be prayerful to seek God’s will “for all our substance”. Our possessions are not ours to fund our hobbies, but resources in our hands that we should use to help others and glorify God.
      - We need to be prayerful over financial decisions and major purchases as well, to seek God’s will in those circumstances and determine God’s will for “our substance” as well.
        - We need to pray before we make major financial commitments: before we buy a house, buy a car, invest in a company, etc.

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### God's Timing – Waiting on God's will to be accomplished in God's time

- We should not go anywhere or do anything if God is not guiding us in that matter. It takes a great deal of patience to properly wait on the Lord and to “stand still” in waiting on the Lord, especially when we are ready to go in our own will. It's oftentimes better to do nothing at all than to hastily pursue the wrong path.
  - Moses prayed for God to show him “thy way” (Exod. 33:13), and God promised His presence would go with them (Exod. 33:14 – God's presence is signified by the cloud of the tabernacle, and in the New Testament, that would be the equivalent of the leadership of the Holy Spirit.)
    - Moses refused to move the people unless the cloud moved (Exod. 40:36-38, Num. 9:15-23) but to follow God's presence and leadership. In like manner, we should remain still if we don't feel the Holy Spirit is leading us in a certain matter, and wait on the Lord's direction and guidance.
  - Moses declared that if God's presence was not going with him, then he did not want to go anywhere (Exod. 33:15) because God's presence was the only thing that separated Israel from the rest of the world (Exod. 33:16)
    - We should refuse to go anywhere or do anything if God's presence (“his cloud”) does not lead us in that way
    - Also, we need to realize that God's Spirit in our lives is the only difference between us and the rest of the world, not by our choice, but because He sovereignly chose to give us His spirit
- Lazarus' death
  - Jesus waited two days (John 11:6) before He went to Bethany, and Lazarus had already been dead four days by the time He actually arrived at Lazarus' grave (John 11:17)
  - Martha and Mary, Lazarus' sisters, didn't understand why Jesus didn't come right away when He had heard Lazarus was sick because they knew if He had come then their brother would not have died (John 11:21 & 32, respectively)
  - The chief purpose for Jesus tarrying and allowing Lazarus to die was ultimately for the glory of God (John 11:4), as Jesus resurrects him from the dead
  - However, Lazarus' family didn't know the “why” of Jesus' timing and waiting. Therefore, Mary, Martha, and the disciples were questioning God's timing (and even insinuating that Jesus didn't care enough about Lazarus to come right away – John 11:21,32). At this point they just didn't understand why Jesus chose to wait like He did. Then, afterwards they could look back and see how Jesus' waiting and tarrying made sense, and it was easy in hindsight to realize His will and His timing was actually perfect no matter how irrational it seemed to us in the moment.
    - Hindsight is said to always be 20/20. We can oftentimes look back and see how God worked out His will, even if in the midst of the situation we didn't see how any good can come out of it. Lazarus' resurrection teaches us that sometimes (not always, but sometimes) God has a greater good and His glory intended even in trying circumstances when it appears God is not acting promptly or not acting at all. Therefore, we should not be distraught in the midst of those situations trying to figure it out, but just to trust God.
- Birth of Isaac
  - God told Abram he would have a son over 25 years before he actually did (Gen. 12:2-3, 15:1-6). He was at least 75 years old at the initial promise in scripture (Gen. 12:4), and then he was 100 years old when Isaac was actually born (Gen. 21:5)

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- God reiterates that they will have a son to Abraham a year before Isaac's birth (Gen. 17:16-17, 18:10-15), and Abraham was still 99 at this time (Gen. 17:24)
- There was a "set time" for Isaac's birth (Gen. 17:21, 21:2) – "the time appointed" (Gen. 18:14)
  - For a nine-month pregnancy, that means God worked it out for Abraham to go in unto Sarah and for her to conceive at "the right time" so that Isaac would be born at the "appointed/set time"
- Abram had to wait over 25 years for his promised son to be born, but ultimately God's will was performed at just "the right time", even though Abram doubted and questioned God's will and God's promise in the midst of having to wait so long to see the fulfillment
- God's guidance of Israel by the cloud
  - Moses refused to move the people unless the cloud moved (Exod. 40:36-38, Num. 9:15-23). The cloud signified God's presence and leadership, and Moses refused to go anywhere that would separate them from God's way and God's presence, to ensure they followed the leadership of Jehovah God, and not themselves (Exod. 33:15-16).
  - It was according to the commandment of God whether the cloud stayed or moved. This was the means that God showed Israel when and if they should stay or move, and lead them in the direction and path that God desired for them to take (Num. 9:18,23)
    - Israel obeyed God's command to wait when the cloud tarried long and didn't move for a long period of time (Num. 9:19), and obeyed when it was only a few days they waited and rested in their tents (Num. 9:20), and obeyed when the cloud moved then they journeyed immediately and followed the cloud (Num. 9:20). They waited on God's guidance regardless of the time lapse.
    - They implicitly obeyed God's command to wait on and follow the cloud no matter the circumstances. This is akin to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the child of God, and we should be prayerful to wait upon the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us, regardless of how long we have to wait for the answer.
  - When the cloud was stationary, then Israel stopped and camped at that place (Num. 9:17)
    - They were to pitch their tent and make their camp where the cloud stopped. If the cloud did not move, then they did not move. Also, they were to rest in their tents while the cloud was not moving (Num. 9:18,23), not to be fretting about what would happen next.
    - If we don't feel the leadership of the Spirit in a certain situation, don't do anything and wait for the Spirit to move to show you God's way.
  - When the cloud was taken up, then the Israelites journeyed (Num. 9:17)
    - It didn't matter whether the cloud was there "two days, or a month, or a year" (Num. 9:22) that the cloud did not move, they still patiently waited in their tents while it remained put. Then, when the cloud moved the people immediately followed the cloud
      - How long we wait in a certain place is not up to us. It doesn't matter how long the wait is (2 days, 1 month, 1 year, \_\_ years), we need to be faithful and rest while we wait on God to lead us in our lives.
    - It didn't matter if it was "by day or by night" (Num. 9:21) when the cloud was taken up and moved, they immediately followed the cloud whenever it moved, even if it means traveling at night
      - Then, when God sees fit to lead us to a different place, it doesn't matter if it's night or day (regardless of how convenient the move is or is not for

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- us at that time), we must be ready to go, and obey the commandment of God to follow His leadership
- The cloud eventually led them to Canaan, to the promised land
    - The Spirit will always guide to God, in God's will, and to the church, never to the world. Just as the Spirit will always confess Jesus as Lord and never deny Him (1 Cor. 12:3), the Spirit will always praise God never dishonor Him.
  - We must implicitly follow God's leadership in our lives
    - When God leads us to a place in our lives (and the cloud becomes stationary), instead of constantly worrying about how long we will be there and when the cloud might move again or what may happen next, rather we must settle in and go about our daily activities (make our camp) and rest in our tents (just rest in God and our faith in His leadership in our lives), waiting for God to choose when He desires for us to move again and where He wants to lead us
    - Then, when God leads us to go in a certain time (the cloud is taken up and moved), it doesn't matter how long we have been in one place (whether two days, a month, a year, or many years), how comfortable we are in the camp we have made, or how much we don't "want to" move. At that point, when God leads us to move, whether "day or night", we should immediately get up and follow God's leadership in our lives.
  - God's guidance of Israel by the ark of the covenant
    - The congregation of Israel had to follow behind the ark of the covenant at least 2,000 cubits (3,000 ft.). They could not go before it because they *"have not passed this way heretofore"* (Josh. 3:4) – they had to follow the ark because they didn't know the way that the Lord would have for them to take.
      - We cannot get ahead of Jesus (the ark), but must patiently follow Him because we do not know the way or path that the Lord would have for us to take
  - *"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...."* (Acts 1:7)
    - The disciples were told to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5) – which was accomplished on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Immediately, they asked Jesus if at the time of this baptism of the Holy Spirit would also be when Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) and set up his earthly kingdom. (His disciples also previously believed that he would liberate Israel from Roman rule – Luke 24:21, Matt. 20:21)
    - However, in response Jesus rebukes them by telling them that is none of their concern
      - *"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his power."* (Acts 1:7)
      - He is telling them that "when" this happens is not your concern, and you should not worry about when – or if – it will occur because God knows that and we have faith in God. Their attitude (and our attitude as well) should be that I don't need to know when because God knows when and I trust God.
        - *"For we walk by faith not by sight"* (2 Cor. 5:7)
        - Rom. 8:24-25 – if we can see it, then we do not need hope, and faith is the substance of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1). Therefore, if we can perfectly see God's will for our lives, then we do not need faith
        - Heb. 11:6 – We please God when we exercise faith, so by God requiring us to trust in Him, He is enabling us with an opportunity to please Him
      - The disciples' responsibility during this time was to *"wait for the promise of the Father"* (Acts 1:4) and wait on the *"baptism of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 1:5). Their

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- responsibility was not to worry about when it will happen (*“the times or the seasons”*) because when it happens is God’s concern, not theirs.
- When they were told this, they did not know what the *“baptism of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 1:5) or its *“power”* (Acts 1:8) even was, and would not even know what it meant that the Holy Ghost *“would come upon you”* (Acts 1:8). Jesus tells them this and then immediately goes to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). Obviously, they had many questions that He did not answer since He left immediately after giving them this instruction. Therefore, because of this, they had to just have faith in Jesus’ words, but Jesus had already told them it wasn’t their concern when this was to happen, but rather to remain faithful until the time did come. They didn’t understand this at this time because they did not need to know yet
    - However, when the time did come and the Spirit was manifested, the disciples knew it immediately – Peter told them directly that this was the fulfilling of scripture, when the Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh (Acts 1:17).
    - When they received this instruction, they didn’t understand (and that was fine because just as Jesus said it wasn’t their concern to know when, but it was only their concern to remain faithful until that time came), but they understood perfectly when the time came (when *“the times and seasons”* came to fruition).
    - Therefore, he tells the disciples that now is not the time for you to know, but when the time came for knowledge, they did understand perfectly.
  - Oftentimes, if we don’t know or understand something – particularly God’s will in a certain area of our life – it’s because the *“time and season”* for our understanding has not yet arrived. We don’t have all the information to understand this, however, when the time does come to fruition – and God’s will is accomplished and is at hand – we can discern, and know very confidently, that yes, this is His will.
    - Most likely, if we do not know God’s will at a certain time in a given area, it’s because it is not yet *“the time”* for us to know. When *“the time”* comes, we will know and understand what we need to know. In the meantime, we need to follow His commandments and wait patiently in faith and confidence in God.
      - Sometimes people will say *“when you know, you just know”* and that seems to be the case and the principle being taught here with the apostles.
      - They didn’t know what the manifestation of God’s will was until the time arrived, but when the time did actually come, they know beyond a shadow of a doubt that was what Jesus was talking about. If you don’t know for sure, then chances are it’s not time for you to know yet.
    - *[God] hath made every thing beautiful in his time.* (Eccl. 3:11)

### Trusting God’s Will in Faith

- Prov. 3:5-6 – *“5) Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*
  - *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;*
    - We must place our *“trust”*, our full confidence and faith in God’s direction and providential guidance in our lives.
      - The word for *“trust”* here means *“to be confident or sure, to hide for refuge, to feel safe or be careless”*
      - One definition of this word gives the idea of trusting God so fully and completely that we are *“careless”*.

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- Because our faith and trust in God is so strong and consumes all our heart, then we actually don't have any worry or fear or anxiety about our pathway, regardless of how uncertain it may seem to us in our lives (perfect love casts out fear, 1 John 4:18).
- This does not mean that we don't look both ways when we cross the street; we don't live with no regard for danger. But, we should lean back, relax, take refuge and confidence in God to such a degree that we live a "care-free" life of faith in the Lord
- Phil. 4:6 – *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."*
- We don't just trust God with certain parts of our life; we don't just give him the unimportant things that we are willing to let go of; we don't block off certain areas of our life where we will handle it ourselves; but we trust every aspect of our life to God's guidance and protection. We trust in the Lord "with all our heart"
- *and lean not unto thine own understanding.*
  - When facing crucial decisions, we don't "lean", trust, or place confidence to rely upon our own understanding to solve the problem or chart the course. We don't trust in our own selves to make the right decisions, but instead place faith in God.
  - Trusting God with all your heart and walking the pathway of faith in the Lord oftentimes runs contrary to common sense
    - It made no sense in natural logic and in his own carnal understanding for Abraham to leave his homeland to follow God in faith to a place he had never been. But Abraham began and completed the journey in faith, relying upon God to show him the way and also to know when he had actually arrived at his destination.
    - It was totally contrary to all natural laws of biology when Abraham was told by God that was going to have a son at his old age. Abraham and Sarah's own understanding told them it was impossible; that is why both Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise at different times. However, "against hope" (against all natural understanding and any reasonable hope to expect it to happen), nevertheless Abraham trusted God with all his heart and still *"against hope believed in hope"* (Rom. 4:18), having faith that God was able to fulfill his promise in spite of his lack of natural understanding.
    - It made no sense for Gideon to reduce his army from 32,000 to 300 in preparation for battle when the opposing Midianite army had 135,000 men prepared for war. In spite of this being contrary to his own understanding and totally contrary to any sound military plan, he followed the commandments of God in faith, and Israel was given a great victory over the Midianites.
    - It's not good logic to get out of a boat and try to walk on water, which Peter could not do in his nature. However, when God tells you to do something as Jesus told Peter to get out of the boat and come to him, faith supersedes our natural limitations and we ought to follow the command of Jesus in faith.
    - If we limit God to only that which we can understand, we will never see the manifold power of God in our lives. Don't ever limit God to your own

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understanding, but remember that God is *“able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to his power that worketh in us.”* (Eph. 3:20)

- Oftentimes, we are afraid to act unless we can clearly see what the end destination is to this particular pathway. If we could actually see destination with perfect clarity and sight, then there would be no need for faith in God. However, God does not expect for us to only act when we can see all the way to the end result and know what’s going to happen. Rather, we are expected to walk by faith trusting God instead of ourselves, to place our faith in God, not placing our confidence in only what we can see.
  - 2 Cor. 5:7 – *(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)*
  - Heb. 11:1 – *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*
    - Faith is based on evidence, but it’s actually evidence we cannot see. We examine and assess the evidence of the invisible God – God’s faithfulness and God’s word and His providence in our lives, etc. – and reach the conclusion to trust God in faith, even though we cannot necessarily see everything that validates our trust in God right now.
  - Thomas was unwilling to place his faith in what he could not see with his eyes. He said unless he could see the nail prints in Jesus’ hands and put his finger into the wound in His side, unless he could examine what he could see, he refused to believe. However, when Jesus appeared, he did place his faith and belief in Jesus Christ (John 20:25-29).
- If we place our faith and trust in our own understanding and our own hearts, we will follow the wrong path, ask for the wrong thing, and inevitably be deceived lead into a destructive pathway, if we are fully left to follow our own understanding.
  - Jer. 17:9 – *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”*
  - Prov. 14:12 (16:25) – *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”*
  - James 4:3 – *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your own lusts.”*
- This verse in Prov. 3:5-6 is often used to teach that if we just trust God then everything is going to work out just the way we want it. Actually, it is teaching the exact opposite: if we really trust God, then God will probably lead us and direct us in a path that is contrary to our own understanding.
  - *In all thy ways acknowledge him,*
    - “In all thy ways” – in every journey, pathway, and direction that we take, we must seek God and acknowledge His sovereignty and providential provision over our lives and our pathway
    - Here, “acknowledge him” means “to know”. So, we need to know, to remember who God is and be reminded of God’s care and provision for us, and why He is so trustworthy to commend our entire lives over to him.
      - Remember that God is our loving heavenly Father who always has our best interest in heart, even if He has to chasten us to get us back into the right pathway. Never forget how much God loves us and that directs all of his guidance and even chastening in our lives.



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- If something doesn't work out the way we want it to, sometimes we have a tendency to act like God doesn't really love us. "If God really loved me, then he would have given me this." It might be the case that it's because He really does love you that he "didn't" give you that thing you thought you needed!
- Remember that God is the good Shepherd who will only do what's best for the sheep.
- Remember that God has promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5), even if we don't feel His presence near all the time.
- We need to know, to be reminded that God has perfect foreknowledge of all events and situations that we do not have. He can see all the possible perils in a future path that we cannot see. Therefore, God will oftentimes direct our paths in a way that we cannot understand at the moment. However, oftentimes with 20/20 hindsight, we can see how God led us in a safe and profitable way, and also delivered us from a destructive pathway that we thought (in our own understanding) was the right course at the time.
- *and he shall direct thy paths.*
  - If we trust God with all our hearts, we forsake our own understanding, acknowledge and remember who God is and that he always has our best interests in mind, then God has promised to direct our paths. If we trust God fully, then He will direct our paths, even if we don't understand how it will ultimately all work out in the moment.
  - Prov. 16:9 – *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."*
    - We devise and scheme what the best way to go is (oftentimes without any input from the Lord) because we are relying and trusting on our own understanding. We say to God in prayer, "I know what's best for me, now give it to me." We've charted our own way based on our own understanding, and now we just want God to rubber stamp our itinerary.
      - Notice it's our heart that is devising and scheming the best path for us. It's man's natural heart that is *"deceitful above all things and desperately wicked"* (Jer. 17:9). That's why the pathway that our own heart chooses is oftentimes so different than God's will, because our heart is deceptive and wants to satisfy the flesh.
    - In summary, "No, you don't know what's best for you". Therefore, God overrules the devises and schemes of our heart and providentially directs our steps according to his will.
  - See "God's Guidance" in prior bullet point: Ps. 37:23-24, 32:8, 25:12-14

### **God, the Perfect Potter (Isaiah 64:8)**

- God made each and every one of us exactly the way we are for a specific purpose. Even though we have the same general framework to glorify God, we all have a different path where that purpose and God's will is carried out in our lives.
  - We were born into this world with certain attributes that God alone gave directly to us as he wrote our unique DNA code and gave us all our characteristics, personalities, and attitudes for physical life

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- As the body of Christ we need diversity, we need calm thinkers and go-getters to work together to get things done (1 Cor. 12:12-27). If the body was made up of all the exact same hands, we would have no feet to walk. If the body was only made up of ears, we would have no eyes to see, etc. All members are necessary and vital in the body of Christ.
- We have each been given spiritual gifts for the edification of the church. A very integral part of God's will in our lives will be us using our spiritual gift to help others and glorify God in the church.
  - 1 Cor. 12:4-11 – *"4) Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5) And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6) And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal... 11) But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*
  - Heb. 2:4 – *"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will?"*
  - 2 Cor. 1:1 – *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth..."*
    - Paul was called to be an apostle by the will of God
- Also, God uses certain people and certain events in our lives as His potter's tools to sculpt and mold us into the person God intends for us to be, i.e. the divinely, perfectly crafted vessel to use in His service as He sees fit.
  - **Peter** – it was needful for the hasty and prideful Peter to undergo the anguish of soul and humility that was taught him when he denied Jesus three times (Matt. 26:75). Peter was not ready during Jesus' ministry to be the leader of the gospel to the Jews in the Acts of the Apostles (which was his ultimate calling). He was still much too impulsive and hasty and quick-tempered, rather than waiting faithfully on Jesus. In fact, Jesus's almost constant rebuke of Peter's rash words is purposed to build Peter into the thoughtful, considerate leader that God intended for him to be to the church in Jerusalem. God had to take him through some painful experiences to mold him into the person who was fit for God's service in a mighty way.
    - It was Peter that God chose to use in two of the most important events in the New Testament church: 1) to preach the sermon to the devout Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and 2) to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles by preaching to Cornelius (Acts 10). However, I do not believe he was ready to do this until the exact time that they occurred. It was all the experiences and heartaches leading up to that point, that had crafted and molded Peter into the vessel that was used by God to accomplish such mighty things in the early church, particularly these two events.
      - Oftentimes, God takes us through a circumstance or season in our life to teach a lesson that we need to master for something he has purposed for us in the future, just like with Peter.
      - We cannot look at others – especially experienced, devout brethren in the faith – and expect to be as strong as they are right away. Who they are today, and the strength of their faith, is the result of years of trials that have strengthened their faith to the point it is today. It takes time to cultivate that in our lives and we must understand holiness in a process.
  - **Moses** – he had to be condescended from the prince's castles in Egypt to the shepherd fields in Midian for God to mold him into the meekest man on the earth (Num. 12:3). This was certainly vital in his intended role because he would be required to remain humble

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and give the glory to God instead of taking it for himself, as he led such a mighty deliverance of Israel from Egypt (all the nations of the world knew about how they were delivered from Egypt, Josh. 2:10)

- He was too immature and hasty even at 40 years old, when he essentially kills an Egyptian by an impulsive, emotional decision (Exod. 2:11-14). It took 40 more years of herding sheep in Midian before he had the temperament to handle an Israelite people that probably consisted of over 2 million people when they left Egypt. It took 80 years for God to mold Moses into the vessel that would ultimately lead Israel's deliverance from Egypt
- God knows what we need, and maybe more importantly, He knows when we need it. God will typically allow the right things to happen, in the right way, at the right time, either to accomplish something at hand or prepare us for something in the future

### Conclusion

- God created man and elected His people for the purpose of glorifying and praising Him. Within that general, overall framework, we each will follow a different path in each of our lives where God's will is manifested and glorified in our lives.
- God's eternal will of the salvation of sinners cannot be thwarted and is perfectly secure. However, God's preceptive will in this world is conditional upon the obedience of man. Some aspects of God's will we are told in scripture: to do good works, to give thanks, to respect authority, etc. We should certainly seek God's will through what we have prescribed already in scripture, but how that works itself out in each of our lives might look different for each of us.
- To follow and find God's providential will for our individual lives, we need to prayerfully pray and seek God will; we need to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit; we need to be in the Lord's house and spend time in close, intimate communion with God alone. God often speaks to us and reveals "the way" of his will in the "still, small voice" in our own heart. We need to be in quiet communion with God, away from the noise of this world, to hear that intimate, internal instruction of the Holy Spirit in our lives to guide us in the will of God.
- At certain points in our lives, it may not simply God's timing for this to occur. In those instances, we need to simply wait in faith on God's will and God's timing to occur. We don't need to move unless the Holy Spirit directs us (just as Israel followed the cloud), but we also be ready and prepared to follow when the Holy Spirit and the cloud does guide us into a new pathway.
- Overall, we need to beg and pray that God guides us at every stage of following His will in our lives. 1) Patience and Faith to trust God when we are waiting and still trying to determine God's will. 2) Wisdom and spiritual confidence to know when the time has arrived that we have been waiting for, and to know the time has come to act. 3) Courage for when we know God's in a matter to boldly follow the leadership of the Lord despite what obstacles might be presented in that particular pathway.