

In the time we have together this morning, I want us to look at a few examples of what the Bible has to say about Seeking, Knowing, and Doing the Will of God. The Will of God is a massive topic, that certainly cannot be adequately examined in one brief period together. What I hope to do, "If the Lord is willing" is to clearly communicate some of what God reveals to us about one particular aspect of His will.

If you would like to get a head start, you can open your Bible to Deuteronomy 29.

Turtle beginning... A couple of weeks ago on a Thursday morning I was driving my 3 sons from our home to the church where my oldest was in 1st grade at CCS, and the other two attended Wee School. I turned onto a two lane road in Union County, and was surprised to find traffic moving very slowly. It didn't look like there had been an accident, but there was a vehicle pulled over on the shoulder with its hazard lights flashing.

Standing on the side of the road I could see a man and his daughter who looked to be about 8 or 9 years old, and they seemed to be waiting for the cars to stop in order to cross the road.

Four or Five cars ahead I could see that drivers were swerving to avoid hitting something in the road. Moments later I came to learn that the object they were avoiding was a turtle, about as big around as a soccer ball. As I pieced the story together in my mind, I realized that as the father and daughter had been traveling to school just as my boys and I were, she spotted the turtle and begged her daddy to please stop and get the turtle out of the road so that it didn't get run over by a car.

Many cars swerved to avoid the little guy. They had seen the girl and her father, and had acknowledged the turtle, and had been kind enough to drive around it. (Pause)

The driver in front of me, though, was visibly frustrated by the slow moving traffic. You know how you can see the body language... raised hands (I don't think it was because they were singing praise), shaking head. No clue what was really happening. That driver had not put the pieces of the puzzle together; the compassion of the little girl, the duty of the father to nurture the compassion of the little girl. It was as though the driver of the red Jeep Cherokee in front of me was completely oblivious to anything going on in the world, or on the road aside from their clock, their schedule, their priorities. The driver of the red Jeep Cherokee was absolutely oblivious...

Intro Continued - hopefully you've had a chance to find Deuteronomy 29. Let's read together Deuteronomy 29:29.

Deuteronomy 29:29 -The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

As a part of a sermon to the Children of Israel, Moses shows us a distinction in verse 29 between two aspects of God's will: Secret Will and Revealed Will. If I wanted to make myself sound like an intelligent Bible Scholar, I would refer to these two aspects of God's will as his Decretative Will and his Preceptive Will, respectively. I'll just stick Secret Will and Revealed will.

God's Revealed Will refers his commands for mankind to obey and his declaration to us of what is pleasing in his sight.

God's Secret Will, on the other hand, usually includes his hidden decrees by which he governs the universe and determines everything that will happen. We find out what God has planned as the events actually happen. Let me give you an example:

In 1 Corinthians 4:19, Paul says to the people at the church in Corinth, "But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing,"

When Paul says "if the Lord is willing," He is not speaking of God's Revealed Will. Remember, God's Revealed Will is God's declared will (that he has made known) concerning what we should do or what he commands us to do.

Paul has already decided to come and visit the church at Corinth, out of his obligation as their spiritual father. When he says, "if the Lord is willing," he is speaking of God's Secret Will, his hidden plan for the future, which is unknown to Paul and which will be known only as it takes place.

When I began this message I told you what I hope to share, "If the Lord is willing." Again, I have already determined that I am going to share God's word with you. What I don't know is God's hidden plan for the future... He may have decided to cut me off with a fire alarm... which would be ok, because we've already taken the offering!

To trust in the Secret Will of God requires that we overcome our pride or our desire to be in control of all things, and express humble dependence on God's sovereign control over the events of our lives. To know God's Secret Will is to go into unauthorized territory; to peek behind the curtain that is reserved only for God. If we could know God's Secret Will, then we wouldn't have to trust him at all.

When it comes to Seeking, Knowing, and Doing the will of God, there is no way for us to Seek, Know, God's Secret Will. God seems to say of his Secret Will, Not in the tone of a big brother who might Lord over us such secret information, but in the tone of a loving Father who knows what is best, "It is for Me to know, and for you to find out." We discover God's Secret Will as the events actually happen.

This morning, as we talk about Seeking, Knowing, and Doing the Will of God, I want us to focus on the Revealed Will of God. Again, God's commands for us to obey, and his declaration to us of what is pleasing in his sight. As Moses said, these things, God's Revealed Will, "belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

#### 1. Seek God's Will... by pursuing God.

Matthew 6:33 is a familiar verse that comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and speaks directly to developing a kingdom mindset in the midst of everyday life. In the preceding verses he instructs his listeners not to worry about what they will eat, or drink, or wear.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

It makes sense to me that anyone who is either a Believer in Jesus Christ, or who believes that a God exists, would want to know God's will for their life. Of course, this assumes that one should believe that God has a will for their life, which he does. The Bible is clear that God made, knows and loves each person who has ever lived and will ever live. He has a plan for and is concerned about each individual.

Ps 139:13 For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (Keyword: whoever. The individual.)

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Somehow, we have created this idea that God's will for our lives is like a bulls eye. We throw our darts, but the probability of actually getting the dart to land inside that little ring are slim and none. I think maybe our confusion stems from verses like Ephesians 2:10, which says, For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. We may read that and think, "those good works, which God has prepared in advance for me to do, are bulls eyes. If I am not checking off the list of bulls eyes, then I must not be in God's will.

Have you ever done a search for a business or service on Google Maps? It is a great tool. This week our new student ministry associate Ryan Jackson and his wife Rachel moved to Charlotte from MO for Ryan to join our staff. Ryan drove a 20 ft U-haul truck, and pulled behind it a trailer, which carried his 1935 Chevy Coupe hot rod, that he and his father built from a body they found in a barn. You really should see it!

Anyway, he called me on Tuesday and explained that the clearance on the front end of the hot rod is so short, that the angle of the ramps on the trailer is too steep. If he tries to back the car off the trailer using the ramps, it will bottom out and damage the front end. He said, I need to be able to back the trailer into a ditch or something so I can drive the car off with trailer as level as possible. Either that or a body shop with a lift that I could back the car onto, and lower it down. One of our interns, John, and I walked all around the church property looking for a place that might work, thinking "this is crazy. We might be able to back the car off the trailer, but how are we going to get the car down off the curb?

The ditch idea wasn't working. So I sat at my computer, went to Google maps, and searched for "Body Shops near Matthews, NC." Literally dozens of possibilities popped up as dots on the map. I picked one, called, explained our situation, and they were willing to help us get the car

unloaded. ( I would like to publicly thank Gary at Matthews Township Collision Center for his fantastic help!)

There were many dots on that map that I could have tried to use, and it is likely that some other body shop would have been just as accommodating.

When it comes to seeking the will of God, often we think that If we don't figure out a way to land exactly on that "dot" then we have missed the mark, and will end up wandering in the wilderness like the Israelites.

God's revealed will for your life is not a bulls eye, or a "dot" on a map. To be "in God's will" is to live in such a way that you are more concerned about enjoying your relationship with Him and pleasing Him, than you are with the minutiae of life.

Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

To seek God's will is to pursue God. His will for you is not the dot on the map, but the map. When you seek Him first, and to understand his incredible love for you and make it your ambition to please Him and your hope to obey his command to love Him with all your heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself, and make decisions based upon those realities (which by the way are God's revealed will) you are on the map. Just like my search for a body shop, there are options within the map. Pick one, and allow God to blow your mind with the joy that comes from Delighting yourself in Him, not in trying to hit the bulls eye on your own.

Unfortunately, We tend to define the will of God based on what we want instead of what God wants.

Someone might say to himself, "Certainly it is God's will for me to go a major university, take a high paying job with an important corporation, marry the one who makes me feel the best about myself, have 2.5 kids, a HUGE house, a couple of very nice automobiles (no more than 3 years old), and a few toys for my personal and family enjoyment."

That makes God's will sound a lot like a modified version of the American Dream.

God's will is for you to know him by believing in Jesus, to be obedient to him (love God, love People) and faithful to him in all things. Can you have all these things and be in God's will? Yes! Can you be in God's will and have none of these things. Absolutely.

Students, does choosing a school or even going to college become your focus rather than making good decisions that honor God and your parents? Adults Have you considered how the job you choose might be a platform for showing the love of Jesus to others? Am I seeking God first, or am I seeking to please others and myself first?

Does buying this house or this car so strap us financially that we feel like we can no longer be generous to the cause of the Kingdom? Are we seeking God first, or are we seeking us first?

Does getting married at this point in my life serve to satisfy my own desires or God's desires for me? Am I seeking Him first, or am I seeking me first?

When it comes to seeking God's will, many of us think we need a sign. Where is our burning bush? Where is our talking Donkey?

God is not hidden. Acts 17:27 says, "God did this (that is orchestrated a relationship with himself) so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

See, he is walking with you through whatever you face. And he loves you! He wants you to experience his joy. He wants you to have the desires of your heart! He wants you to seek him first; To delight in Him.

Commercial

In his book called, Measuring Up, Knute Larson says about seeking God's will...

"I now rest in the fact that in the Bible I find a lot more promises from God indicating that he'll shepherd me than commands to find his specific will! Our main call is to keep our hearts pure and open to him, wherever we go."

Seek God's will by first seeking God. Understand that his will for your life is revealed in his commands and what is pleasing to Him. It is the map; not the dot.

2. Know God's Will... by studying God's word.

God has given us his word as his revelation of himself to us. There is no better way to understand God's wrath, love, grace, mercy, and will than by studying his word and applying it to our lives.

Listen to what Paul says in

Romans 12:1 -2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Lisa and I once heard David Platt, pastor of the Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham AL and author of a book called "Radical", preach on the verses of Romans 12:1 -2 . He explained that the Therefore points back to the argument in chapters 1 -11 , and he then proceeded to quote from memory the first Eleven Chapters of Romans, verbatim. I will not be attempting that today, aren't you glad?

Romans 1:18 –11:36 is an explanation of the mercies of God. As Christians we are to give ourselves entirely to God because of his saving grace.

The pattern of this world in verse 2 still threatens those who belong to Christ, so we must equip ourselves to resist its trappings. Our lives are changed as our minds are made new, so that we are able to test and approve, God's will. The Greek translation of that phrase "test and approve" (dokimazō), means to find the worth of something by putting it to use or testing it in actual practice.

How can we know God's will unless we study his word? Our lives are changed as our minds are made new. Our minds are made new by purging the misinformation that the world offers; and pouring in the truth of Scripture: That God the father made you, knows you, loves you, wants a relationship with you and made that relationship possible by allowing his only Son to become the sacrifice to pay your sin debt, once for all, so that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, You will be saved! (Romans 10:9)

Now he says, Give all that you are to him (Your ambition, your checkbook, your future). Study what he has revealed to you through his word and apply it to your life. Then you will be able to discern or know that God's will is for you to obey his commands, and live a life that pleases him. That is the destination. God's revealed will for your life is not hidden. It is very plain in the words of Jesus as he quotes the words of Moses in Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Commercial

Alice in Wonderland - Cheshire Cat

If you've seen the classic story, you may remember that Alice in Wonderland came to a fork in the road. Icy panic stung her as she stood frozen by indecision. She lifted her eyes toward heaven, looking for guidance. Her eyes did not find God, only the Cheshire cat leering at her from his perch in the tree above. "Which way should I go?" blurted Alice.

"That depends ...," said the cat, fixing a cynical smile on the confused girl.

"On what?" Alice managed to reply.

"On your destination. Where are you going?" queried the Cheshire fiend.

"I don't know ...," stammered Alice.

"Then," said the cat, with grin spreading wider, "it doesn't matter."

Know God's Will... by studying God's word.

3. Do God's will... by obeying God's commands.

1 John 5:3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, For the believer, God's will is to obey him and do those things that please him. His will is not a burden, but is the ultimate source of joy.

God's love in us gives us the desire to love and please him. In light of his love for us and what he has done to make a relationship with himself possible, we should be eager to keep his commandments.

We make the will of God, burdensome. We are easily distracted; easily convinced, as I said before, that the will of God in our lives is the specific "dot" rather than the map. And, lets face it... people can be hard to love. When we feel as though we are incapable of hitting the dot, we become discouraged. We're hard on ourselves because we think god is hard on us. We focus more our failure than on Gods grace.

The Bible gives us many examples of those who knew God's will (remember, God's revealed will is not hidden), yet chose to disobey.

David - a man after God's own heart, had an affair with Bathsheba and conspired to have her husband killed.

Jonah - was given instructions to go to Nineveh to preach, and deliberately disobeyed. I guess it was just too hard to digest...

Simon Peter - "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." (Matthew 26:35 NIV84) And by the time the rooster crowed, 3 times he had denied ever knowing Jesus.

Certainly in each of these cases, there were consequences for disobedience. That's what a loving father does; not out of anger or spite, but out of love, in order to correct and restore a broken relationship.

In each case, though, we see a beautiful demonstration of God's grace. David records his in Psalm 32:

I said, "I will confess

my transgressions to the Lord"—

and you forgave

the guilt of my sin.

(Psalm 32:3 -5 NIV84)

Jonah - Prayed to God from the belly of the fish, and was rescued and God used him to preach to the whole city of Nineveh, and they were saved from destruction.

(Simon Peter)- After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus met Peter and restored his relationship with him, and would use him to be instrumental in the growth of the early church.

I mentioned a little while ago that we don't really have time to talk about God's Secret will. But quickly... As we do God's will by obeying his revealed will, we see God's secret will accomplished; Those mysteries that we so desperately wish we could know ahead of time. Those "good works he has planned in advance for us to do."

In his famous book, Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby says, "God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action."

"We forget that when God speaks, He always reveals what He is going to do – not what He wants us to do for Him. We join Him so He can do His work through us. We don't have to be able to accomplish the task with our limited ability or resources. With faith we can confidently proceed to obey Him because we know He is going to bring to pass what He purposes."

The bad news: Sometimes, the will of God leads to suffering (Rom. 8:28; James 1:2–4 ; 1 Pet. 3:17), as it did for Jesus (Isa. 53:10; Matt. 26:39, 42).

Many of you have experienced suffering, and desperately want to know why God would allow it to happen. My family and I have experienced suffering in the loss of unborn children. Our suffering is not a direct result of disobedience, our suffering is a result of a fallen world that is subject to disease and pain and death.

James tells us to Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (James 1:2, 3 NIV84)  
1 Peter 3:17 says It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:17 NIV84)

God doesn't need our acceptance of his secret will. He wants us to trust him and love him; be faithful to him in what he has revealed and know that he wants the best for us.

Understanding and following God's commands brings believers great joy and freedom, not burden or oppression. For the believer: Do God's will by obeying his commands and living a life that is pleasing to him.

For the person who is struggling with whether or not they believe: God's will is for you to know him through Jesus, and begin to obey and please him by loving him with all your heart, soul, and mind and loving others as you love yourself.

The Bible says that your sin separates you from God, and on your own there nothing you can do to be made right. But, because of his love for you, Jesus, God's one and only son, died on the cross in your place and mine to pay the penalty for our sin and make a relationship with God possible. He was buried, and on the 3rd day God raised him from the dead. The enemy has been defeated, your debt has been paid, and salvation is God's free gift. Your next step is to submit to His authority in your life, and commit to follow Him. Ask him to forgive your sin, and come into your life right now.

If what I said made sense, if you just asked Jesus to forgive your sin, and invited him to come into your life for the first time, then today you are In Christ. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"  
If that is you, we'll give you an opportunity in just a few minutes to come and share that with me or one of our counselors. Or if you'd like, you can make your way to the next step room after the service, where someone will be waiting to talk with you about taking your next steps with Jesus.

Do God's will by obeying his commands.

Close

It was as though the driver of the red Jeep Cherokee in front of me was completely oblivious to anything going on in the world, or on the road aside from their clock, their schedule, their priorities. The driver of the red Jeep Cherokee was so oblivious, she didn't even touch her brakes.

I heard the shell crack, and I saw the turtle spread out on the road like someone had dropped a watermelon off the roof onto the pavement. I watched as the little girl clutched her face and ran to her van, and I heard the father with arms open wide yell, "What are you doing?"

The red Jeep Cherokee never slowed down, and I believe the driver is still absolutely clueless of the damage done not only to the turtle, but to that poor little girl who had stopped to rescue him. 30 seconds, tops, is all it would have cost the driver of the red Jeep Cherokee, to stop and let the little girl rescue the turtle, had she been concerned about anyone but herself. All she knew was that it was taking too long to drive down Potter Rd.

Of course the little girl will never forget watching the turtle get run over. She begged her dad to stop to prevent that very thing! And of course the father will never forget the broken hearted cry of his little girl... And I would be willing to bet, he'll never forget the emblem on the back glass of the red Jeep Cherokee, that identified the driver as a churchgoer.

May we not be so wrapped up in our own agendas that we miss what is going on in world around us.

And may we find JOY in loving the Lord with everything we are, and in loving others as we love ourselves.

Seek God's Will

Know God's Will

Do God's Will

Let's pray.