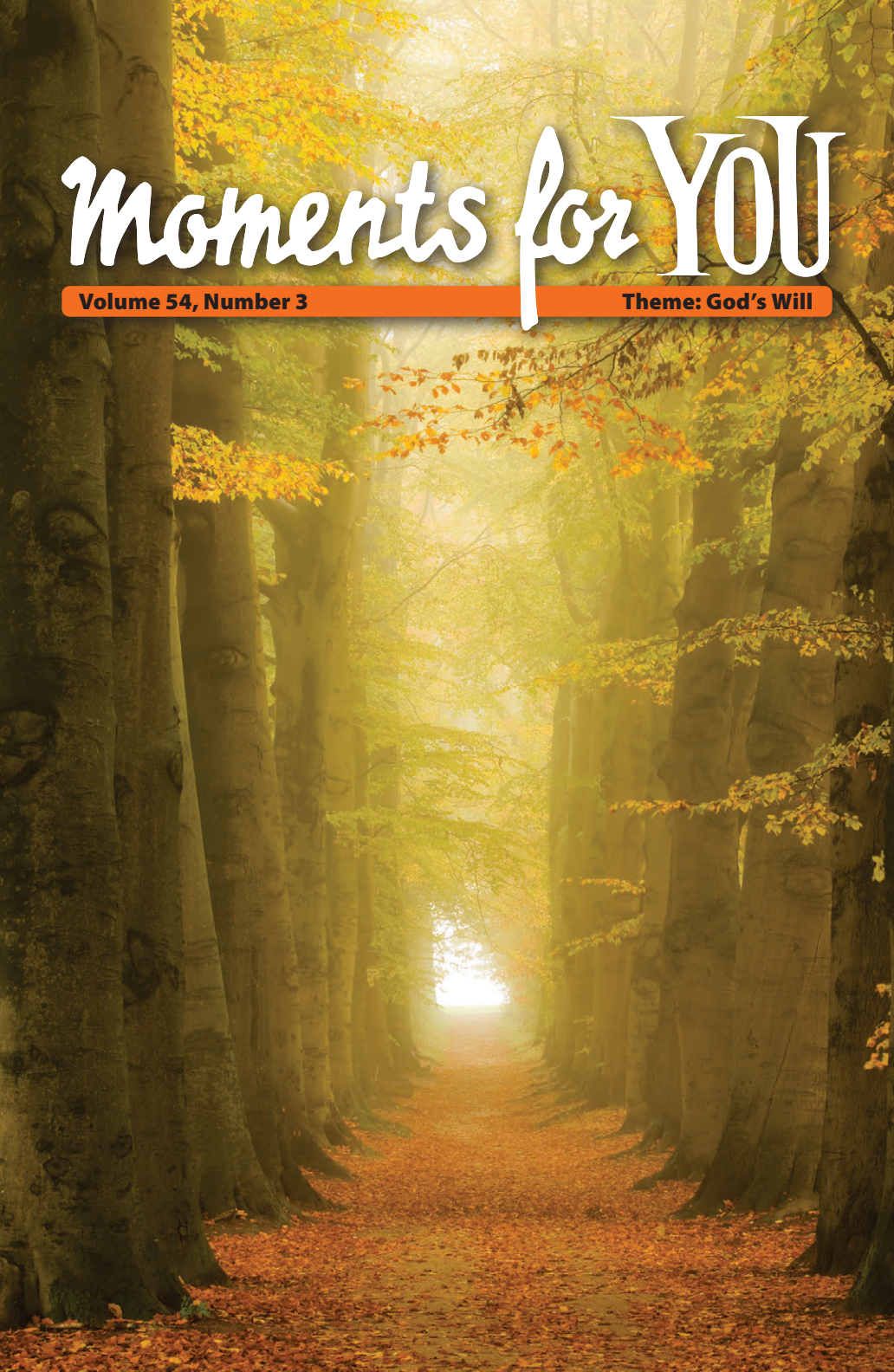


# Moments for YOU

Volume 54, Number 3

Theme: God's Will



## GOD'S WILL

The expression “*will of God*” is used in the Bible in two ways. God’s *sovereign will* is His secret plan that determines everything that happens in the universe. It is unknowable (except through history and prophecy). On the other hand, God’s *moral will* consists of revealed commands in the Bible that teach how people ought to believe and live.

### WHAT MORE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

The guidance God provides for Christian living through His *moral will* is more pervasive than many realize. Its abundance begins to emerge when we explore it in four distinct ways.

First, the moral will of God is the expression of the character of God. The following traits are among those that are to characterize the believer because they characterize the Godhead: holiness (1 Peter 1:15,16), righteousness (1 John 3:7), purity (1 John 3:3), love (Ephesians 5:1,2), forgiveness (Colossians 3:13), compassion (Luke 6:36), endurance (Hebrews 12:2-4), submission (1 Peter 2:21-24), humility and obedience (Philippians 2:5-8), kindness (Luke 6:35), and generosity in giving (2 Cor. 8:1-9).

Second, God in His grace made His moral will known to us, for it is *fully revealed* in the Bible, our final and complete authority for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16,17). It was authoritative for Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:4-10; 5:18) and His apostles (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Third, the imperatives of God’s moral will touch *every aspect and moment* of life because they prescribe the believer’s goals, motives, and attitudes, as well as his actions. To put

it differently, God is not concerned simply with *what* we do; He’s equally concerned with *why* and *how* we do it. God’s moral will shapes the believer’s perspective of reality, the context in which his decisions are made.

Finally, since the Bible expresses God’s own character, contains God’s complete revelation pertaining to faith and life, and touches every aspect and moment of life, it is able to equip believers for *every* good work. This is explicitly stated by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

### WHAT IS THE FIRST THING TO DO?

It is the moral will of God that each person believes on Christ and has eternal life. Believing in God’s existence is not enough; heart trust in Christ is what’s needed. The issue is man’s sin. God’s holiness has been violated, and the just penalty is God’s wrath. God’s love has not ignored His holiness, but satisfied it by paying the price for sin. The price was death, and the perfect Christ paid it in full. As a result of Christ’s sacrifice, God can offer forgiveness and eternal life as a gift—purchased at a precious price.

It is God’s moral desire that everyone accept this gift. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:3-6). In fact, God’s judgment against sin has been “postponed” so that all will have time to respond. “The Lord is ... longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

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No excuse for rejecting Christ is excusable. A friend of mine likes to put it this way: “If you refuse Christ, be sure that you have a real good excuse thought up because it’s the excuse you will give when you stand before God on judgment day.” It is the moral will of God that everyone trust Christ. It is the sovereign will of God that those who do will certainly have eternal life. “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 6:40).

Do you intend to live your life according to God’s will? The very first step of obedience is to turn to God in repentance and receive His salvation through faith in Christ.

#### OK, NOW WHAT?

The moral will of God has been well illustrated as the area enclosed by a circle. The interior of the circle contains all the commands and principles that are morally binding upon the believer. But any thought, attitude, or action that falls outside of that circle is sin (1 John 3:4). Thus, it is of supreme importance that the believer learn where the perimeter of that circle runs. Jesus told His disciples, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). The blessing of obedience is impossible apart from fulfillment of the first “if”—“if ye know these things.”

Accordingly, the Christian’s first responsibility is to gain a good understanding of what is included within God’s moral will. The source of such knowledge, as we have emphasized, is God’s Word. The process for gaining such an understanding includes reading (1 Timothy 4:13), careful consideration (2 Timothy 2:7), search and inquiry (1 Peter 1:10,11), diligence in study (2 Timothy 2:15), meditation

(Psalm 1:2; Joshua 1:8), memorization (Psalm 119:11), and learning from gifted Bible teachers (Philippians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 12:28,29). This requires time and effort!

The believer can expect that God will be at work within him to give understanding as he studies. Paul exhorted Timothy, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Timothy 2:7). The Holy Spirit of truth does not work to illuminate the Bible’s meaning apart from our diligent study, but rather through it.

#### YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND

As the Christian grows in his understanding of God’s moral will, he must also grow in his obedience to it. Obedience is one of the most important responsibilities believers have during this life. In his first epistle, John made a vivid contrast: “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17). John expected that the one born of God will give evidence that he is a new creature by his obedience to the moral will of God as a pattern of life. Throughout the epistle, he describes what such a lifestyle looks like: keeping the commands of God (2:3-6), living a life of love (4:7,8), and believing in true doctrine (2:21-23, 4:1-3; 5:1). These characteristics are not the basis for our salvation, but are rather evidence of it. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8,9), but genuine saving faith can never be separated from good works, which follow from it (Acts 26:20; Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26). Obedience to the moral will of God is of supreme value. It is not optional.

—Condensed from *Decision Making and the Will of God* by Garry Friesen with J. Robin Maxson. Copyright © 1980, 2004 by Garry Friesen. Published by Multnomah Publishers.

## DIVINE GUIDANCE

God is the shepherd of His people. He leads them (Psalm 23:1). He sent His Son to lead them (John 10:3). The assurance of God's guidance is one of the characteristics of the Christian. The very idea that God guides us implies that we live according to the *path* which He has laid down, that our lives have a *purpose* in the present, as well as a *destiny* for the future.

### THE DESTINY GOD HAS PLANNED

Why has God made me? What is my life for? The perspective of the believer throughout Biblical times was forward-looking. He was going somewhere, expecting something in the future. The epitome of unbelief is consequently illustrated in Lot's wife. Warned to flee, she looked back (Genesis 19:26). By contrast, the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11 are, without exception, characterized by anticipation, hope, and an expectation for the future (Hebrews 11:13).

Because we have a destiny, we become pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). The point is that our residence here is temporary. We do not really belong to this age. The child of God is a citizen of another world. His call to go home will one day come, but meanwhile he is establishing his life according to heavenly, rather than earthly principles. He has set his heart on the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1).

Do you notice that this elementary principle of the life of faith immediately solves some of the problems which many Christians have in knowing God's will? When he sets his mind on establishing a life patterned on heaven, many of these issues become irrelevant, because his life is being lived on a different plane altogether.

### THE PURPOSE GOD HAS ORDAINED

The essence of the Christian life is that God should be glorified in us. All that Christ did during His ministry had this motivation (John 12:28; 14:13; 17:1,4). The glory of God is a determining factor in the Christian life or ought to be. The purpose of our obedience and fruitfulness is always to bring glory to our Father (Matthew 5:16; John 15:8). When we have differences of opinion about a course of action, the decisive factor is to be "what tends most to the glory of God?" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

There is, in fact, no more basic question for us to ask than this: *Will this course of action tend to further the glory of God?* If we do not seek His glory, we cannot be walking in the way of His blessing. If we seek His glory, then we can be sure that we shall discover light shed on our paths.

### THE PATH GOD HAS LAID

God means to guide our lives so that they may reflect the glory of His Son. In order to accomplish this He calls us to be imitators of Christ. Jesus was called to leave aside His glory by taking the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). Christ humbled Himself under the mighty hand of God, and was in due season exalted (1 Peter 5:6). He suffered and then entered glory (Luke 24:26). The shape of His life was the pattern of the cross.

We can never repeat too often to one another that this remains the pattern of God's will and purpose in our lives. A familiarity with the way in which God works will bring enormous stability to our lives. It will make it possible for us to trust the purposes of God, even when they seem to be most painful. We will learn thus the paradox of the Christian life: it is a path to glory, through tribulations

(Acts 14:22). The way in which God leads us is the way of following Christ in bearing the cross. Any “guidance” which contradicts this principle will lack the familiar autograph of Christ. Any “voice” which beckons us to forsake this pathway will lack the accents of our Master.

So, when we come to Christ and ask: “Will you be my Shepherd and my Guide through life?” He asks in return: “Will you take up the cross daily, and follow Me?” Is that really our ambition? Do you really want this kind of divine guidance? Have you counted the cost? Will you deny yourself, take up the cross, and follow Christ into His perfect will for your life?

—From *Discovering God’s Will* copyright © 1982 Sinclair B. Ferguson. Published by Banner of Truth.

*“I know not the way He leads me, but well do I know my Guide.”*  
—Martin Luther

## GUIDANCE FOR THE GODLY

People would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God’s will, but there exists no means of ascertaining it without reference to the state of our own soul.

We sometimes seek God’s will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which His only will is that we *should not be found in them at all*; and where, if conscience were really in activity, its first effect would be to make us leave them. It is our own will which has put us there, but we should like nevertheless to enjoy the comfort of being guided of God in a path which we ourselves have chosen. “He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). You cannot exempt yourself from this moral law of Christianity.

The Lord must be known intimately if one would walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God’s will (Colossians 1:9,10). Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will.

—From “How to Know the Will of the Father” by J.N. Darby.

*“If the Lord’s business is made your principal business, I assure you that you will repeatedly have divine guidance in your Christian life.”*  
—A.J. Gordon

## THE ART OF WISDOM

*“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee” (Proverbs 4:7-9).*

The Hebrew word for wisdom refers to much more than an accumulation of facts. In the Old Testament this word was used for anyone who had an unusual degree of skill in a given area. For instance, if a potter could create beautiful tableware, he was said to have wisdom. The same thing would be said of a composer who could take notes and put them together to make beautiful music. The word means to be skilled in some area of life. Wisdom in the book of Proverbs might be defined as the ability to live life skillfully from God’s point of view.

The first step in acquiring wisdom is simply to desire it more than anything else. Like everything else in the spiritual realm, wisdom is free for the asking, but it will cost you all you have. Let no man think he will become wise by accident. No, a man must search after wisdom as if he were searching

for silver or gold; he must set aside trivial pursuits in favor of that which comes only from God.

You must turn from evil if you truly want wisdom. In one place we are told that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10); in another, that to fear the Lord means hating evil (8:13). You can live in the darkness or you can walk in the light, but you cannot do both at the same time. God invites you to a brand new life. Do you want wisdom? You can have it if you want it, but you must make the decision and pursue wisdom with all your heart.

But there is a further step you must take. It involves humbling yourself, admitting your need, confessing your lack, and asking God to help you (James 1:5). Several times Solomon warns against the man who is “wise in his own eyes” (Proverbs 26:12; 28:11). If you think you have arrived—well, you’re right, for with that attitude you aren’t going to go any further with the Lord. If you want wisdom, you can have it. It’s free, but it will cost you all you have.

—From *The ABC’s of Wisdom* copyright © 1997 by Ray Pritchard. Published by Moody Press.

## ONE STEP AT A TIME

*“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way” (Psalm 37:23).*

We often make a great mistake, thinking that God is not guiding us at all, because we cannot see far in front. But this is not His method. He only undertakes that the *steps* of a good man should be ordered by the Lord. Not next year, but tomorrow. Not the next mile, but the next yard. Not the whole pattern, but the next stitch in the canvas.

—From *The Secret of Guidance* by F.B. Meyer. Published by Moody Press.

## WAITING AND DOING

As is the case in some other areas of the Christian life, it is easy to go to extremes in one direction or another while trying to do God’s will. There are those who are so impatient to be up and doing that they find it difficult to wait long enough to learn what God wants. They plunge ahead in Christian activities hoping that God is pleased with what they are doing. Such Christians may become active in Christian service operations such as committees, planning groups, and evangelistic programs (all very good things if operated in His will, by the way), but are often lacking in the equally important functions of prayer, meditation, and study of God’s Word. If they engage in witnessing, they may force the issue with those they meet without waiting for the opportunities God’s Holy Spirit gives them, and may often offend. They are like unskilled but enthusiastic carpenter’s helpers who, in their eagerness, rush to bring boards and tools which are often unnecessary and which clutter up the work area. Far from helping, they may actually impede the work.

At the other end of the spectrum are Christians who are so obsessed with the idea of waiting on the Lord that they do little or nothing in Christian service. They are concerned that they may do the wrong thing and that their activities in Christian service may be “of the flesh” and not in accordance with the Spirit of God. Such Christians tend to think of themselves as simply puppets activated by the Holy Spirit rather than partners in God’s service. They spend commendable amounts of time in prayer and Bible study, but become so involved with thinking about their own spiritual condition that they often find it

difficult to give out a tract or engage in a teaching, pastoral, or gospel effort unless they feel especially and mystically led by God to do so. Like some of the ancient hermits, they can become so concerned with themselves and their own spirituality that they are of little use to either God or to their fellow Christians.

To avoid both of these extremes, remember that the great followers of God in both the Old and New Testaments were persons of decisive action and of prayer, and that God's Word counsels you to exercise the same combination of patience and energy. The same God who tells you to be "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16), also exhorts you to "Pray without ceasing ... for this is the will of God" (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18). By following all, not just part, of the scriptural pattern for the Christian life, you can be a useful and well-balanced Christian.

—From *That Voice Behind You* © copyright 1991 by Charles G. Coleman. Published by Loizeaux Brothers.

***"It is our duty to do our duty. This simple fact takes care of a large area of life for which no further guidance need be sought."***  
—J. Oswald Sanders

## HIDDEN DIRECTIONS?

If God has a wonderful plan for my life, as many evangelistic tracts tell us, then why doesn't He tell me what it is? After all, our lives down here are a confusing mess of fits and starts, dead ends and open doors, possibilities, and competing ideals. With so many decisions to face, it's no surprise many of us are desperate to know the will of God for our lives.

The "will of God" is one of the most confusing phrases in the Chris-

tian vocabulary. Sometimes we speak of things happening according to God's *sovereign* will. Other times we talk about being obedient and doing the *moral* will of God. And still other times we talk about finding the will of God. Most of the time what we are really hoping for is God's will of *direction*. What does God want me to do with my life? What job should I take? Where should I live? Those are the kinds of questions we ask when we seek God's will of direction.

So here's the real heart of the matter: Does God have a secret will of direction that He expects us to figure out before we do anything? And the answer is *no*. Yes, God has a specific plan for our lives. And yes, we can be assured that He works things for our good in Christ Jesus. And yes, looking back we will often be able to trace God's hand in bringing us to where we are. But while we are free to ask God for wisdom, He does not burden us with the task of divining His will of direction for our lives ahead of time.

Expecting God to reveal some hidden will of direction is an invitation to disappointment and indecision. God is not a Magic 8-Ball we shake up and peer into whenever we have a decision to make. He is a good God who gives us brains, shows us the way of obedience, and invites us to take risks for Him. We know God has a plan for our lives. That's wonderful. The problem is we think He's going to tell us the wonderful plan before it unfolds.

The better way is the Biblical way: *seek first* the kingdom of God, and then *trust* that He will take care of our needs, even before we know what they are and where we're going.

—From *Just Do Something* © 2009 by Kevin DeYoung. Published by Moody Publishers.

## DECISION MYTHS

*Here are some mistakes to avoid when seeking the will of God.*

*First, we must not think that because we want to do something, it can't possibly be God's will.* That attitude displays a distorted concept of the character of God. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4). As we delight ourselves in the Lord, our will and God's will begin to coincide.

*Second, we must not feel that every decision we make must have a subjective confirmation.* I have known people who couldn't act at all because they did not have some kind of liver-shiver about the whole thing.

*Third, if something is the will of God, then often a whole series of other things are, too.* For example, if God leads you to get married, you do not have to spend hours in prayer agonizing over whether or not it is the will of God that you should support your wife.

*Fourth, we must guard against the temptation to take Bible verses out of context to get God's will.* Some people seek guidance by randomly turning to a page and pointing to a verse. This violates the basic principle of interpreting the Bible in context, and God gets blamed for all kinds of things which are merely human stupidity.

*Fifth, we must not think that we can be sure we are in the will of God if we have no problems or stress.* Frequently, just when we take a step of obedience, the bottom falls out of everything. Consider the incident in Mark 4:35-40, as well as the deep distress of the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before His ultimate act of obedience. Peace is not a guarantee of God's will.

—Adapted from "Affirming the Will of God" by Paul Little.

## DECISION CHECKLIST

*Your answers to the following questions should help you evaluate your ability to make a God-honoring decision when faced with difficult choices.*

- Have I asked for God's help?
- Do I show that I trust God in every area of my life, not merely in this decision?
- Do I obey God's will as clearly revealed in the Bible?
- Am I operating on the basis of good reasons rather than changing feelings?
- Am I filling my mind with God's Word so that my mind is transformed?
- Are there Biblical commands or principles that apply to my specific situation?
- What are the alternatives and consequences of each possible option? How do these fare when evaluated by what the Bible says?
- Do my gifts, abilities, and weaknesses have a bearing on the decision? How?
- What decision will glorify God, build me up spiritually, and edify others?
- Have I sought out worthy advisors?
- Have I carefully evaluated the advice, not merely accepted or rejected it?
- Is this decision a matter of my own freedom?
- Would waiting be profitable or detrimental?
- Am I determined to obey and please God?

—From *How Can I Know What God Wants Me To Do?* © by RBC Ministries.