

How Do I Know God's Will?

Q. How is Christ a prophet?

A. As a prophet, Christ reveals the will of God to us for our salvation by His Word and Spirit.

(Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A #24)

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”

(Hebrews 1:1-2)

As you might imagine, as a pastor, I get asked a considerable amount of questions. In fact, a large percentage of my time is taken up with attempting to answer the questions that come up as faithful believers in Christ attempt to study God's Word and apply it to their lives. On a weekly basis, people ask me questions regarding theology, biblical studies, philosophy, worldviews and apologetics as well as practical questions about living as a Christ follower at home, at work or at school. As human beings, we are by nature highly inquisitive. We have an innate desire to learn, to discover and to uncover the truth. And with over 15 years of ministry experience, if you were to ask me what the most common question is that I've been asked by Christians, it is this: *“What is God's will for my life?”*

That question, *“what is God's will for my life?”* is the penultimate question for believers right next to *“what must I do to be saved?”*. We want to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God and so we are constantly asking the question, *“Which path does God want me to take?”*. Over the years as I've worked with college students, the question of discovering *“God's will”* comes up with even more frequency. Christian college students are always asking questions such as, *“Which major in college does God want me to pick? Which girl/guy does God want me to date? Which job does God want me to choose?”*. As Christian adults we are still faced with these kinds of questions. Adults will ask questions like, *“Which person does God want me to marry? Which career does the Lord want me to pursue?”*. Each of these types of questions come down to the subject of discovering God's will. So how do we determine God's will for our lives? The answer to this perennial question is found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A #24 where we read, *“As a prophet, Christ reveals the will of God to us for our salvation by His Word and Spirit”*. You see, in holding the office of a prophet, Jesus *“reveals the will of God to us...”*. And He reveals His will in two ways, *“by His Word and Spirit”*. So if we want to discover God's will

for our lives (*in regards to our sin, the way of salvation and the path to serving God*), we must, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, turn to God's Word for the answers.

There are two different types of God's "will" that we find in the Scriptures. The first is what is commonly described as God's "decretive will", or His sovereign will. It's His "eternal plan...by which, for His own glory, He has foreordained everything that happens" (*Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A #7*). In other words, God's "decretive will" is His *hidden* will, the plan of God that only He is aware of. Most of the time when people ask me, "what is God's will for my life?" they are asking me to help them determine God's "decretive will" for them as individuals. The problem is, God's hidden will is just that...it's hidden! This side of eternity we will never be able to determine God's "decretive will" for our lives. As John Calvin famously wrote, "When God closes His holy mouth, I will desist from inquiry".

However, there is another type of God's "will" that is given to us in the Bible, and that is God's "preceptive will", or His will of *precept*. A *precept* is a rule or a law that is used to regulate a person's behavior or thought. You see, we will never be able to determine God's decretive will, BUT, we are able to discover God's preceptive will for our lives. We can search the scriptures to discover God's precepts, His laws, and seek to follow those precepts to the best of our ability. So instead of us asking God the question, "Lord, just give me a sign! Which career move should I take?" we should be asking the question, "Lord which job will allow me to obey your precepts more faithfully? Which career will allow me to follow your laws more closely?". And if both careers allow you to follow God's laws faithfully, then we as Christians have the freedom to pick whichever job we like the best. As long as we choose that which is in line with God's preceptive will, we can never go wrong.

Dig Even Deeper into God's Word!

John 16:13
Hebrews 1:1,2
Micah 6:8