

# Learning the Will of the Lord

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“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” ([Eph. 5:17](#)).

- [Ephesians 5:17](#)

Every Christian, at one point or another, has asked this question: “What is God’s will for my life?” The drive to discover the will of the Lord is certainly understandable. After all, the Holy Spirit creates a desire in us to do what is pleasing to our triune Creator; thus, we want to follow Paul’s exhortation to seek that which the Lord approves ([Eph. 5:10](#); see [Phil. 2:12–13](#)).

Much of the time, our quest to know God’s will is related to matters of personal guidance. We want to answer questions such as these: “Who does the Lord want me to marry? Where does God want me to live? What is my vocation?” These questions are appropriate, and we can answer them by the principles for holiness revealed in Scripture. But the Bible never answers these kinds of questions directly; rather, we are responsible to apply biblical teaching wisely to our circumstances. Relying on the Holy Spirit who speaks through Scripture, we read God’s Word and seek advice from wise Christians to help us make decisions pleasing to the Lord.

Matters of personal guidance, despite their importance, are secondary when Scripture calls us to understand God’s will. Paul’s exhortation in [Ephesians 5:17](#) that those who walk in the light should not be foolish but instead know the will of the Lord is to be read in context. He has already defined God’s will as the union of all things in heaven and all things on earth (1:9–10). The divine goal is to bring together the whole of creation in submission to the King of kings — the Lord Jesus Christ. This goal begins to be fulfilled in the church as the Savior, in His fullness, unites Jew and Gentile into one corporate body animated by love and intent on submitting to His lordship (1:22–23; 2:11–22; 3:1–21).

Understanding the will of the Lord, then, means that we emphasize the church’s need to be united in truth and love. It means that we discern our role in fostering this union. Those who are foolish, the characteristic that marks out those who misunderstand God’s will ([Eph. 5:17](#)), seek to divide the body and

engage in the impure acts that Paul warns us against in this epistle (4:17–6:20). Wise people who love the Lord’s will, on the other hand, promote Christian unity and submit to the principles for sanctified living found in Ephesians and in all of Scripture.

#### Application of God

Knowing the will of the Lord — a church united in truth and love — is easy. Fulfilling our part in accomplishing this end, however, is more difficult. On account of our fallenness, we do not readily seek harmony but are more apt to gossip and backbite. Furthermore, we often prize our own opinions over the truth. If we are guilty of these sins, then we are not acting to fulfill God’s will but are foolish, unprofitable servants.

#### Passages for Further Study

[Ezekiel 37:15–28](#)

[Galatians 5:13–14](#)

[1 Peter 3:8](#)

[1 John 4:7–12](#)