

Knowing God's Will

(appropriate for High Schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily, January 2016

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

(find 3 students who are good readers/actors to come to the front of the class and read the parts for the man, woman, and narrator)

Narrator: A young woman prays that God would give her a godly man to marry. Someone who is passionate about following God and obeying His Word. One day, a handsome young man shows up and he thinks she's beautiful. There's an instant, mutual attraction. They get to know each other and date. One of their conversations goes something like this:

Man: *"I've been learning a lot from God lately in my quiet time. Take Matthew chapter 6 for example. Jesus talks about all the things the people of the world worry about and eagerly seek – food, clothing, jobs, spouses, money, etc. But then Jesus says that if we seek Him and His kingdom with everything we've got then, guess what - He will just give us all the other things! Isn't that radical? That's how I want to live my life! What about you. What has God been teaching you?"*

Narrator: As the young woman sits there, looking into his eyes, she realizes that she doesn't really have much of a daily time with God reading the Bible. Then she says:

Woman: *"Oh, well God has been reminding me of how much He loves us and all the ways He gives us grace"*

Man: *"What ways specifically?"*

Woman: *"Lots of ways. There are just too many to name, don't you think?"*

Man: *"You know, when I moved here, I travelled by airplane, and one of the things I like to do on airplanes is share the gospel with the person sitting next to me. I have a 5 minute way of doing it using 11 memorized verses. Its hard for people stuck on an airplane to say no to a short 5 minute presentation! It was awesome to see God working in the guy. He was stunned that God would go to so much effort to give him eternal life for free. He didn't become a Christian but God is definitely working in his life. What about you. How do you share the gospel?"*

Narrator: As the young woman sits there, looking into his eyes, she realizes that she hasn't really ever tried to share the gospel with anyone. Then she says:

Woman: *"The way I do it is, I try to be there for people. I think that's important. If you are there for them, they'll feel like they can ask you questions if they want. If they ask, then I try to answer their questions as best I can or I invite them to come to church with me".*

Man: *"Let's pray. I'll pray first then you can finish us up. Lord, plow up the hard ground of our hearts and use your Word to send roots downward and bear fruit upward in our lives for your glory. Like a mirror Lord, use your Word to show us who we really are, compared to what you want us to be. Drop your Word like a plumb line against our lives and reveal to us where we are falling short in our obedience to you. And Lord, we ask that you would keep us in the center of your will for our lives and we ask that you would use any means necessary to accomplish this."*

Woman: *"Lord, thank you for the many blessings you give us. Please be with those who are travelling and keep them safe and help my brother recover quickly from his illness. In Jesus name. Amen."*

Are they "hitting it off"? (a little but not exactly) Why or why not?

There was clearly an initial attraction between them which led them to date each other. Is that attraction growing or not? (doesn't look like its growing)

What feelings might the young woman be having?

(discomfort – she's struggling to find something to share because she doesn't really have anything)

What feelings might the young man be having? (perhaps a little disappointed)
What do you think will most likely happen with this couple? (most likely they will stop dating soon)
Did God answer the young woman's prayer? (yes, He did)
Is it God's will for them to marry each other? (probably not) Why or why not?

We will come back to this couple at the end of our study and discuss how things might have gone differently.

The Key to Knowing God's Will - Obedient Action

Knowing God's will is actually not a mystery. Its one of those things in life that is simple, but not easy. Losing weight is also one of those things. Its simple to understand (exercise more, eat less), but its not easy to do. Knowing God's will is also simple to understand, but its not easy to do.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

How much of the path does a lamp reveal when you are in darkness? Does it reveal the entire path from start to finish? No, it reveals the next step on the path. The same is true with God's will. God reveals one step of His will at a time to us. And how much He reveals and when, depends on how we respond. If we respond to the revealed next step with obedient action, then God reveals another step to us. But if we don't respond with obedient action then God stops. God is a gentleman. He does not force anything on us – including His will. He will wait patiently for us to decide to obey Him again, even if it takes years. Until that happens, though, He doesn't really have much else to say to us. He's not angry, He loves us and will wait patiently for us to obey. But until then there is not much more to reveal to us.

Let's see what happened to Naaman. Naaman was a four star general in the Syrian army but he also had leprosy.

II Kings 5:1, 9-14

Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, *but he was a leper.*

⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and *you will be clean.*" ¹¹ But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' ¹² Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you *to do some* great thing, would you not have done *it*? How much more *then*, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.

What was God's will for Naaman? God's will was for Naaman to make a choice to either obey God or not. At first He refused to obey God because the task God gave him was too simple. It was beneath his dignity. As a four star general Naaman was expecting to be given some big thing to do, but because it seemed too small he didn't want to do it. Fortunately, Naaman eventually made the right decision, obeyed God, and was healed. But what if Naaman had refused to obey God? What would have happened? He would have remained a leper. Would that have been God's will? Yes. God was OK with whatever decision Naaman made because either way God would be glorified. God is glorified when those who obey Him receive special blessings and He is also glorified when those who don't obey him don't receive those blessings. So, both outcomes were within God's will and God let Naaman's decision determine which outcome would occur. But notice who is calling the shots here. Its not Naaman. Its God.

If you are a non-christian what is God's will for you? Its to make a choice to become a Christian or not. But what if you say, "I might become a Christian in the future, but before I do, God, tell me what your will for me will be if I do for the next 10 years"? What will happen then? Nothing. Until you obey God and become a Christian, there is nothing else to talk about. So, God will wait patiently for you to become a Christian. After that happens then He will reveal the next step in His will for you. If that does not happen then you are done. There is nothing more to talk about.

By the way, what is the next step in God's will for you after you become a Christian? Its to get baptized.

Acts 22:12-16

"A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. ¹⁴ And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

But what if you say, "I don't feel like getting baptized right now. That's a lot of trouble. I would have to change my routine and, besides, I don't really feel like getting wet right now. Besides, baptism isn't even a salvation issue, right?" Is God going to reveal more of His will for you? Why should He? You are not willing to obey what He has told you to do and get baptized. So, God will wait patiently for you to obey Him and get baptized. After that happens then He will reveal the next step in His will for you. See how that works?

So, if you are a Christian and you want to know God's will but you have not been baptized yet, what do you need to do?

John 13:17

If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

The only part of your Bible knowledge that counts with God is the part that you have put into obedient action. The rest is worthless.

James 1:21-25

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

James 4:17

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Actually, Bible knowledge not acted upon is worse than worthless. It becomes a negative.

I Corinthians 8:1

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

Two Kinds of Christians

If you want to be continually growing in the knowledge of God's will this is the type of person you will need to become:

Isaiah 66:2

"For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

God loves all of us and gives salvation as a gift freely. But if you want to be a person that God pays close attention to, you need to be a person who "trembles at His word". What does that mean, to "tremble at His word"? It means to treat it with great care, pay attention, and do exactly what it says. We don't play with it.

"The Bible says that God made the entire universe in 6 days but I believe in the Big Bang"

– is that trembling at God's word? No.

"The Bible says that God personally created Adam and Eve but I believe in evolution"

– Is that trembling at God's word? No.

"The Bible says to be baptized but I'm just not going to do it.

– Is that trembling at God's word? No.

I could go on and on with examples. When God says something in His Word, we don't argue with it, we take it seriously, we work to understand it in detail, and we take action.

Proverbs 13:13

The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, But the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.

Which type of Christian are you? Do you tremble at God's Word or do you despise His word by being an expert at the casual "quick dismissal" of God's command? Those who are experts at the "quick dismissal" of what God says will pay a price far higher than they are aware of.

(John 14:15)

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

John 14:21

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.

God reveals more understanding of Himself, including His will, to those Christians who focus the energy and resources of their lives on obeying Him. Starting with small things:

Luke 16:10-11

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹ Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

If He gives you a small thing to do and you don't do it, there is nothing much more for God to talk to you about, is there?

James 4:8

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Once God has revealed something to you that He wants you to do, the next step is yours.

Psalm 143:10

Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

God will lead us as long as we continue to obey Him.

Luke 9:23

And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

This is the most difficult part of knowing God’s will. Continuously putting into obedient action whatever He is revealing to you of His Will. Focus on this and the rest is easy.

The Rest

If you are continually obeying Him in the things He has revealed in His Word then two things will happen:

- 1) God will block you from doing things He doesn’t want you to do. He will close doors on you.

Acts 16:6-7

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; ⁷ and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

- 2) God will invite you (through other people and circumstances) to participate in things He knows you are now ready for (ministries, marriage, etc.).

Hebrews 5:1-4

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;² he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness;³ and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. ⁴ And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

You will receive invitations from others to “come over and help us with X”. For example, let’s say I was the pastor of a church but a family emergency required that I be out of town on Sunday. Who can I trust to preach from my pulpit? Who can I trust with such a serious responsibility? Letting the wrong person speak could be a major disaster. As I scan my memory trying to think of someone, it comes to me. It’s Mr. Johnson (one of the adult leaders in the class). I’ve known Mr. Johnson for years. I’ve seen his passion for following Christ and his obedience to God’s Word. Out of 1,000 men in the church, Mr. Johnson is the only person I can trust to preach next Sunday. So, I call Mr. Johnson and explain the situation and ask if he would preach from the pulpit for me next Sunday. Why did Mr. Johnson receive this invitation? Because his many years of obedient action have brought him to the point where God believes he is now ready and is inviting him (calling him) to take this next step. But what if Mr. Johnson had not been faithful in obedient action all those years? Then the invitation would never have been offered to him.

Another “invitation” that will happen, because of your years of obedient action, is the invitation to “come over and help me by marrying me”.

Now, not every invitation is from God but some invitations you will receive as a result of your faithful habit of obedient action - invitations that you otherwise would not have received.

Back to the Young Couple

Let’s go back to the young couple we started with. How might their relationship have been different? What if, years ago, the young woman had been more faithful in obeying God in small things such as reading her Bible regularly and learning to share the gospel. How might that have changed the outcome of the relationship?

Instead of discomfort and disappointment, they might have found themselves encouraged by each other, resonating on the same wavelength, and drawing closer in their relationship. They likely would have ended up marrying each other.

Would that have been God's will? Yes.

But just like the example of Naaman, the outcome of their relationship will be determined by the choices each of them made over the years of whether to consistently obey God or not.

Conclusion

Right now satan is telling you, "Hey don't get so serious about this Christian stuff. There's no one your age out there who is taking this stuff that seriously. Back it off a little."

But here's the truth: There are people out there who are your age and who are passionate about following Christ and obeying His word. They exist. And someday you are going to meet them.

Wouldn't it be sad if, when you meet them, you realize, "Oh, my gosh, these types of Christians actually exist!" And then you realize, "And I'm not one of them." Then, the opportunity passes you by and you have to live with that for the rest of your life. It would be really sad if that happened to you, wouldn't it?

You don't want to be that girl, do you? You don't want to be that guy, do you?

But getting a godly spouse is not a goal, it a mere side benefit God gives you as you focus on following and obeying Him (**Matthew 6:25-33, Psalm 37**)

Think about it: Getting you a godly person to marry is trivial for God. Its not even hard. If you are living in obedient action to Him, He will take care of it for you. That's the easy part.

The hard part is getting you to consistently obey Him.

Appendix A – The Dialog Script

Narrator: A young woman prays that God would give her a godly man to marry. Someone who is passionate about following God and obeying His Word. One day, a handsome young man shows up and he thinks she's beautiful. There's an instant, mutual attraction. They get to know each other and date. One of their conversations goes something like this:

Man: *"I've been learning a lot from God lately in my quiet time. Take Matthew chapter 6 for example. Jesus talks about all the things the people of the world worry about and eagerly seek – food, clothing, jobs, spouses, money, etc. But then Jesus says that if we seek Him and His kingdom with everything we've got then, guess what - He will just give us all the other things! Isn't that radical? That's how I want to live my life! What about you. What has God been teaching you?"*

Narrator: As the young woman sits there, looking into his eyes, she realizes that she doesn't really have much of a daily time with God reading the Bible. Then she says:

Woman: *"Oh, well God has been reminding me of how much He loves us and all the ways He gives us grace"*

Man: *"What ways specifically?"*

Woman: *"Lots of ways. There are just too many to name, don't you think?"*

Man: *"You know, when I moved here, I travelled by airplane, and one of the things I like to do on airplanes is share the gospel with the person sitting next to me. I have a 5 minute way of doing it using 11 memorized verses. Its hard for people stuck on an airplane to say no to a short 5 minute presentation! It was awesome to see God working in the guy. He was stunned that God would go to so much effort to give him eternal life for free. He didn't become a Christian but God is definitely working in his life. What about you. How do you share the gospel?"*

Narrator: As the young woman sits there, looking into his eyes, she realizes that she hasn't really ever tried to share the gospel with anyone. Then she says:

Woman: *"The way I do it is, I try to be there for people. I think that's important. If you are there for them, they'll feel like they can ask you questions if they want. If they ask, then I try to answer their questions as best I can, or I invite them to come to church with me".*

Man: *"Let's pray. I'll pray first then you can finish us up. Lord, plow up the hard ground of our hearts and use your Word to send roots downward and bear fruit upward in our lives for your glory. Like a mirror Lord, use your Word to show us who we really are, compared to what you want us to be. Drop your Word like a plumb line against our lives and reveal to us where we are falling short in our obedience to you. And Lord, we ask that you would keep us in the center of your will for our lives and we ask that you would use any means necessary to accomplish this."*

Woman: *"Lord, thank you for the many blessings you give us. Please be with those who are travelling and keep them safe and help my brother recover quickly from his illness. In Jesus name. Amen."*

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Knowing God's Will*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Psalm 119:105*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Kings 5:1-14*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Acts 22:12-16*

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Knowing God's Will*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 13:17, James 4:17, I Corinthians 8:1*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *James 1:21-25*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Isaiah 66:2, Proverbs 13:13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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THEME: *Knowing God's Will*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 14:15, John 14:21*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 16:10-11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *James 4:8*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 9:23*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Acts 16:6-7*

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JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Knowing God's Will*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 5:1-4*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 6:25-33*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Psalms 37*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?