

CLI Leadership Bible Study: Lesson 11

How to positively influence the attitudes and actions of others for Jesus Christ

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day One) *Choosing God's Will*

A leader's faith is intertwined with knowing God's will. As we learned in Lesson 10, *Faith of a Leader*, God is faithful and desires our trust. Our faith not only allows us to rest in God's plans but also to step out boldly when He calls us for a special mission or task.

God has a will and has given every normal functioning human being a will also. He is the Creator, and His will is perfect and powerful. Our will is imperfect and limited in scope.

Definition: The noun will is defined as the mental faculty (ability) by which a person decides upon and controls his own actions or those of others. It is the part of the mind that makes decisions. Will is also defined as that which is desired or determined; something that someone wants to happen.

The year was 2006 and my husband Anders and I were living in a townhome. In reading the gospels, I was moved by Christ's life and teachings to live a simpler lifestyle. We had sold our large house four years earlier when Anders joined CLI full time. We prayed and agreed that we should sell our townhome. Right after we placed the 'for sale' sign in the yard, God gave us a new vision for Christian Library International. The vision was for a mission center to train former inmates to become missionaries.

Anders and I would live on the property with the men and women God was calling into full time missions. The program, designed for a two-year period, would combine active ministry and academic learning. CLI's regular ministry of providing Christian books and Bibles to the imprisoned would continue to operate at the mission center.

This is what I wrote at the time in 2007: "Today is Thursday and our movers are scheduled to arrive next week on Wednesday. We looked at an apartment around the corner from the CLI offices and went on the internet to inquire about rentals. It put me in a bad mood. It didn't feel right. What is God's will for us? Do we look for a rental as a backup plan or do we wait? What will we do with our furniture and clothes? Where do we live?"

*This is what I wrote the next day: "This morning in prayer God revealed to me that part of our current situation has to do with writing this lesson. It is a real life drama of walking with God and knowing His will. I had prayed: *God, Please just tell me what You would like me to do and I will do it. If You want us to look for a place to live, I will do it. If You want us to face the movers without an address and put our belongings into storage, we will do that also.*"*

"But God is quiet or I'm not hearing correctly. You see I have a dilemma. Do I wait in faith or is this waiting a misuse of God's gift of wisdom? Perhaps I am not adequately using the reasoning

and planning skills that God has given me. It does seem somewhat irresponsible not to make plans. We continue to pray.”

Perhaps you have faced similar situations. You know whatever God desires is best. He has complete wisdom and complete knowledge. The challenge arises between one choice or another. *Will we choose correctly?*

Our will is our command post for making decisions and choosing a course of action. This is what we call *free* will. God has commanded us to obey Him and we have the freedom to choose. If we decide to follow Him, there are rewards and if we decide not to, there are consequences. Our *free* will assures our autonomy (independence) to choose.

The will can override our intellect and emotions; it keeps us functioning as we wish. For example, emotionally we may not like a person, but we can make a decision to act kindly and friendly anyway. Our desires, determinations and decisions, however, must be in accord with the created order of time, space and circumstances. We cannot turn the clock back, decide to fly over the moon or change certain situations.

Read Genesis 2:15-17 and answer questions 1-5:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:15-17

1. Who took Adam, the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden (v.15)?

****See end of lesson for repeat of questions and blank spaces for you to write your answers.**

When all the questions have been completed, return your answer sheets to CLI. You may keep this lesson for your own study or review. You may also pass it on to another or discard.

2. Did Adam have a choice about being placed in the Garden? Yes No (Circle One)

3. Did Adam have a free choice to follow God's will in the Garden? Yes No (Circle One)

4. What was God's command and will for Adam (v. 16-17)?

5. What was the consequence of not following God's command, or His will (v. 17)?

Adam and his wife, Eve, chose *not* to follow God. They ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was *not* God's plan for them. God is just (fair, impartial) and always morally correct. Therefore, He held Adam and Eve responsible for their actions. They were forced to leave the Garden and eventually their bodies grew old and died. Their sinful choice has affected all mankind since.

Joshua, a great leader of God's people knew the importance of man's free will. Before he died Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He reminded them of the LORD's faithfulness and exhorted (urged, encouraged) them to fear and serve Him.

Read Joshua 24:15 and answer questions 6-7:

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15

6. What choice did the Israelites have?
7. How did Joshua use his will in this verse?

The Israelites had the choice to serve God or idols. As much as Joshua wanted them to follow God, he could not make them serve God from their heart. In the secrecy of their homes, they could set up shrines to false gods or practice pagan religions. Joshua could not control their will.

In the same way, the Christian leader cannot force people to follow Christ. You can pray for them, set a good example, teach, exhort and hope, but ultimately it is their decision. They have their own free will to follow Christ when the Holy Spirit moves within their lives (John 3:6-8).

But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.
2 Chronicles 26:16

8. Read 2 Chronicles 26:16. King Uzziah started out seeking God and His will for the people. God had given him success and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt. But after Uzziah became powerful, what happened?

King Uzziah became arrogant with his own self importance. He decided that he could take control of the way things were run. He did not need to follow God's plans and laws. After all he was the king.

They confronted him and said, "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the LORD God."
2 Chronicles 26:18

9. Read 2 Chronicles 26:18. What seems to be the motivation of the priests who confronted Uzziah?

The priests, the leaders of the temple, warned the king that he was out of God's will. He was not following God's desires and plans for the way the altar of incense was to function (Numbers 16:39-40). Although God had made Uzziah the king over Israel, he had overstepped his boundaries. In this case the priests were courageous leaders confronting the king with the truth of his sin. It seems they were truly concerned about God's will and the well being of their king.

King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house--leprous, and excluded from the temple of the LORD. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land. 2 Chronicles 26:21

10. Read 2 Chronicles 26:21. What were the consequences for King Uzziah seeking his own will and not God's?

King Uzziah lost his leadership position. God could not trust him to follow His plans. Therefore He removed him from His presence and chose another to govern the Israelites. This is a good reminder to us that God does control or move people according to His plans and purposes (Exodus 4:21; Psalm 115:3; Ecclesiastes 2:26). Our free choice in no way hinders God's sovereignty.

Definition: The sovereignty of God describes His supreme rule over the universe. He is the source of and Lord over all creation. All things depend upon God. Psalm 24:1-2 teaches this truth: *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; ² for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.*

Personal Application:

11. Consider how the use of your free will may affect others and outline any changes that you plan to make in your life:

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Two) Forsaking Our Will

God is sovereign; He exercises authority and power over all creation. He does so in harmony with His holy and loving character. God is the source of all goodness and therefore we can rest in His rule. He wants us to know His will and have a purposeful life.

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Isaiah 30:21

12. Read Isaiah 30:21. What is God saying to the Israelites (and to us) about knowing His will?

Although we may not hear an audible voice, God promises He will direct us in His will. He will show us the right path, no matter the situation. Consider that God's Word speaks to us constantly of His will and purpose. His purpose is to bring us and His whole creation into fellowship with Him through Christ Jesus.

God has the ability and the power to decide all things and control all things. Man's will works within the parameters (limits) God has set up in creating the world. God alone is unlimited. Therefore theologians¹ distinguish between God's *decretive* will and His *perceptive* will.

Definition: God's *decretive will* defines His ability to decree (order) whatever He desires to happen. It is sometimes called God's absolute or sovereign will and refers to the hidden or secret things of God.

God does not tell us everything that He desires for us and for the world. We could not possibly comprehend or understand it all. Just think of parents telling their one year old about certain

¹ A theologian is an expert in, or student of, theology. Theology is the study of God or religion.

career choices or how the earth rotates around the sun. Well, we are always that one year old to God. The vastness of His decisions and rule over the universe is absolutely phenomenal.

God may also keep certain things that directly affect us hidden in order to strengthen our faith, keep us from needless worry, or keep us focused on the work before us. Not knowing what will happen next in our lives can keep us humble and wholly dependent on YHWH Yireh (The LORD Provides).

In the same way that God does not share all His plans with us, we may not disclose our plans to other people. Of course we cannot hide anything from God. He knows all of our thoughts and motivations (Hebrews 4:13).

The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand." Isaiah 14:24 (Sworn is defined as taking an oath or unwavering resolve.)

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.¹¹ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do. Isaiah 46:10-11

13. Read Isaiah 14:24 and 46:10-11. What is God saying in these verses?

Definition: God's *perceptive will* describes the way He directs humans in the duties that belong to us. This would include the teachings and commandments in the Bible. This is the part of God's will that He desires for mankind but that He allows to be disobeyed.

Perceptive will is also known as God's revealed will. In other words He makes His divine truth known in order for us to choose correctly. The Bible is a record of God's desires and plans for us. He wants us to know how to follow Him in all matters, great or small.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 and answer questions 14-16:

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable,⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

Definition: Sanctification (sanctified) refers to both the believer's position of being "holy" in Christ and the process of becoming holy (transformed into His image). Believers are holy in that we are "set apart" or "consecrated" for God's holy use or purpose.

14. Fill in the blank. It is God's will that you should be (v. 4:3a) _____

15. The Apostle Paul teaches believers to live a sanctified life. List his instructions in this regard:

16. Fill in the blank. Paul compares lustful passion to not knowing (V. 4:5) _____

Perhaps you are having difficulty controlling your sexual passion or another kind of sin. Remember that you are not alone but have the Holy Spirit. When you live in the Spirit, you will not be doing what the sinful flesh craves (Galatians 5:16).

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Bible and how God wants us to apply the teaching to our lives. He also guides us in all truth and gives us direction in everyday decisions (John 16:13). Nevertheless, the Spirit does not make us obey God, we still have free will to follow.

17. How does God's will and sovereignty function with our free will and autonomy (self-rule)?

First and foremost, God has complete control over all creation and whatever He decides or purposes to do, it will be done (Isaiah 14:27). Therefore God's plans for our world and creation will prevail. If He calls a person to do a job and that person refuses, He can make that person do it, or simply call another. The man or woman who is made to do a particular job and does not do so willingly, forfeits (loses) any reward or approval by God. God's overall plans will not fail.

However, we can fail to answer God's call and pay the consequences. For example, God desires everyone to come to repentance, but not everyone will (2 Peter 3:9, 2:9; Revelation 20:11-15). God has a good plan for everyone; however, not everyone will do what is necessary to partake of those plans (Psalm 40:5; Galatians 1:6-7).

There are various reasons why Christians do not follow God's desires and determined plan. First, they may not believe God has their best interests at heart and simply do not trust God. Second, they may think that they have a better plan than God and prefer having control to execute it. Third, their knowledge of God is lacking. They have not spent enough time reading and studying God's Word to know Him and what He requires. Fourth, there is a lack of commitment or zeal. They know what they should do but will not make the effort.

For these reasons and others, **there is a constant challenge: Do I do God's will or my own?** Following God's will not only brings you rewards in heaven but a full and complete life now (John 10:10; Revelation 22:12). Nevertheless, the route going through God's will may be painful. In those times when you feel that your heart is going to break, it is tempting to try to change and tweak God's plans or think you misread God's will altogether.

When Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) trusted Jesus at seventeen, he offered himself to God's service. He heard God's call to go to China and knew that was God's will for his life. He gave up a comfortable lifestyle and began serious Bible study as well as learning the Chinese language.

Hudson met and fell in love with a lovely music teacher. They were engaged, and his cherished hope for two years was for her to share his life in missionary service. But then came the challenge. Her father decided that he did not want his daughter to go to China. The young woman did not really want to go to China, either. They both urged Hudson to stay in England where they could have a good life and serve the Lord together as a married couple.

Hudson really wanted to marry this young Christian woman. He could have easily justified his decision and tried to serve the Lord in England. Certainly there was a lot of Kingdom work to be done right there. Love between a man and a woman is a strong emotion. He was in great pain and sorrow. But he met the challenge and chose God's will; he chose China.

He wrote of this experience, "Yes, He has humbled me and shown me what I am, revealing Himself as a present, a very present help in time of trouble. And though He does not deprive me of feeling in my trial, He enables me to sing, 'Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.'...Now I am happy in my Saviour's love. I can thank Him for *all*, even the most painful experience of the past, and trust Him without fear for all that is to come."²

Mr. Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission, is often referred to as 'the father of modern missions.' When he died in 1905, he left behind 849 missionaries and 125,000 Chinese Christians. It has been said that the Christianity that exists in China today is due largely to the efforts of this one faithful man.³

As a leader, your job is to help Christians see that following God's will is always the right choice. Satan is always ready to tempt you and those whom you shepherd to take the way of the flesh. What feels good must be right. "Why would I *feel* this way if this was not the way God wanted me to go?"

Read Mark 14:34-36 and answer questions 18-21:

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.³⁶ "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Mark 14:34-36

Definition: The cup in this passage symbolizes God's wrath poured out in divine judgment against sinners (Psalm 75:8; Habakkuk 2:16; Revelation 14:9-10)).

18. In your own words, explain how Jesus felt the night before he was crucified (v. 34)?

19. What did Jesus do when He was overwhelmed to the point of death (v. 35)?

20. In His prayer to the Father, what three things did Jesus say to Him (v. 36)?

21. If faced with intense suffering, will you say: "*Yet not what I will, but what you will?*"
Yes No Not sure (Circle One) Explain your answer and share your thoughts on this question:

Recall from Lesson One that Jesus is our Model. Hudson Taylor followed our same Model. This is why Hudson did **not** say, "I'm in love and surely God doesn't care *where* I serve Him." Hudson did not try to justify his love and desire for this young Christian woman and marry her. Hudson knew in his soul what Jesus expected and what His Savior had done for him on the cross.

² Taylor, Dr. & Mrs., Hudson's Taylor's Spiritual Secret, The Bible Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, 1989.

³ Christie, Vance, Hudson Taylor, Barbour Publishing, Inc, Uhrichsville, OH, 1990.

Jesus did **not** say, "I am so overwhelmed with sorrow so my Father must not want me to go to the cross." Nor did He say, "I'm God's only Son and He wants me to be happy and free from pain." If Jesus had relied on His human feelings, we would still be in our sins.

Hudson followed Jesus in forsaking his human will. When we choose God's will, we are forsaking our own. That means that we are giving up or renouncing what God has given us a right to have. In other words, He gave us free will but as Christian leaders we surrender it in favor of His plans and purposes. **A note of caution:** keep all truths in balance. Not all of God's plans for you will be difficult. As you develop a heart like His, you will joyfully choose rightly.

22. How might we pray for you in regard to following God's will in your life?

23. Personal Application: Memorize: Mark 14:34-36

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Three) Rewards for doing God's will

There are rewards for doing God's will, and we will look at four. **The first and incomparable reward of choosing God's will is intimacy with Jesus.** Your relationship and closeness with Jesus is actually the hallmark of a Christian leader. The temporal (brief, worldly) things that you give up are nothing compared to living in God's presence (Genesis 15:1; Philippians 3:8).

Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:49-50

Read Matthew 12:49-50 and answer questions 24-25:

24. Jesus says: "For whoever does the _____ of my _____ in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

25. What point do you think Jesus is making?

Jesus loved His earthly mother, Mary (John 19:26-27). God had called her to carry, nurture and raise Him. Yet when she and the family came looking for Jesus, He made it clear that whoever acts in accordance with God's will has just as much importance and intimacy. Indeed, in this case His disciples had moved spiritually into this close, familial position and his biological family had moved down a notch.

Mary and her adult children were not coming to Jesus in God's will but in their own will. They incorrectly thought that Jesus was "out of His mind" and wanted "to take charge of Him" (Mark 3:20-21). Perhaps they were concerned about the family's reputation or perhaps they were truly anxious about Jesus' health. Whatever the reason, the result was the same: they were trying to prevent Jesus from accomplishing God's purpose.

26. What apostle also tried to keep Jesus from God's will (Matthew 16:21-23)?

27. Can you share a time when someone tried to keep you from God's will because he or she thought they were trying to protect you?

In God's economy, one must die to self (John 12:24-27) to gain the reward of a close and an intimate relationship with the Lord. That means standing up to anyone, including family members, who would keep you from doing God's will. No matter how loving their intentions may be, we must not let them deter (prevent) us from God's purpose.

The second reward of choosing God's will is successful work. You and the people that you lead want to have a positive and fruitful life. No one wants to labor for nothing. A farmer does not want to toil (labor) in the fields day after day and never harvest (gather) anything.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

28. Read John 15:5. How do you bear much fruit (have meaningful Kingdom work)?

In order to bear fruit we must remain in Jesus and He in us. Jesus has already promised His disciples that He will be with them *to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:20). He is with us for the long haul. At question is our faithfulness. Remaining in Jesus means that it is a full-time commitment. We follow Him in all situations and are always loyal to Him. His priorities are our priorities. His concerns are our concerns. His will is our will.

The third reward of choosing God's will is assurance. Even though outward circumstances may seem frightful or devastating, we know that God is working through them all for our good. We have been called according to His purpose and we will be conformed to the likeness of Jesus.

Read Romans 8:28-29 and answer questions 29-30:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:28-29

29. When you choose God's will for your life, what promise or assurance do you have when things look bleak? (v. 28)

30. According to v. 29 what is the good that God will work out for those who love Him?

The fourth and final reward of choosing God's will is an excellent plan for your life now and a glorious eternal future. Although we are highlighting four rewards, you may think of others. Pray and thank God for these and all rewards that He has graciously given to us.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

31. According to Jeremiah 29:11, the LORD has plans to _____ you and not to _____ you, plans to give you hope and a _____

Specifically this verse comes from a letter written by the prophet Jeremiah to the surviving elders, priests and other people carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon (597 B.C.). But it still speaks the truth of who God is and how He acts. It is still true for you and other Christians.

Personal Application: Read and meditate on Proverbs 11:18; Isaiah 40:10; Matthew 5:11-12; Ephesians 6:7-8; Hebrews 11:24-26 and Revelation 22:11-13. Answer questions 32 and 33:

32. Summarize what God taught you about rewards from these verses:

33. Share with another Christian what you learned about rewards. What was his or her response?

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Four) Resources for Discerning God's will

If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. John 7:17

Jesus tells us that we have a choice to follow God's plan or not. God does desire a certain course of action for our lives. It is a holy desire designed for our good and God's glory. His plan for us is centered on His Son Jesus Christ. We are to trust and follow Him daily.

Jesus invited, and even challenged, His listeners to investigate His teachings. The same is true today. He invites everyone, no one is excluded, to investigate His life. If anyone has the right heart, he or she will see the truth of Jesus' message.

Jesus lived to honor and bring glory to His Heavenly Father. In knowing God's will for your life it is important to be honest with yourself. Do you want people to think well of you or do you want people to think well of God? **Make sure that in seeking God's will that you choose all actions that put the spotlight on Him.** This also includes simple, everyday tasks!

When making a decision, ask the question, "Who will receive glory for this?" Choose plans that will bring the most glory and honor to God. Your selfish nature might not like it, but your spiritual nature will bloom!

Personal Application:

34. Do you sincerely want to do God's will? Yes No Sometimes (Circle One) Explain:

35. What do you think would keep you from totally embracing God's plan for your life?

36. How do you think asking the question, "Who will receive the glory for my actions?" will help you remain in God's will?

It is important for a leader to be in God's will and also to help others understand and seek His will. Sometimes it is not a lack of desire to do God's will but a lack of wisdom in making the right choices. Let us look at four spiritual resources that *work in concert* (harmony) to help us know God's will.

Four Spiritual Resources for Discerning God's Will

Definition: Discern is defined as the ability to see or notice something that is not clear or obvious. It also means that a person can tell the difference between two or more things. A discerning person is selective and uses good judgment.

First, God has given us the gift of communicating with Him in prayer. Asking the triune God what He wants you to do is always the best place to begin (Psalm 143:10). Thank God for the ability to talk with Him and recognize His voice. Praise Him for His faithfulness.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6

37. Read Philippians 4:6. Why are you not anxious about seeking God's will?

Second, God gives us His Spirit to lead and guide us; we are not alone. **We will never be alone again.** The Spirit can help us with all decisions including guiding us in our thoughts, motivations and behaviors.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--
John 14:16

38. Read John 14:16. When you are seeking direction and have to make a decision, who is your constant, powerful and permanent helper (Acts 1:8)?

The third resource the Lord has given us to know His will is His Word. The Bible contains God's loving rules for living here on earth. God recorded His words to help us know Him.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

39. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. God equips us for every good work through_____

In many cases we do *not* need to ask God His will about a certain subject. He has already told us what to do in the Scriptures. However, it is critical to approach the Bible without preconceived (formed in advance) notions of what we want or desire.

40. What if a person, within your center of influence, came to you and said, "I have become a Christian but my spouse refuses to believe in Christ. I think God is leading me to divorce my spouse and become a missionary." What advice would you give this person?

God will not lead someone against His Word. If there is a conflict with what we think God is saying and what His Word says, we must continue to pray. If, in question 40, God is calling this person to become a missionary, it will be in God's timing and not by seeking a divorce or deserting a spouse. God has already spoken through the apostle Paul on this subject (1 Corinthians 7:12). We cannot build a ministry or seek service to God through sinful behavior.

As you read and study Scripture, you will find answers to God-honoring behavior (Psalm 119:11-18). Granted, Christians are faced with issues in this day and age not directly addressed in the Bible. For example there is no command that says not to have an abortion, own slaves or engage in chemical warfare. There also does not seem to be any guidelines for fertility treatments, right to die (death with dignity) or cosmetic surgery. Nevertheless, as you prayerfully study God's word, He will reveal principles and standards that will guide you in the proper responses.

God may also give you answers by making certain verses quicken your spirit. You are reading the Bible and all of a sudden your heart is stimulated in a way that you know God is speaking to you. He will use the passage or verse for your particular situation be it instruction, encouragement or direction. God will do this through Christian books, radio, television, other people or circumstances. Recall God got Balaam's attention through opening the mouth of his donkey (Numbers 22:21-35). Do not try to limit how God may want to reach you, but do use wisdom and discernment.

The fourth spiritual resource the Lord has given us to know His will is wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to make sensible and wise decisions and judgments. God is good to give us experiences, knowledge and understanding in order to increase our wisdom. Wisdom implies that we consider the spirit of the law and not just a set of rules to blindly follow.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Colossians 1:9

41. Read Colossians 1:9. Paul is asking God to fill believers with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual _____ and _____

I shared earlier about our moving situation that needed a timely decision. We had prayed, sought the Holy Spirit's help, studied Scripture and we still did not know exactly what we should do. Anders and I believed God wanted to provide land for the CLI Mission Center and certainly did not want to do anything that would reveal a lack of trust in God.

There are times when we do not seem to hear directly from God as to our next step. If there is not a time element involved, we can patiently pray until our answer becomes clearer. Deadlines tend to color this process. This was one of those times for Anders and me.

First, we had to trust God was leading us, whether we were aware of it or not. *Second*, we needed to faithfully use the wisdom and understanding that He has given us. Therefore, at 1 PM the day before the movers were to arrive, we felt it was time to look for a place to live. We prayed and decided it would be wise to look at an apartment near our offices.

I got in the car and drove to the apartment complex that we passed every morning on our way to work. It was too expensive and did not fit within our budget. However, the leasing agent referred me to another 7 minutes from CLI. At 3 PM I called my husband Anders to see if anyone had contacted us about donating land. No one had called, so at 4 PM Anders and I signed the lease. The movers arrived at 8 AM the next day.

A few months later, the office building where CLI rented space was sold and we had to find a new place. We have now been in our current office for five and a half years and still praying and waiting for our land and building. However, the CLI Mission Center has actually become a reality in a different way.

God began to tweak the vision He gave me of a mission center to train missionaries. All those who have trusted the Lord are on mission. We are followers of Christ, disciples who are to carry out any task that we are given. It may be to a faraway land or to the person living next to you.

On January 10, 2012, God impressed deep within my soul these words, "Make disciples, build My army from the prisons." The Lord made it clear to me that discipleship was not a building but a transformed heart. CLI did not need to wait for a "Mission Center" but is to begin training disciples now.

With this in mind, we have designed the Disciple of Christ program for graduates of the CLI Leadership Bible Study. Several graduates are now leading Bible studies and making disciples to honor Christ's mandate to *make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19).

We are confident in the choices we have made. Certainly God may change or tweak our direction at any time but right now we are in His will. God has given all Christians the spiritual resources needed for knowing His will, no matter how difficult the decisions may seem.

42. Are you confident that you are in God's will at the current time? Why or why not?

If you are not sure you are in God's will, be encouraged! He is working in you right now to make you like Jesus in doing His will. He *wants* you to desire His good purpose. However, if you are currently out of God's will, you can confess, repent and immediately get back on the right path.

for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.
Philippians 2:13

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Five) Exercising your free will

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. Romans 12:1-2

Definition: As a verb, will means to exercise or put into effect one's willpower. One's willpower is a mixture of determination and self-discipline that enables a person to do something no matter the difficulties. Recall, the will is the command post of an individual.

43. Read Romans 12:1-2. How can you use your *free will* to know God's will?

You can determine how you think and act in any given situation. Your decision must be to renew your mind. Renew simply means to make new. You take your old patterns of ungodly living and replace them with God's truth. God's Word is truth (John 17:17). When you desire and determine to be shaped and changed by God, you will be able to discover and interpret His will.

Sometimes the problem is *not* "knowing God's will," but in following through with it. It may seem too difficult or uncomfortable. That is why the apostle Paul tells us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. In the Old Testament animals were killed in sacrifice and offered to God for worship, fellowship and sin. Jesus' death on the cross has already paid the price for sin and opens the door for worship and fellowship. We, on the other hand, are called to kill our selfish interests and to offer our living bodies and will to God. As we surrender our will and bodies to God, we are given glorious opportunities to serve Him.

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." Jonah 1:1-2

44. Read Jonah 1:1-2. How do you know that God's will was revealed clearly to Jonah?

But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD. Jonah 1:3

45. Read Jonah 1:3. Jonah knew God's will for him and yet, what did he do?

Jonah did not like God's plan and thought he could run away from Him. This is still true. Sometimes we may procrastinate (delay) or try to ignore God's call on our lives. The work may seem too difficult, dangerous or unattractive to us for one reason or another.

46. How do you think you would respond if the LORD commanded you to arise, go to Iraq and begin preaching against the wickedness of the terrorist group Al-Qaeda⁴?

This would be a dangerous assignment. Without the LORD's divine intervention, you would be quickly exterminated by this group. Of course as a Christian leader, you would also be telling the other Iraqi people of Jesus Christ and of His death and resurrection. This would cause the regular Muslim population to rise up against you, also.

Jesus tells us not to judge others (Matthew 7:1-2) and this includes biblical characters. We really do not know how we would have responded given the same set of circumstance. So let us *not* judge the prophet Jonah or others, whether in the Bible or not, but let us learn from them.

He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Jonah 4:2

47. Read Jonah 4:2. What is the reason Jonah gives for running away from the LORD's will? (If you are not familiar with the whole story of Jonah, read all 4 chapters.)

⁴ **Al-Qaeda** (also **al-Qaida** or **al-Qa'ida** or **al-Qa'idah**) (Arabic: القاعدة *al-qā'ida*, Translation - *The Base*) is an international alliance of militant Sunni Jihadist organizations. Its roots can be traced back to Osama Bin Laden and others around the time of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989.^[1] Al-Qaeda's objectives include the end of foreign influence in Muslim countries and the creation of a new Islamic Caliphate. Al-Qaeda has been labeled a terrorist organization. Source: Wikipedia Online

Nineveh was located in Assyria, an enemy of Israel. Jonah was not happy that God would show mercy and goodness to their enemies. When God called Jonah, he knew that God might relent from pouring out His wrath on the Ninevites, even though they were a cruel and ruthless people.

48. Do you think Christians struggle with showing love and mercy to their enemies? Yes No Sometimes (Circle one)

49. What are some ways that *you* could help yourself and others to have the compassion and love for enemies?

Remembering how much we have been forgiven is always a good place to start (Luke 7:47). When we recognize the goodness and mercy of God in our own lives and how we have been rescued from eternal damnation, our hearts begin to soften towards others. We can also pray for ourselves and others. *O Lord help me to have Your love, compassion and mercy. Make me a forgiving person. Make everyone I know be conformed to Jesus! Amen.*

In order to be like Jesus and do what He would do, we need to spend time in the four Gospels. They are clear and straightforward. Do you ever wonder what we, as the church, would look like if we focused all of our energy in following Jesus?

Perhaps the reason we do not make a *vigorous* effort to follow Jesus is because His teachings go against our prideful and arrogant flesh. It is much easier to argue and take doctrinal positions than to kneel before the King for His will. His will keeps us humble. Our will keeps us haughty. We are not saying doctrine (rule or principle) is not important, but to keep in mind that all doctrine is based on Matthew 22:36-40. Read Luke 11:37-52 and John 21:21-22 for perspective.

Jonah was given a second chance to comply with God's will. Of course, he had to be swallowed by a great fish. He did preach against Nineveh and the whole city repented. Although Jonah was not happy about the outcome, God was pleased to save this great city (Luke 11:29-32).

God may give innumerable opportunities for you to conform to His plans. On the other hand, God may give you only one opportunity to act (Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:35). His plans will not be thwarted and He can very easily raise another for His purposes (Esther 4:12-14).

But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.
Psalm 33:11

Personal Application:

Meditate on Psalm 37:23-24, 55:22, 147:11; Romans 8:26-27, 12:1-2 and Jude 1:24.

50. After meditating on the above verses what would you tell someone who is overly anxious about missing God's will?

Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. Ephesians 6:6-8

Personal Application: Read Matthew 6:10-11 and 2 Chronicles 26:1-23. Ask God to speak to you through these verses and answer the following questions:

51. What did God say to you?

52. What did you say to God in response?

- End Lesson 11 -

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS Lesson 11
CLI Christian Leadership Study: Knowing God's Will

Name & Number: _____ Date: _____

Name of Institution: _____ Street address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day One) *Choosing God's Will*

1. Who took Adam, the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden (v.15)? _____

2. Did Adam have a choice about being placed in the Garden? Yes No (Circle One)

3. Did Adam have a free choice to follow God's will in the Garden? Yes No (Circle One)

4. What was God's command and will for Adam (v. 16-17)? _____

5. What was the consequence of not following God's command, or His will (v. 17)? _____

6. What choice did the Israelites have? _____

7. How did Joshua use his will in this verse? _____

8. Read 2 Chronicles 26:16. King Uzziah started out seeking God and His will for the people. God had given him success and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt. But after Uzziah became powerful, what happened? _____

9. Read 2 Chronicles 26:18. What seems to be the motivation of the priests who confronted Uzziah? _____

10. Read 2 Chronicles 26:21. What were the consequences for King Uzziah seeking his own will and not God's? _____

Personal Application:

11. Consider how the use of your *free* will may affect others and outline any changes that you plan to make in your life: _____

12. Read Isaiah 30:21. What is God saying to the Israelites (and to us) about knowing His will? _____

13. Read Isaiah 14:24 and 46:10-11. What is God saying in these verses? _____

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Two) Forsaking Our Will

14. Fill in the blank. It is God's will that you should be (v. 4:3a) _____

- 15.** The Apostle Paul teaches believers to live a sanctified life. List his instructions in this regard: (1. _____ (v. 4:3b)
(2. _____ (v. 4:4)
(3. _____ (v. 4:6)

16. Fill in the blank. Paul compares lustful passion to not knowing (v. 4:5) _____

17. How does God's will and sovereignty function with our free will and autonomy (self-rule)?

18. In your own words, explain how Jesus felt the night before he was crucified (v. 34)?

19. What did Jesus do when He was overwhelmed to the point of death (v. 35)? _____

20. In His prayer to the Father, what three things did Jesus say to Him (v. 36)?
(1. _____ (2. _____
(3. _____

21. If faced with intense suffering, will you say: "*Yet not what I will, but what you will?*"
Yes No Not sure (Circle One) Explain your answer and share your thoughts on this question:

22. How might we pray for you in regard to following God's will in your life?

23. Personal Application: Write Mark 14:34-36 from memory without notes:

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Three) Rewards for doing God's will

24. Jesus says: "For whoever does the _____ of my _____ in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

25. What point do you think Jesus is making? _____

26. What apostle also tried to keep Jesus from God's will (Matthew 16:21-23)? _____

27. Can you share a time when someone tried to keep you from God's will because he or she thought they were trying to protect you? _____

28. Read John 15:5. How do you bear much fruit (have meaningful Kingdom work)?

29. When you choose God's will for your life, what promise or assurance do you have when things look bleak? (v. 28) _____

30. According to v. 29 what is the good that God will work out for those who love Him?

31. According to Jeremiah 29:11, the LORD has plans to _____ you and not to _____ you, plans to give you hope and a _____

Personal Application: Read and meditate on Proverbs 11:18; Isaiah 40:10; Matthew 5:11-12; Ephesians 6:7-8; Hebrews 11:24-26 and Revelation 22:11-13. Answer questions 32 and 33:

32. Summarize what God taught you about rewards from these verses:_____

33. Share with another Christian what you learned about rewards. What was his or her response?

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Four) Resources for Discerning God's will

Personal Application:

34. Do you sincerely want to do God's will? Yes No Sometimes (Circle One)

Explain: _____

35. What do you think would keep you from totally embracing God's plan for your life?

36. How do you think asking the question, "Who will receive the glory for my actions?" will help you remain in God's will?_____

37. Read Philippians 4:6. Why are *you* not anxious about seeking God's will?

38. Read John 14:16. When you are seeking direction and have to make a decision, who is your constant, powerful and permanent helper (Acts 1:8)? _____

39. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. God equips us for every good work through_____

40. What if a person, within your center of influence, came to you and said, "I have become a Christian but my spouse refuses to believe in Christ. I think God is leading me to divorce my spouse and become a missionary." What advice would you give this person?

41. Read Colossians 1:9. Paul is asking God to fill believers with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual _____ and _____

42. Are you confident that you are in God's will at the current time? Why or why not?

Lesson 11: Knowing God's Will (Day Five) Exercising your free will

43. Read Romans 12:1-2. How can you use your *free will* to know God's will?

44. Read Jonah 1:1-2. How do you know that God's will was revealed clearly to Jonah?

45. Read Jonah 1:3. Jonah knew God's will for him and yet, what did he do?

46. How do you think you would respond if the LORD commanded you to arise, go to Iraq and begin preaching against the wickedness of the terrorist group Al-Qaeda⁵? _____

⁵ **Al-Qaeda** (also **al-Qaida** or **al-Qa'ida** or **al-Qa'idah**) (Arabic: القاعدة *al-qā'ida*, Translation - *The Base*) is an international alliance of militant Sunni Jihadist organizations. Its roots can be traced back to Osama Bin Laden and others around the time of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989.^[1] Al-Qaeda's objectives include the end of foreign influence in Muslim countries and the creation of a new Islamic Caliphate. Al-Qaeda has been labeled a terrorist organization. Source: Wikipedia Online

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48. Do you think Christians struggle with showing love and mercy to their enemies? Yes No Sometimes (Circle one)

49. What are some ways that *you* could help yourself and others to have the compassion and love for enemies? _____

Personal Application: Mediate on Psalm 37:23-24, 55:22, 147:11; Romans 8:26-27, 12:1-2 and Jude 1:24.

50. After mediating on the above verses what would you tell someone who is overly anxious about missing God's will? _____

Personal Application:

Read Matthew 6:10-11 and 2 Chronicles 26:1-23. Ask God to speak to you through these verses and answer the following questions:

51. What did God say to you? _____

52. What did you say to God in response? _____

Next: Lesson 12: The Leader's Fire of Holiness

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