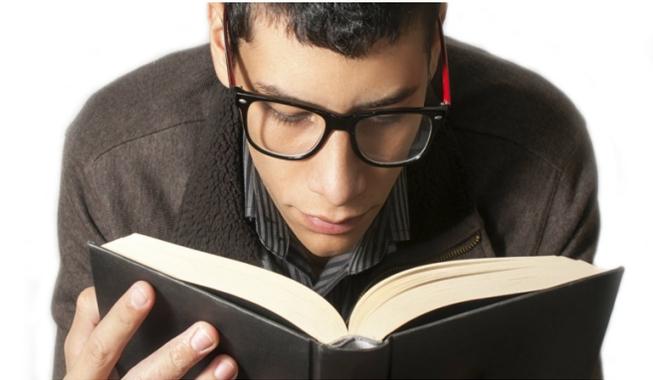


Keys to Finding God's Will  
Drew Anderson



When it comes to God's Will, we can quickly become suspended between over-confidence and confusion. Basic life questions such as: "Do I take this job? Pursue this career change? Move to this city? Marry this person? Get involved in this ministry or that activity? and so on..." demand an answer—a biblical road map. As Christians, we know that God's will is provided in the Bible and is ultimately revealed for His glory, but how does one flesh this out in everyday life? How do we find and know we are walking in God's Will?

Finding God's Will mini-series explores the sometimes fleeting and oscillating path one navigates in order to find and determine God's will for their life. As we get started, it is important to give credit to John MacArthur and his handling of this topic [HERE](#). This mini-series has adapted some of his content, and has benefited from his work on the topic.

Let's begin by looking back in time in order to glean truth's from an ancient follower of God. What we find in Ezra 7:10 is that, "...Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel. That's it..."

Ezra's heart was:

- SET (on God),
- he STUDIED (God's Word),
- he PRACTICED (God's Word), and
- he TAUGHT (God's Word).

The fact is we need practical biblical guidance to navigate life, and the four elements expressed in Ezra's life provide a general template for Finding God's Will today.

Let's begin...

#### Part 1 – SET

Before Ezra began to study, live, or teach God's Word and live out God's will his heart was set on God. What does it mean to have a heart set on God?

1. Saved
  - The reality for every human being is that we're born with an insatiable desire to define right and wrong, as well as a burning passion to justify our actions, thoughts, and words. It starts with food, moves to toys, and then goes to money and another person's spouse. In essence, we're born wanting to be god, and when we fail we justify our mistakes.

- The problem is...this is a problem. See also all of human history. Humans cannot get out of this predicament. The sad reality is that this predicament separates us from our holy and perfectly righteous Creator.
  - Thus, left to us...we're lost with no hope. We simply cannot rescue ourselves from this position. We've tried. We've failed. We need someone else to step in and save us from ourselves. We need someone to make us right with the One who created us. We need something or someone outside of us that has lived our life perfectly, and then offers His life in exchange for our life.
  - Enter Jesus Christ. He is the second person in the Triune God-head who died in our place to assume upon Himself the consequences of our sin. In essence, He is our only hope of being rescued.
  - The person who believes this for themselves has moved from being lost to being found...from disregarded to saved.
  - 2 Peter 3:9 – God's will...man's salvation...John 6:44
  - Matthew 18:11 – Christ came to save the lost...goes after one lost sheep
  - 1 Timothy 2:4 – Desires men to be saved
  - Mark 3:34-35 – God's family...saved
  - The first aspect of finding God's will is having a heart set on God. The first step in having a heart that set on God is becoming a child of God and being saved from eternal separation from God.
  - The incredible thing is...God calls you to this...come home!
2. Sanctified
- God did not merely save us to set us aside for future display in heaven. No, no. He saved us to then conform us to His Image (Romans 8:29).
  - In essence, biblical sanctification is the daily revealing of our great need (which brings humility), and the daily revealing of God's great solution (which brings gratitude).
  - The human that is being sanctified walks in humble gratitude. They are not characterized by pretension, fear, grumbling, insecurity, jealousy, etc. No, no, they are characterized by confession and understanding, grace and mercy, love and peace, and humility and gratitude.
  - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8...they are vessels of honor
  - Abstain from sex sin – Protect marriage bed (Hebrews 13:4)
  - Control body – Your body is to honor God (2 Corinthians 7:1)
  - Don't act like pagans – Not to be guided by impulses and glands (physical)
  - Don't defraud a brother – Not to take advantage of mentally/physically
  - Thus, the second aspect of finding God's will by having a heart set on Him is viewing all of life's circumstances as God's means of sanctifying us (making us look more like Christ) through humbling us and teaching us a heart of gratitude, as well as God's gift for us to example Him to a lost and dying world in need of salvation.
3. Surrendered
- A heart set on God is saved, is being sanctified, and is surrendered. To be surrendered means to give up the battle. You can't win. You throw in the towel...you raise the white flag...you stop trying to accomplish God's work for Him in your own strength.
  - In other words, you are no longer dependent upon yourself for God's work to occur, but on prayer. You recognize that taking up your cross means dying to your desires, and placing the good of others in your sphere of influence above your own. You say no (and walk in confession when you stumble) to the flesh and besetting sins, and instead have a faraway gaze to heaven.
  - You also recognize that God will one day bring to light all the deeds done in the body (whether good or bad) and will judge our lives and distribute rewards to you based upon how you live this life—there is an echo.
  - Luke 9:23 – Take up the cross
  - Matthew 6:19 – Treasures are in Heaven
  - 2 Corinthians 5:10 – Bema seat judgment for Christians

- Thus, a heart set on God is saved, is being sanctified, and is surrendered to God. That is to say, his time, treasures, and talents are placed on the altar and declared to be God's...to be used according to His pleasure.

#### STUDY.

There is something about the word–study–that makes us cringe, or at least pause. Often when we think of study, we think of an exam. “There must be a test if I’m to study,” we often assume. What if we changed the notion of study to something different? What if we said, to study simply means to explore?

Remember when you were a kid, and you had so many questions? Kids ask a lot of questions, because they’re subconsciously forming their schema for life. As a result, they’re studying–exploring–many things by asking questions, gaining knowledge, and ultimately making decisions.

Now, when it comes to God’s will, what if our study was more an exploration of God’s Word? This is the treasure map to God’s heart. It’s the roadmap to walking in step and in fellowship with Him. Experience, intuition, education, and insight simply are not sufficient to understand what God desires. We have to explore or study the place where He has already revealed His will–the Bible. But, how many times do we have closed Bibles on our desks, and instead rely upon experience, intuition, education, and insight to guide our lives? There’s certainly a place for each of these, but they’re not primary.

As such, many people today have plenty of Bibles in their homes, but there are not the hours each day to show their exploration of God’s Word. How can we ever expect to know God’s will for our lives if we were not willing to explore what He has already revealed?

God’s Word is not a cryptic and antiquated document–as many so-called educated and enlightened people in our world would have us think. God gave His Word through centuries of history and living and facts. He has documented for us how He has moved in and through humanity and the ages. God’s Word is where Ezra went to find direction for his life, and it’s the same place for us today.

The questions are:

What is your soul-thirst?

Are you walking in step with God?

Are you willing to sacrifice your time, treasure, and talents to explore God’s Word to find God’s will for your life?

- What is your soul-thirst?
- Consider David in the Psalms:
- Psalm 42:1-2 – Deer to stream...Soul to God/Soul thirsts for God...living God
- Psalm 63:1 – Earnestly seek God...soul thirsts/in a dry and weary land
- Psalm 107:9 – God satisfies a longing soul
- Psalm 119:81 – Soul longs for His salvation... “I hope in Your Word”
- Psalm 143:6 – Stretched out hands...soul longs for God
- If God’s Word is not your source of life to understand God’s will, then you are probably looking at God’s Word more as a picture and not a window. Ask Him to change your vision for His Word.
- Are you walking in step with God?

- Consider the proximity of your life as it relates to your time, treasure, and talents invested in the things of God. Look at your daily calendar. Where do you spend most of your days? Take an inventory of what you are spending your money on. Who or what is getting the majority? Consider your spiritual gift(s). Do you know what they are? Are you investing them in the body of Christ for its edification and equipping?
  - Consider the following passages:
  - 1 Corinthians 12:13 – All who turn to Christ in faith are baptized into one Spirit...you are one with the body of Christ through faith. You are therefore loved and sacrificed for by Christ. You are positionally as close as you could ever be. However, if you are grieving and quenching the Spirit, then you're walking as far away from fellowship as you could ever be. God won't let His children stay there long.
  - Ephesians 5:17-18 – When Paul talks about not being drunk, what he is saying is, "don't let yourself try to induce a more open experience with the deities through a mind-altering substance—which is what the pagans believe in his day would happen through drunkenness." The real question is, "Is God enough?" If so, then be filled by Him, not mind-altering substances. God's Word is what fills you. Thus, let the pain of life be what it is, and know that God has not left you, but instead is more near to you—because of Christ.
  - Consider Peter's life and times of proximity and separation from Christ:
  - Matthew 14 – Walks on water...Trust/Near...Lack Trust/Fall
  - Matthew 16 – Says who Christ is...God revealed
  - John 18:10 – Cuts off guard's ear...near Christ
  - John 18:27 – Denies Christ...
  - Acts 2:14 – Peter brought back into fold and used by God...
  - Are you willing to sacrifice your time, treasure, and talents to explore God's Word to find God's will for your life?
  - Consider Paul's charge to present our bodies as living sacrifices...
  - Romans 12:1 – a sacrifice is used in worship. Is your life a life of sacrifice to study and the exploration of God's Word?
  - The response to God's Word is like Josiah's of old in 2 Kings 22:8-11...
  - The king in an instant realized God's Word was now going to be their guide, and his response was utter humility and subsequent submission.
- Many of us have become lackadaisical or even indifferent to the study and exploration of God's Word. How would we ever know God's Will if so? Study is the rocky path...the path of sacrifice...the path of being confronted with our sin and need...but the good path that leads to life and understanding of God's will.

May we be people of the Book... May we endeavor to explore God's Word everyday... May we trust that it is sufficient for our understanding of God's will for our lives...

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“...for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.”  
Philippians 2:12

PRACTICE

Submission: For the Lord's sake...not men!

For many, submission is not only hard, but near impossible. Why? Because most of us like control. However, such struggles present not only disappointment, but bitterness. So, how can submission help in finding God's will?

- 1 Peter 2:13-15 "Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to a king as supreme or to governors as those he commissions to punish wrongdoers and praise those who do good. For God wants you to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good."
  - People are watching you...evaluating what you do...whom do you obey?
  - Want to silence those around you?
    - Obey the law of the land unless it contradicts Scripture...Acts 4 & 5
- Ephesians 5 – Husbands and wives submit to one another in the realm of marriage. As a result,
  - Women...want to be a godly wife...? Learn to submit...to God...to authorities...to your husband...
  - Men...want to be a godly husband...? Learn to submit...to God...to authorities...
- Rebellious spirit...?
  - A maverick, lone ranger, captain-of-his-own-ship type person will struggle with finding God's will for his life, because he won't let go of the steering wheel...and he doesn't know the directions (scary combination).

Suffering: Godly = Persecuted

Raise your hand if you like pain...! The vast majority of us do not. So, when we face pain, we often find ourselves doing everything to get out of it or to alleviate it. That may not be best. Sometimes pain is keeping us in God's will...sometimes it's guiding us to God's will...sometimes it's teaching us to simply accept and trust.

- 1 Peter 3:17 "For it is better to suffer for doing good, if God wills it, than for doing evil."
  - God's will...to suffer for what is right
- 1 Peter 4:19 "So then let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator as they do good."
  - Those who suffer according to the will of God...entrust their souls to faithful Creator
- 1 Peter 5:10 "And, after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."
  - In suffering, Christ: perfects...confirms...strengthens and establishes You!
  - Suffering is part of the maturing of believers...
- 1 Peter 1:6-7 "This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold—gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away—and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."
  - Sucker branches are cut off...put through the refiner's fire
- 2 Timothy 3:12 "Now in fact all who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
  - Live a godly life = suffer persecution

Saying Thanks: Glass 1/2 full...rest!

Sad to say, but some people go through life with their glass half-empty. Some of that is personality, some upbringing, and some choice. In any case, there is another alternative. We are not victims. God has said that in Him, we are new creations. Not renovated, but new. That means... the old has passed away! Can I get an amen?! WE can choose an attitude of gratitude. That is needed everyday. How and why?

- Psalm 46:10 “He says, “Stop your striving and recognize that I am God. I will be exalted over the nations! I will be exalted over the earth!”
  - Be still and know that God is fighting your battles. God is in control.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “...in everything give thanks. For this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
  - In all things...give thanks...this is God’s will!
- Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”
  - This means that I’m to be anxious...in nothing...but...in everything...with thanksgiving...pray.

We’ve seen that in finding God’s will we need a (1) heart set on Him, (2) a commitment to the study of God’s Word, and now (3) a life committed to practicing what we know to be God’s revealed will in His word...submission, suffering, and saying thanks!

God help us!