

A MESSAGE ON YOUR GOD-GIVEN WORTH

GOD'S WILL: WE CAN DO IT!

Romans 12 offers principles for experiencing God's good, pleasing and perfect will

By George Foster



When we discover that God has a plan for our lives, we want to know what it is and how we can experience it. We wonder what benefits we will receive for doing God's will and what consequences we might suffer if we fail to do so. We can be assured that God delights in revealing His will to us, but He requires that we be predisposed to do it. If we have not yet made that commitment, He appeals to us and works in us to win our hearts.

1. REFLECT on God's mercy.

"I urge you in view of God's mercy..." Some Christians are afraid to commit themselves entirely to God's will. They think it will be hard, boring, strange, or dangerous. Paul reminds us that everything about it emanates from His mercy and His desire to do for us what is "good, pleasing, and perfect." God wants to bless us and not hurt us and to guide us in such a way that our lives are aimed at the highest good for God, for others and for ourselves. God's plan is not to be feared. It is not to be avoided. It is to be embraced. It is a path of blessing for us and for those our lives will touch.

2. SUBJECT your will to God's will.

"Offer your bodies as living sacrifices." We like to do things our own way. We think that brings us freedom, but true freedom comes from surrender to God. Freedom is not the ability to seek or do whatever we want to do with nobody to approve or disapprove of it. If we insist on that, we become enslaved to selfishness and egotism. We don't have the luxury of learning specific details of God's will to then decide if we want to do it. He reveals His will when we are willing—not because we like the details, but because we love and trust Him. Yes, we have preferences, but when our desires conflict with His, we pray as Jesus did, "Not My will, but Yours be done..." He is worthy of our surrender.

3. SELECT the highest priority for your life.

"Wholly and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." Jesus challenges us: "Seek first God's kingdom and righteousness. The rest will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). To do God's will, we must believe it is attainable even though it may require God's supernatural help. "The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Situations that present options of greater or lesser opportunity to please and glorify God, require that we choose the greater good that pleases Him most and achieves His highest purposes. Is it pleasing to God, to you, or to both?

4. REJECT the counsel of a "my way" culture.

"Do not follow any longer the patterns of this world." The world suggests instant gratification, but we must abandon the world's way to go God's way. James says, "You can't follow God and the world at the same time" (James 4:8). "For the wisdom of the

world is foolishness in God's sight." (1 Corinthians 3:19). When values are wrong, behavior is wrong and outcomes are wrong. Our decisions reflect the sources of wisdom we seek, so we must seek God. Our culture says, "Take it, enjoy it, you deserve it and you can do it." Better advice would be, "Spend less, cut debt, give to God, save for the future and trust God to meet your needs in His time." We don't withdraw from the world; we go into the world to reclaim it from darkness, by spreading light in Jesus' name.

5. CORRECT your path by God's Word.

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Paul knew the way to a transformed life. David knew it too: "How can you live a pure life? By obeying God's word" (Psalm 119:9). "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11). Sometimes we get specific guidance; but more often we are led by wisdom accumulated by faithfully reading God's Word. When there is no specific guidance, we weigh the facts and make the choice that is most consistent with God's ways, God's Word, God's will, and the direction He has already given us. Then we must be prepared to change if further guidance comes.

6. EXPECT God to reveal His best for you as you choose His ways.

"You will be able to decide what God wants for you; what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Romans 12:2). Jesus said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out if my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:17). "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples; Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31). We may not know all the details or outcomes, but God goes before us and gives us sufficient understanding to take the next step. We must choose. We must follow. We must trust.

7. RESPECT your limitations and respect the gifts of others.

"Do not think you are better than you are, but think of yourself with sober judgment. In accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members and those members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We who are many form one body and each member belongs to the others" (Romans 12:3-5). Each of us has an area where we are at our best and make our greatest contributions. Learn to also respect the abilities of others in your group and let them do their best.

8. DETECT the gifts God has given you.

"We have different gifts" (Romans 12:6). In what ministry do you love to be engaged? What motivates, energizes and brings out the best in you? Is it prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leading, or showing mercy? What service do you find yourself most drawn to? What ministry gives you the deepest sense of satisfaction and brings good results? From time to time you may engage in more than one, ministry but don't choose one because it carries prestige and gives you honor. Choose one that comes naturally and that you can hardly yourself keep from doing.

9. CONNECT with others in Christian love and ministry.

"Love as brothers and sisters" (Romans 12:9-10). When we develop relationships with others and find affinities with them, we are often led into service that fits us best. Be open, willing, ready, and actively engaged. Define your vision. Ask how you can help. Certain doors open. Others close. Opportunities arise to join in and find a place. You must be actively engaged to be led.

10. PERFECT your walk in partnership with God.

“Be careful, then how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is” (Ephesians 5:15-17) “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). Ministry is an overflow of our love and devotion to Christ and His Kingdom.

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. 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 12:1-3).