

HOW GOD'S WILL DIRECTS US

Ephesians 5:17 (HCSB)

So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Many of us want to know God's will

This is revealed to us in what he says; God's Word is His will.
His will can be defined as Law and Gospel.

Let's start with the Law

Romans 7:12 (HCSB)

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

This is counterintuitive because....

We naturally feel that rules, parameters, and laws hinder our freedom.

Bad rules hinder freedom.

Good rules define freedom.

Illust: Musical scale.¹

What kind of "music" does God's Law make?

It directs our prayers

AP!

1 John 5:14 (HCSB)

Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.

It directs our worship

John 4:24 (HCSB)

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

It directs our Christian walk

Psalms 119:1 (HCSB)

How happy are those whose way is blameless, who live according to the Lord's instruction!

It is strength-giving

Psalms 119:28 (HCSB)

I am weary from grief; strengthen me through Your word.

It is life-giving

Psalms 119:107 (HCSB)

I am severely afflicted; Lord, give me life through Your word

It is light-giving

Psalms 119:111 (HCSB)

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

It is joy-giving

Psalms 119:111 (HCSB)

I have Your decrees as a heritage forever; indeed, they are the joy of my heart.

¹ Music is artistic, expressive, and mysterious. Grammy-Award winning music producer John Leventhal once stated, "The most powerful part of music to me is the overwhelming mystery of it. I know so much about it but I don't want to because the fun is in the mystery." And yet music has rules, boundaries, a scale made up of only eight notes. http://worldsciencefestival.com/blog/instant_reaction_rhythms_on_the_brain

It is how God's people know God

Hebrews 8:10-12 (HCSB)

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. And each person will not teach his fellow citizen, and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins."

It is how people flourish

God's Law shows us how to glorify God and to flourish as humans.

So is that all? Just obey, and all our problems will go away? No. We are the problem!

Sin definition: my will be done; "Heart curved in on itself" Luther

Salvation: regeneration of the heart

The Law shows us our need for Jesus

Galatians 3:24 (HCSB)

The law, then, was our guardian² until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

The Law leads us to the Gospel (to reveal God's overarching purpose)...

Let's talk about the Gospel

LAW: Under the old covenant (do this and live), we condemned ourselves, because no one can be as holy as God.

GOSPEL: God enacts a new covenant (I will do this so you can live), under which we are changed from the inside out, desirous of God.

When saved, you are enabled to obey God's law

Ezekiel 36:26-28 (HCSB)

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances. Then you will live in the land that I gave your fathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Phil. 2 (presump: that which brings him glory/us joy is *enabled* by grace)

God's will is revealed in the Law and the Gospel (written)

Unfortunately, that doesn't always satisfy us...

Illust: Sitcom (scenes/situations) vs. miniseries (story)

Micro: the need of the moment (scenes)

Macro: the overarching purpose (story)

Sometimes I want to go back to sitcoms to deal with immediate situations.

Both *scenes* and *story* are Scriptural, but...

Sometimes we want the former and not the latter

Problem: we're more **concerned with self** than God or His purpose

² "The word translated *guardian* in vv. 24-25 is different from the word in [Gl 4:2](#). In our culture, we do not have a slave who takes a child to and from school, protecting the child from harm or corruption. In Gk the word *paidogogos* described such a slave. This slave was not a teacher." Taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible study notes under the same verse.

Point of verse: Paul is drawing our understanding back to God's eternal purpose not our circum.

You have been washed, so marinate longer in God's will!³

This understanding is *experiential*

AP!

"The apostle is not suggesting that the readers have no insight into this will. Rather...he is admonishing them to appropriate it more fully for themselves. God has revealed to them the mystery of his will in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let them lay hold of it and understand its implications for their day-to-day living." - Peter T. O'Brien⁴

Proverbs 2:1-6 (HCSB)

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Recover this: it's not just *learning*, although we must learn (more theology, not less)

This understanding is *responsive*

James 1:21-25 (HCSB)

Therefore, ridding yourselves of all moral filth and evil, humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save you. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works—this person will be blessed in what he does.

God's will:

He is going to bring everything together in Jesus (true freedom)

The Law of God defines our freedom

The Gospel of God enables our freedom

The beauty: if we marinate in God's will, our smaller decisions will be influenced and directed by it:

Romans 12:1-2 (HCSB)

Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

³ "This means that redeeming the time and understanding the Lord's will stand parallel to and define each other." Frank Thielman. *Ephesians*. (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). 357

⁴ Peter O'Brien. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999). 385