

## What Every Christian Ought to Know - Adrian Rogers

### How to Discern the Will of God - Chapter 7

In Proverbs 3:6, Solomon wrote, “*Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*”(NLT) On a secular level, I was recently asked by a great-niece “How can I choose an occupation that will make her financially successful in the future? How do you know?” I led her down the road of choosing something that you are good at and that you enjoy.

Sometimes knowing the will of God for you is just as difficult. As Christians, our great desire should be to know the will of God for our lives. We should delight in doing God’s will. The great danger is to not do His will.

Adrian Rogers says that there are six myths regarding knowing God’s will. MAP MYTH. God does not give us a map to follow that takes us down the road of God’s will.

That would make it easier to discern God’s will for us. Consider the Hebrew Nation coming out of Egypt. God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Knowing His will is about a relationship and not a map.

MISERY MYTH. Some people think that doing God’s will is painful. When I hear this, I think of the monks that take a vow of silence. Or I think of something that my mother said when she thought that I was started serving God in our church. “God is going to take another one of my sons.” My oldest brother was an evangelist. His disappearance from our household was his choice and not God’s choice. Serving God does not mean giving up your extended family.

Adrian Rogers uses the example that if we do God’s will then we will end up in Africa. Yes, some people are led down the missionary road but it is not for everyone. Talk to Kylie Terry about teaching in Africa and her eyes light up. Talk to her dad and I am sure he supports her but as a human dad, he has pain. Kylie

doesn't feel the pain because she is doing God's will. Yes, she does miss her family. It is not for everyone.

“Some people are afraid of God. They really are afraid to surrender to the Lord. Yet God is a loving God and God wants for us what we would want for ourselves if we had enough sense to want it. God is a loving God; don't believe the misery myth.”

MISSIONARY MYTH – The myth is that God only calls a certain class of people, such as Pastors or missionaries but not regular people. It doesn't matter who you are God calls you to serve Him in numerous capacities.

MIRACLE MYTH – Some believe that to know God's will, you must experience a miracle, see a sign, hear a voice or something supernatural. Read 1 Kings 19:11-12. God wasn't speaking to Elijah in the wind, the earthquake or the fire. God spoke to him in a small still voice.

MISSED-It Myth – You think “I missed it, God came calling when I was young and now I have missed it.” Did God reveal His plan for you and you missed it? I believe that God is at work in our lives and as Paul told us in Philippians 1:6, “*He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect and complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return].*”(AMP) He is not done with us yet.

I have seen this one in my own life. As a younger man, I was caught up in science and work. Pastor Larry and Pastor Brian have said that they believe that I was called to pastor. There were numerous times in my life when He could have changed my path. I believe that I am right where I should be.

It is never too late to fulfill God's plan for you. Look at Moses, he was born to lead the Hebrew Nation out of Egypt. At 40 he killed a man but at 80 he fulfilled God's plan.

MYSTERY MYTH – Sometimes we think that God's will for our lives is a mystery. You ask, “How will I ever know what God's will is for my life, it is a

mystery?” God wants you to know His will. He will reveal it to you as you grow as a Christian. He nudges us in His direction when we need it.

As a Christian, if we met Jesus, Rogers believes that we would ask Him, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” In Acts 9, Paul met Jesus face-to-face and in verse 6, Jesus told Him, “*Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.*” Paul was headed the wrong way and God set Him straight.

We need to be open to whatever God leads us to do. Isaiah 64:8 says, “*Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.*” If you pray a prayer similar to what the hymn says, “Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way. You are the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will. While I am waiting yielded and still.” God will reveal His will to you. Maybe not immediately but it will become evident.

Jeremiah 10:23 says, “*I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.*” (NASB) We may want to know what the will of God is for our lives but we can’t figure it out on our own.

Consider Paul, I don’t believe that God’s will for Paul was to go around and murder Christians. It took a meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus to get Paul on the right path.

Rogers gives several principles from Paul’s experience recorded in Act 9.

### **Principle 1. “Guidance is Promised”**

In Acts 9:6, Jesus told Paul, “*Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.*” This applies to us all. God will lead us in the way that we should go. Consider Psalm 37:23 and 32:8. Who plans our steps? God

Ephesians 2:10 says, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”* God has a plan for all Christians to do good works.

Isaiah 58:11 also tells us that God will continually guide us. *“The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”* Solomon in his wisdom knew it. Proverbs 3:6 tells us that if in all our ways, we *“submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

Rogers says, “Thank God, there is a like promise to us as well. I have a Father above me who is controlling all things. I have a Savior beside me directing my footsteps. I have the Holy Spirit within me, energizing me and impressing my heart, my mind and my will.”

One of the things that we can know for sure is that God is in control of everything going on in the past, present and future. We are sitting here today in Church and Sunday School because God willed it. It is not by accident that we are in this place. It is the “Prevailing” or Sovereign will of God.

There is also the “permissive” will of God. God gives us free will. He does not impose on us the choices that we make. He could force us to accept the salvation that He provides through Jesus’ work on the cross. People accept and reject Him all on their own. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that He doesn’t want anyone to perish but come to salvation.

Back in Deuteronomy 30:19, God gave the Hebrew nation the choice *“life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”* We have the same choice today. God gives us free will and we can choose to disobey God.

Rogers says, “God has a plan for my life, for your life, for everyone’s life.” They are all different and individualized leading to your eternity with Him.

To summarize:

- a. God’s prevailing will is that there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth and that Jesus will rule and reign over them. That will happen, no if, ands or buts about it.
- b. God’s permissive will is that we make the right choices. Rogers uses the example of making the right choice about Christians marrying Christians. It doesn’t always happen.
- c. God’s personal will is for us to marry the right person, in my life, it was Terry. It is a very special and specific will. As we read in Psalm 32:8, it is God who directs our steps but we still have to make the decision. He can lead us in the way that we should go but we still have to choose.

You might say, “An individualized personal will for everyone is impossible.” Nothing is impossible for God. Jesus told us that God even knows the number of hairs on our head. If He knows the number of hairs on our heads then He can certainly watch over us and provide us with guidance.

God’s will and how you serve God is different for you than it is for me. We each have to serve God how we are led. Read John 21:21-24.

## **Principle 2. “Guidance is Provisional”**

### *Willingness*

When I think of provisional, then I think of temporary. What Rogers is saying is, “Guidance is yours provided you claim it.” You have to want it or you have to claim it and be willing to do it.

God can have a plan for me to carry out a specific missionary event. He can make all the circumstances perfect and open all the right doors for it to happen. If for

some reason of my own choosing, I decide not to carry it through, then it won't happen.

The same thing can happen with a calling to be a pastor or missionary. God can guide you into and through it but if you choose not to then it won't happen. Remember Paul asked on the road to Damascus, (Acts 9:6) "Lord, what do you want me to do?" We have to have the willingness to do God's will.

All through the Bible, we are told that God has a specific plan for us but if you choose to go your own way then His plan will not be accomplished for you.

### *Meekness*

The NKJV of Psalm 25:9 says, "*The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.*" Other versions say "*the humble*". What the psalmist is saying is that to accept God's will for your life, you have to have a meekness to listen.

He uses the example of a wild horse. Breaking the horse is a battle of two wills. When you break the horse, you want all of the attributes that the horse possessed before but you want to instill a meekness in the horse. Meekness provides the horse with a willingness to listen. Same for us.

Consider if God says, "I want you to . . ." You say, "I know how to do that" and charge in your own direction. God will provide you with His will for you and guide you on the path He wants you to take. Being headstrong is not the attribute in you that God is looking for. Slow down and let God lead.

Meekness provides you with a teachable spirit. Quite often my A.D.D. gets in my way, then I remember "Let go and let God." He will open doors that you never thought were possible.

### *Openness*

On the road to Damascus, Paul said, “What do you want me to do?” or “I am open.” The hymn “Where He leads me I will follow. . . I’ll go with Him, with Him all the way.” God is looking for those who are open to His leading.

Consider Elijah’s encounter with God in 1 Kings 19. In verses 11 and 12, we find out that God spoke in a small still voice. We have to be quiet and listen for God’s leading.

In your busy life, try to find a quiet time to talk to God, whether it is a prayer time or a Bible Study time. Develop a routine of spending time with God. Meet Him there and listen for that small still voice and be open to His leading.

If you are open then you will be able to hear and accomplish God’s will for your life. In many cases, God is persistent. Consider Moses, he used every argument that he could think of for God to get someone else to lead the Hebrew nation out of Egypt but God persisted.

Rogers says, “We say, ‘Listen Lord, Your servant speaks,’ rather than ‘Speak Lord, Your servant listens.’ Knowing and doing God’s will require an openness on your part but listen until He is finished speaking.

Consider King David, he wanted to build the temple but God said that his son would build it. Still, David amassed what was needed for his son to build the temple. God’s will for David was as a warrior. Let God decide how He will use you.

### *Yieldedness*

When I think of “yieldedness”, I think of Isaiah 6:8. “*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?” And I said: “Here am I. Send me!”* You can know what God wants and be open to what His will is but then you have to yield to putting His will above yours.

Back to Paul's conversion in Acts 9. Consider Ananias' part in Paul's conversion. We know that Paul was headed to Damascus to put Christians to death. Even the apostles were afraid to meet with Paul after his conversion. Ananias was a Christian and God told him to go meet with Paul. Read verses 10 -12.

Ananias knew what Jesus wanted him to do. He recognized that it was what Jesus wanted but he recognized that Paul could have him put to death. What would have been your response to Jesus? Which son from Matthew 21:28-32 would you be?

Ananias was neither son. In verse 17 of Acts 9, we read that he did just as Jesus had asked. That is true yieldedness. He feared for his life yet he did what God/Jesus asked. Rogers says, "If you are not willing to yield to the will of God, then why should God show you His will?"

It is human nature that when asked to do something, we ask "Why?" Tell your children, especially a teenager, to do something. "Why?" Fortunately, when we say "Why?" to God, He doesn't say "Because I said so!"

Romans 12:1-2 says, "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*" Living sacrifices are willing to do what God asks of them.

Rogers says, "You may not know what it is, but I can tell you it's good, acceptable and perfect. God promises that. He has a wonderful will for your life."

### **Principle 3. "Guidance is Practical"**

God guides us in a variety of ways. He guides us with the:

- a. Miracles – It is not His normal way but consider Paul in Acts 9. Paul was knocked down, blinded and spoke with Jesus. Sometimes we need an extra kick in the pants.



- b. Word of God – Have you ever read Scripture and been put back on the path that God wants you on or pushed in a different direction? This is not uncommon.
- c. People of God – Have you ever listened to a sermon and thought that the pastor was speaking about you? In Paul’s story, God used Ananias to get Paul to follow the will of God. He can do the same with our friends or Church family. It could even be through a book or Bible Study.
  - i. Proverbs 24:6 says, “*Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers.*”
- d. Spirit of God – As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us. Sometimes I accept Him as the Holy Spirit and don’t put it together that it is the Spirit of God living in us. It too will direct us down the will of God.
  - ii. Galatians 5:18 says, “*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*” The Holy Spirit will guide us in the true way that God wants us to go. When I think of our trip to the Mediterranean, I believe that the Spirit of God directed us throughout the trip. Things don’t work out that well unless it is of God.
- e. Wisdom of God – Read Acts 9:20-22. Immediately after Paul was healed by Ananias, he started preaching in the synagogues. Just a short time with Jesus and Paul is preaching about Jesus. God provides us with the wisdom we need when we need it. There isn’t or shouldn’t be a pastor out there who is preaching from their own wisdom. When I prepare for Sunday School, it is the same thing. God provides me with His wisdom to allow me to teach. Read James 1:5.
- f. Providence of God – The internet definition of providence is “the protective care of God or of nature as a spiritual power.” Look back in Acts 9, verses 23-25. God’s protection allowed Paul to escape death.

- iii. Rogers says, “There’s a God who watches over the affairs of men. They planned to kill Paul, but God let him know of their plans. There’s an unseen hand that guides – the providential hand of God.”

To sum up, the 6 principles used by God to keep us on the path to completing His will for us, we can put them all into one, “Just Jesus”. Remember from 1 Corinthians 12:12, “*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.*” Jesus is the head of the Church. Jesus makes sure that the body has all of the parts to advance the overriding will of God which is the Great Commission. Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”

God’s will for you will help fulfill what Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:9, God doesn’t want anyone to perish.

First – “the will of God is for your welfare. It is not something you have to do; it is something you get to do. You would want the will of God if you had enough sense to want it if you understood how much God loves you.

Next, the will of God will never take you where the power of God and the grace of God cannot enable and keep you.

And last, you are free to choose. God will not force His will upon you. You are free to choose His will. You are not free not to choose. You say, “Well, I won’t choose.” You just made a choice—you chose not to choose. You’re free to choose, you’re not free not to choose, and pay attention—you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. You make a choice, and the choice chooses for you. You’re free to jump out of a ten-story building; that’s your choice. But then the choice chooses for you when you hit the ground. Do you understand what I’m saying? You’re free to choose. You’re not free not to choose. You’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

And so what you really are is the sum total of your choices. The wisest thing you can do and I can do would be to do what? Do what Saul did. Ask the first question, "Lord, who are You?" And second, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"