

## **Small Groups – What is God's will – how do we know it?**

*By Pastor Richard Braun*

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Week** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Icebreaker**

What is your favorite holiday of the year? Historically, how have you typically spent this particular holiday? If money were no object, would you plan this holiday differently?

### **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we're here to talk with you and each other about your will for our lives. We don't always realize your intention for our lives, nor do we always seek it. Please help us to understand your will for each of us today. Allow us to learn from our mistakes and grow closer to you in all that we do. We especially ask your Holy Spirit to touch our hearts as we meet. Amen

### **Open It**

1. Life can be full of adventure at times. When you were a youngster, what is one thing you did that was full of adventure and excitement? What made it exciting for you?
2. If you did not seek adventure as a youngster, why not? What fear kept you from it and why?
3. What attitudes from your past impact your current life choices? State a case or circumstance that validates the answer and describe how it does.
4. When seeking direction in your life today, how do you go about it? Choose one and explain.
  - A. Never decide at all; let circumstances determine the outcome.
  - B. Seek wise counsel and ignore it when it doesn't match my desired outcome.
  - C. Put all the choices in a hat and draw the one. That's the direction you should follow.
  - D. Look for scripture that supports the desired path I want to go, then follow it.
  - E. Pray about it until I receive a special and unique word from God.
  - F. None of the above, so describe your foolproof method so we can all benefit from it.

### **Explore It**

1. Do you completely understand what is meant by God's sovereign will? If so, describe it to the group.
2. I've heard the term "I felt led" to do this, and I've often wondered how one might describe that feeling. What does that term mean to you? Is it Biblical? State your case and point out scripture to support it.
3. Greg Koukl, a modern-day apologist, states that being "led by the spirit" involves righteous conduct and not arbitrary decision-making. Do you agree or disagree with him, and why?

Read Romans 8:12-14 & Gal 5:16-26. J. I. Packer, in his book *"Hot Tub Religion,"* states that we don't discover God's will by feeling it and being "led by the Spirit." We resist sinful impulses and seek God's will for our lives through prayer and wise counsel. What's your opinion?

5. What about "having peace about it"? Should that influence decision-making and the will of God? Read Colossians 3:12-15 - The phrase "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" has nothing to do with decision-making, but it refers to harmony in the body of Christ. Do you know of other scripture that may teach otherwise? Read other passages for support and clarify how they support your point.

Read this section of scripture from Ephesians 1:3-23 **3** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, **4** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love **5** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, **8** which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight **9** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him **10** with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him **11** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, **12** to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. **13** In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory. **15** For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you, and your love for all the saints, **16** do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; **17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. **18** *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might **20** which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. **22** And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.<sup>1</sup>

### **Get It**

1. Is God's will something we can know? Why/why not?
2. Isn't God's will pretty clear in scripture? God wants us to love Him and love our neighbor as ourselves. If we use this as the primary tenant for determining God's will for our lives, how can we tease out situations, so we know what to do? Explain how you would do that.
3. Paul talks about the church in Ephesians vs. 1:22 & 23. How might we connect these two verses to the church's 15th-century reformation and the ideas set forth by the reformers about the place of the church in our lives? Please explain the connection you see, if any.

### **Apply It**

The final cry raised by Luther during the reformation was "sola Scriptura," only scripture. The scripture is full of comments and thoughts about Christ's church. How does it relate to God's will? Do a personal study over the next week on the church as depicted in scripture. Please make this a priority and share it with your small group next time we meet.

### **Closing Prayer - don't forget to ask for praise reports or items needing prayer.**

Dear God, thank you again for all you have given us, our faith, and our hope for tomorrow. Thank you for past leaders and reformers like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, who championed the right ideas despite criticism and persecution. Please build your church here on earth in Jesus' name, Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.