

8 Ways to Know God's Will for Your Life

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When I was a young man, I seemed to continually wrestle with knowing God's will for my life. I wanted more than anything to follow His plan. Interestingly, now that I'm "old" (currently 47 years old), I still wrestle with doing His will in my life. I have come to learn that this is not just something that a young person does early in life; it is a lifelong pursuit in order to stay in the exact center of His plan.

So, then, how can we know God's plan for our lives? Over the past twenty-five years that I have been in ministry, I have discovered eight vital keys to knowing God's will. Here they are:

1. Walk with God.

For starters, if you are interested in knowing God's plan for your life, then you must learn to walk with God. You need to develop a relationship with Him. Christianity is all about relationship rather than just religion.

And so you must cultivate your relationship with God. You must seek to know Him and not just seek to know about Him.

You will cultivate that relationship best by spending time in His Word, taking time for prayer, and taking every opportunity you can to be involved in church and small group [Bible study](#) opportunities. When you seek these disciplines in your life, God will begin the first steps to revealing His plan to you.

>[Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart](#), and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

2. Surrender your will to God's.

Many times when we say we are seeking God's will, what we are really wanting to say to God is this: "OK, God, here's what I'm planning to do. Now I need you to rubber stamp this, all right?" I must tell you that this is not really effective in finding His true will.

Before God will begin to reveal His will to you, you must be committed to doing whatever it is that He desires for you to do. God will likely be slow to show you His plan if He knows you will likely not do that plan anyway.

[Romans 12:1-2](#)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but [be transformed by the renewing of your mind](#), that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Jesus was willing to die for us, so shouldn't we be willing to live for Him? When we surrender to Him, that is when He really begins to direct our steps.

3. Obey what you already know to be God's will.

Many people seem to want to know what God's plan is for their lives, but they overlook the fact that 98% of His will is already delineated carefully through His Word. God is very clear about many, many aspects of His will. For instance, it is clearly His plan that we abstain from [sexual immorality](#) ([1 Thessalonians 4:3](#)).

If we do not obey the things that God has shown us clearly to be His will, why would we think He would reveal any further information regarding His plan for our lives? Obedience is an important first step.

4. Seek godly input.

One key component to finding God's will is to seek the input of godly advisors in your life. If you don't currently have 3-4 godly mentors, then I would highly recommend that you seek them out right away.

Think of it this way: you should understand that you are basically a composite of the five people you spend the most time with. So, then, it is vital that you choose those five people well. If you choose to surround yourself with godly advisors, they will be instrumental in helping you discern God's plan for your life. But if you surround yourself with people who are far from God, your [hope](#) of finding His best for your life will be greatly diminished.

[Proverbs 11:14](#)

Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

The church is designed to help you greatly with this. I would encourage you to be in church every single time the doors are opened. The more you involve yourself with a community of believers, the greater your chances will be of finding godly men and women who can help you discern God's will.

5. Pay attention to how God has wired you.

God has created you to fulfill a specific role in this world. There is no one else who can achieve completely what God has purposely created you to do.

The Apostle Peter gives us this admonition:

[1 Peter 4:10](#)

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

God has gifted every one of us to perform a special mission for which we alone were created. How amazing is that? Wow!

So, when you seek to discover God's will for your life, pay attention to how He has gifted you. His plan for you will always be directly related to the gifts that He has bestowed upon you. The great news is that you will automatically be good at whatever it is that He has called you to do!

6. Listen to God's spirit.

I experienced a major turning point in my own prayer life when I learned simply to shut up while I was praying. That may sound odd to you, and it seemed odd to me at first.

You see, I used to do all the talking when I prayed to God. But then, several years ago, I read Bill Hybel's book, *Too Busy Not to Pray*. That book completely changed the way I approached God through prayer. Since reading that book, I have added a significant component to my prayer life: listening. I take time to listen to what God might have to say to me.

Practically, the way I go about this is to bring a notepad with me when I sit down to pray. Then I write at the top of several pages things like the following:

- "What is the next step in my career?"
- "What is the next step in my ministry?"
- "What is the next step for my family?"
- "What is the next step for my [marriage](#)?"
- "What is the next step in my education?"
- "What is the next step in my finances?"

During my prayer time, I meditate on questions such as the above. Often, God will start flooding my heart with ideas and information regarding one or more of those questions. I write as fast as I can as He speaks to my heart. What a glorious experience that is to sense His Spirit on me, guiding my thoughts and words.

Through experiences like this, He has shown me many times with great clarity what His will is for my life. I long for those experiences when He speaks to me like that. Those times are truly life changing.

[John 10:27](#)

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

7. Listen to your heart.

In addition to listening to the Spirit, I also recommend listening to your heart. To understand my point here, consider the following passage:

[Psalms 37:4-5](#)

Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. (NKJV)

I **love** this passage, because it shows me that, when I am walking with the Lord, He will actually let me do many really cool things that I actually love to do! When you are close to Him, He actually begins to shape your desires so that you desire the things that He has already called you to do.

So then, His plan actually becomes a super-exciting adventure. I always have the most fun in life when I am doing God's will. And that is because He shapes my "wanter" to want to do the things for which He has actually created me.

8. Take a look at your circumstances.

God often clearly demonstrates His plan for our lives by lining up circumstances in obvious ways. And He also shows us what His will is NOT for us to do in that same way. It is not His will for you to take the job that is not offered to you. If you are 5' 6" tall and weigh 125 lbs., it is not likely that God has created you to play professional football.

Over the years, I have discovered that God is pretty good at opening and closing doors. He even did that for the Apostle Paul and his enterouge in Acts. Take a look at this passage:

[Acts 16:6-10](#)

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the **Holy Spirit** to preach the word in Asia.

After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So, even Paul had to face closed doors in his ministry. God often uses closed doors to show us clearly what He does NOT want us to do. And He also uses open doors at times to show us what He DOES want us to do. Of course, this does not mean that every open door is definitely God's plan, but it does help to give you some basic direction.

A Closing Thought:

The next time you begin to ponder God's plan for your life, I would encourage you to mull over the above eight keys. Use these principles to help you to hone in on His plan. And when you seek His will earnestly, you will find it!