



Good morning I am Josh Burnham and I'm the lead pastor here at Bethel. For all of our guests, those watching online, and all our covenant members, welcome! Why are days like today so important? We gather to strengthen our grip on the truth and majesty of Jesus and glorify His name alone.

We continue and conclude our sermon series called "Because you asked." It's named this _____ what the Word and the wisdom of the Lord had to say about hot topics in your life. Today we answer the questions: what is God's plan for my life and how can I discover Yahweh's will? These are fantastic questions. I believe that doing the will of God is the foundational desire and pursuit of the Christian life. The Jesus follower is not alone in asking about God's plan. Pop culture is full of artists, writers, and singers asking about God's plan. Drake sings about God's plan. So what does the Bible say?

"Discovering God's Plan"

What is the plan of God for my life?

The above question necessitates a common understanding of terms. Firstly, we must define what is meant by "plan/will." Secondly, if God has a plan can we know his plan? Thirdly, if God has a plan that we can know, is His plan specific and personal for my life. Millard Erickson describes *God's will as that attribute of God whereby He approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.* The sovereign will of Yawheh is whereby He alone approves and brings about everything necessary for the existence of all creation. God's sovereign will is His and His holy divine purposes will never cease. Psalm 115:3 *Our God is in heaven and does whatever he pleases.* This is the same attribute of the Lord that Jesus appeals to in the garden of Gethsemane Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me—nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." Jesus recognized and demonstrates to us that the sovereign will of the Father will always and forever be accomplished!

When we answer, "what is the plan of God for my life." We are not asking, "what is the sovereign-often hidden will of the Lord." At his news conference the morning after the beginning of the 2003 attacks on Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was asked by a reporter "about the apparent failure to follow the war plan." Rumsfeld replied dryly, "I don't believe you have the war plan." This is parallel to our worship gathering asking or questioning the sovereign plan of the Creator.

Now what? Do we pack up and go home? "There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'"—C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)
We are asking about another category, *the commanded will of God*. Deut 29:29 The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law. The commanded will of God is the revealed plan of the Lord in your life. This is the plan we long for! This is the declared will that reveals to you what you should do, how you should trust Him, and His design for your life.

If the Lord revealed Himself from the beginning through His creative act where he spoke the material world into existence from nothing and then personally breathed life into humanity, and demonstrated His glory through Immanuel incarnate, who will one day return, then He is still revealing Himself and His plan today. ***God's wants you to know his commanded will. It's not a mystery.***

God's plan is for you to obey and trust Him. Matt. 6:9 "Therefore, you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done. This prayer couldn't be a prayer that God's secret will come to pass. This is a prayer that the people of the One true God obey his will and follow His plan. What is God's plan for your life? To walk according to His word and ways. **When I do not walk in the ways of Jesus, I am not living according to His plan for my life.**

God's plan is good. Let me introduce to you a man named **Joseph**. Joseph was a privileged child and loved by his father more than other brothers because he was born in his old age (Gen. 37:3). After revealing to his brothers that one day they would bow down to him, a vision he had, his brothers sold him into slavery because one, Reuben, didn't feel like murder was the best option. They told Jacob (dad) that he was torn to shreds by wild animals when in reality he was taken as a slave to Egypt. God's hand was upon his life and he rose the ranks in Potiphar's house, an officer to Pharaoh. One day the wife of the house made unwanted sexual advances to Joseph which he denied and was subsequently thrown in jail. In jail he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. In a moment of need Pharaoh himself called for Joseph who interpreted his dream and was placed over all the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:41). Eventually through difficult situations Joseph meets back with his brothers who need food to survive, which is housed in Egypt. This is how Joseph responds: **Gen. 50:19** "But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 **You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. 21 Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children.'**" And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Joseph's life reminds us that all the travesty was not good, but our Father is good, and His plan is good! Was it good that Joseph was sold as a slave? Falsely imprisoned and accused? Joseph stands and declared that the Lord is perfectly good, and his plans flow from His goodness. **God's plan for your life is always for your good and His glory!!**

Things will happen in your life that are not in God's (commanded) will. How do you explain the abuse of someone? What happens if you were abused by an uncle, a friend, a father, mother, or someone in the church? Was this the will of God? Of course not! **Matt. 5:27** "You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. 28 **But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart** (Millstone). Where was God, what was his plan, when this abuse was happening? In that moment, the Lord was looking at the abuser and saying, I have commanded you against this atrocity, and I hate what you are doing. And because of your sin, you will be held eternally accountable to the righteous Judge because you have transgressed his commanded will. Understanding the commanded will of Yahweh, and the depravity of humanity who can do otherwise, gives us a theological framework to cry out: this world

is broken! Oh how we long for the one who can restore us and the day when His good will is always and eternally carried out on earth as is in heaven!

How can I follow the plan of God for my life?

Rom. 12:1 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. **2** 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.

1. **What does the Bible say? (Psalm 119:105)** The revealed plan of the Lord for your life is found in the Bible decisively and authoritatively. **Psa. 119:105** Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. It's not God's plan if I haven't consulted God's Word. *But, God wants you to know and follow His plan, that is why He gave you His Word to discern His perfect will.*
2. **You must be made new (Rom 12:1)** Romans charges us to be transformed. **The reality is that 90%+ of what you do is spontaneous and not calculated.** You did not stop at the front door of the church building and pray, Lord is it your will for me to open the door with my left (Ehud) or right hand (David)? Rather, you naturally, and habitually, opened the door with the same hand that you open 99% of doors in your life. If this is true, then we need radical spiritual transformation so that we have a new life, new heart, transformed minds and the Spirit begins to work out with us new spiritual patterns and habits. **Without Christ,** you habitually do not work out the plan of God in your life. But, when you are **made new,** the Spirit works in you according to His good will. **Phil. 2:13** For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose. **Made new by His Mercy**
3. **Radically renew your mind (Rom 12:2)** The same verb (metamorpho) is rendered transfigured in Matt. 17:1. To follow the plan of Christ you must let the Messiah transfigure your mind. **We must not be like a chameleon that takes its color from the surroundings.** You must do many things that the Bible does not give specific instructions. Can you find a verse to show you whether to buy a **Tesla, Ford, or Chevrolet?** In this scenario, it is not the commercial or media that shapes your mind to buy a car: you deserve this, people will look at you; rather, it is the transformed mind of Jesus that renews our motivations which leads to Christ-exalted decisions.
4. **Don't over-spiritualize every decision (Rom 12:2)** Far too often we over-spiritualize decisions. **Listen to how we speak. I am praying about the one college for me (will God not bless you going to another college)? I am praying about that one person in the world that I will marry (what happens if that one person gets hit by a bus).** What happens if you chose the wrong sport team to cheer for? This leads to **spiritual analysis by paralysis.** We must be more concerned that our bodies are a living sacrifice holy and pleasing! Pray holistically. If my

life is pleasing to the Lord today, a byproduct of that sacrifice is the aroma of God-honoring decision making and spiritual discernment. **Devotion > decisions**

5. **Living sacrifice- abide in the Spirit (Rom 12:2). Acts 16:6** They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia; they had been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. **7** When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. **8** Passing by Mysia they went down to Troas. **9** During the night Paul had a vision in which a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" **10** After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. We are not told how the Holy Spirit forbid or blocked the path of Paul. But one thing we do know, Paul was abiding in the Spirit and the Spirit faithfully displays the plan of the Father in His life. Is it possible that we are seeking the knowledge of God's will rather than obeying and abiding? The Holy Spirit always magnifies the Son and always does the will of the Father. How can I follow the plan of God in my life? Remain in His Spirit.
6. **Ask Christ-centered questions (Rom 12:1)** Good questions to ask: is this good for me, will this help me succeed, is this moral? Best (mercy view) questions: does this decision make me more like Jesus Christ? What will help me best bring God glory in my life? How will this help me present my life as a living sacrifice? Why not, rather than why not (Take a risk for Jesus).
7. **Is this decision confirmed by the counsel and community of faith (Rom 12:2)? John 17:20** "I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. **21** May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. We must listen to the oneness of the faithful. If you are dating a young man or woman and your godly parents don't like him/her, stay away. If your godly friends are concerned about your decisions, listen. Maybe it is the Holy Spirit working through the community of faith. **It was the community of faith, praying and seeking the Lord, that our Father used to move and confirm His calling upon myself and my family. I remember saying, "God of your righteous saints are praying, I would be a fool not to listen."** The church is given for your good and discernment.

Our Response

What is God's plan for you? He desires that you be saved **1 Tim. 2:3** This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, **4** who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

That you grow in Christ-likeness There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'"—C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)

Notes

Doing the will of God is the foundational desire and pursuit of the Christian life.

Psalm 143:10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your gracious Spirit lead me on level ground. Implies that the will of the Lord is not a struggle of information but obedience.

What Does He (The Spirit) Do? The Will of God (John 14:17) John 14:17 exhorts us that the Spirit remains with you and will be in you. The Greek here (remain) means to continue to exist. Often, we concern ourselves with the will of the Lord for our lives. We know that God has two levels of will: his sovereign will which is over all things and his commanded will (honor your father and mother) in which we as moral agents have free will to do. Is it possible that we are seeking the knowledge of God's will rather than obeying and abiding?

Listen to how Jesus prayed: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me—nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22:42 CSB17). In the Garden, Jesus never asked, "Lord what is your will. Rather, he proclaimed, your will be done! How did Jesus know the will of the Father? **Because He remained and abided.** Often, we ask for the will as a map, and yet we forget that the Spirit is our GPS. *Quit asking for the will of God while neglecting the abiding comfort of the Spirit.* If you have His Spirit, seek to abide in the Spirit and watch at the will of the Father work through you. **What does the Spirit do? Always the will of the Father.**

Romans 12:1-2

What does will of God mean? John Piper sermon

Sovereign Will or Commanded Will to do what is right

3 stages of God's revealed or commanded will

1. The will of command is revealed in the Bible decisively and authoritatively
2. You must choose to do many things where the Bible does not give you explicit instructions.
 - a. In this moment it is crucial to have a renewed mind that is not accordance with the way of the world.
3. You must be a new person not simply make new decisions. 95% of your behaviors are spontaneous and thus necessitate radical spiritual transformation.

God's Will (Millard Erickson, 211).

God's will is that attribute of God whereby he approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.

Scripture frequently indicates God's will as the final or most ultimate reason for everything that happens.

More specifically, all things were created by God's will.

Rev. 4:11 Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because you have created all things, and by your will they exist and were created.

Sometimes it is God's will that Christians suffer, as is seen in 1 Peter 3:17.

Secret will and revealed will. **Deut 29:29** The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law.

Those things that God has revealed are given to the purpose of obeying God's will. With regard to the secret/unrevealed will of God, Israel was simply to trust Him.

Because God's revealed will usually contains his commands or precepts for our moral conduct, God's revealed will is sometimes also called God's declared will concerning what we should do or what God commands us to do.

Lord's prayer (Matt 6:10) is a prayer that the people of the Lord obey his revealed will. This could not be a prayer that God's secret will come to pass. Further if a person is praying for the secret will of God to be done, they would never know for what he or she was praying.

We are encouraged by Christ here to pray that people would obey God's laws, that they would follow his principles for life that they would obey his commands to repent of sin and trust in Christ as Savior.

Gen. 50:19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **20** You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. **21** Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Acts 16:6 They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia; they had been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. **7** When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. **8** Passing by Mysia they went down to Troas. **9** During the night Paul had a vision in which a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" **10** After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

There are no details as to how the Spirit prevents this work from going on in Asia (ECNT, 526).

1John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Practical Steps to discerning the plan/commanded will of the Lord

1. What does the Bible say? God did not hide his word but placed in in the most obvious place, His word!
2. Made New. 90% of what you do is spontaneous not calculated. This truth necessitates radical spiritual transformation.
3. Renew your mind. You must do many things that the Bible does not give specific instructions.
4. Abide in the Spirit
5. Don't over-spiritualize every decision. This lead to analysis by paralysis. Some decisions are morally and spiritually neutral.
6. Ask better questions. Good questions: is this good for me? Will this help me succeed. Better questions: Does this decision make me more like Christ? What will help me best bring God glory in my life?
7. Is this decision confirmed by the counsel and community of faith?

God's will for your life (John MacArthur)

1. That you will be saved
2. That you be spirit-filled
3. That you be sanctified
4. That you are submissive (James chapter 4)
5. That you suffer (1 Peter 3:17)
6. That you say thanks (1 Thess. 5:18).

Illustrations

Crisis

- . Once he hands the ball off, the entire focus of the opponent chances. Hand the ball of to Christ

Application

Tony Snow, former press secretary for President George W. Bush, has been battling cancer, off and on, since early 2005. When asked what spiritual lessons he has learned from his battle, he replied: "We want lives of simple, predictable ease—smooth, even trails as far as the eye can see—but God likes to go off-road."

At his news conference the morning after the beginning of the 2003 attacks on Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was asked by a reporter "about the apparent failure to follow the war plan." Rumsfeld replied dryly, "I don't believe you have the war plan."

We often approach God with a question like the reporter's why doesn't he follow the plan we expect? As God told Job, and countless others since then, "I don't believe you have the plan."

"There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'"

—C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)