

# God Has a Specific, Step by Step Plan for My Life – Romans 12:1-2

## Introduction

When you think of the “will of God”, especially when it comes to making decisions, what image or notions come to mind?

Many recent college graduates are currently searching for God’s will concerning finding and landing a job

And many high school graduates are seeking God’s will concerning finding a college to attend in the fall

Other folks are trying to find God’s will about who to date or who to marry, where to live, where to work, what to purchase, and the list goes on...

**Any time we’re faced with a major decision in life, we have the tendency to want to discover God’s will for our lives**

Clearly, we believe that God’s will is important so we undertake extra efforts to find out just what God would have us do

And those efforts may well be different for different people

Some turn to increased and impassioned prayer that God would please, please, please show us his will

Some turn to the Bible and randomly flip through its pages looking for some verse that seems to speak to their situation

Some seek out people they trust and ask for their advice or enlist them as prayer partners on their behalf

Some take a sense of inner peace or the apparently divine coincidence of an open door as proof of God’s will

Others pull out all the stops and use a combination of some or all of the above

Consequently, it seems rather obvious that most of us think that God’s will is some elusive treasure that God wants to see us plead for and pursue sufficiently before he will reveal it

Still, we look at passages like **Mark 3:35** which tells us that our relationship with Jesus is at stake based on how we do God’s will and we read in other places where people are rebuked and corrected for not following God’s will

And so we know it’s very important that we discover and then follow whatever God has planned for us

Because another belief we have is that **God has a specific, step by step plan for our lives** that we dare not deviate from

This kind of understanding looks at God’s plan like a set of instructions from Ikea

If you’ve ever had the pleasure (or suffered the purgatory) of assembling a complicated piece of furniture from Ikea you know what I mean

You lugged the box into the house and cleared a space to work, tore the box open and dumped out the contents

Then, faced with a bewildering array of parts and seemingly unlimited possibilities for how to proceed you turn to the instruction sheet only to be met with almost indecipherable gibberish complete with unclear pictures to guide you

And you know that all of those pieces are supposed to go together and make a wonderful product but only if done in the exact sequence intended

Otherwise, you’ll create a mess and, if you’re lucky, you’ll only have to backtrack and start over but there’s a good chance you’ll mess things up so badly that pieces will be broken and the whole project will be ruined

Is it any wonder, then, that we face the process of knowing God’s will with more than a little anxiety and a whole lot of uncertainty?

It’s no wonder that the importance and seeming elusiveness of God’s will can cause us to fall prey to a kind of paralysis of analysis – simply because we are so afraid of making a mistake and messing up God’s plan for us

But as we’re going to see today, God’s will really isn’t a mystery and God isn’t conspiring to keep it a secret from us

It’s just that we’ve been searching for the wrong thing all along because of something we know that just ain’t so

As we open God’s Word we are first going to answer the question, **“What is God’s will?”**

Then we’ll consider the question, **“How should I view God’s will for my life?”**

And, lastly, we’ll look at **six habits that help us know God’s will**

Let's begin by considering our first question, "What is God's will?"

## I. What is God's will?

God's will actually has more than one aspect

It might help to realize that God has a sovereign will and he has a desirous will

God's sovereign will cannot be thwarted – what God declares will happen will indeed happen

But God's desirous will is simply those things he wants to see happen but allows to go undone

Consider **1 Timothy 2:3-4** for example where we see that God "*desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*"

And **2 Peter 3:9** tells us the same thing in a slightly different way –

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

So, we can rightly say that it is God's will that everyone would repent and be saved – that's what those verses tell us

But we know that not everyone will be saved even though God wants it to be so

However, we also know that everyone who confesses their sins and repents of them and accepts Christ's payment for their sins will be saved because God has declared it to be so – that falls under God's sovereign, declarative will

The fact that God's sovereign, declarative will is certain should give us comfort – we can't mess it up by our wrong choices – it's going to happen in the end just as God says it will

However, we still want to please God by doing according to his desirous will so we need to have a proper understanding of it

And that leads us to question number two, "How should I view God's will for my life?"

## II. How should I view God's will for my life?

God has defined and described a narrow way of being reconciled to him and he has likewise defined and described the behavioral expectations he has for humanity

God certainly has expectations for you as you live your life – especially if you are a Christ-follower

God has given us his Commandments and made very clear that some things are forbidden while others are permissible and some are better and some are worse – some he approves of and some he tolerates and so forth

God has also given us general principles that we can use to guide us in our day-to-day decision making

But the reality is, God likely doesn't have a specific, step by step plan for your life that you must follow or else

While we do see cases in the Bible where God had a very detailed plan for someone to follow those cases are rare – even among the heroes of the faith

Instead, what God more than likely has for each of us in most cases is more like a framework within which to operate

A structure that gives us a great amount of flexibility in working out the details and the freedom to make adjustments as our lives unfold

God has a planned outcome for each of his children; he's made that clear in his Word – we'll look at that in just a bit

But he allows us a great deal of flexibility in how we get there

### ***Bomb squad mentality***

Still, some Christians approach each life-altering decision like they are a member of the bomb squad deciding whether to cut the red wire or the blue wire to defuse the bomb

Snip the wrong wire and \*BLOOEY\* you're done – no second chances because you just irrevocably messed up God's plan for your life

Just think for a moment of the implications of the mindset that believes there is only one correct choice for every major life decision

Let's say Joe Christian, in a moment of carelessness or even rebellion, dates and marries the wrong girl

Well, the girl who Joe was supposed to marry is in a pickle as is the guy that was supposed to marry Joe's new wife

And, unless they both stay single or marry each other they are bound to mess up further God-ordained unions

In fact, Joe may have started a worldwide chain reaction of marriages that go against what God had planned

Now, if you say that God would step in and stop Joe from marrying the wrong spouse the whole idea of independent human agency is destroyed and we become nothing more than chess pieces that God moves around at his will and none of our decisions matter anyway

### **GPS**

In reality, God's plan for your life is more like taking a trip with a GPS

God has a specific destination planned and programmed into your personal GPS and there is a preferred route for getting to your destination

Suppose, though, one day as you're traveling along you come to an intersection and you, for whatever reason, turn in a wrong direction

All is not lost because your ultimate destination is still programmed into the GPS and, even though you have caused it to have to recalculate a new route, it will still guide you to precisely where you were originally headed

You may well take an extended detour and travel over much rougher roads than God had in mind for you but you can still get back on track as soon as you pay attention to the instructions your GPS gives you

### **The reality is there is not only one right choice for every major decision we face in life**

There is usually an ideal choice or a better choice, but for the vast majority of decisions a lesser choice is far from fatal God gives us a great deal of freedom along with his loving guidance as we travel through life

The reality is, God doesn't care nearly as much about which Christian spouse we marry as he does about how we conduct ourselves within the marriage

Likewise, he doesn't care nearly so much about where we work or where we live as he does about how we work and how we live

When you consider what the Bible focuses on, you will see that it doesn't really deal much at all with the kinds of decisions we stress over

Instead, the Bible emphasizes having an intimate relationship with God and developing godly character and a general pattern of obedience

So, let's look next at **six habits that will help us to know God's will**

## **III. Six habits that will help us to know God's will**

### **1. Make walking with God the normal pattern of your life**

**Proverbs 3:5-6** tells us –

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

If you want to know God's will; know God's Word

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** makes clear the functional nature of God's Word

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.***

Do you want to be fully prepared to make the best choices when faced with the big decisions of life?

Then be in the Word daily and absorb the principles and commands and teachings found within its pages

Get to know God within the context of the minor details of daily life and you will be better prepared to understand his mind when the big decisions come along

## **2. Determine in advance to surrender your will to God's**

God's will is knowable but it requires intentional submission on our part as we see in **Romans 12:1-2** where we read – *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Notice that the prerequisite to knowing God's will is self-sacrifice

God is ready and willing to reveal his will to us but he requires that we first commit to following it as an act of worship  
If we're honest, we tend to approach God's will tentatively and we want to know what his will is before we commit to following it

We want to make sure that what God wants aligns with what we want and then we'll go along with it – otherwise, we might decide to go our own way

Why on earth would we expect God to go along with that scheme when we wouldn't continue to do so in our own interpersonal relationships?

If someone repeatedly asked for our preference and then ignored whatever we said and did as they pleased, it wouldn't take long for us to stop telling them our preferences and God is no different

The third habit is closely tied to the second

## **3. Obey what you already know**

I would venture to estimate that 95% of God's will is the same for all of us

As we've already discussed, God has made the vast majority of his will known to us through his commands, precepts, and principles that are plainly revealed in his Word

Take for example **1Thessalonians 5:16-22** where we read –

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*

The commands contained in those verses are God's plan, or will, for every believer who walks this earth and we could point to many other examples where God's will for all is clearly spelled out

If every Christ-follower were simply commit to obeying and to making all their decisions in a way that would help them fulfill the plain statements of God's general will, just think of how little there would still be to question

Still, we want to ignore those plain passages while pleading with God to guide us in some seemingly vital personal decision

Why would you seek God's advice on who to marry if you're ignoring his commands concerning sexual purity while dating, for example?

Or why would you seek God's will for a business decision if you're actively cheating on your taxes?

Believe it or not, there are things you don't need to pray about

But quite often, when we are doing what is forbidden by God's Word we try to get God to see things our way and bless our doing of them or at least ignore it and give us guidance so that we can decide whether to follow or ignore it

**Proverbs 11:5** tells us that – *The righteousness of the blameless keeps his way straight, but the wicked falls by his own wickedness.*

If you want God to guide you along his straight path the key is to live righteously; doing what he has already made plain

#### **4. Actively listen to the urging of the Holy Spirit**

**1Corinthians 2:16** tells us that when we believed we were given the mind of Christ

And **John 10:27** tells us that Christ's sheep hear his voice and follow him

And **John 14:26** tells us of the indwelling Holy Spirit who "will teach [us] all things and bring to [our] remembrance all of Jesus' teachings

One of the major functions of the Holy Spirit is to bring to mind those things we might be prone to forget and to make clear those things we might otherwise fail to understand

So we need to have our "spiritual ears" open to his leading because it often comes to us as a low whisper

But we also need to listen as we are moving because God tends to reveal his will more fully to those who are active

Again, this ties back to habit 3, obey what you already know

Perhaps my favorite example of this kind of mindset is the apostle Paul in Acts 16 when he and his traveling party were prohibited from going first into Asia to the north and then Bithynia to the south leaving west as the only direction

And that's because Paul knew God's will was for him to take the gospel to new areas and, since he had come from the east he knew that meant he had to travel west

But still, it wasn't until he ran out of land that God revealed in a vision of the night that he was to get on a ship and head across the sea to Macedonia

Keep moving in the last direction you know God was pointing until he turns you but keep listening for the new direction

#### **5. Pay attention to yourself**

What I mean by that is that you need to recognize, understand, and accept how God has wired and prepared you

**1Peter 4:10** commands us to use what God has given us for his glory

And God has gifted each of us differently

We have differences in personality, ability, and proclivity and we are all shaped by our own experiences into a tool that God desires to use for his glory in some distinct way

So you must seek to act within your unique calling as you focus more on what God has equipped and prepared you to do than specifically where you might do it

Again, God cares less about where you put your gifts into service than he is with whether you are serving at all times according to your ability and circumstance

Lastly,

#### **6. Seek godly input concerning the decision before you**

I put this one last not because it's least but because it's less of a habit than it is a practice to undertake when facing a decision

Others often see our situation with greater clarity than we do

And as we see in **Proverbs 11:14** there is wisdom in seeking advice and counsel

But there is also danger lurking if the wrong counselors are chosen so we must be diligent to only seek advice from the spiritually mature who are also practicing the first five habits – that's why I say "seek godly input"

Still, even then, we must be careful to weigh and compare everything with what God plainly says in his written Word, the Bible

## Conclusion

God has a plan for your life – and for the life of every believer

The destination for each one of us is already programmed in

**Romans 8:29** tells us that God the Father has predestined each of us to be conformed to the image of his Son

That's God's will and **Isaiah 46:10** tells us that he will accomplish his purpose

And God has a perfect path that will get us there but he wants us to willingly travel that path

Of course, following God's path would prove to be the wisest route but not always the smoothest or the one that only traverses the mountain tops while avoiding the valleys –

Those are also misconceptions we have that we'll explore in future sermons

Obviously, where God's Word is clear in what God requires or forbids we should, of course, comply

But quite often, when we sincerely struggle to know what God's will is in a particular circumstance, and yet God seems to be silent, it very well may be because God doesn't have a preference

Sometimes it seems that God says, "I'll let you choose this one" and then uses our choice to further his ends

And as long as we are striving to walk close to God and living according to biblical principles to the best of our ability, sincerely seeking to follow God's will, and sensitive to his direction, none of our choices are going to be all that far off anyway

God has a plan for us but it's a plan that generally has lots of latitude built in

And if God truly wants us to go in a specific direction he won't leave us in doubt about it but will make it perfectly clear

But since the Christian life is less about walking a particular path than it is about becoming a particular person, we can stop stressing over each and every decision as if one wrong move will blow up God's whole plan

Remember, God has a destination already laid out for you and God's sovereign will can't be messed up by your bad choices –

Sure, you might have to endure a less than pleasant detour along the way but you'll still arrive where he wants you to be

So, relax, live a life of obedience to the best of your ability, and trust God with the outcome

Let's pray