



Discovering the Will of God for Your Personal Fishing Venture

By Kurt von Schleicher

Does God still speak to man today about people's needs? Does He talk to Christians about His will for them especially regarding His great fishing enterprise? Is He interested in what happens to us down here? Does The Master really have a master plan for our lives? If so, how can we discover it? I want to hear His voice—how can I? I want to know the will of God—how can I? Are you only interested in learning about God's will for you if it is independent of you witnessing and influence lost people for Him?

Those are some important questions huh? Man, not all of them are super easy to answer too. I believe that what you really desire in life will only be found in God's will for you and that His will for you will indeed include helping lost people in Christ's Name. I believe we all need the Lord to direct our lives in every area—yes, regarding all the great questions of life like: Whom should I marry? Where should I work? Should I ever relocate? How does God want me to serve Him with others? God does want to communicate with Christians today about His will for them in directed-service towards Christians and not-yet-Christians. Your worship and fishing activity matters! And I'm talking about the best kind of fishing—for souls?

Jesus was talking to Simon one day about going after fish, ***"He said to Simon, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' But Simon answered and said to Him, 'Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.' And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink"*** (Lk. 5:5-7).

Have you ever felt discouraged after toiling all night and having caught nothing? Many faithful God-honoring pastors feel like this on Mondays. And Christ understands that feeling. So if Christ can do all this guiding stuff for Simon on a lake so he could gain some swimming animals (mere food), Christ can just as easily turn things around for you when dealing with what's most valuable to Him (souls). Christ can easily direct your service for winning people to righteousness starting today! And He wants to. It is very important to Him that you are involved with Him in His worldwide plan.

So does God still talk to Christians today? The answer is absolutely YES! We as are not "victims of chance," blindly trying to feel around in the dark for our way in some crazy maze of a world. When we read the Bible we can see how God actually led people in the Old and New Testament times and we find encouragement because He hasn't changed. He still wants to lead you and

me today. How? I've found that the will of God has unfolded in my life one step at a time, one day at a time, and one choice at a time – as I took little and big steps of faith. As I've persisted in trying my best to apply God's Word and the different principles of Scripture in a wise way, God has led me.

Of course some times it's been a little hard to tell for sure if I was really doing the best thing at the time—God's will. Like many of us Christians, He has spoken to me in a pretty clear way before—not often—but most of the time He speaks inside my human spirit. It's indeed been a journey of faith. In fact, that's what we see in the Scripture over and over again—people stepping out in a venture of faith. Will this work God, are you really in this. Sure there is a little risk, but we can minimize all risk. Listen to what the Bible says to us: ***"The just shall live by faith."***

To me, God's will seems more like a right attitude of heart, a right spirit, a right frame of mind ...more than an exact detailed itinerary for the day's events. I say this: spend some time in the Word and in prayer with Jesus and then start moving out, walking in fellowship with Him and you will discover the next indicated thing He wants you to do. That time alone preps you in your spirit to hear His voice. Start walking with Jesus now and He, the Good Shepherd, will surely guide you to green pastures where sheep tend to multiply. He might even bring you across the path of someone else in need—maybe an unbeliever needier than you, ***"for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"*** (Lk. 19:10). Sometimes I can feel pretty down if I don't see a lot of action—a lot of things happening all at once. I get impatient too easy I guess, but what a joy it is on the days when I can minister to someone else or just encourage them a bit! It really does seem to be more blessed to give than to receive.

Clearly, God is very interested in your life! He's interested in the lives of each one of His kids, as well as in the lives of those He wants to join His family. And contrary to popular thinking today, not everyone around us is in His family or on the road to Heaven. God does speak today and He has you and lots of other people on His mind and heart when He does. He really delights to guide and counsel His children especially when they are involved in fishing for others! God won't ever play run and ditch or hide-and-seek with you. He desires to be found by you and He desires to lead you far more than you want to be led by Him. God is more concerned about keeping us in the center of His will than we are to be kept in it! He is a good Father looking out for our welfare.

Though God might not speak to you or me exactly just like He used to speak to people in Old Testament times, or as you would speak to your earthly friend at the store, you can speak to Him like that. He doesn't mind. Just be yourself. He remains so interested in us and shows us that He wants a close relationship with us. He has a plan and fishing purpose for our lives each day.

In Solomon's day, in Old Testament times, if a believer needed direction regarding God specific will, for example concerning who to marry, where to move, how to serve others, what career to choose, he would travel all the way to Jerusalem where he would find the high priest. And as part of the high priest's vesture, he wore a priestly pouch-like breastplate upon which were 12 gems, each representing one of the tribes of Israel. I'm sure you remember reading how Aaron wore that ephod bearing, ***"the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart"*** and how he was told to ***"put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim,"*** that they would, ***"be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord"*** (Exd. 28:30). Yes, it would appear that these 12 gems were instrumental in the dispensing of wisdom and specific direction. You see, according to Exodus 28:30, if a person had any need of wisdom or guidance personally, or if the people had need for direction corporately, the high priest would consult the Lord by way of the urim and the thummim.

Although we can't say dogmatically what the urim and the thummim were like in detail, we do know what the word: 'urim' means 'light and the word: 'thummim' means 'perfection' — in other words a perfect light to give God's people direction.

How did they work? It would seem as though the stones on the breastplate of the high priest which were linked to the urim and the thummim would literally light up in such a way that, using the letter of the tribe each stone represented, a valid answer would be spelled out.

The problem was that only the high priest had the urim and the thummim, and anyone having a question would have to travel far, all the way to Jerusalem just to make an appointment with him to get an answer from God. Getting wisdom and direction on how to serve was not an easy thing to do!

Today people seek God's will in a different way—in the Bible which points them towards a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And God guides His children—born again Christians—by the Spirit of Christ if they are open to His leading.

There are many verses in the Bible that discuss God still having a will for people like you and I. One Bible verse commands, ***"So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is"*** (Eph. 5:17). Yes, that means it's possible for you to obtain this knowledge. Maybe one thing that God is waiting for before He shows you His specific will—His fishing plan for you—is that He expects you to respond to what He has already clearly revealed to you from His Bible about what He wants you to do. Many people are crying out to God, *"Lord, please reveal Your will to me! I want to hear Your voice—I've got to know your will! Please speak to me and use me!"* and all the while they are holding God's response to their prayer in their hands. Yes, His answer is right in their laps—in the Bible—God's *User's Manual*. It's God's love letter to the real Christian.

"When the Scripture speaks, God speaks."—Martin Luther

I recall a time when I bought my first video camera. It was kind of a complicated temporal widget and for some reason I didn't feel like reading all about it (that's probably due to me being a guy). I never feel like reading the instructions for any device. But I discovered something cool one year—that when I would read the user's manual for my video camera, the video films that I produced were much easier to watch. There was less frozen-frame-stalling, less shaking, less technical problems and fewer failed films. There was also less jerking around with what people saw when they viewed them. Man, my wife used to get so dizzy watching the movies that I shot. They were horrible—no they were disgusting! But that camera's instruction book saved me years of experimentation and more bad videos!

The deal is this though. You've got to actually go do what the manual tells you to do or it will just seem worthless forever. My point with all this? Hear from God in His Word if you want to properly know and do His will. He said, ***"Behold, I have come—in the volume of the Book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God"*** (Heb. 10:7). Are you concerned about what to do in the future? Obedience to revealed truth guarantees future guidance in matters of unrevealed truth!

God's General Will and His Specific Will—What's the Diff?

Did you know that you can divide God's will into His general will and into His specific will? His general will is always very clear as we read it in the Bible and this applies to all individuals. Yes, we find His general will revealed in the Scriptures in the area of what you and I are to believe; (like with ethics, doctrines, morals, good life-style and how we are to behave). The general will of

God is for all of us ...not to ignore! Are you ready to know what's at the top of the list in God's general will for you? Here it is;

You must be a born again believer. Why? Because Jesus said you must be born again. The Scripture says that **"God will have all men to be saved..."** (1 Tim. 2:4). That's the most important decision a person will make – will I take Christ as my Savior or not? The Bible says, **"God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"** (2 Pet. 3:9). So, before anything else is said here, let it be known that God is telling each one of us that it is His will that we need to permanently turn away from a lifestyle of sinning and put our [full trust in Jesus Christ as Savior](#) and Lord! And there's no better time than now! He is wonderfully magnificent and knowing Him means LIFE! I know that's a "no-brainer" for some of you, but we need to start there.

Here's some more:

God wants you to daily develop a close personal relationship with Jesus, His Son, through further study of the Bible, through believing prayer, through fellowship upwards and outwards so that you will have close strong Christian friends. Daily, God wants you and me to walk in victory over sin, over Satan's dominion and over the demands of the world and our own fleshly nature!

He wants you and me to become obedient in witnessing as an overflow of this great harmonious union we each have with Christ—that's fishing for lost people as the Spirit directs us. He wants you and me to press in to know Him well and then make Him well-known—that's discipleship by the Spirit. God wants each of us to be an active part of a sound Bible teaching, actively fishing kind of church. Why attend a church where the leaders and followers could give a flip about scripturally rescuing the lost from their bondages and hang-ups when Jesus is all about that? God says, **"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"** (1 Jn. 3:8, nkjv). This is all part of His general will for you and me. God wants us all to grow up to maturity. He also wants every member of His Church involved in world evangelization at some capacity—in giving, in sending, in going, in praying and in witnessing. What else is part of God's general will for you each day?

You and I need to be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit moment by moment. Scripture tells us, **"Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Eph. 5:15-20, niv). Jesus said, **"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"** (Jn. 16:12-14). There is so much the Spirit wants to tell you, but you may not be ready yet. When the Father tells Him that you're ready, He will then reveal brilliant stuff to you.

Look at that phrase again: **"be filled."** In the original language, this word appears in the present tense. It means **"constantly be filled up!"** It's indeed a simple command. It is the unmistakable will of God that every believer be continually filled with God's Holy Spirit! Are you being obedient to this clear command of the Lord? Are you opening your heart to the filling and leading of Christ's Spirit? Christianity is dry, boring and religious without the Spirit! Being "filled up with the Holy Spirit" has little to nothing to do with your feelings and emotions. The word filled comes from a word that means "controlled." Jesus desires that you will be yielding to the Spirit's leading each and every day. In addition to that, what else is God's general will?

You and I need to lead a pure life before a watching skeptical world. The Bible says, ***"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality"*** (1 Thess. 4:3). Wow, how clear can it get? That's a great fishing-directive from God to you ...for He calls us to *be fishers* before we are to *do fishing* in His Name! If your talk doesn't line up with your walk, your fishing success will be hindered!

The word sanctification means holiness, consecration and full dedication to God. This speaks to all single people who are called to one day be married—it means remaining sexually pure until marriage and faithful to one's spouse after marriage. It doesn't mean marrying a half committed carnal Christian or a non-Christian. That's never part of God's general will for a Christian. God doesn't ever want a single Christian girl shacking up together with a "lost guy" or a "saved guy" outside of marriage ...no matter how many worldly singles around us move-in to live with each other to enjoy all the sexual privileges of a marriage. And Christian men are never to pressure any one for sex—they are to wait on God's choice of a spouse for them! God wants all of us to ***"Abstain from all appearance of evil"*** (1Thess. 5:22). And there are no exceptions to the rule of Scripture in God's general rule. God will not lead you to do something His Word clearly forbids! Is He a kill-joy? No, He's looking out for your best interest wanting no one destroyed by sin. Does He want to make you into a clone? No way! All sins are injurious and sin is the only thing He wants to remove from your lifestyle! Why be so frank? Because I've actually run into unmarried couples who claim to be Christians, and they tell me that the Lord has told them it was OK for them to move in together and to sleep together. Like He'd actually say, *"Bless you my beloved child, and enjoy each other's bodies in the fullness of my Spirit!"* Give me a colossal-break! I've also run into homosexuals who say it's God's will for them to sleep with the same sex. They are totally deceived! The Bible clearly teaches against this sin—it's an abomination to God! Wow abomination, that's a big word. How do I describe its meaning? It means that if you commit this sin and let's say you owned a nation, then God would feel like bombing your nation. That's kind of the gist of "abomination." God's will is for you to leave animals and the same sex alone! Many are very deluded, perverse and in error with a seared conscience today, but that's why it's God's will for you and I to be pure witnesses—bright shining lights in the middle of the darkness!

It's God's will for you to cultivate and daily choose to have an attitude of gratitude. We all need to express thanks and praise to the Lord regularly. He's done so much for us. The Bible says, ***"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"*** (1 Thess. 5:18). Did you see that? ***"This is the will of God...concerning you."*** That's very clear huh? Do we deserve any of God's blessings to us? Of course not—we've all sinned. Yet God provides for us. It's the ungrateful (saints and sinners) who get into trouble. I'm talking about having a thought life and an attitude inside that recognizes that God is in control of all circumstances that surround your life. So many Christians are too busy to even recognize God's providence in their lives today. He leads us to both still waters and stormy seas and works everything out for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.¹ God provides for His children in unique but wholesome ways. It's all a part of God's process for us in making us more like Jesus Christ!

What about God's Specific Will For Me?

Now here's something that's absolutely assured for you. No one living has a perfect understanding and flawless insight about God's specific will regarding everything. The soundest, most mature Christians unfortunately can and do make mistakes regarding God's specific will. What should you do about this? Bluntly ask God to clearly show you His specific will for your fishing venture—that's so important! Many Christians become discouraged in trying to discover it. They try to put their finger on the pulse of God's specific will all by themselves—independent of the Spirit's assistance. Don't do that! No one can live any part of the Christian life properly apart from the Holy Spirit enabling them.

Listen, time won't wait for you and me—we need to make decisions daily. And of course we desire that all those decisions are made right—right in the center of God's direct will. And we must never forget that the Holy Spirit understands our time demands, our work deadlines, or limitations and He is much bigger than each one of us. He is leading our steps daily as we fellowship with our Friend, Jesus Christ. We just need to be patient and trust Christ. When you were a toddler learning to walk, I'm sure you didn't just capitulate on the whole learning experience of walking when you first tried to make some steps? In elementary school, if you failed in a spelling test, you didn't just quit school altogether did you? No way! You and I are far from perfect still, yet we are being perfected inside and we need to keep trying to perfectly aim for God's will, especially regarding our part to play in world evangelization. We are going to come as close as we can with it and trust God to get us there all the way. The Lord will make allowances for your imperfections on earth. This allowance that He makes is called grace—it's really amazing and it is delivered to us daily by the Holy Spirit.

You already know how NASA launches space craft up into space fully equipped with a cool guidance system, but that guidance system they install won't come into use to help the astronauts until after the time of liftoff. If the NASA engineers expected their rocket powered space craft to fly flawlessly through the atmosphere, they wouldn't have bothered to construct that guidance system in the first place. But here's how it along with their team work functions. The scientists must make slight corrections over the course of the entire flight as they communicate. The Lord also expects to make guidance adjustments with your life over the course of your entire Christian experience, while you're on earth. Jesus is so aware of the whole situation. He's alert to all your weaknesses too ...far more than you are, kind of like the engineers at NASA in Houston know each one of their astronauts personally, all their quirks and the inner workings of the spaceship much better than their astronauts inside it know things. God has already made a big investment in your life and He is certainly never the author of confusion for anyone. In fact, He always loves to remove all confusion and ignorance from people. Unlike dead religion, He wants you and me *in the know*. So expect God to guide you with His precise timing and knowledge. He's never late in providing for you or in bringing you to where He wants you to serve Him. I'm talking about that beautiful fishing purpose which He has specifically designed for you. It should start where you are now—Christianity needs to start at home, rather than over an ocean somewhere. Learn to witness and lead people to Jesus now.

“God is never in a hurry, but God is never late!”—Adrian Rogers

Remember that nobody on earth can reveal God's will for you as well as God can, so quit running to people for guidance first. Quit leaning on the arm of the flesh. Bathe it all in prayer and then listen for the Lord's voice. That means spend a lot of time in prayer and then move out in Him. Ask God to speak to you by His Spirit—to your inner human spirit for, ***“The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart”***(Prov. 20:27). God may reveal His will to you by some unexpected method of course: by a godly friend, by a sound Christian book, by a Christ-exalting church, or by a good teaching CD etc, but He will probably not reveal His specific will to you at all, if you've totally bailed-out on spending time alone with Him in prayer. He wants you to want Him far more than what He can give to you or how He can use you. Seek Him daily! Delight yourself in Him ...for Him, not in Him for what you can get from Him. He certainly wants you more than what you can do for Him—what you can give to Him and how you can serve Him! Yup, unlike many preachers today, God longs for you far more than your wallet ...but He does want to direct you with your wallet. The Gospel is free and needs to remain that way! It will cost to get it out there where the unbelievers are, but let me ask you this? Does a rich cattle Barron need money for His work? God responds saying, ***“For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills”***(Ps. 50:10). When you know that God will provide for His Cause, it's easier to rest in Him. When you're assured of God's absolute general will for you, it's much easier to detect His specific will in prayer.

In determining God's specific will there are some absolutes that never change:

- ❖ God does indeed have a plan for your life that will include other people, but it might include some pain, persecution and suffering [see Jer. 29:11].
- ❖ The Lord's general will is that we each have a close obedient relationship with the Father through His sinless Son, so He can then disclose all the details of His specific will for them in their fishing endeavors [1 Tim. 2:3-4].
- ❖ God promises to give each and every Christian His wisdom if we will simply ask and believe Him for this [Jam. 1:5]. Applying the principles of God's Word in performing His specific will, will require God's wisdom.
- ❖ In Romans 12:1-2 we can see some clear prerequisites that we must honor before God's perfect will is revealed. Your flesh on His altar with your mind transformed by His Spirit of truth, instead of you being conformed in a perverse worldly way ...is an absolute "must" in order to learn God's specific will for you in serving Him.
- ❖ God doesn't typically use burning bushes, wet animal fleeces, open visions, audible voices, liver-quivers, goose bumps, or feelings much in communicating with His people about His specific will, but He does communicate through burning hearts—hearts that are aflame with vertical passion for Him and ears that are tuned into His Word and His evangelistic heart-beat. We worship Jesus Christ daily and He gladly kindles in us that fire anew.
- ❖ Again, every decision we make must meet at least two criteria: First, it must not contradict God's written Word [It can't go against what the Bible says we should do or should not do no matter what we feel like doing. See Psalm 119:105]. The Bible is your roadmap for all decisions. No short cuts—no detours allowed. If your choice doesn't agree with the Bible, it isn't God's will at all! Be relentlessly persistent. Some decisions we make regarding God's will are objective enough to be eliminated quickly on the basis of direct contradiction to Scripture, others take a little more study [see Prov. 8:10]. Second, every decision we make must be compatible with our own God-given personal convictions inside ...regarding those grey-area-habits of life that God allows us to personally enjoy or commands us to avoid. Keep a clear conscience! We each have these convictions for fishing's sake, for blessing and for liberty's sake. Paul wrote, "***The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves***" (Rom. 14:22). Paul also said, "***One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind***" (Rom. 14:5). It's ok to have different personal convictions on certain things. Yesterday I went to hear Chuck Swindoll teach. It was great to hear him pray: "*Lord please free me up from the need of always straightening somebody else out—anybody else out with their behavior and convictions.*" Swindoll then exhorted his audience with these words: "Quit trying to control people!" I love it! We are not called to reform sinners and commandeer saints. So give up your must-do-list and your never-ever-do-list that you have for other people so they can come up to your standards. It's none of your business! Who are you to be judgmental—to judge another man's servant? Mind your own convictions and simply obey God. It's mature well-fed Christians who are held to the highest standard by God. To whom much is given, much will be required. And this requires constant input from the Holy Spirit in order to stay on the *specific path* that God has laid out for us to walk on [see Jn. 16:13]. This means that Christians are accountable if they choose to defile their consciences by

doing something they really believe is wrong. Doing God's specific will is based on the Spirit's One-to-one-communication and a firm inner conviction from God!

- ❖ God will not lead you in a specific direction that will violate His principles or His holy nature. For example, under normal circumstances I really doubt that God would lead you into a situation where you would incur a huge high interest debt through borrowing money just to buy a fast depreciating item (see Ps. 37:21; Rom. 13:8). Listen we all have *needs* and God promises to meet them, but He isn't there to meet all our *greeds*. I've run ahead of God in this area before and what a drag it turned out to be. Getting in huge debt to serve God can get you in trouble fast and you don't want to be a bad witness! We can learn the hard way as we experiment in doing things our own way or we can learn the easy way by simply listening to God's voice and obeying Him. So often Christians believe that God is leading them into a new area of ministry, and God might really be doing that very thing for them, but they lunge forward too fast without going back to God to get all the details of His specific will and how to fund the work according to His specific directions. And when we do, we do this to the hurt of others or to ourselves. It can give the Gospel Cause a black eye. In this credit card society we live in, we all can tend to run ahead of God if we aren't careful, but He wants us to get out of debt so we can enjoy more freedom in spreading His Gospel. Remember that where God guides, He provides. So let's do His will His way rather than our own way.
- ❖ Even with the best spiritual discernment utilized, it is possible to do things that are outside of God's specific will for you. The key is not to allow ego or willful stubbornness to get in the way but rather, admit your wrong-doings quickly and then submit to God's delegated and direct authority. Many Christians want to serve God according to the satanic principle of rebellion, instead of under authority and the work is not blessed. It will one day burn up like chaff. I say submit to God's old (maybe ignored) directives and also to his specific new directives for you ...in concert with His Church and in harmony with His leadership for He is a God of order and peace. He hates pride and presumption, because it hinders us in His will. We should hate it too and stop being quick to seek the highest and best seat so to speak, but remember that He gives grace to the humble. He has given each of us gifts, resources, abilities, and talents to use in His fishing and discipling endeavors and we must be faithful stewards of all these things for His glory!
- ❖ If a believer isn't gifted in a certain area, chances are God will probably not call that Christian to serve in that area (see Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:11-13). But God can also give special grace to accomplish a job He wants done. I've seen Him give utterance to a shy introvert on more than one occasion, to boldly communicate His truth in love before thousands.
- ❖ When deciding between different alternatives after earnest prayer has been prayed, many times the option that best fits into God's specific will and direction will be confirmed to us by God's inner peace that acts as an umpire to judge what's right. Isaiah said, ***"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever"*** (32:17, nkjv).
- ❖ Many Christians make decisions on major issues based on what is called the *"open door"* philosophy. In other words, *God would never let a Christian do something wrong and therefore, if the door is standing open before the person, then they should always go through it.* Now, I think we should pray for open doors in spreading the Gospel and also go through those doors to tell people the Good News, but we should not be quick to call every open door that we face, "God's open door for us to enter." Christian, listen to that still small voice inside of you! Why enter an open career-door in a business that

produces and sells things that can hurt or pervert other people? When in doubt, don't! Seek godly counsel. God will not always make His will clear to you through the counsel of others, but He sometimes will. Just make sure their suggestions square with the Bible. Some call this the "open mine shaft" philosophy because a lot of saints stumble down open shafts of opportunity thinking that God wouldn't allow them fail or miss Him. I sometimes ask the Lord in prayer that if the "open door" before me is not of God, then please let me know or close it for me so I won't enter it. Yes, way too many Christians make their decisions based on an over simplified "open door" philosophy of sorts which says: If God does not block my way; it must be okay with Him for me to enter this open door. Unfortunately, Satan can also open doors—opportunities that lead to destruction. That's his goal for you—to kill, steal and destroy you ...any way he can and as fast or slow as you let him. Believers must constantly ask God to evaluate their motives (Ps. 139:23, 24) and be willing to change direction as God will lead them. Don't be like Balaam who kept pushing for God to let Him do what He wanted, just to gain for himself. We're not to be self-seeking!

- ❖ Finally, believers seeking God's specific will must be accountable to, and listen to the good advice of a few spiritual men (or women if they're a female) who are mature and godly, who are very wise in the operations of God's fishing plan and directives ...and who are controlled by the Holy Spirit, that He has placed in their lives (see Prov. 12:15; 15:22). A married man doesn't need to seek godly counsel from a woman, and a married woman doesn't need to seek godly counsel from a man.

Three Harbor Buoys in a Line

There are three buoys in the sea of life so to speak that really need to line up in a row before you can safely enter the harbor of God's direct will. The first one is the Word of God. Is Scripture clearly opposed to you doing it, or for you doing it? The second one is the inner peace of God that He gives you when you're contemplating doing something. And the third one is the circumstances of life. God's providence is important. Will the circumstances in your life even allow you to do something, or will they prevent you from doing it? I remember when I was wondering if it was God's specific will for me to leave my home and go attend Bible College in 1980. I indeed wanted to go to Bible College, but I really didn't have the money to pay for this education. The Bible told me ***"Owe no one anything except to love one another"*** (Rom. 13:8).

Going to Bible College in and of itself was not a bad thing. It could be a good thing if I was called to do this. The circumstances of life were blocking my way to school for a time. I remember praying and fasting about the matter one weekend, because the desire I had to go would not leave me alone. And that was when 1.) God called me to do this as He clearly spoke to me in my spirit and 2.) When God provided the money for me to attend a Bible College in Dallas, He surprised me when He did this through a very unexpected source at the perfect time too—right before the fall semester started. I had a will to do it and the Bible says, ***"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain"*** (Phil. 2:12-16, nkjv).

It was time for me to go because buoy number one was in line for the Bible commands, ***"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"*** (2 Tim. 2:15, nkjv). The Scriptures were totally lining up with buoy number two as well, because I had the inner peace of God about this whole venture of faith. Paul said, ***"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in***

one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Col. 3:15-16). Buoy number one had been in line with number two for awhile, but now buoy number three (which was out of line), came quickly into line with the first two for the circumstances of life now allowed me to pay for this education. And God wants us to live within our means and pay all our bills on time in order to be a good witness for Him. We trust that where God's finger points, His hand of provision will open. The Bible says, ***"Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law"*** (Rom. 13:7-8, niv).

"God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply." —Hudson Taylor

It was the same way for me when it was time for me to get married. All three buoys lined up perfectly. My girlfriend, Liney, was a growing spiritual Christian who wanted to marry me. I had finished school in Dallas and had the time to work to earn enough to support us. Her parents also spent a lot of money for the wedding and a friend gave us their cabin high up in the Rockies for our honeymoon. The Bible was for us becoming equally yoked in Christ. Liney and I both had the inner peace of God about it. Yup, we had it bad for each other, but we both loved Christ more and wanted to serve Him together in Germany as missionaries. And all of a sudden, I had the ability, time and employment to support a wife. Praise the Lord! We've been married almost 26 years now and I know that this has been the second best decision of my life, after getting right with Christ.

What good thing have you desired to do or to have? Have you prayed about it? What unbeliever have you wanted to witness to? Have you interceded for them? Is there a young Christian in your life who needs a strong friend and some encouragement?

What has God laid on your heart? The Bible tell us to, ***"Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart"*** (Ps. 37:3-4). It tells us, ***"...your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things"*** (Matt. 6:32-34).

"God's will is exactly what I would choose if I knew all the facts." —Bill Gothard

The safest place to be is within the will of God. You know that missionaries have been killed in God's will sharing His Message in the right way, but I'll tell you what. Those people are safe! Others have refused to obey God and have also died. They are not in a safe place today. The important thing is to find out what God's will is and then do it. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with asking the Lord for personal direction in how to live fruitfully. The Apostle James basically told us, ***"If you need wisdom – if you want to know what God wants you to do – ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord"*** (Jam. 1:5-8, nit). I love that old Jewish Proverb says, "It is better to ask the way 10 times than to take the wrong road once." We men seem to have a reputation for not being fond of asking for directions. That's more than likely the reason why the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. They could have reached their destination in 40 days, but none of the men wanted to ask for directions! That was supposed to be a humors statement, but the fact remains that God does want us to inquire, to ask Him for direction in our lives especially regarding bringing closure on the Great Commission. God reminds us ***"You have not, because you ask not."*** Ask God to reveal His will for your fishing venture.

Let's Get Practical

I'm still not sure what God wants me to do regarding personal evangelism and missions (cross-cultural fishing). Hey, you are not alone. It can be a process to find out. In a 1998 research survey of 600 evangelical Christians, from age 42-55 years of age, the two leading questions in the minds of people were: ***Is this God's will for my life*** ...along with questions about support — how to get paid so I can pay my bills while serving the Lord.

Again, determining God's will for your fishing venture will mean you spending time each day getting to know the fishing-God of the venture. Use your Bible as you read from the front cover to the back cover, be brutally honest in prayer, use a decent devotional with *a worship dash soul-winning emphasis*, use your talents, use your recourses, and use both your mouth and your life to start witnessing to people now.

Unless you get to know the Lord in a deep abiding close and personal way, it will be difficult for you to discern what His plan for your life is. It is more than likely that the Lord will use you in an area that He has already gifted you in. Please offer your gifts and body to Him—yes, give yourself to Him first as a living sacrifice in the areas of your skills, training, interests and passions. Christian, I would say begin to gather information, look carefully at your current proficiency levels now. Maybe God has blessed you with expertise in an area? Employ these things in church ministry now and in witnessing ministry outside your church. That mix of giftedness that you have is what the Lord expects you to offer back to Him in helping others. Our horizontal ministry can and should simultaneously be vertical worship to Him, but it will never replace our private time with Him. Do experiment in using these strengths to build up and equip Christ's body. You've got to *get along* minus committing spiritual compromise *to go along* in the church. Pray about teaming up with others to utilize your strengths and giftings on a short term mission's trip—it doesn't have to be pulpit ministry to help. This way you can see what you really enjoy doing ministry-wise. And Christians around you might give you some valuable feedback about better application or how to proceed. See in what areas God seems to bless you with fruitfulness. Begin to identify yourself more closely with your church's evangelism department, missions department and some evangelistic and missions minded para-church agencies that fit with your interests. And then begin to build a long term working-relationship with one or two of them that biblically seem to make the most sense to you. Christ's mouth still works—He'll tell you specifically what to do. He said, ***"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish"*** (Jn. 10:27-28, nkjv). Jesus said, ***"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice..."*** (Jn. 10:16, nkjv).

The Bible tells us what's ahead saying, ***"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"*** (Hab. 2:14). You and I can choose to become a part of the fulfillment of this verse or be left out of it. It will soon be fulfilled! Our decision is simply to join the Fisher in His passion for worshippers and sinners. If not, we could join something else that has much less significance. Who wants that? We each have our assignments—together we have a collective global assignment! When Jesus departed this earth after making some post-resurrection appearances to His followers, He addressed these laypeople that were assembled together with important words saying: ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"*** (Matt. 28:18-20). And if the guiding Shepherd of Israel has committed to being right there with you in His end-times evangelistic effort, then it only makes sense that He will follow through to direct you into that part of His work that He wants you involved with for ministry purposes! Jesus' last command must be one of our first concerns! For He will indeed impress upon your heart how to serve Him locally in your Jerusalem so to

speaking. How fulfilling! He did this for that ex-demon-possessed guy that He cared about saying, ***"Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you"*** (Mk. 5:19). For sure this doesn't at all mean that we have to maintain a narrow worldview, because His influence through you and I will naturally work its way outward. Yes, we need to start where we thought, as we ***"go and make disciples of all nations."*** Getting starting with Him is so important! Remember, the whole earthly ministry of Jesus started in a small town and worked its way outward even blessing us gentiles. It's always been aimed towards blessing all people groups! And it had its climax in Christ's words ***"Therefore go."*** The first two letters of Gospel are **GO!** So please go to Him and then go to where He sends you. The world desperately needs the Gospel that you can share!

Here are some guidance verses to meditate upon (emphasis mine):

Matthew 6:10

Thy **will** be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matthew 10:18

And you must stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. This **will** be your opportunity to tell them about me—yes, **to witness to the world.**

Psalms 25:9

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way.

Psalms 25:12

Who is the man who fears the Lord? **He will instruct Him in the way he should choose.**

Psalms 31:3

Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of Your name **lead** and **guide** me.

Psalms 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I **will** counsel you and watch over you.

Psalms 37:4,7

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...** Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him

Psalms 37:23

The steps of a good man **are ordered by the Lord.**

Psalms 48:14

For this is God, our God forever and ever; He **will** be our **guide** even to death.

Psalms 73:24

You **guide** me with your counsel, and afterward You **will** take me into glory.

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and **a light to my path**

Proverbs 1:33

But whoever **listens to Me will dwell safely**, and **will** be secure, without fear of evil.

Proverbs 2:6-9

For **the Lord gives wisdom**; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones. **Then you will discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course.**

Proverbs 3:5

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

Proverbs 3:6

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he **will** make your paths straight.

Proverbs 6:22

When you walk, they (*your father's command, the law of your mother...*) **will guide you**; when you sleep, they **will** watch over you; when you awake, they **will** speak to you.

Proverbs 11:3

The integrity of the upright **guides** them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.

Proverbs 12:26

A righteous man is **cautious in friendship**, but the way of the wicked **leads** them astray.

Proverbs 16:9

A man's heart plans his way, but **the Lord directs his steps.**

Proverbs 24:6

For **by wise guidance** you **will** wage war, and **in abundance of counselors** there is victory.

Proverbs 11:14

Where there is no guidance the people fall, **but in abundance of counselors** there is victory.

Proverbs 15:22

Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but **with many counselors** they succeed.

Isaiah 30:21

Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, '**this is the way, walk in it,**' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.'

Isaiah 50:4

The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, **that I may know how to sustain with a word Him that is weary.** Morning by morning he awakens, **He awakens my ear** to hear as those who are taught.

Isaiah 48:17

Thus says the Lord, Your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who **leads** you by the way you should go.

Isaiah 58:11

The Lord **will guide** you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your

bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Jeremiah 10:23

O Lord, I know the way of man is not in Himself; it is not in man who walks to **direct** his own steps

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, **to give you a future and a hope.**

Jeremiah 33:3

Call to Me and I **will** answer you, and I **will** tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

Matthew 6:33

Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things **will** be added to you.

Luke 11:9-10

"So I say to you, ask, and it **will** be given to you; seek, and you **will** find; knock, and it **will** be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to Him who knocks it **will** be opened.

John 8:12

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me **will** never walk in darkness, but **will** have the light of life."

John 14:26

The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father **will** send in my name, **will** teach you all things and **will** remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 16:13

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, **He will guide you into all truth.** He **will** not speak on His own; **He will speak only what He hears,** and **He will tell you** what is yet to come.

Romans 14:5

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. **Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.**

1 Cor. 10:13

...God is faithful and He **will** not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation **will also provide the way of escape,** that you may be able to endure it.

Philippians 2:13

It is God who is **at work in you,** both to **will** and **to work** for His good pleasure.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks **wisdom,** let Him ask of God, **who gives to all generously** and without reproach.

Here are some more...

Isaiah 58:11 — The Lord **will guide** you continually, and satisfy your needs...

John 10:27-28 — **My sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, **and they follow Me**.

Psalms 16:7 — Bless the Lord who **gives me counsel**.

Psalms 23:3 — **He leads me in right paths** for His name's sake.

Proverbs 3:6 — In all your ways acknowledge Him, and **He will make straight your paths**.

Psalms 1:6 — For **the Lord watches over the way of the righteous**, but the way of the wicked **will** perish.

Psalms 73:24 — **You guide me with your counsel**, and afterward you **will** receive me with honor.

Psalms 143:10 — Teach me to do your **will**, for you are my God. **Let your good spirit lead me** on a level path.

Psalms 119:105 — Your word is **a lamp to my feet** and a light to my path.

Isaiah 58:11 — **The Lord will guide you continually**, and satisfy your needs...

Psalms 16:7 — I bless the Lord who **gives me counsel**.

Psalms 32:8 — **I will instruct you and teach you** the way you should go; **I will counsel you with My eye upon you**.

Proverbs 3:6 — In all your ways acknowledge Him, and **He will make straight your paths**.

Psalms 1:6 — For **the Lord watches over the way of the righteous**, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalms 27:4 — One thing I asked of the Lord, that **will** I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.

Psalms 73:24 — **You guide** me with Your counsel, and afterward You **will** receive me with honor.

Psalms 143:10 — Teach me to do your **will**, for you are my God. Let your good spirit **lead** me on a level path.

Jeremiah 31:9 — With weeping they shall come, and **with consolations I will lead them back**, I **will** let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I have become a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.

Revelation 7:17 — The Lamb at the centre of the throne **will** be their Shepherd, and He **will guide** them to springs of the water of life, and God **will** wipe away every tear from their eyes.

¹ See Romans 8:28 in the Bible along with its surrounding context.