



# Can We Know God's Will?

Ephesians 5:17

**Therefore do not be unwise, but understand  
what the will of the Lord is.**

**Ephesians 5:17 NKJV**



# What Is the Will of God?

- The word translated "will" (Gr. *thelēma*) simply means "desire, intention, or wish" (e.g., free will; Ephesians 5:17 NLT).
- We know that God is a volitional being because ...
  1. The universe evidences a purposeful design, which implies an intentional designer (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:19-21).
  2. Humanity possesses free will and moral conscientiousness, which are inexplicable without a spiritual creator (Genesis 1:26).
- If God is a willful being and has created us in his image, we can reasonably infer that he would communicate to us his desires for us (Acts 17:24-31).



**God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ...**



And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ...



for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring." Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. ....



**Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.**

**Acts 17:24-31 NKJV**



# Has God Revealed His Will?

- The testimony of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ affirm that God has communicated his will to us (e.g., "Thus says the LORD," Exodus 4:22; 2 Peter 1:21; John 1:18).





**For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**

**2 Peter 1:21 NKJV**



**No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**

**John 1:18 NKJV**



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- We come to know God and his will through ...
  1. The witness of creation (i.e., natural revelation; Romans 1:20).



For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 1:20 NKJV



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  2. The inspired words of Scripture (i.e., special revelation; Ephesians 3:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13).



How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.

Ephesians 3:3-5 NKJV



**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,  
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for  
correction, for instruction in righteousness,  
that the man of God may be complete,  
thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV**



**But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ...**





**Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**

**1 Corinthians 2:10-13 NKJV**



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  1. The witness of creation (i.e., natural revelation; Romans 1:20).
  2. The inspired words of Scripture (i.e., special revelation; Ephesians 3:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13).
- God has spoken in a way that we can understand; he demands, then, that we know and practice what he desires (Ephesians 5:17; Matthew 7:21-27).



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**Ephesians 5:17 NKJV**



**Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" ...**



And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. ...



**But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.**

**Matthew 7:21-27 NKJV**



# How Do We Know God's Will?

- Though some claim that knowledge of anything is unattainable, the Bible insists that we can know the will of God (Ephesians 3:3-5; cf. Deuteronomy 30:11-14; 29:29).



How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.

Ephesians 3:3-5 NKJV





For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" ...



**Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.**

**Deuteronomy 30:11-14 NKJV**



**The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.**

**Deuteronomy 29:29 NKJV**



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**For I have not spoken on My own authority;  
but the Father who sent Me gave Me a  
command, what I should say and what I  
should speak.**

**John 12:49 NKJV**



**Then Jesus answered and said to them,  
“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do  
nothing of Himself, but what He sees the  
Father do; for whatever He does, the Son  
also does in like manner.”**

**John 5:19 NKJV**



I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

John 5:30 NKJV



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- The words of God in Scripture communicate in the same ways that we speak to one another; he tells (statements and commands), shows (examples), and implies (implications) what he wants from us (John 12:49; 5:19, 30).
- Our duty is to read the Bible, to interpret it correctly, and to obey it (1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 3:15-18; Romans 12:2; cf. Acts 8:30-31).





**Till I come, give attention to reading, to  
exhortation, to doctrine.**

**1 Timothy 4:13 NKJV**



Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV



And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation— as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. ...



**You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.**

**2 Peter 3:15-18 NKJV**



**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

**Romans 12:2 NKJV**



So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:30-31 NKJV





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