

HOW DO I KNOW GOD'S WILL?

Help!

A JESUS-CENTERED GUIDE



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HELP! HOW DO I KNOW GOD'S WILL?

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INTRODUCTION

If God wants you to do his will, why is it so hard to know exactly what he's after?

He's great with the big picture stuff—don't murder or cheat, be nice to people—but annoyingly thin on details.

Who should you marry? What about that job in Boston—take it or leave it? And is buying a house in this market a great idea or the worst financial decision ever?

You want to do God's will. Really. If *he'd just answer your questions.*

Because that's the rub, right? You bump up against a decision and ask God what he wants you to do. Then you ask again...and again.

And you hear nothing. Not a peep.

So hear this: God *does* care. He *is* listening. You *can* know his will and—if you choose—do it.

And this little pocket guide will help.

Not that you're holding a formula for uncovering God's Word. Rather, these are lessons learned by people who have tackled the same question you're asking: *How do I know and follow God's will?*

They're sharing what's helped them, and it's good advice. But it's only advice—not a recipe for you to follow.

How God makes his will known to you may be vastly different from how he makes his will known to someone else. But that's okay. That's part of the fun, a slice of the adventure.

So relax. Take a deep breath.

You don't need a seminary degree or silent month in a monastery to discern God's will. You already have exactly what you need: a willing heart, a deep desire, and a God who wants nothing more than to connect with you in life-changing ways.

Pretty much all you're missing, if you want to get the most from this book, is a pen—you'll do a bit of journaling—and a few minutes to read, write, and pray.

The journaling is so you can see how your story unfolds. That's helpful. Equally helpful is a Bible that's easy to understand and keeps your attention focused on Jesus—because knowing him is at the very heart of knowing God's will. More about that later.

So, if you're ready, so are we.

Let's dive in.



“

True friendship
can afford true
knowledge.
It does not depend
on darkness and
ignorance.

”

—*Henry David Thoreau*



IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIP

Cindy's an IRS agent so, come tax time, she hears from *lots* of people.

"Calls usually start with, 'How are you? How are Rick and the kids? We should get together sometime. Hey, since I have you on the line, is there any way pet food is deductible?'"

Cindy's learned that nobody's really interested in hearing about her family. Once she answers whatever question prompted the call, there's an awkward silence, a "gotta run," and the line goes dead. And getting together? It never happens.

"Some years I'd give anything to just get a call asking me to go out for coffee," Cindy says. "No hidden agenda. No request for free tax info. Just coffee with a friend."

Cindy's not alone.

God also gets far more calls looking for advice than friendship.

Which is a shame, because God cares *way* more about your friendship than your to-do list. He already knows you're not perfect—that's why God sent Jesus. That's why there's grace and forgiveness.

Besides, he's already crazy about you. You don't have to earn his love.

So rather than worry about always doing The Right Thing, focus on having an ever-deepening friendship with God. As you draw closer to him, you'll get to know him better, and that will help you know his will.

Because that's how it works with friends. Sooner or later you know not just who they are, but what they value. And, if you love them, you're eager to please them.

Augustine, a theologian in the early church, summed it up this way: "Love God and do what you will."

He was on to something.

Rather than think of God as a boss barking orders at you—"Marry Dan, become an accountant, buy the Volvo"—Augustine urges you to love God and then work it out from there...together.

Sort of like a married couple who operate from a base of mutual trust and respect. They make decisions together, honoring each other in the process. They begin by loving each other and wanting to please each other.

And then they decide: Will the kitchen be painted Twilight Blue or Azure Cream Blue? Or maybe French Cloudless Summer Sky Blue with a hint of Tuscan Lake tossed in?

There's great stress in always fretting about doing The Right Thing, and refreshing, delightful joy in simply diving deeply into a friendship with God. Of course, in this particular friendship, God's intentions and perspective and imperatives carry tremendous weight—he's not shy about raising issues of "obedience" with us. But it's an obedience born out of intimacy and respect, not rote religious rule-keeping.

So, by all means, ask God what you should do. He's not trying to withhold information from you and welcomes a conversation with you about anything you choose to bring up.

Just make sure you stop by for coffee now and then, too.

Because that's what friends do.


PEN-IN-HAND PONDERING



● In what ways is your relationship with God like a friendship to you, and in what ways is it more like a servant/master relationship?

● Think about the last few times you've prayed or reached out to God. Of course, we are often asking him for help, but what are some hurdles you face when you think of interacting with him more broadly as a friend?

What are some important characteristics about your close friends that prompt you to trust them and be vulnerable with them? In what ways do you see these characteristics in God, and in what ways do you not see those characteristics?

 What are the similarities and differences between your relationship with God and your closest human relationship? Explain.

TALK WITH GOD ABOUT IT



Do you even *want* to draw closer to God? Some people don't—they're happy to keep God right where they've got him.

Tell God why you are...or aren't...interested in deepening your friendship. And listen to what he has to say about it.

DO
THIS

Ask God to help you find something small in nature that reminds you of your friendship with him. A vibrant, healthy leaf, perhaps. Or a broken twig. Or a small, flat rock. Whatever it is, press it between these pages and let it be a reminder of where you are today.

The
secret
to knowing
God's
will...

...is
knowing
God.

When it comes to making big decisions in life, all of us want to know God's direction. But what happens when you pray and don't hear an answer or the path seems confusing and overwhelming? *Help! How Do I Know God's Will?* is a portable, practical book that offers creative, real-life suggestions for discerning God's will and remaining open when his answers are different from what you might expect.

When you read this guide, you'll:

- Be relieved to discover you're not the only one who struggles with confusion and doubt.
- Find increased confidence in decision-making as you discover God's heart and learn to listen for his voice.
- Be encouraged as you see your prayers for guidance answered in both expected and unexpected ways.
- Discover practical ideas for discerning God's will when faced with big decisions.

Help! How Do I Know God's Will? is part of the **Jesus-Centered Guide** series for people wanting to grow in their relationship with Jesus, including helpful instruction on prayer, reading the Bible, and knowing God's will.

Collect and share the whole set.

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