

## Spiritual Growth Lessons

### LESSON 31 of 32

#### HOW TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD

*"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts..." (Colossians 3:15).*

The Bible gives to us different methods that people have used to discover the will of God in a certain situation. When a person seeks to find the will of God, the first question should be, "Does the Bible have anything to say about the matter?" For example, it is not necessary to pray about whether you need to be baptized in Jesus' name. The Bible declares there is salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12), and all the apostles baptized the believers using the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48,19:5). I have heard of women praying and asking the Lord for permission to cut their hair. Such praying is dangerous, because the Bible declares that a woman should not seek to shorten her hair in any manner. Her long hair is her glory. We override our conscience when we try to pray around something that the Bible commands us to do or not to do! Likewise the man does not have to pray about how he should treat his wife. The Bible commands him to love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25).

Here are some other methods that are commonly used to discern the will of God:

#### **Choosing Scriptures At Random**

I have had the Lord speak to me and tell me to open my Bible, and at such times He has given direction or encouragement from His word. Other times, in my immaturity I would seek to know God's will for a situation by praying, "Oh God speak to me through your Word." Then I would open the Bible at random, and look at the first verse. Believe me, the results of this method often were not encouraging — and could be dangerous. God is not usually in such things!

#### **Fleecing (Judges, Chapter 6)**

Gideon was the first person to use this method. The angel of the LORD visited him as he sat under an oak tree threshing wheat. (This was none other than the angel of God's presence, or God manifest in the form of an angel. See verse 14) The angel informed Gideon that he had been chosen of God to lead Israel to victory over the Midianites.

*"And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and if it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this onces with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground." (Verses 36-40)*

Although I often used this method in my earlier walk with God, it is not the most mature method, and we have no Biblical record that it was practiced by the apostolic church. Some say that the apostles "casting of lots" was their way of fleecing the Lord to find out who should take Judas' place. Yet we must remember that they did this BEFORE they received the Holy Ghost, and we cannot even be certain that the man THEY chose was God's choice. His name was never mentioned again in the Bible. Meanwhile, the Apostle Paul referred to himself as an apostle "born out of due season." I personally believe that Paul became the twelfth "apostle of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:14).

## God's Peace - The Best Way to Discern the Will of God

While we were a missionary living in Singapore, God finally got through my thick skull the best and most effective way to know His will. The answer is found in the portion of Scripture at the top of this page: "Let the peace of God rule in your heart." The word "rule" comes from a Greek word which means "acts as an umpire or decision-maker." The Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of truth" John 15:26. As we pray about a certain thing, if it is the will of God, we will feel the peace of God the more we pray. If, the more we pray we feel troubled, it is NOT the will of God.



In 1983, we were informed by the Foreign Missions Division to move to the Philippines, because we could not get the proper paper work to stay in Singapore. As my wife packed all of our belongings, getting ready for the move, she continually felt troubled. Everything was shipped by mail — and everything that could be broken WAS broken! We had moved out of the will of God! Thirteen days later God woke me up at three in the morning and told me to get back to Singapore. How much better it would have been if we had prayed about the situation, and understood how to discern the answer to our prayers!

A few years later, I was preaching a revival in Seremban, West Malaysia. My wife was taking care of the church in Singapore. The revival was to end on Friday, so I could get back to Singapore for the Sunday service. God was moving in a special way, as many sought to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Forgetting the lesson God had already taught me, I fleeced the Lord, "Lord, if it is your will for me to continue the revival, let someone receive the Holy Ghost tonight." (In my heart, I felt we were supposed to continue the services.) Despite all of my efforts to see someone receive the Holy Ghost (so I could obey the promptings of my heart, and stay), nobody received the Holy Ghost. I was really a little angry with God-but remember, regardless of what we pray, God can only give the Holy Ghost to prepared hearts.

I got behind the pulpit and told everybody we would be closing the revival and I would be returning the next day to Singapore (much to the dismay of the pastor). That night I called my wife, and told her I would be coming home. She was very surprised. She answered, "I have felt all day, that you would be continuing the services."

After hanging up the phone, I decided I had better make sure my decision had been correct. As I opened the Bible, I said, "Lord, speak to me through your Word." The first words I read was, "*Husbands love your wives.*" I thought, "If I love my wife, I will go home." Then the Lord spoke clearly to me, "You know I have taught you better than this! I have taught you to 'Let the peace of God rule in your heart.'"

Just then the phone rang, and the pastor informed me that it was my wife. "Honey," she said, "Let the peace of God rule in your heart." I wept as I informed her, "Then I will not be coming home. That is exactly what the Lord just told me." She joined me the following Monday. A number of people were baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost the next few days!

After this experience, we have never forgotten the more mature and safe way to know the will of God! *ds*