

Abide

The Disciple's Will
Dr. David Platt
October 21, 2007



The Disciple's Will Galatians 2:20

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Galatians 2. Feel free to use your table of contents if you need to find Galatians. I pray that Christ would be our everything.

"What is God's will for my life?" It may be the most commonly asked question in Western Christianity today. What in the world is God's will for my life? And I think one of the reasons is because we have so many decisions that we make and we have so many questions that we ask that are not specifically addressed in the Bible. And as we're wandering around just wondering, "Okay, well, how do I know what God wants me to do?" And some of them are small decisions, "What book do I read this month?" "What do I do in this particular parenting situation?" "What do I do when my 18-month-old is starting to have some breakdowns?" or "What do I do when my 16-year-old is having breakdowns?" some of you ask. "Where do we go eat today? Do we eat in? Do we eat out?" And they just multiple, "If we eat out, where do we eat? Do we eat Mexican or burgers or Italian or Chinese?" The Bible doesn't tell us whether or not to eat Mexican this afternoon, so what do you do?

And those are small decisions we make. But then there's a lot decisions we make, too, that we don't always have specific guidance on. "Should I go to college? If I go to college, where do I go to college? When I get there, what do I study? What in the world am I doing with my life? Should I date along the way? If so, who should I date? Should I get married? If so, who should I marry? And then when I decide that then I've got to decide should we have kids? If so, how many kids? Should we adopt kids? Just have kids biologically?" It just gets more complex, "Where do we live? What kind of house? Where is our house going to be? What do we live on? Do we need to save more money? Do we need to spend more money? What do we do with our money?"

And a lot of serious questions. "Do we separate for a little while to deal with some of these painful issues we're going through?" "Do I take my mom or dad and help them get them in this home at this point or do I wait?" We got all kinds of questions and thoughts that the Bible doesn't give specific guidance on.

The Bad News...

So here's the bad news, there are countless people - and by people I mean Christians - there are countless Christians who are confused and wondering, "How do I find God's will for my life?"

The Good News...

And the good news is God's will is not lost. It's not lost, so we don't have to find it.

I hope this frees you up from the very start this morning. We are not living in this cosmic Easter egg hunt where we're trying to find God's will and God is saying, "You're getting warmer. You're getting warmer. Oh, no, you're getting colder."

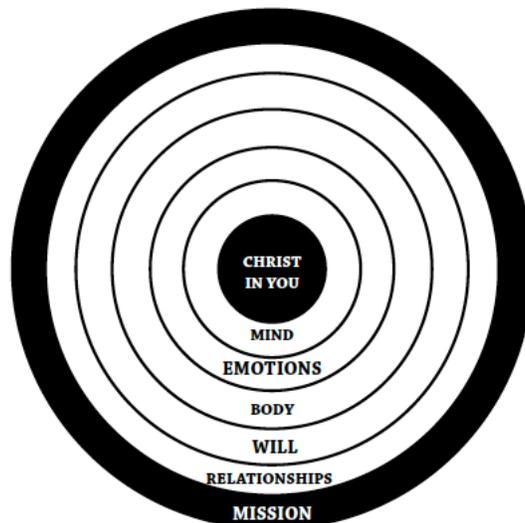
What if God's will is not some secret that we need to uncover somewhere? What if God makes His will very clear to us, and what if God is actually more passionate about you knowing His will than you are about knowing His will. What if this whole idea of seeking to find God's will is more of a pagan notion than it is a Christian notion? What if trying to figure out the formula for discovering God's will is missing the whole point of Christianity altogether? What if God so desires for you and I, not only to know His will, but to experience His will, that He actually has invested His one and only Son in our lives to make sure that we accomplish His will?

The Bottom Line...

This is the bottom line and the foundational truth. And I pray for each of you that God will lodge in each of our heads and our hearts this morning, God desires for me to follow His will so much that He lives in me to accomplish it. God desires for me to follow His will so much that He lives in me to accomplish it.

This is where we come back to these concentric circles. We're talking about Christ in you, and how does Christ affect every facet of who you are? We've seen how Christ affects the way we think, our mind, the way we feel, our emotions, our bodies. We looked at last week - how do we carry our bodies? How do we care for our bodies in a way that honors Christ? How does Christ affect our bodies? How does Christ affect our will?

And these different circles are not neat categories. It's not that they don't blend together, but the will encompasses all of these things. And this is where our actions come out, and this is where our lives reflect what we believe and what we feel, what we think.



And so what I want us to do is dive into a really interesting passage of Scripture this morning in Galatians 2 where we're actually seeing kind of a confrontation between Paul and Peter, two of these stalwart guys in the New Testament who are actually hitting heads with each other.

What happened is, just to give you a little background, there was a group in the New Testament church called the Judaizers. And these folks came on the scene, and they basically believed that you can follow Christ and Christ is who saved you, but you also have to follow Jewish laws. And so in order to be a Christian, you also need to be circumcised. In order to be a Christian, you also need to follow these food and dietary laws. And what was happening was Gentiles were coming to faith in Christ and Gentiles lived a lot differently. The Gentiles were wondering, "Well, does that mean we have to be circumcised in order to follow Christ?" or "Does that mean we have to follow your dietary laws in order to be saved?" And the Judaizers were saying, "Yes, that's exactly what needs to happen."

And so you have this division, this conflict, and Peter was right in the middle of it. What would happen is if you were going to sit down, say you were a Jewish Christian and you were going to sit down for a meal with Gentile Christians, and they were going to start eating these things that went against your dietary laws then you were in a quandary. Either number one, you could eat those things and risk violating these laws from the Old Testament, or number two, you could say, "I'm not going to eat with you guys anymore," and by implication say that they are not acceptable to God because they're eating those things.

And Peter was in that deal. For a while, he was sitting there eating this meal with the Gentiles, but then some Judaizers showed up and he started to back away, and he wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. And by implication, he was reverting back to this works based righteousness that says, "In order to be accepted by God, you've got to do these certain things and abstain from these certain things." And Paul just flat out calls him on it in Galatians 2. And in the middle of this context, we have one of the crown jewels of the New Testament, a verse that I pray, I hope will lodge into our hearts and our minds this morning and help us to realize how Christ in us affects the way we live.

It's verse 20, but we're going start in verse 11 to get the context. Galatians 2:11, listen to what Paul says. He says, "*When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong*" (Gal. 2:11). Paul doesn't mince words, he says what he's thinking.

Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, 'You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? We who are Jews by birth and not "Gentile sinners" know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin?

Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing (Gal. 2:12-21)!

And Galatians 2:20, if you don't have it underlined in your Bible, let me encourage you to underline it, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" (Gal. 2:20). That is one mammoth verse that brings us in line with what it means for Christ to transform, absolutely transform the way we live and transform our will.

The Transformation of the Will...

I want us to see some truths that are hidden here in this verse that help us to understand what it means for Christ to transform our will.

Christ give us a new identity.

Truth number one is this, in Christ you have a new identity. This is where Galatians 2:20 starts off, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20). And this is probably the most concise picture, but it's a picture we've got all over Paul's writing from the New Testament about how in our lives we are united with Christ and everything that's Christ becomes ours, and it all revolves around the cross. Crucified with Christ, the cross is the one place where myself is united with Christ and all that He is. This is why He says later in Galatians 6, "I boast in the cross," which is a weird statement. How do you boast in an instrument of torture? He boasts in the cross because of what happens at the cross.

I want you to think about the great exchange that happens at the cross, and the unity we have in Christ that happens at the cross. What happens at the cross? First of all, at the cross I give Him my sin. I give Christ my sin and He gives me His righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21, "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the*" what? "The righteousness of God." At the cross, we give Christ all that we are, all of our sin, all the bad things we have done. And not just the bad things, we give Christ all the good things we've done that still don't measure up. Even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of Christ. We give it all to Him, all of our sin. You know what He gives us? He gives us all of His righteousness, spotless righteousness.

This is why Paul said in Philippians 3, "I consider the best things in my life rubbish, they are like dung compared to knowing Christ, being found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, but a righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. He gives me spotless righteousness." So at the cross, you give Christ all your sin; He gives you all of His righteousness. That's a good thing, but then it gets better.

Not only do we give Him our sin, He gives us His righteousness at the cross. I give Him my slavery; He gives me His freedom. The whole picture we have in the New Testament, we are slaves to the law, we are slaves to ourselves, we are slaves to the flesh. This is what he's saying in verse 19, "*For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God*" (Gal. 2:19). At the cross, we give Him our slavery to the law, to ourselves, to the flesh, He gives

us freedom to live for God. We are free from the guilt of the law. You are free from the shame of the law. You are free from judgment from the law, which we'll get to in just a second. You are free to live. I give Him my slavery, He gives me His freedom.

At the cross, I give Him my defeat; He gives me His victory. It's not that the law is a bad thing in and of itself, the only problem is I can't live up to the law. But there's one who does live up to the law, and this is what he says in Roman 8:3 or 4, somewhere in there, he says, *"God condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us"* (Rom. 8:3-4). So we can actually fulfill the law through Christ. He gives us His victory over the law. This is why he said in 1 Corinthians 15, *"He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 15:57). So I give Him my defeat when it comes to the law, He gives me all of His victory.

Next, I give Him my judgment, and He gives me His mercy. Romans 3, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law. No one will be declared righteous in His sight, the whole world is held accountable to God. You and I stand under the judgment of God for our sin. But praise be to God, He gave Jesus Christ to take that judgment upon Himself and we give Him all of our judgment, that is what the cross is about, and He pours out His mercy on you and me. That's what happens at the cross, I give Him my judgment and He gives me His mercy.

Finally, I give Him my death; He gives me His life. This is Romans 6, *"If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection...For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God"* (Rom. 6:5, 9-10).

What Paul is saying is, "Christ died, and I died. Christ lives and I live. Christ was raised, I'm going to be raised." We give Him death, and He gives us eternal life, that's what happens at the cross.

The great exchange that happens at the cross is Christ taking all of who we are and the implications of all we are upon Himself, and He takes all that He is, and He gives it to us. He gives us a completely new identity.

I remind you that by the cross of Jesus Christ when you unite your life with Him, everything that He has, His experiences, His death, His life, His ascension, everything becomes yours. Your entire identity changes.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live..." (Gal. 2:20). He's proud of being crucified. Why? "Because Christ now lives in me." It's a good thing to be crucified with Christ. The great exchange that happened at the cross. "Now, does this mean, Dave, that when you unite your life with Christ and you die with Christ that you no longer have a will then?" On the contrary, it's not that you don't have a will, it's that your will is now lost in Him. It's not that Paul doesn't have a will anymore, but Christ lives in Him. It's Christ's will. Paul is literally saying, "I have given Him all I have, all I am, all my will to Him and now it's Christ's will, and it's all that He is in me." He's literally saying, "I've surrendered everything. I've surrendered my will completely to Him." This is what it means to be identified with Christ, it means that Christ's will now directs me; we've got to realize this.

If you are a follower of Christ we've got to remember that we have sacrificed the right to determine the direction of our lives. You and I do not call the shots anymore. Our will has been crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but He lives in us. We don't determine the

direction of our lives anymore, and this is a very good thing. This is where we miss it. We have this hesitancy, even a fear when we start talking about really giving God all of our lives, I mean really saying, "God, me and my family, whatever you want us to do, we will do it. Wherever you want us to go, we will go." We say, "What a hard thing to do, and I don't know if I'm ready to do that," and it's almost kind of a scary thing. Where do we get that idea? I think it's because we forget who we're surrendering our will to, to Christ, to God our Father.

I mean, think about it. Dads in this room, what would you do if one of your children came to you this week, today and said, "Dad, all week long, this week, all week long, I want to do exactly what you want me to do. Every single thing you say I should do, I will do it completely." What would you do? Would you rise up and say, "I'm going to make this the most miserable week in my son or daughter's life"? No, absolutely not. You'd say, "I'm going to guide you. I'm going to give you direction that will show you that you can trust me, show you that I do love you, and I'm going to lead you to what is best for you." *"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit [give guidance] to those who ask him"* (Luke 11:13).

Can I remind you that our Father in heaven is absolutely perfect, He makes no mistakes, so it's not a bad thing to give Him our will and say, "You guide me, you lead me, you direct me." After all, He is the one who created us. This is the beauty, it's not that we don't have a will anymore, but our will is lost in the one who alone can enable us to experience the life that our Creator has designed for us. This is for the first time when our will becomes fully functional. But let's be honest, this is not where we are.

I mean, really, how many of us came into this room this morning saying, "Whatever David reads from this book, I will do it regardless, no question"? How many of us really came in with that approach to the Word today? "Whatever it says, I'll do it this week." I think the approach we take is more along the lines of if somebody were to come up to you after the service this morning and say, "Hey, can you do me a favor?" What is the first thing you would say? "What is it? What would you like me to do?" That's what we say when somebody says, "Hey, can you do me a favor?" "Well, what would you like me to do?" And, you know, that's the way we relate to each other, that's okay, but it's not okay if that's the way we relate to God because it misses the whole point to Christianity. We have surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ, we have been crucified with Him, and we no longer say, "Let me see what the Word says first and then I'll decide whether or not I'm going to do it." And we've got to be careful here.

I give you a picture of contemporary Christianity where we shop around for churches that say what we want them to say and say what agrees most with us regardless of what the Bible really says. We say, "We're going to go to the Bible and give ourselves to the parts that most agree with us, and the parts that don't agree with us, we'll leave to the side," we've got to guard against this. Christ has given us a new identity. Our wills are lost in His. We have sacrificed the right to determine the direction of our lives, and this is a really good thing. Christ gives us a new identity.

Christ gives us a new direction.

Second, Christ gives us a new direction. Now, here's the problem, "Okay, Dave, I'm crucified with Christ and Christ lives in me, but I still got all these questions, I've got all these decisions I've got to make." And I know there are people all across this room that have come here this morning, and you're facing some major decisions. "Okay, well, Dave,

what do I do then? Still got these questions to throw out there and decisions I've got to make."

And it's at this point that you can go to the Christian bookstore and find a host, a plethora of books that will give you some advice on this. You can go and ask a bunch of Christians for a lot of advice on this, and you'll get a lot of different things. I want us to pause for a second; I want us to think about some contemporary methods for discovering the will of God. How do I know the will of God? Let's think about a few contemporary methods.

Number one, the random finger method. We laugh. I'm not going to embarrass you by asking how many of you have tried this method. The whole method that says, "Okay, I don't know what to do, I'm going to open up the Bible and point down to the first verse that comes down and that is," that's, I mean, Psalm 124:5, "*The raging waters would have swept us away.*" I mean, is that encouraging? And it's at this point you know what we do? "You know, I'm going to try it one more time." We do it three or four more times until we get one that makes sense and "Ah! This is the Word for me. This is amazing, I can't believe this actually works!" We laugh because we've done it.

I have a friend who used this method and pointed to Romans 8:25 and it said, "*But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*" And there was a girl that he'd been asking out and kept saying no over and over again, and so this was God's word for him, "Hope for what you do not yet have, and you just wait for it patiently."

Only problem is whenever we do that, we just strip the Word out of its context completely, Romans 8 talking about how we hope for the redemption of our bodies, hope for eternal life, we don't have to worry about dating life anymore. And in the end, this wasn't the girl he was actually hoping for anyway. So maybe the random finger method is not the most reliable method. So let's move on to the second.

How about the miraculous event method? The burning bush like Moses. Vision like Saul or Paul had on his way to Damascus, this is how it works. If only we would be spiritual enough for God to choose to reveal Himself to us in that way, what an honor it would be. Here's the question, how many of you have seen the burning bush? How many of you have had this experience? Okay, so this is apparently not the most common method, so let's not rely on that particular one.

Let's go to the third one then. How about the striking coincidence method? Oh, now this one's good. Coincidences kind of pop up here and there and we put them together and make it clear to what God's will is for our lives. Maybe you wake up in the middle of the night and you look over at the clock and it says 2:22 a.m. it's kind of weird, you go back to sleep. And the next night, in the middle of the night, you wake up and you look over at the clock and it says 3:33. Okay, now you're getting a little worried. The next night you go to sleep and you wake up and you'll never guess what it says. It says 4:44 on the clock. That's weird, huh? "God is telling me something. Do I need to change my job? Honey, we're selling the house." "Why are we selling the house?" "Well, I woke up one night it was 2:22 and then it was 3:33 and 4:44." Maybe God is saying, "Take some sleep medicine so you can sleep through the middle of the night." Okay, maybe not the striking coincidence method.

Let's move on to the next one. How about the cast the fleece method? Now, this one is biblical, right? Gideon. "God if you really want me to do this then you show me by doing this." That's biblical preacher, that's what we should do. The only problem is, well, it's a larger problem. Not every story we've got in Scripture is intended for us to imitate. I could give you a list of those, but we won't even go there.

Remember the whole point of this Gideon casting the fleece deal was to show his lack of faith? God had already clearly told him exactly what to do, and he was stalling on doing it. Do you think that's the best pattern for us to use in discovering the will of God? Maybe not the cast the fleece method.

How about the open door method? How about the open door? "When God opens up the door then that means His will is directing." Now, this one starts to sound a little more biblical. In fact, turn back to the left. You'll go to 1 Corinthians; end of 1 Corinthians 16. Just go 2 books back to the left from Galatians, just a couple of pages. First Corinthians 16, look with me at verse 8. And this is the biblical justification for the open door method. When God opens up a door that means He's leading you through it. Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 16, Paul says, "*But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me*" (1 Cor. 16:8-9). Okay, well that makes sense. If God opens a door then I go through it.

The only problem is, turn one page over to 2 Corinthians 2. Go to 2 Corinthians 2 and look with me at verse 12. Let's see what Paul says over here. "*Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia*" (1 Cor. 2:12-13). The only problems is one instance there's an open door so he stays. One instance, there's an open door and he walks away from that door. So, apparently, just because God provides an opportunity does not mean that He is calling you to go through that opportunity. Does that make sense? Open door method can't really trust.

Well, then how about the closed door method? When God closes the door that means you don't try to go through it. Well, that's okay until you get to Acts 20 when Paul's sitting around with his friends at Ephesus and even a prophet, he's going to Jerusalem and they say, "Now, if you go to Jerusalem there's a good chance you could be bound, you could be arrested, you may even die if you go there." I think God's closing the door is what they're telling him, and Paul says, "I'm compelled by the Spirit to go there." What if the Spirit of God actually causes you to go right smack dab into a closed door? Do you think that's possible? This is one of the methods that is most dangerous because we've got this idea, this Western idea that whatever the will of God is, it must be for my security and it must be for my safety when, in fact, the open door He may provide is trouble and suffering and persecution for you to go through. So, apparently, this doesn't work.

Say you're sensing that God is calling you to go to India and you apply for a visa and you get turned down, closed door. Well, what does that mean? Can it mean a few different things? Couldn't it mean, well, number one, God's not calling you to go to India, He's calling you to stay right here. It could mean that God's not calling you to go to India, He's calling you to go to another country. Or it could mean that God's testing you to see if you're really serious about following Him and obedience in going to India to the fact that you may swim over there if you have to, but you're going to go to the country. Closed door method doesn't work either.

That leads us to one more. We're running out of options here, but the last option is the still small voice method. This is 1 Kings 19. It's Elijah, he's running from God and he stops, and God comes. There's an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. And there's wind, God was not in the wind. And there's fire, but God was not in the fire. But there was this still small voice, and God was in this still small voice. So you just have to look for the still small voice.

The problem is most of us, even no matter how hard we close our eyes and try to think, we're still not hearing the voice, there's not a whisper coming in. So if it's not audible then people say, "Well, this is the feeling that you get."

Well, I think we all know that when we walk through decisions, when making tough decisions don't you have a variety of feelings that you're wrestling with? How do you know which feeling is from God and which feeling is not from God? How do you begin to balance that? I don't think it's going to work in those instances to say, "Well, I'm just going close my eyes and wait for a voice. And if I don't hear a voice, I'm going to wait for the first thought that comes into my mind that gives me a feeling, and I'm going to ask is it still and is it small and if it is then it's from God."

That kind of leaves us wondering, "Well then, David, how do we really do it? I mean, you've pretty much knocked out the methods that we have created." Please hear me, I know that God uses a variety of different things to reveal Himself to us and to lead us, I realize that. But these kinds of methods, formulas that we come up with for trying to discern, figure out the will of God are just flat pagan and miss the whole point of God's relationship with us.

Let me give you a biblical method for discovering the will of God. It's really not a method at all, but it's the crux of what Paul is talking about in Galatians 2:20, let's call it the Faith method, so to speak.

Here's the deal, and I know that at this moment there are some of you who are going to start to think, "Dave, you're doing this preacher talk - okay, it's all about faith, like it's that easy." But follow with me here. When you get to the New Testament church and the Holy Spirit comes down, not one time do you see them trying to seek to find the will of God using the ways to the Old Testament. In fact, you don't see any instructions for seeking to find the will of God. The only one people point to is in Acts 1 when they cast lots to try to figure out who will replace Judas, but that was before the Holy Spirit had come down. What you've got instead is a picture of the Holy Spirit on His people guiding and directing His people and Paul saying in Galatians 2:20, "*The life I live in the body, I live by faith...*" "My whole life is summed up in faith." And this is where we have a tendency to relegate faith, say, "Yeah, I was saved by faith alone." Ephesians 2:8, "*It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves.*" "I know that it had nothing to do with my salvation." We relegate that to the point of our salvation. I want to remind you, the only way to live out your salvation is by faith.

It's what he says in Galatians 2:16, three, four times in a row he talks about, it's all by faith, faith alone. We live by faith. This is what Paul said in Galatians 2, follow me, the Christian life is not about us figuring out how to live for Christ, that's not Christianity. The Christian life is about trusting Christ to live for us, I mean really trusting Christ to live for us, that's the whole point of what we've been diving into over the last few weeks. Now, think about how that relates to this discussion of God's will for our lives.

What if our job is not to figure out what God's will is and then go do it for Him, what if our job is to trust moment by moment, day by day, decision by decision, trust the Christ who is in us to live out His life through us that's what Paul seems to be telling us here, "The one who gave Himself for me loves me enough to live His life through me."

And at this point, we're about to dive into a breakthrough that I pray God brings us to in thinking about His will. And the breakthrough is this: knowing God's will is secondary to simply knowing God. This is so huge. Knowing God's will is secondary to simply knowing God. You look at every single one of those methods that I listed, they're all shortcuts.

They're all just flat out lazy when you think about them. They're looking for a quick fix, a quick answer. They don't require any discipline. They don't require any work, any character transformation, that's not what any of them involve.

But what if God has designed His will, this whole will of God thing so that as you seek Him and as you know Him and as you abide in Him that He shapes you. And through this process, He molds you and He enables you not only to know what His will is so you can go out and do it, He enables you to experience His will.

Here's the deal, let's be honest, God has the power. In the decisions you're trying to think through right now, God has the power to paint in the sky for you exactly what you should do. He has the power to give you a dream tonight or a vision today that says, "This is exactly what you need to do." But maybe He's decided not to do that for a reason. Maybe He wants you to know Him and to trust Him and to learn from Him and to lean on Him and let Him use this journey to form you into the image of Christ, to help you understand what it means for Christ to live in you and for you to trust the Christ who lives in you instead of trusting some formula.

I know that people across this room would be happy if I would give you a list today of three steps or five steps or seven steps you could take right now to help figure out this decision that you're walking through. The problem is I can't give you a list like that based on the authority of God's Word. But on the authority of God's Word, I can say this, there is a God in heaven who is, just as He sought after you to save you, still seeking you, and He wants you to know Him personally. He wants you to know Him so badly that He has put Christ in you to reveal Himself to you so that He enables you, not just shows you His will, He enables you to experience His will. And the whole beauty of this question is that it should drive us to the fact that the will of God is not a roadmap. It's not a map that He gives you, "Now, do this, this, this and this." It is a relationship where Christ overtakes your will to become one with His.

Have you ever noticed how God doesn't always take us on the quickest, easiest route between points A and B? I know that there are people across the room this morning that could say, "Amen to that. I wish that I could get from A to B a little quicker, a little easier." But what if what matters to God most is not getting you there in the quickest most efficient fashion? What if this is not "fast food" will of God? What if what matters to God most is that He may take you on a bit of a circuitous route, but the point will be to teach you to learn and trust Him completely, to grow you into the image of Christ?

Now, in one sense that's just not encouraging, it's not encouraging in the fact that we want the answer right now. But I hope it's very deeply encouraging to realize that the God of the universe really wants a relationship with us, and He doesn't just want to give us handouts. He wants to live in us. He's given us all kinds of things in this relationship as we walk this journey.

The will of God is not a roadmap, it's a relationship whereby Christ gradually overtakes our will to become one with Him as we first, trust in His Word, He's given us His Word. This is the beauty, the majority of God's will for your life and it's already been given to you, you're not wondering around in a fog. Now, you've heard me to say before, I'm convinced 95% of God's will for our lives is right here in this Word. You open to any part of this Book and you have the will of God guaranteed, and it's trustworthy.

So He says trust in His Word. Second, pray for His desires. This is the picture: His Word fills our mind, and He transforms our desires. This is what I love, 2 Corinthians 5:17; in Christ,

you're a new creation. Christ is in you. The old is gone, the new has come. And this is where as Christ overtakes our lives and if He changes our minds and if He overtakes our desires and overtakes our passions then we can actually begin to trust the passions of Christ in us. And our desires, we can follow our desires. This is Psalm 37:4, "*Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.*" Literally, He'll put His desires inside of you as you're abiding in Christ. This is the beauty, this is where we're so freed up, we can begin to trust our passions. We can do what we want to do and Christ is filling us.

We trust in His Word, we pray for His desires and then we walk in His will. And you say, "What do you mean walk in His will, Dave? The whole point is we don't know what His will is." This is so huge. Experiencing, following the will of God is not a passive journey where we sit back and just wait for Him to show us something. It's an active journey where we are constantly taking the will of God that has been revealed to us and walking in it and obeying it.

This is what we see all over the New Testament. We see the Apostles taking the gospel to the nations, and where they'll go at certain times is open to discussion. Acts 16, you see Paul, it looks like he's in a pinball machine. The guy goes to one city, gets stopped there. He goes to another city, God checks him there. He goes to another place, "Where am I supposed to go, God?" Paul didn't always know he was confused sometimes. But here's what he did know, he did know what he was supposed to do, preach the gospel. He did know why he was supposed to do it, for the glory of God and all the world, and he gave himself to it. And along the way, God checked him here or checked him there to lead him. And I just have got a feeling that God wants His will to be accomplished enough that when we give ourselves to it, He's not going to let us go wrong.

And this is part of it, we've got this fear. One of the reasons we stress out so much about the will of God is we've got this fear that we're going to make the wrong decision. "What if I marry the wrong person? Somebody else was supposed to marry that person. I messed up the whole chain. I don't want to be responsible for messing up the whole chain. What if I go to the wrong college? I'll miss God's point for my entire life if I go to the wrong college."

"Trust Christ in you," Paul says, "trust Christ in you." Walk in His will. When you don't know what to do, do what you know to do, give yourself - and this is so elementary, but at the same time, we so need to be brought back to it. And I'm really not trying to oversimplify this thing, but we've got to face the reality. If we are asking God what His will for our life is over here but we're not being obedient to His will for our life right here, we've missed the whole point. If you're asking God, "What is your will for my life?" but you're living with your boyfriend or your girlfriend, you've missed the whole point. If you're asking God, "What is your will for my life?" but you're spending time on the Internet like we were talking about last week, then you've missed the whole point. We are fools if we think that God is honored in us saying, "I want to do your will here, but I'm ignoring your will over here." That misses the whole point. So walk in His will, obey what you know to obey.

This is one of my favorite quotes from Adrian Rogers, listen to this, "The way to find God's will for the rest of your life is to do God's will for the next 15 minutes." That makes sense. "The way to find God's will for the rest of your life is to do God's will for the next 15 minutes. I know in my own life that's what I pray on a continual basis. I pray, "God, I pray that today, now, you would lead me to the people, places, positions where I can most effectively make disciples of all nations." I pray that all the time, its continual prayer in my heart.

And here's why I pray that, it's not some magic prayer, but it is this, I know that it's God's will for my life for me to make disciples of all nations, I know that. And I know that He wants that mission to happen in my life more than I do. And so when I pray that on a continual basis, I'm confident. I don't know where I'll be 5 years from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, 40 years from now, I don't know. I don't even know if I'll be alive, but I do know this, if I am seeking after Him and saying, "God, I want to follow your will for my life right here, right now," I'm doing that, I'm confident that wherever I am 5, 10, 15, 40 years from now, I'll be exactly where God wants me to be. Not because I trust myself, because I trust Christ in me to accomplish what He has created me for.

You see how freeing that is? You don't have to wander around worrying about whether or not you're going to miss it anymore. You walk in His will. And instead of trying to figure out His will, God intends for us to become His will. And this is the beauty of it, and I hope God helps us to make this step. He intends for us to become His will.

Oswald Chambers said this, "To be so much in contact with God that you never need to ask Him to show you His will is to be nearing the final stage of your discipline in the life of faith. When you are rightly related to God, it's a life of freedom and liberty and delight, you are God's will, and your common-sense decisions are His will for you unless He checks. You decide things in perfect delightful friendship with God knowing that if your decisions are wrong, He will always check and when He checks, you stop at once."

You are His will - that sounds a lot like what Jesus said to us in John 15, "You abide in me, I no longer call you servants, I call you friends because a servant doesn't know his master's business. Everything the Father's made known to me, I have made known to you because you're my friends." "How does that look practically, Dave?"

I take you back about 18 months ago, a little more than that, when Heather and I were praying about a big decision, whether or not to go back to New Orleans or to come here to Brook Hills, and we'd go through that journey. And I know it's not an easy journey. It's like you're on an airplane and there are clouds all around and you can't see anything, and you're waiting for that breakthrough to come where you can see clearly, but it's just not coming day after day after day.

So what do you do? You trust in His word. I know that during that time God took Heather and me to deeper places in His Word and understanding of His will here. And it wasn't that we would go to the Word and say, "Okay, what does it say about Brook Hills or Birmingham or New Orleans or seminary or this or that," it doesn't say that. The point is the more you know God's voice here, the more you know God's voice out here. He took us to deeper places in His Word, and we had all kinds of desires that were warring here.

And she had different desires at one point and I'd have different desires, and then we'd kind of get to another point and our desires had completely changed. And I thought I'd come around to where she was and she had changed completely to where I was, and so it was just a battle of desires, "What do we really want?" Wrestling with that and saying, "God, we want you to change our desires. You lead our desires." And He did that. As we walked in His will.

It was at that point, "Okay, I don't know what to do," we were still located back in Atlanta as a result of the hurricane, so I was coming here and I was preaching some here. And so, "I'm going to preach the gospel here as God has given me this opportunity and God has called me to do this at this point." At the same time, we were going back to New Orleans, we were serving down there. We were helping out with the church down there. We were

doing different things down there that we loved doing, we were walking in His will. And it was through that process that God did bring us to that clearing.

But the whole beauty of it is when you get to that clearing and God gives you clarity on what He wants you to do, you realize that really is secondary to what He has taught you about Himself and His goodness and His grace and His power.

And here's the good news, you and I all know that when you make tough decisions here that there are tendencies along the way to say, "Well, did I make the right decision? Did I make the right decision?" And the good news is that 6 months later or a year later or 18 months later, whenever you start to think, "Did I make the right decision? Did I do this right or that right?" You don't have to look back and hope in a small feeling you had, and you don't have to look back and hope in some can you saw on the side of the sidewalk. You look back and what you hope in is a rock-solid relationship with the God of the universe who has never left you alone in the middle of the whole process.

This is what God has designed for us. And I call it a safe method here and I don't want to sound over simple, but that is the point. Not even to trust ourselves but to trust Christ in us to lead us and to guide us, this is the beauty of the new direction that Christ gives us.

Christ gives us a new purpose.

Christ gives us a new identity, a new direction, and Christ gives us a new purpose. And this is where I want us to take Galatians 2:20 back up again and see the overall context. Because what Paul is confronting Peter about is the fact that Peter had missed out on what God was doing among the Gentiles. He had missed out on that. God had a plan for what He was doing among the Gentiles, and Peter, by his actions, by not living out what he believed was calling that picture into question.

And this is so big for us to realize, this is huge. The question is no longer, "God, what is your will for my life?" Now, we've talked about some reasons why we might not ask that question, just talked about how we are His will, but when you think about it, "God, what is your will for my life?" the question's almost kind of funny, isn't it? As if the universe revolves around your life or my life, and that God's entire will revolves around me. What if instead of asking, "God, what is your will for my life?" our question should be, "God, what is your will for human history, and how can I align my life with your will?" Now that changes everything.

This is so big. What if the question is not, "What is God's will for my life?" or "What is God's will for my family?" or even, "What is God's will for Brook Hills?" What if the question really is what is God's will in human history? I mean, really, what is it? Not what do I want His will to be, not what are my plans and my desires, what is my agenda? Really look at the Word, what is God's will in human history? Now, how can my life, how can my family and how can The Church at Brook Hills align with His will?

That's where we've got to get to. God help us to get there. It's what Paul was telling Peter, "Christ lives in you, He directs, He guides." What does that mean? First, we live to magnify the grace of Christ. This is what verse 21 said, "*I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing*" (Gal. 2:21)! Paul is point blank telling Peter that if he continues in the way he is acting, he will nullify the grace of God in Christ, and Christ will have died for nothing. If you have to follow all these rules to get to God, you've missed the whole point. So you live in a way that magnifies the grace of Christ.

Second, you work to accomplish the mission of Christ. Paul is saying to Peter, "Peter, you are hindering the advancement of the gospel among the Gentiles, among the nations by the way you are living, by the way you are taking your will into your own hands, you are hindering the advancement of the gospel." And this is where we've got to come back to the seriousness of this issue for us as a church and where God has us as a people.

We say and we believe that Jesus is precious and His love is more precious than anything else in this world. If this is true, that has huge ramifications for us sharing the gospel with the neighbors who live right around us. If we say we believe Jesus is the hope of the world and a billion people haven't heard His name then if we don't rise up and say we'll do everything we can to reach them with the gospel, then we've got to face the reality that we may not really believe Jesus is who He says He is in the Bible.

We've got to decide in our lives, in our families and as a church, we've got to decide if we're going to be a spectator in the plan of God, living according to our own meager plans and our own meager desires and our own meager wants and our own meager agendas or if we're going to put those aside and become participants in the eternal drama of a Christ who is drawing the world to Himself in Birmingham and all nations. Do we want in on this eternal drama? If not then we'll miss out on what it means for Christ to live in us.

We work to accomplish the mission of Christ, and finally, we die to spread the gospel of Christ, the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. The Word is literally, "surrendered" His life for us. Christ died that He might live in us. We die with Him so that He might live through us. To share His life, we die to spread the gospel of Christ. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Gal. 2:20).

It is not a mechanical formula for figuring out God's will for your life, but it is the secret to knowing, experiencing and walking in His will on a day-by-day basis. And I pray that God makes us a people who wants it, and who sacrifices everything we have for it, to be crucified with Christ.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: Radical.net