

# HOW DO WE KNOW GOD'S WILL?

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The answer to this most important question varies, depending on whom you ask. Most people in the world, if they think about it at all, think God's will is a matter of emotion. Whatever feels right to them is God's will for them. This is subjectivism and it is a plague on mankind.

For many in the world of Christianity, God's will is revealed in the Bible, but only partly so. A substantial number believe that God's will includes the Bible and the teachings of church leaders and councils, deemed approved by God. Others take the position that God's will is revealed in the Bible only as the reader is enlightened by a direct leading operation of the Holy Spirit. From this perspective, one knows precisely what a passage means because one's understanding is supernaturally certified.

Neither of these two positions is correct; indeed, both are very dangerously wrong. In the first place, no man since Jesus, his apostles and the people upon whom they laid their hands to impart spiritual gifts (see Acts 8) is inspired. No one receives direct revelation from God today. Paul was inspired. I am not and neither are you.

Our minds are marvelous creations of God and are thus capable of high levels of understanding, but neither a church council nor an individual preacher can be a direct recipient of Divine knowledge absent the Bible itself. If this is the case, how then do we come to know God's will? The simple fact is that the Lord's will comes to be known only through reading, studying and learning the Bible. Here are the familiar passages: John 8:32, John 4:14, John 17:17, John 12:48, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Timothy 4:2-4, 2 Timothy 2:14, 1 Timothy 4:12-16, and Hebrews 4:12.

There are many other passages that teach that the Bible is the source of knowledge of God's Will. Indeed, this doctrine is implicit throughout the document. What we call "common sense" (which is really the reasoning ability God built into our minds) argues for it, too. Consider all the church councils and individual preachers who claim a "direct line" to God. Do they all agree? The answer is obviously, "No!" But they claim to be getting their knowledge from the same source. We know that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). So some of these folks are either lying (I hope not) or they have been deceived, or they are deceiving themselves. I do not know which it is in every case. Some sets of doctrine are convincing and folks brought up to believe a certain way are likely to do so. Whatever is the case with regard to motive, it still remains that the contradiction present among those who insist that they are inspired proves that they are not inspired.

Why then does some form of this doctrine continue to be so popular? Popular it is, because most of the religious folks in our communities chose to be in churches precisely because the doctrinal positions taught therein suit them. This position allows, even demands, that people be their own arbiter of what God's will is for them. If for instance, you don't like what is being taught in church A, move on over to church B. If you can't find one to your liking, you may start church C. This is also a form of subjectivism, but with a twist of Christianity added.

The Bible teaches that every human being that becomes a Christian does so by obeying the Gospel (see 1 Peter 1:22-25, Hebrews 5:8-9). We remain faithful (Revelation 2:10) by adhering to the pattern of sound words revealed in Scripture (2 Timothy 1:13). "God's Will" can be known; it is in His Book.