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God's Will and the Holy Spirit



QUESTION 1:

Whose advice do you often recall—even years later?

THE POINT

The Holy Spirit will guide us in knowing God's will.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

My wife Lisa and I once led a marriage enrichment weekend. As we walked to the podium to speak on the first evening, I wiped my nose with a tissue. Somehow, a piece of tissue came loose and stuck to the end of my nose! Mortified, Lisa tried to alert me to my ridiculous appearance. She muttered under her breath, "Wipe your nose!" But I didn't hear her. She scribbled on my notes, "Wipe your nose!" But I didn't notice.

The irony is that we were teaching on communication in marriage! Standing beside me was someone who knows

and loves me more than anyone, yet she could not get my attention. It was the last marriage enrichment weekend we ever led.

To a far greater degree, the Holy Spirit loves us unlike anyone else. He knows all of God's plans and purposes for our lives, and He desires for us to know God's will. Since we cannot see Him, how does He communicate God's plan? In the Book of 1 Corinthians, Paul spoke on the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us know God's will.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-8

⁶ We do, however, speak a wisdom among the mature, but not a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ On the contrary, we speak God's hidden wisdom in a mystery, a wisdom God predestined before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age knew this wisdom, because if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Are you ever surprised or even offended by the opinions of people at your workplace or in the media? You shouldn't be. The worldview of a Christian is considerably different from that of the world.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly said, "You have heard that it was said . . . But I tell you . . ." (For example, see Matt. 5:21-22.) Jesus was constantly correcting common assumptions and attitudes of His day.

- ▶ People store treasures in this life; Jesus urged us to invest in the next (6:19-20).
- ▶ People assume it is best to be served; Jesus said it is better to serve (20:26).
- ▶ People want to be first; Jesus said it is better to be last (19:30).

Even as we read this, we might struggle to fully agree with Jesus! We are constantly being bombarded with the world's values and perspectives while we often spend inadequate time allowing God to impart His thoughts to our hearts and minds.

QUESTION 2:

What truths about God seem hard to believe for many people in our culture?

Paul said he was speaking words of wisdom for those who were spiritually mature; however, those who think like the world would be unable to comprehend what he was saying. The more mature we are in Christ, the more God's Word makes sense to us. The writer of Hebrews compared this process with the difference between drinking milk and eating meat.

This helps explain why people respond differently to the same sermon. Some people are worldly minded and the message is incomprehensible to them. Others are spiritual infants. They can only digest "milk" truths. Those, however, who are spiritually mature will eagerly grasp the "meaty" words being shared and will receive significant nourishment for their souls.

God's wisdom is a "hidden wisdom." This means God's truth cannot be discovered apart from God revealing it. God's truth cannot be understood, unless the Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds to comprehend and receive it. That's why skeptical atheists can read the Bible a thousand times and yet remain

unmoved by it. They can analyze the Hebrew and Greek text and debate with the most brilliant Bible scholars on earth, but unless the Holy Spirit opens their understanding to the truths in God's Word, it appears as foolishness to them.

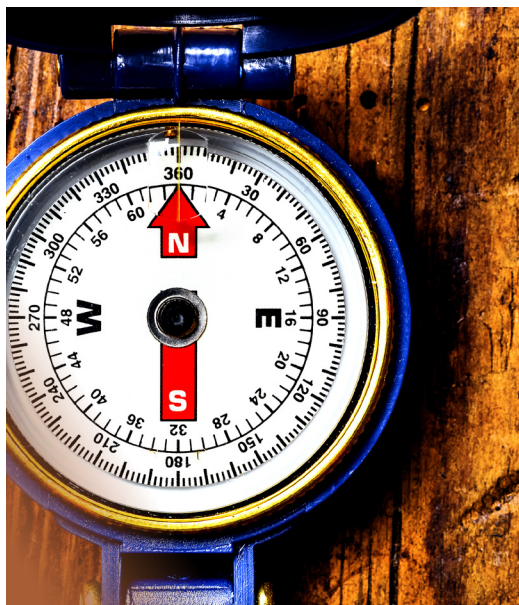
God's ultimate wisdom is connected to the person and work of Christ. When we understand God's wisdom, we see Jesus Christ for who He truly is. This summarizes God's eternal purposes and work for humanity.

Even as we embrace God's wisdom and walk in the truth of who Jesus is, we should never assume we have "arrived" spiritually. Those who are spiritually mature never assume such a position; instead, they humble themselves before God, acknowledge the lordship of Christ, and surrender themselves to the Holy Spirit's guidance. By His wisdom He leads us deeper into spiritual growth.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-11

⁹ But as it is written, What no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived—God has prepared these things for those who love him. ¹⁰ Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit, since the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except his spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

Some world religions portray God as a distant, unknowable deity who cannot be approached or conversed with by mere mortals. Others view Him as a mysterious god who remains hidden. It's only Christianity that understands God as a Trinity.



- ▶ God the Father, who plans and purposes His will for all creation.
- ▶ God the Son, who carries out that will and who came down to humanity so people could know what God is like.
- ▶ God the Holy Spirit, who reveals God's will and implements into our lives all that the Father intends and the Son has wrought.

No one can know what's in a person's mind. Only the person's spirit knows what that individual thinks or intends to do. Likewise, only the Holy Spirit knows what God thinks and intends for His creation. When the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we have Someone within us who knows all of God's intentions.

Tragically, many Christians don't know what to do with the Holy Spirit who indwells them. Yet Jesus said the Holy Spirit would work in our lives in the same way the Holy Spirit related to His twelve disciples. Just as Jesus had to teach His disciples to have faith, so the Spirit will teach us to trust Him, so we can believe God for all He wants to give us.

QUESTION 3:

How can we discern whether it's the Holy Spirit who is speaking to and leading us?

The Spirit reveals the will of God and seeks to work in our lives. The key is to not resist the Holy Spirit as He works. He will not force God's best upon us. We must cooperate with the Spirit as He reveals and seeks to implement the Father's will in our lives. We must learn to recognize the Holy Spirit's guidance in our lives and make any adjustments He calls for.



1 CORINTHIANS 2:12-16

¹² Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God. ¹³ We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. ¹⁴ But the person without the Spirit does not receive what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually. ¹⁵ The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, and yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. ¹⁶ For who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

QUESTION 4:

What does it look like to have the mind of Christ?

Christians just don't make sense to non-Christians oftentimes. There may be times when the Holy Spirit will lead you to do something that bewilders unbelievers. The Spirit might convict you to start tithing your income to your church. Giving away ten percent of your hard-earned money will make no sense to most unbelievers! Or the Spirit may lead you to spend significant money to go on a mission trip. Your non-Christian colleagues at work may be bewildered why you would spend your vacation time ministering to the homeless in Haiti.

Don't be surprised when your obedience to God's promptings causes others to question you; for if they're not led by the Spirit themselves, they have no ability to comprehend spiritual matters in your life.

Paul concluded this chapter by declaring, "But we have the mind of Christ." This is the ultimate spiritual maturity the Holy Spirit is leading us toward: To think the same way Christ does; to view problems the same way Christ does; and to view success as well as suffering from Christ's perspective. Unfortunately, this does not happen automatically the moment you become a Christian. The work of the Spirit is to free us from the world's sinful approach to view life more and more from Christ's perspective.

As we grow in our ability to think with the mind of Christ, we more readily discern the voice of the Spirit.

QUESTION 5:

How can our group help one another develop the mind of Christ?

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Choose one of the following images that best illustrates someone who might be displaying the mind of Christ. Explain your choice.



“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth.”

JOHN 14:16-17A

LIVE IT OUT

How can you know what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do next? Choose one of the following applications.

▶ **Pray.** Thank God for the presence of His Holy Spirit in your life. Express a desire to let Him lead you in what you think and do.

▶ **Evaluate.** Take an inventory of your current thinking on important subjects such as politics, marriage, work, church, family, and social issues. Evaluate your views in light of what Scripture teaches. Ask God to grow you in thinking with the mind of Christ in these matters.

▶ **Obey.** Act on what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do. It is as simple as that. Delayed obedience is disobedience, so trust God to empower you in what He leads you to do.

When you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, you have every resource of heaven at your disposal. Remember, He knows all of God's plans and purposes for our lives, and He desires for us to know God's will.