

SEEKING GOD'S WILL

All of us as Christians have at one time or another asked ourselves some of the following questions:

How do I know which path to take?

What shall I do next in life?

How do I know the direction to follow when I am at a crossroad?

Of my several and varied interests, which one shall I pursue?

It is not unusual, nor odd, that we should have such questions. We want to do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

Here are some of my thoughts on the subject. They have helped me along the way and I hope they can be of help to someone else. This is not an attempt to give definitive answers but rather to emphasize principles to consider.

When God gave us the Bible, He gave a few commands for us to follow, but He did not spell out the answer to every problem we face. He did, however, establish certain principles that can be translated into specifics.

For example: God didn't say, "Don't speak back to your parents," or "When your parents are old and feeble, be sure to take them into your home and care for them as they cared for you when you were children." He simply said, "Honor your father and mother," and left it up to us to determine the best way to do that. God-given principles are the foundation for our actions.

But first, it is assumed that as Christians we begin with prayer. We are reminded that Jesus said, "Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Mathew 21:22). Though the form, manner or approach we take in prayer will differ with each believer, we all agree that prayer is indispensable in establishing a relationship or communion with God in aligning ourselves to His will.

Secondly, we must be sure that whatever we decide to do, it must be in conformity to the Bible, which is God's written Word. If it is contrary to the Bible, it is wrong. God does not state one thing in Scripture and then something contrary to that in our hearts. For example, we will not be led to steal or lie, because God has already declared those things to be wrong.

So, here are some principles to consider:

1. *God usually asks us to do things that we enjoy doing.*

A preacher is one who likes to talk; a pilot, one who likes to fly; a

translator, one who likes languages; a nurse, one who enjoys caring for people's need; etc. Consider, then, what you like to do and explore ways to serve the Lord by utilizing your interests.

2. *God usually asks us to do things we are qualified to do or are willing to learn to do.*

In other words, He uses our talents, abilities, and skills even though we may need further training, education, development or experience in those areas. Make a self-examination and write out a list of your talents, abilities, education, skills and interests. Then consider where or how those things could be put to use for the Lord.

3. *“Open doors” or “closed doors” may have little or nothing to do with God’s will for your life.*

Some doors have been open to me that I know would have led to sin. Just because the door is open does not mean that it is right for you to enter. Thievery or even sexual immorality may be the result of entering an open door, though such would be wrong in the sight of the Lord and contrary to His Word. Don't proceed simply because a door is open.

Similarly, a “closed door“ may mean “wait“, rather than “no“. It may mean that one is not presently qualified and needs further preparation academically, financially, socially or emotionally. It may mean that all conditions are not yet in the “ready” state. Family, debt or other responsibilities may be standing in the way at the present. We should be very careful when we say; “The Lord closed the door.” He may not have been the one to do it. And we surely don't want to blame Him for what we may be doing to ourselves.

4. *Our relationship with others must be considered.*

As humans, we are in constant association with others. We need that. But our association with one group will restrict our association with another, even to our dismay and our disappointment.

For example, if we become a Republican, many Democrats will have nothing or very little to do with us. Some will reject us outright. It is true vice versa, as well. And if we choose to be Independent, both Republicans and Democrats will probably reject us or at least be indifferent to us.

If we become Presbyterians, we can expect that Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans and others will view us as outsiders. I can give proof to that. And an Independent Christian seems to be the least accepted of all. Wrong as that may be, it happens. So we must carefully choose our associations or

isolation as the case may be.

Such a choice will also determine the scope or range or breadth of our future endeavors. No one can be all things to all men, though the Apostle Paul tried. And he found out the reality of this truth throughout his ministry. We, like him, may try but it doesn't work out that way.

Our lives and work (ministries) are largely determined by those who accept us, not simply by those we accept. We are all more at ease with "our kind" whether that means white, black, German, Italian, American, Chinese, Northern, Southern, Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Muslim, educated, uneducated, young or old. We can try to bridge the gap - and ought to - but that is easier said than done.

So, we need to consider the results of this reality as a principle to guide us in seeking God's will.

5. Another principle involves *our present responsibilities and obligations*.

If we have chosen to be married, we must not neglect the responsibility we have toward our spouse. Similarly, our children must be taken into consideration. To make decisions that disregard those relationships cannot possibly be of the Lord. Family needs, education, relationships and prior obligations must not be overlooked. God does not expect us to cast aside prior commitments and responsibilities in order to accept something else.

This principle also applies to financial obligations such as mortgages, loans and the like.

6. *Exercise a Reasonable Faith with Foresight*

Only the Devil believes in a Blind Faith. But Jesus would not yield to that temptation and wouldn't jump off the pinnacle of the temple. (Luke 4:9-12). Faith and stupidity are not compatible.

When God provides for the ravens, (Luke 12:24) He does not expect to find them in the middle of a lake waiting for a heavenly messenger to arrive with a basket of grain. They know what they have to do to acquire God's provision.

True faith considers consequences! This cannot be overemphasized.

Conclusion-

So then, what now? How do I know which options I should accept when seeking future opportunities?

I suggest making a written list on a sheet of paper with two columns - Pros and Con or Advantages and Disadvantages.

As the list grows, I think that the Lord will give wisdom (guidance) to our sensibilities so that we will be able to know which paths to pursue. And as we prayerfully, slowly and deliberately consider those things, we will open ourselves to His will.

Remember, “God is not the author of confusion.” I Corinthians 14:33. If we are still confused, it is best that we defer any decision and “Wait on the Lord. Again I say, wait on the Lord.” Psalm 27:14.

I love the promise, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.” Proverbs 3:5-6.

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