



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

HOW TO BE SURE OF GOD'S WILL

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 40:8

► SUMMARY

If someone asked you what Christians mean when they speak of the will of God, what would you say?

Although it may seem like a strange concept to the unsaved, believers need to understand exactly what this term means. The will of God refers to His purpose, plan, and desire for our lives.

► SERMON POINTS

Christians should have the same attitude that is described in Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart." Yet people sit in churches every week without giving any thought to God's will for their lives. Therefore, they have no idea what He wants to accomplish in and through them.

Every day of our lives is to be lived for God's purpose, according to His plan, and in obedience to His desires. But how can we be sure we are walking in His will, especially in times of difficulty, suffering, or pain? Although trials may seem contrary to God's will, He assures us that whatever He allows is designed for our good—even the heartaches and hardships.

Categories of God's Will

- **The Predetermined Will of God.** There are certain events that the Lord has predestined to occur, and no one can thwart His sovereignty.
- **His Moral Will.** These are the righteous standards by which God intends for mankind to live. A good example is the Ten Commandments, which apply to all people.

- **God's Desired Will.** God specifies how He wants us to live as Christians.
- **His Circumstantial Will.** When we fail to live up to God's standards, He wants us to know how we should respond to these circumstances.
- **God's Immediate Will.** This covers what the Lord desires us to do today in our current situation.

How can we be sure that what we are considering is the will of God?

Each day is filled with decisions, and every choice is an opportunity to ask the Lord what He would have us do. The decisions could be practical, moral, financial, or any other issue. Every aspect of our lives should be submitted to the will of God because He has already chosen the best possible course for us. He knows every circumstance of our lives from birth to death and has the wisdom, grace, goodness, and mercy to work in our hearts and guide every aspect of life.

To help us confirm whether our decisions align with God's will, we should ask the following questions:

- **Is this decision consistent with God's Word?** His will and His Word always agree.
- **Is it a wise choice?** An initial consideration should be the consequences. Every decision comes with consequences—some we like, and others we don't. Therefore, we must evaluate the likely result of our choice and how it will affect others. Our choices will influence people to one degree or another. They watch how we live, what we do, and how we respond. Although we can't live out God's will perfectly, we can

make wise choices that benefit us and others as well as His kingdom.

■ **Can I honestly ask God to enable me to achieve this decision?** The Christian life is a serious relationship with the Lord, and we should not presume to make decisions on our own and then seek God's approval. First we must ask Him if this is what He'd have us do. Since we live in a world opposed to God and His righteousness, we are inadequate to make wise choices without His help and guidance.

■ **Do I have genuine peace about this decision?** When we are walking in God's will, we will have peace, quietness in our spirit, and an overwhelming sense of gratitude for His guidance. But if the decision is not according to His will, we may be plagued by doubts and inner irritation. Although we may be making the right choice, we must also be sure that it's according to God's timing. To step ahead or lag behind God could be very costly.

■ **Is this choice consistent with the way God works?** Throughout Scripture, God's ways are revealed, especially how He worked in the lives of biblical characters. The only way we can know that the Lord approves of what we are choosing to do is by determining whether it's consistent with His Word. God isn't trying to hide His will from us but is ready to reveal it to anyone who genuinely wants to obey Him. However, if we are distant from God and living in sin, we can't expect His guidance until we first heed His warnings and corrections.

■ **Does this decision fit who I am as a follower of Jesus?** If we are truly born again and following Jesus, we will want to do His will by adapting our behaviors and attitudes to fit our identity in Christ. For example, the way we speak, dress, respond, and act should all be a reflection of Christ in us. If our choices aren't consistent with who we are in Christ, then they are not God's will.

■ **Does this idea fit God's overall plan for my life?** Some of the answers to our questions regarding what to do are clearly revealed in God's Word, but at other times the exact situation we are facing is not specifically mentioned in the Bible. Therefore, we must consider whether our choice would reveal an inconsistency between our claim to be a Christian and our behavior. Hypocrisy damages our testimony, witness, and influence for Christ.

■ **Will this decision honor God?** The Lord is honored when our choices align with His Word, but if we have unrest in our hearts, and the situation keeps us awake at night, then we need to reconsider our decision. God brings up troubling thoughts to protect us from wrong choices because He loves us and wants to guide us to the best possible path.

■ **Will this choice result in unrest and regret for the rest of my life?** The time to consider this question is before acting on a decision because if it's not God's will, the regret and heartache we feel afterward may last a lifetime.

■ **Can I expect God to reward me for this decision?** The choices we make in this life determine whether our actions are worthy of blessings now and our future reward in heaven.

► RESPONSE

■ As you look back at past decisions, how much thought did you give to whether they were God's will? What have you learned today that will help you determine what God's will is in a particular situation?

■ How does knowing that God has a purpose, plan, and desire for your life make you feel? Are you willing to trust Him to rule your life and guide you into His will?

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