

DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL

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February 22, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: God desires for us to know and live in the centre of His perfect will for our lives.

Congregational reading: Romans 12:1-13

Scriptures: Romans 12:1-13; Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 12:7; Gen. 15:1-21; Ex. 3:2-10; Ex. 28:1-3; Ex. 31:1-5; Num. 27:15-23; Josh. 1:1; Neh. 1:1-4,11; Neh. 2:1-8; 1 Cor. 1:2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. ³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ *Let love be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not

lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing
steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the
saints, given to hospitality.

In 1843, Hans Christian Andersen published the story of the “ugly duckling”. It tells of a bird raised with ducks, but disliked and ridiculed by them. He goes through a period of hard and solitary living, but eventually finds acceptance by a flock of the most beautiful birds he has ever seen – a flock of swans. As he swims with them and sees his reflection in the water, he realizes that in fact, he is one of them – a swan, not a duck!

When we are misplaced, not living and acting as we were created to be, problems arise. When we do not know who we are and what our purpose is, we live frustrated and unfulfilled lives. So our goal needs to be to discover and live in accordance with God’s perfect will for our lives.

In Genesis, we read about Abram, a very wealthy and successful man. God spoke to him on a number of occasions and even appeared to him in theophanies, giving him details of His will and plan for him (Gen. 12:1-3; 12:7; 15:1-21). He obeyed and was blessed.

Exodus provides a number of examples we can learn from. Moses was spared from death as a child and given the best life and education available, (in Pharaoh’s palace, of all places). At the same time, He was taught by his mother that he was a Hebrew, a worshiper of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Finally, he received his divine commissioning at the burning bush – a direct, supernatural encounter with God (Ex. 3:2-10).

On the other hand, his brother Aaron was appointed high priest through God speaking to Moses (Ex. 28:1-3).

Bezalel, the man responsible for all the craftsmanship in the tabernacle was called to his task through Moses and filled with the Holy Spirit to empower him in the performance of his calling (Exodus 31:1-5).

In the book of Numbers, the Levites were singled out by God as servants of the tabernacle and commissioned through Moses and the people of Israel (Num. 8:5-19).

Joshua was called to lead Israel through Moses (Num. 27:15-23), and God also spoke directly to Him (Josh. 1:1).

The book of Judges speaks to us of Gideon and Samson, very common people God commissioned to do great works for God.

Then 1 Samuel tells us of the anointing of Saul and David to be kings of Israel through God's anointed prophet.

But let us take a look at Nehemiah – a slave in a foreign land. There was no prophet, no divine visitation, no anointing with oil, no laying on of hands. There was just a man with a desire to do something for God, who was willing to risk everything, including his own life, to do what he felt was needed at the moment.

Neh. 2:1-8 And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, *when wine was* before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. ² Therefore the king said to me, “Why *is* your face sad, since you *are* not sick? This *is* nothing but sorrow of heart.” So I became dreadfully afraid, ³ and said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire?” ⁴ Then the

king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." ⁶ Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. ⁷ Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors *of the region* beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which *pertains* to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted *them* to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

Jesus passed by common men in the midst of their daily work and said to them: "Follow Me"! They left everything behind and followed Him. I am sure many have heard this call and it may be ringing in your ears at this very moment. "Follow Me". **This is the first part of knowing and fulfilling God's will in our lives. We must follow Him. His Word must become our guidebook. We must obey what we read there.** If we do not obey in the least of things, He won't waste His time, or ours, by revealing more of His will to us. We start with obedience to the basics. As we do this, the Lord is then able to reveal more of His will to us, in any of the ways we have discussed earlier. He may even use one of His favourite techniques to communicate with you - His "still, small voice".

In summary, God may speak to us directly, He may appear in a vision, He may send a prophet to anoint us, He may send an angel with our commission, He may cause miraculous births, we may be chosen by our peers, a mantle may be dropped on our shoulder, or He may speak

to us in a still small voice. Or, we may simply see a need that we can meet, with God's help.

In other words, God does not restrict Himself in the ways He chooses to reveal His will to us. We simply need to have our eyes, ears and hearts open to whichever way He chooses to communicate His will to us.

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In the New Testament era, there is a particular calling of God that applies to each and every one of us - we are called to be saints. This is God's will for every one of us!

To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be saints* (Rom. 1:7)

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those **who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be saints*** (1 Cor. 1:2)

We are called to live the life of Christ every day, in every circumstance and situation we face. If we never receive a calling other than this, we have enough to see us through to the coming of the Lord. We are called to be saints.

To use Hans Christian Andersen's analogy, we are created to be swans, not ducks. Our lives are meant to be beautiful - a joy for all to behold. We are created to fly to supernatural heights through the Spirit of God who dwells in us.

Our scripture reading from **Romans 12 is of great help to us in coming to an understanding of God's will for our lives.**

First, the apostle reminds us that we need to present our bodies to God as willing sacrifices. The chances of

knowing God's will are very slim if we have not very consciously and deliberately given ourselves over to Him, for His exclusive use – withholding nothing.

Secondarily, we escape from a worldly confirmation through a heavenly transformation. With this heavenly orientation and outlook, we can see determine God's will for our lives!

Paul then gives some examples of how God's giftings and callings can be manifested in our lives. Do any of these resonate with you? Do you find yourself drawn to any of these?

Rom. 12:6-8 NKJV Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if **prophecy**, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or **ministry**, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in **teaching**; ⁸ he who exhorts, in **exhortation**; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

You may not sense the Lord leading you in the direction of the spectacular “sign gifts” listed in 1 Cor. 12, but He may well desire you to fulfill His will in some of these less demonstrative ways.

Maybe the most direct way to finding God's will for your life is to answer the simple question: “What is it that I love to do so much, I could do it all day? Every day”. It is quite likely that the way He created you, with your likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, desires and delights is all in line with His plan and purpose for your life. He is our Creator. Our Creator has created us in accordance with what He wants us to do and how He wants us to perform. We do not need to think that God's will and work for us has to be a dramatic departure from who we are and that

which gives us joy and fulfillment. Our loving Father delights in seeing His children prosper and thrive in their areas of desire and giftings.

As Bishop T. D. Jakes has taught in his leadership seminars, maybe the thing (or things) that really bother us are the things God has strategically put us here to fix.

Like Nehemiah, you may just need to strategize a way to make the changes you know need to be made, even though you may need to get permission from someone you would expect to say no. If God is in it, and this is His will for you, he will change the heart of the most stubborn antagonist into an ardent supporter. When this happens, you will know without a doubt that you are living in the will of God for your life.