

The Will of God

I owe a lot of my thinking on this matter to Garry Friesen and his book “Decision Making and the Will of God”. When I read his book, (more than 30 years ago), it changed my life.

By “God’s will” we sometimes mean God’s sovereignty. What non-Christians might call “fate”. God is sovereign, and if he wants something to happen then he has the power to choose to make it happen. God’s sovereignty can overrule anything.

But this is about God’s will for me. What does God **want** me to do?

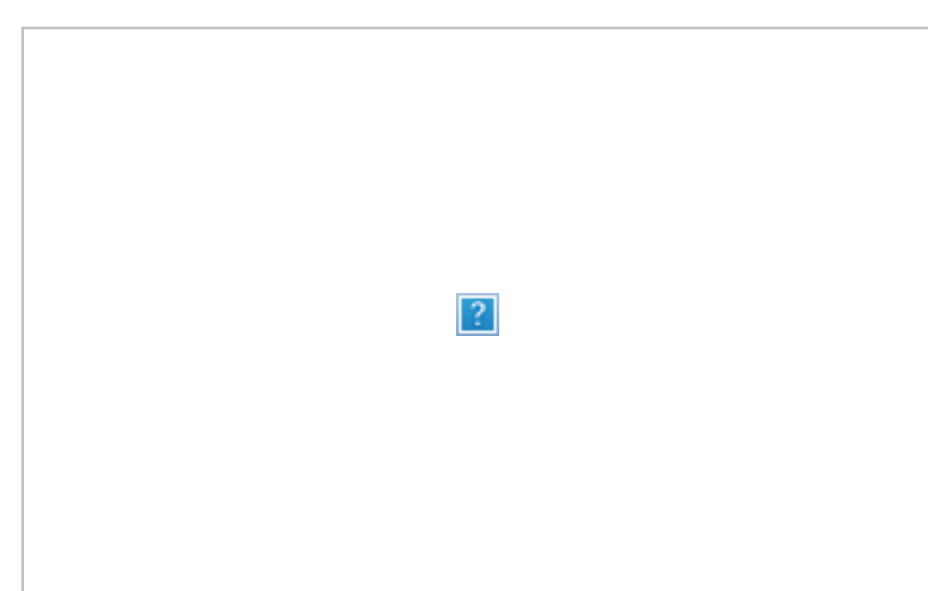
Usually when people are asking this question they have a specific context in mind.
Who does God want me to marry?
What job does God want me to do?
What does God want me to study?
Where does God want me to go for short term mission?

Mostly what we would consider “big” questions.
I think we all pretty much assume that God doesn’t mind which shoe I put on first this morning, or what I have on my toast.
Basically, when it comes to the big decisions, we don’t want to get it wrong, so we give careful thought to what God wants.

So, let’s look at this in the context of career.
First, think of every possible career there is. Everything. In the diagram below this is the orange box.

Now, within that, there are going to be some jobs that I simply cannot do.
I can never become queen of France. I am too old now to become an astronaut to Mars. I don’t think I have the physical attributes to become an Olympic athlete.
These might be silly examples, but basically there are many jobs/careers that are not open to be because of my circumstance.
They might be available to you, but not to me.
So, not everything in the orange box is possible for me. So, now I have the blue box. All the careers that are actually possible for me.

Now, within what is possible are some things that are clearly unacceptable because of things God has revealed in the Bible.
I am sure God does not want me to be a prostitute. Or a thief. These choices are not acceptable.
This leaves me with the green box. All the jobs that are possible for me to do and generally acceptable to God.



Now, traditionally, and in many Christian circles still, there is the thinking that of all the dots in the green square, only one is God’s will for you.
That God has a specific career for you. And only this career is God’s will for you.
No wonder we want to get this right! If we miss that dot and choose the wrong one we will have wasted our whole life.

But is that true? Is God really like that? Is that what you see in the Bible?

God is often described as our shepherd.
Can you imagine a shepherd taking his sheep to a lush mountain pasture and yelling,
“OK, #43 not that blade of grass, a bit to the left.”
“#98, you know better than that, what are you doing on this side of the pasture... AGAIN!”
Of course not. He chose the pasture because he knows its safe. He knows the grass is good here.
He is happy for his sheep to graze it wherever they want, (as long as they stay nearby).

God is also our father.
Imagine I tell my little son to go and play.
And he asks, “Do you want me to play with my toy cars or with my lego?”
“With the police car or with the fire engine?”
It would drive me crazy.
I have chosen his toys carefully. I know they are all safe. I know they are all “good” for him.
I’m happy for him to play with whichever toy he wants to play with.

Now, everything in the green square is acceptable, but some of the choices in the green square are going to be “better” than others.
This is where wisdom comes in.
When my son was little I might have gone along with his questions because I know he was just trying to please me.
“Play with the police car”.
But as he gets older I would expect him to know me a bit better and to start to be able to make these decisions for himself.
Now he is in his 20’s. Imagine if he was calling me every day to ask what clothes to wear to work today. And should I take the freeway or surface streets today?
By now, he should be making those decisions himself.
But if he’s thinking of getting married, or buying a house, I would be thrilled if he asked my opinion on his choice.
I would love to have some input on those decisions.
Of course I would still leave the choice up to him, but I would be happy to share my thoughts.

God’s will is like that. As young Christians God puts up with our questions and even answers them for us as a patient father.
But as we get older, as we mature, he expects us to make wise decisions for ourselves.

We can ask questions like, “Which choices bring more glory to God?”, “Which choices best fit the talents and abilities God has given me?”
Questions like that show maturity.

But then, if we have more than one choice which seem otherwise equal. It’s up to us. Which one do you **want** to do?
What job do you **want** to do? Who do you **want** to marry? Where do you **want** to go for mission?

Now, in the Bible we do read of times that God had specific things for people to do.
Jonah was very specifically told to go to Nineveh as a missionary.
For Jonah, there was a dot. One dot.
But in all these cases in the Bible, God communicated to them exactly what that dot was. And usually only once or twice in their entire lives.
If God clearly tells you, that for you there is only one dot... DO IT.
But if he hasn’t, then you may eat any grass in the pasture.

God’s will for you is that you choose wisely from all the acceptable choices available to you.
I think he would like it if you discussed it with him if it’s a big decision.
But there is no dot. You are free to choose.
Choose wisely.

PS: I’m not saying in any way that we should ignore God in our big decisions.

Basically I treat God like I would like my now adult son to treat me if he has a big decision to make. I would hope he would discuss his choice with me and listen to my advice. And if I thought his choice was very poor and may cause him harm, then I would try to intervene at whatever level I thought was necessary to stop him going ahead.
I always ask God for discernment when I’m trying to make any decision that I think is important. I ask him to show me the real facts behind the options. And then I will always discuss my choice with him if he hasn’t intervened and given me clear guidance one way or another. And then finally, I will always leave the final say up to him by asking him to prevent my choice from going ahead if it’s not wise, or if he knows some reason or future circumstance which will render it a poor choice for me.