



Discovering God's Will



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God's Will @ Church - Acts 15:1-35

Discovering God's Will starts in our Hearts

Proverbs 3:5-6

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.*

(NIV)

3 Aspects of God's will

1. Providential Will of God – Things God is going to do no matter what.
2. Moral Will of God – Things God has instructed His people to do or not do.
3. Personal Will of God – What God wants us to do in the details of our lives.

The Path of God's Will

God's Moral Will

God's Moral Will

What God is up to

What God is up to

Personal Will of God Decisions



The Path of God's Will

Legalism

Personal
Will of God
Decisions

God's Moral Will

What God is up to

What God is up to

God's Moral Will

The Path of
God's Will

License

God's Moral Will

God's Moral Will

What God is up to

What God is up to

Personal
Will of God
Decisions



An Issue comes up @ Church

Acts 15 [Seatback Bibles p 783]

1 *Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers:*

"Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

2 *This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them.*

So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. (NIV)

Every Issue has 2 sides

Acts 15:3 *The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted.*

This news made all the brothers very glad.

4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. (NIV)

Discovering God's will

Acts 15:5 *Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."*

6 *The apostles and elders met to consider this question.*

7 *After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: (NIV)*

What Peter said

Acts 15:7 *"Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.*

8 *God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.*

9 *He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. (NIV)*

Peter's Position

Acts 15:10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?

11 No!

We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” (NIV)

Barnabas, Paul & James

Acts 15:12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

13 When they finished, James spoke up:

"Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. 15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: (NIV)

What the Prophets said:

Acts 15:16-17 [quoting Amos 9:11-12] *"After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent.*

Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name,

says the Lord, who does these things"

15:18 [quoting Isaiah 45:21] *"that have been known for ages (NIV)*

James' Decision

Acts 15:19 *"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.*

*20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols,
from sexual immorality,
from the meat of strangled animals
and from blood.*

21 For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath." (NIV)

Communicating God's Will

Acts 15:22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

23 With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. (NIV)

Why we got involved

Acts 15:24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said.

25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. (NIV)

The Decision > God's Will

Acts 15:28 It seemed good
to the Holy Spirit
and to us

not to burden you with anything beyond the
following requirements:

29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to
idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled
animals and from sexual immorality.

You will do well to avoid these
things.

Farewell. (NIV)

The Response

Acts 15:30 The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter.

31 The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.

32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. (NIV)

Back to Mission focus

Acts 15:33 After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. [Jerusalem church & leaders]

[some manuscripts add: 34 but Silas decided to stay there]

35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

(NIV)

How to decide about God's Will

Romans 12:2 *...be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Then

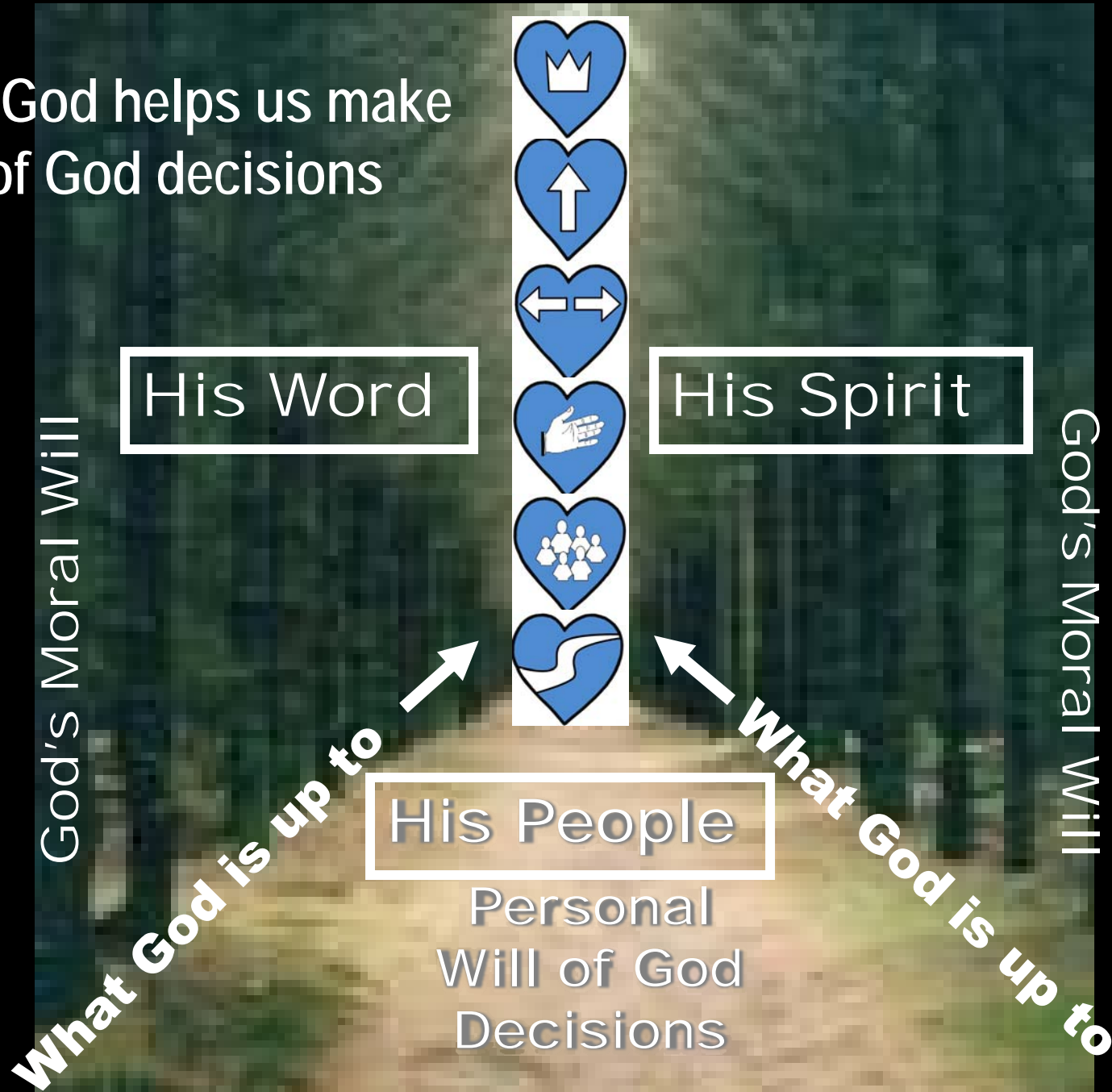
you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—

his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV)

Good News: We're not in this alone!

➤ God Provides Help!

How God helps us make Will of God decisions



His Word

His Spirit

His People

Personal Will of God Decisions

God's Moral Will

God's Moral Will

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Next Week: When It's Time to Decide