

## **PROGRAM 23 TEASER**

Imagine a pilot without a flight plan. A hiker without map and compass. An army with no battle plan. Pilot, hiker and soldier will make decisions – probably wrong ones. What about you? You're on a journey through life. You'll have to make decisions – some that can thrill you – or kill you. But what if you have Christ on your side? And what if He were to tell you that the Holy Spirit would teach you how to discern God's awesome will in each decision you must make? Interested? Don't miss this telecast. That's where we're going on MORE THEN TALK. How to discern God's will for your life.

## **PROGRAM 23 INTRO**

God offers you a better plan than making life's decisions by trial and error. Like getting married and discovering you blew it. Too late! Explosion coming! God loves you. And He wants to teach you and me how to discover His will in those critical decisions in life. How to discern God's will – before you act— not after your own will blows up in your face. I'm working on a simple, scriptural plan to bring the Lord into the decisions that make up life. Want to find out what it is? Join me – now – for MORE THEN TALK.

## **PROGRAM 23 PAGE 1**

### **HOW TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE**

#### **Page 1 Nothing On Earth More Important!**

Take all of the world's greatest books. Religious books. Science books. Philosophy books. Wisdom books. Pile them up on one side and put one book—the Bible on the other side. Between them there will be a chasm too wide to bridge. That's because all other books—I said all—are merely the words of men. The Bible is what it claims to be—the Word of the one true and living God.

Now begin to read this book. It mentions a man named Enoch who walked with God. And Noah walked with God. And Abraham and Moses. Why, this is beyond incredible. The Creator of the universe inviting His human creation to seek and find Him. To speak to Him in awe and wonder. And get this—to hear God speak to us spirit to spirit and lead us like a father leads a son—like a shepherd guiding his flock.

So God gives each of us a specific DNA and tells us there is a divine plan for every human life. For my life. For yours. If we choose, He will actually lead us day by day. "For as many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14. What a promise. Wait! There's more. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5,6.

Jesus Christ is the One who makes God the Father real to us. That's why God raised Christ from the dead and promises to turn you into a new creation if you invite Jesus to be Lord of your life. If you have not done this, I urge you to do it now. Just say "Yes, Lord Jesus Christ. I choose to believe the truth—that God raised You from the dead. Come and live in my heart and life. Guide me into your truth." Then get a Bible and start in the fourth book—John—and begin to nourish your spirit on the One who is the way, the truth and the life.

But, you say, "I already know Jesus as my Savior. But how can I know God's will in all the decisions I face in this world?" I want to answer that question today, so that whether you are a new follower of Jesus or have been a Christian for many years, you will know this simple, practical plan on how to discern God's will for your life. There is nothing more important.

## **PROGRAM 23 PAGE 2**

### **HOW TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE**

#### **Page 2 No Playing Games With God**

Christian lives, marriages and homes are collapsing in epidemic numbers. Christians are making foolish and even sinful decisions and regretting the terrible consequences. The problem? They don't know how to find God's will before they do their own thing and it blows up in their faces. Of course, some did know God's will, disobeyed and are now paying, or will pay, the sad consequences. To many, God's will is not the critical desire of their hearts because they are determined to do what they want. "Don't bother me with biblical facts—my mind is made up," has been the tragic attitude of great numbers of Christians.

This message is not for dishonest Christians. It's also not for believers who, though honest enough to admit they are living in sin, still rebel against asking God for grace and new desires pleasing to Him. This teaching is for the Christian who is serious with God and who desires practical help in how to know God's will in small and great decisions that will bring either happiness or heartache—victory or defeat—peace or turmoil—God's will or Satan's trap. This lesson is for the person who knows you don't play games with God.

It is not so easy to know God's will in the many decisions we have to make which are not covered by a specific scripture verse. Of course, many decisions we must make are covered clearly in the Bible—if we only know where to find it. I know enough about walking with God to realize that hearing Him is not always as easy as some of us try to pretend. After all, He does not generally speak out loud, write words across the sky or send an angel with an envelope containing the orders of each day. God gives His Holy Spirit the tremendous task of teaching human beings (who have always lived by our senses) the ways of the fourth dimension—the world of the spirit. Such lessons are not learned in a day.

## **DECISIONS, DECISIONS**

I'm going to share nine simple points for you to grasp if you want to know how to truly discern God's will in your life. Perhaps you're contemplating changing jobs. Or the situation is even more serious—you are thinking about getting married? Is this the right person? Or perhaps you wonder if it's time to buy that new car. Or your schedule is already so busy but you are being asked to do something else. Should you say yes or no? Perhaps your marriage is failing. Some people tell you it's too far gone and you should give up. Others say you should endure at any cost. What to do? Or maybe it's witnessing to your loved ones. Should you try to approach those hard cases again—or wait a while? Perhaps you're wondering if the Lord wants you to serve Him full time as a missionary or minister. Is it God's call? Or only your desire?

Difficult decisions—all of them. See how easy one can experience a tragedy if a wrong decision is made? We have enough of the foundation. Let's get started.

## **FINDING GOD'S WILL**

### STEP 1. DESIRE GOD'S WILL ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE

This first point determines whether or not you even need to listen to the other eight steps that I'll give you. Some people only wish to know God's will if it agrees with what they have already determined they are going to do. That won't work. If I claim Christ as Lord, then my only choice is to want God's will for my life—at any cost.

God only shares His heart with those who really want it. We also find the Lord Jesus carrying out His earthly ministry with an emphatic, "I come to do thy will O God." (Hebrews 10:9) That's it! A delight to know God's will, regardless of whether or not it requires sacrifice or even possible "loss" as far as the world is concerned. Whenever you face a decision, quiet your heart by reminding the Lord that all you want is His will in the matter and that you are counting on Him showing you His will at any cost. With that kind of a foundation, we'll be ready for step two.

## **PROGRAM 23 PAGE 3**

### **HOW TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE**

#### **Page 3 How To Test Your Feelings**

We have already discovered the most important part of knowing what God wants to do in your life. That was step one—your wanting His will more than anything in life. Not your will, but God's will. Now we're ready for:

#### **STEP 2. DEVELOP A STRONG FOUNDATION OF SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES**

God has put into a love letter of sixty-six books all the material you will ever need on every issue you will ever face. If you don't have a working knowledge of the Bible, you are at a disadvantage. It's like a blind man feeling his way and hoping he doesn't stumble.

The Lord does not cater to lazy people. He loves them—but lazy Christians pay a terrible price for neglecting to study the Word. Begin immediately morning and evening devotions and travel through both Old and New Testaments. I suggest moving rapidly through it the first time just to get a total view of what's in your Bible. You'll be amazed at how much sticks in the computer of your mind. Then you can begin again in meditation and deeper study.

Scripture says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6) God spoke of the Jewish people then—but He is speaking today of Christians. Lack of knowledge of the Word of God can be catastrophic. "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) is not a suggestion but a command. So along with point one of desiring God's will above anything, remember step two of gaining a basic foundation of the main teaching of the mind of God as found in the Bible.

#### **STEP 3. *INNER IMPRESSION***

A powerful idea or thought comes into your mind or heart that lets you think God is talking to you. Maybe He is and maybe He isn't. Check it out. Those thoughts or desires can come from one of three directions—God,

Satan, or your own human spirit. The first will make you a winner but the second two will lead you into the wilderness.

Many Christians run on their inner impressions. Case in point: one woman poured out a tormented heart. Her husband is confused, doesn't meet her needs and she feels forced into the arms of a lover. When even non-Christians accuse her of hypocrisy, she salves her conscience by telling them Christians are not perfect and that her sin is the whole reason for the grace of God anyway. See the trap this dear lady walked into? She ran on inner impression but didn't bother with the fourth step that I will share in a moment.

Then there was the deceived young man who had a lust problem. He excused himself by telling me that God knew that he had a even greater problem with pride. Thus, when his "pride level" rose dangerously high, he said God would allow him to carry out this lustful urge in order to humble him so he would have to confess his sin and be broken. In other words, his thoughts, desires inner impressions and reasoning became the controlling force of his life. He ran on those feelings and was tragically shattered. Once again, this person failed to check out step three of "inner impressions" with step four.

#### STEP 4. *THE WORD OF GOD*

The Bible is the final Supreme Court. There are no higher appeals. This Book settles everything. In other words, even if I am convinced that God has spoken to me—whether through impression, word, prophecy, dream, vision, etc., and I find that the Bible tells me the very opposite—I don't even have to pray about what came into my heart or mind. God's Word is the final umpire of God's will, and anything that contradicts it is from the flesh and the devil.

There is a precious lady whom Norma and I dearly loved who endured a broken heart before she died. On her 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, her husband informed her that he had found another woman. Our friend was crushed.

Her husband's reasoning? His wife had prayed for him for many years and he had finally been led to Christ by a woman in the church. That woman became his spiritual teacher (see the trap that was set?) and the two grew dependent on each other. Satan's web of deceit grew thicker. Our friend and her husband had also wanted a son and even had chosen a name. They never did get their baby but this other woman had a son by that same name. The husband put these "miracles" together and figured this just had to be God leading him to this other woman. He never arrived at step four or he would have learned that God's Word calls what he did adultery.

For example, many times young Christians come to me with the strong desire to date or marry non-believers. I always point them to the "Supreme Court" of 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers..." Those who obeyed God's Word later found that they had been saved from a horrible trap. Those who rebelled against the Scriptures often paid a terrible price.

The Word of God. What a Supreme Court! "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35) Of all nine steps that I will give you in knowing God's will before you act, the fourth step—the Word of God—is the one that stands out as the most important!



## **PROGRAM 23 PAGE 4**

### **HOW TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE**

#### **Page 4 Watch For God's Signposts**

#### **A LOOK BACK**

God has a wonderful plan for each of us. He wants to guide us into His will in each day's decisions, if we choose to let Him. So far we've looked at four steps in learning how to discern His will in the many important decisions we must make in our lives. They are:

- 1) DESIRE GOD'S WILL ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE
- 2) DEVELOP A STRONG FOUNDATION OF SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES
- 3) INNER IMPRESSIONS OF THE MIND
- 4) TESTING OUR THOUGHTS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD—THE BIBLE

Now we shall study five more points in learning how to discern the difference between the will of God and that of Satan or our own deceived flesh. How much better to embrace the plan and will of God rather than have my own plans and will explode later in my face.

#### **STEP 5. *SIGNPOSTS***

Travel any busy highway and you will find signs along the way indicating where you are. The same is true when following well-traveled mountain trails as arrows point the way to the summit. God is often like a map-maker or trail-marker. He will give signals or signposts to those who desire to do His will. Perhaps it will be something that takes place or an invitation from some person. Or maybe something you read or hear.

Keep your eye out for signposts or trends, but don't base your decisions on them without checking further with all the other eight steps that will be shared before this lesson is finished. Remember Joshua when he was ordered to destroy the nations and take over their lands? (Joshua chapter 9) The Gibeonites were smart enough to know what God had done to Israel's enemies. They decided on a trick that called for old shoes, old

garments and moldy bread. Though they lived close to the children of Israel, they pretended to come from a far country and made Joshua promise not to destroy them. He later learned that he had been deceived because he went by only a "signpost" rather than take it in prayer to God as well as get advice from others (we'll cover this point next).

Never let a signpost cancel out the clear-cut Word of God. Remember when Paul, with winter approaching, warned the ship captain not to make that hazardous journey. (Acts 27:9,10)

When the south wind blew softly (v.13) the captain disregarded Paul's instructions from God and a shipwreck was the result. Many Christians find themselves shipwrecked because they sail on the "south wind of circumstances" rather than stand on the solid rock of the Word of God. Remember this simple rule—signposts or trends that are from the Lord will find an agreement in Scripture and will never be contradictory. That's why it's so important for you to study daily God's love letter, the Bible. Ignorance of the Word of God is not bliss—it's deadly.

## STEP 6. COUNSELLORS

Scriptures says, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 11:14) Blessed is the Christian who has some mature Christian friends he or she can depend on for advice. Most of the time, that wise counsel will help much in determining God's will. Scripture also says, "Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war." (Proverbs 20:18)

When facing big decisions, get all the advice you can from as many directions as you can. A couple drove a long distance to see my wife and me. Their marriage was in trouble but for a different reason. This man was not unfaithful and was a magnificent husband. His problem was that he

could not say "no". Active in his church night after night, he still accepted more responsibilities. While gaining the applause of some in the church who were willing to let him do all the work, he was losing the respect of his wife who desperately needed him. We prayed, worked on his schedule and he promised to make adjustments. I even performed an impromptu ceremony in our living room as they renewed their wedding vows. Their seeking out advice saved their marriage.

## **PROGRAM 23 PAGE 5**

### **HOW TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE**

#### **Page 5 Before You Make That Big Decision...**

##### **7. TIME AND PRAYER**

I like to take a night to sleep on major decisions. I have made too many mistakes by being presumptuous and impulsive. Decisions that are off in the future give you time to carefully check out the Lord's will. Other decisions must be made almost instantly. When possible, take at least one night to wait on the Lord in prayer and in the Scriptures before making a big decision. Often, the next morning will dawn with your path made crystal clear because you took time to "Be still and know that I am God". (Psalm 46:10)

Scripture reminds you that you do not have to make your decisions alone. In fact, you really don't even have to make them at all if you give God a chance to make them for you. You will still have to be the voice behind the decision, but it will be the Spirit of God showing you what to do. Taking time in prayer over the problem or action facing you allows you to view it from God's perspective and makes you conscious of His lordship over your life and decisions. And this is the promise we have in 1 John 5:14,15, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." How awesome. The Creator of the universe inviting you and me to learn to pray according to His will and plan—so He can answer our prayers and become more real to us than ever before.

##### **STEP 8. A FINAL TOTAL COMMITMENT TO GOD**

Let me illustrate this point with an example I'll never forget. We were faced with moving our organization from West Coast to East Coast in 1979 when I was still a young minister. All Norma and I wanted was God's will no

matter the cost (step one). We had a basic foundation of scriptural principles (step two). A strong inner impression that God would give us miracle facilities (step three) was followed by many scriptures that challenged us to step out in faith (step four). We had signposts such as city commissions and zoning boards speaking in our favor, and a miracle price for large facilities (step five). A multitude of counselors advised us to "go" (step six) and we had spent time in prayer (step seven).

Now we chained ourselves to the will of God. In other words: "Lord, it all looks like it's you. But if we have been deceived, blow the whole thing up if it's not your perfect will." We claimed the promise in Matthew 18:18, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven..." and rested in the Lord. What followed was the final point in this lesson.

#### STEP 9. THE PEACE OF GOD

Colossians 3:15 is a magnificent indicator of God's will, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts..." God promises to be your umpire and settle all questions that fill your heart and mind. He will do it with that "perfect peace" (Isaiah 26:3) that settles in when it's really the Lord.

When all nine of these signals click in, you can make your decision, large or small, with the assurance that you have done your best to be true to the Lord and to listen to His voice. Now step out on faith and move in the direction that you believe to be right.

#### BUT LET ME GIVE YOU A FINAL WORD OF ADVICE

Always remember that you do not have to ask God if it is His will for you to give, witness, forgive, attend church, etc. Those are scriptural commands and privileges that a Christian automatically does without the excuse of "I don't feel led." Just do them and you will be blessed.

## SO LET'S HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

These nine steps, once learned, will become like a well-used map to which you will refer as you face decisions on who to marry, where to move, what church to attend, when to have children, what activities to involve yourself in, what purchases to make, etc. Too many Christians blow it by first making the decisions and then asking God to bless them. The Lord is not in the business of blessing wrong decisions and loves us enough to make us pay for them. Always make a mental note of the bad decisions you have made in the past so you don't repeat them. Ephesians 5:17 tells us, "...be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Take these important steps I have given you, add any others that God may give you and go to work learning how to understand His voice and will. You will find a new confidence as you approach life's decisions because you will be seeking one thing only—God's will and never your own.