

EVERY NATION ROSEBANK

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# CONNECT OUTLINE

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topic

**KNOWING GOD'S WILL**

**4 WEEKS**

## SCRIPTURE

# INTRODUCTION :

God wants us to find freedom and joy in his revealed plans for us.

The goal of this series is to help connect members to understand that God's will is predominantly revealed in scripture and that as they obey his commands and character, they can confidently live it out.

## Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

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For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

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# WEEK 1

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topic

**KNOWING GOD'S WILL**

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## DISCUSS

# DEFINING GOD'S WILL

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**OPENING QUESTION:** What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase, “God’s will for my life?” (*Typical answers: career, marriage partner, where to live*).

When we think about God’s will, we immediately imagine a very specific, thought out plan containing a step for step blueprint for our lives. Because we believe that this is how God wants to work in us, we spend hours and hours agonizing over what God wants us to do. We get stressed and frustrated and freaked out! Ultimately we feel like God is keeping a secret from us that he will only reveal when we reach some undisclosed level of spiritual excellence.

The simple truth is that God makes his will for mankind, and yes, you and I very clear in his word, the Bible, his foremost way of communicating to his people. The Bible is God’s best way of communicating with us, because we can go back to his word repeatedly to figure how he wants us to live.

Before we figure out our personal God given purpose, we need to understand and practice the glorious and holy general purpose God has ordained for everyone who trusts in him for salvation.

There are three distinctions to consider in God's will:

**1. Sovereign Will**, describes God's ultimate plan that will happen regardless of human action (e.g., the Cross, Jesus' return). We cannot resist this will. (Daniel 4:35)

**2. General Will**, is what God commands for all people in Scripture. This is the will we can choose to obey or disobey. This is our focus today.

**3. Specific Will**, is the decisions we make (job, school, spouse) where the Bible does not explicitly command a choice. This is often where we seek "signs."

**1. God's General will for all believers:**

God's general will is focused on our character, relationships, and attitude. He wants us to be:

**a) Sanctified (Holy):**

Separated from the world's immorality and continually growing in Christ-likeness.

*Romans 8:29 (NIV)*

*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV)*

*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

If our hearts, minds and values are not being conformed to the image of Christ, when we seek to find our personal purpose, we will be tempted to have selfish motives and believe that what we want is higher than what Jesus requires of us.

***b) Thankful:***

Maintaining a posture of gratitude in all circumstances.

*1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV)*

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

This is a command from God, and Paul makes it very clear that this is Jesus' will for you and I! Disobedience to God's commands will keep us from knowing and doing God's will.

The New Testament contains up to 1050 commands, applying to every area of our lives, from relationship with God to relationships with other people, both in the present and the future. There is an attached list of most of them below. Many of these commands are positive, "do this". What is very clear is that obeying these commands is what puts you into the very centre of God's will. This is what he wants from all of us, before we start worrying about what job to do and where to live and what car to buy. These commands are what God is focused on and so we should be focused on them also.

**c) Spirit-Filled:** Submitting to the Holy Spirit's control daily, leading to a renewed mind and discernment.

*Ephesians 5:18 (ESV)*

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,*

*Galatians 5:25 (ESV)*

*If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

*Galatians 5:22-24 (NIV)*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

We cannot fulfil God's general will for us by ourselves! The Holy Spirit is our helper (John 14:26). We need to keep inviting him to fill us and come alongside us every day in every situation. He inspires us and strengthens us and reminds us what God's will is. If we strive to obey in our own strength we will get burnt out and discouraged. Remember, you are never ever alone in anything, the Holy Spirit is God living inside our hearts.

**d) Living exemplary lives:**

Living ethically and doing what is right.

*1 Timothy 5:2 (ESV)*

*Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*

*Matthew 5:16 (ESV)*

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

God's general will for our lives is to conform to the image of Jesus, to look more and more like him as we grow in our faith. Looking like Jesus gives us Godly impact in the world as we live out our personal purpose. God wants us to live good lives for ourselves, our families and our communities. As Christians we already influence every environment for the better, simply because we believe in God, we believe in his word and we believe in his presence and power with us.

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# WEEK 2

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# MISCONCEPTIONS OF GOD'S WILL

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## **1. The Dot Theory:**

The belief that God has one single, secret plan for every decision (the perfect job, the perfect spouse, the perfect house), and if we miss that “dot”, our life is ruined.

## **2. God's Will Equals Misery:**

The idea that if God's will is truly perfect, it will be the path that we least enjoy or the one that requires the greatest sacrifice to our personal desires and happiness.

## **3. The need for signs or omens:**

The assumption that God must provide a subjective sign (e.g. a fleece, a strange coincidence, a strong emotional feeling, or a direct prophetic word) for every small, morally neutral or practical decision.

# Fellowship

Ask your group about any misconceptions they have encountered about God's will.

Get three people to each read one of the following scriptures and ask the group to agree which one counters the relevant point above. (The answers for you the leader are in the brackets).

*Psalm 37:4 (ESV) (Misery)*

*Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

*Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV) (Signs/Omens)*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.*

*1 Corinthians 10:23 (ESV) (Dot theory)*

*'All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up.*

### **1. “Dot Theory” (1 Cor 10:23):**

God gives us freedom within the boundaries of His moral will. If a choice is not sinful, we often have the freedom to choose what is helpful and builds up others. Romans 14: 23 says, “But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin”. If we believe something is wrong or sinful it is best we avoid it.

Remember that in Christianity, freedom is simply understanding the difference between right and wrong. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8). He convicts our hearts of sin when we plan to do something wrong, he inspires us to obey God and do what is right. As circumstances and situations open up in our lives, God is there to guide and lead us through. He does not have one perfect will for any of us. God deals with us in the imperfection of this world and our lives. We must simply keep obeying his commands and his character.

## **2. “God’s will is misery” (Psalm 37:34):**

When our hearts are aligned with God (His general will), our desires change. God is not interested in our misery but in the joy and fulfillment we find in Him. God cannot be manipulated by us! He knows our thoughts and our motives. To delight in God (Ps 37:4) means to agree with him, to understand his ways and thoughts and plans and to find them joyful and good. We cannot delight in God without agreeing with him and only when our desires are the same as his, will he give us the desires of our hearts because they are his desires first.

### **3. “Signs and Omens” (Proverbs 3:5-6):**

We are to use the wisdom and common sense God gave us, trusting that if we acknowledge Him (obey His moral will), He will guide us. God never tells us to ignore our sanctified reason. God is deeply mystical, but also deeply practical. He has given us wisdom, insight, intelligence, ability, skill and understanding so we can navigate this world we live in. Jesus said that we will know the truth and the truth will set us free ( John 8:32). If God commanded it, we must do it.

Jesus says “you must love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). If you are asking God for a sign to show you who to love or when to love, you are disobeying this command. He said it, he is truth and everything he says is truth, the only response is “yes Lord”. This is how you fulfill the will of God.

# Reflection Questions

In what areas of your life have you been living under “dot theory”, “God's will is misery” or “signs” and omens?

What shift do you need to make to take ownership of these areas in your life?

Are there fears or misunderstandings you need to face?

What decisions have you outsourced to God that you now realise you need to make a decision on and live your life?

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# WEEK 3

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**KNOWING GOD'S WILL**

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## DISCUSS

# LIVING GOD'S WILL DAILY

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God's general will is what makes discerning His specific will possible. When we live out the known will of God, we are prepared for the unknown direction.

## 1. The Daily living Sacrifice.

*Romans 12:1*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Ask your group to think carefully about how they can intentionally dedicate their day, body, mind, time, and plans to the Lord before every morning.

## Fellowship:

Ask your group to discuss what they have had to sacrifice, to follow God, as far they feel Comfortable.

## 2. Dwell in Scripture to Renew Your Mind.

Commit to daily reading and meditation on the Bible. God's general will is revealed in His Word. The more you know the Word, the more instinctively you can discern right from wrong, and the less you need to search for external "signs."

## Fellowship:

Ask 3 people to share about a time they read a command in scripture and how they fulfilled it, OR they can talk about a command they read recently in scripture and the group can discuss how they can practically fulfill that over the next week.

### **3. Choose the Spirit-Filled Response of Gratitude.**

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

In moments of frustration, trial, or anxiety, pause and identify three specific things you can genuinely thank God for. Choosing gratitude in all circumstances is explicitly God's will and transforms your perspective from worry (missing the will) to worship (trusting the sovereign God).

## **Fellowship:**

Ask everyone to list three things that they are grateful to God for. Encourage them to regularly stop and tell God how grateful they are for what he is doing in their lives.

# Reflection Questions

Ask your group to reflect and share on what they have learnt in this session, and how they have changed their thinking about God's general will over the last 3 weeks.

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# WEEK 4

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# GOD'S SPECIFIC WILL

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## **Pre-Planning for leaders of this session:**

Send out the link to the Motivational Gifts test. Make sure all your members do it, record their results and come ready to share them.

***Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire, Spiritual Gifts Survey.*** <https://trinityemc.com/spiritual-gifts>

Send this podcast link to your group, and ask them to listen to it before the this session.

SERMON: <https://soundcloud.com/his-people-joburg/holy-spirit-power-gifts-greg-peek>

## DISCUSS

God's specific will for you is already a part of you. God only creates good things and he created you! King David tells us that we are all "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). When God created you he gave you lots of unique qualities.

None of us are only one dimensional, we are all multifaceted. This means we have a diversity of gifts and passions, and aspirations, abilities and skills. The full package of all of these together makes us very unique. God's specific will is found in this bouquet of uniqueness.

Only when we are authentically living out God's general will for us (as discussed over the last three weeks) will we be able to recognize and express God's unique purpose for us. The truth about purpose, is that "you are your purpose!" Your purpose does not exist outside of you, it is a fundamental part of you that is manifesting whether you recognize it or not. Other people are already benefiting from our purpose even if you haven't figured it out yet.

## Activity:

Each member of your group must share with each other member something they see in that person that makes them unique! Examples could be, "you are so funny and bring so much joy into our meeting"; "whenever anyone in this group is sad, you are the first one to notice and speak comfort to them; "you give such good advice"; "Whenever I speak to you I feel so encouraged".

## **What Purpose is Not.**

Purpose is not a specific gift or talent or skill or ability. Purpose is not a title, it is not a position, it is not a job description.

# Activity:

Why are none of these things purpose?

The answer lies in the fact that many different people might have the same gift, title, position and job description. But who they are in all of these things will dictate the unique thing they bring to each of these

Romans 12:6-8 (NLT)

*In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup> If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup> If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

## Activity:

Get your group to identify all seven gifts listed in the scripture above.

## **The Motivational Gifts:**

These seven gifts are called motivational gifts, because they explain the motivation of our hearts and passions and causes. Three different people might have a gift of counselling, but one is motivated by mercy and one is motivated by truth (prophetic) and the other is motivated by service.

The “mercy” motivated counsellor will immediately empathize with his client, and make lots of space for them to express their feelings and emotions and make them feel safe and comforted.

The “truth” (prophetic) motivated counsellor will encourage the client to tell them all the facts they possibly can, and then help them to reorganize their experiences and thoughts and feelings in such a way as to make the person very aware of what is going on in their heart.

The service motivated counsellor will listen carefully to their client and they will give them very helpful techniques on how to deal with their issues, they will refer them to other therapists they know who are particularly equipped to deal with their specific needs, and they will follow up with them afterward to see if they can help them in any other ways.

The point of the above examples is to help you understand that these three people are all doing one thing, they are counselling clients. However, each one of them has a different impact and influence on their clients because of their unique motivation. This is the essence of purpose. Regardless of what I am doing, purpose is the effect I leave behind on the person I am working with.

**Purpose can only manifest in the context  
of the next person I meet.**

Optional podcast on unique purpose: <https://tinyurl.com/ybjwjda8>

## **Activity:**

Split the group in half and get them to share the results of their Houts Wagner Test and how they think it might impact their lives.

# What's Happening At **EVERY NATION ROSEBANK**

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## **EVENT REGISTRATIONS:**

**<https://everynationrosebank.churchcenter.com/registrations>**



