

### Media and Graphics Notes

<b>Sermon Starter Video?</b>	Yes
<b>Sermon Notes?</b>	There are notes and scripture for the screen throughout the sermon.

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## Key Questions

### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about the ways that we can know God's will for our life.

### ***Why is this sermon important?***

This sermon is important because we can know God's will for our life. God has good things in mind for each person.

### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This sermon is the third in the FAQ series and is adapted from the Alpha Talk - How does God guide us? by Nicky Gumbel.

### ***What are the next action steps?***

Don't look back with regret. Don't look around with worry.  
Trust God that in everything in your life God is working for your good.

### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news is that God is guiding you. God's will for your life is good.



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## Metadata

### **Topic(s)**

1. Changing Lives

### **Sermon Books of the Bible**

1. 1 John
2. 2 Timothy
3. Philippians
4. Proverbs
5. Psalms

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany  
FAQ - How do I know God's will for my life?  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1QuTFJd>

January 17, 2016  
Philippians 2:12-18  
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## Philippians 2:12-18, CEB

Therefore, my loved ones, just as you always obey me, not just when I am present but now even more while I am away, carry out your own salvation with fear and trembling. God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out his good purposes. Do everything without grumbling and arguing so that you may be blameless and pure, innocent children of God surrounded by people who are crooked and corrupt. Among these people you shine like stars in the world because you hold on to the word of life. This will allow me to say on the day of Christ that I haven't run for nothing or worked for nothing. But even if I am poured out like a drink offering upon the altar of service for your faith, I am glad. I'm glad with all of you. You should be glad about this in the same way. Be glad with me!

### Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

### Series Review

We all have questions. Sometimes the answers are easy. But, sometimes, our questions are complicated and the answers are difficult to see and even harder to articulate. Join us for worship at First United Methodist Church in January as we address some of the most frequently asked questions about the Christian faith.

### Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

## **Prayer**

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## **Opening Stories - Choices**

### **Grocery Story**

We are faced today with a dazzling array of choices. There is a super-abundance of options. In the average grocery store, there are 42,214 different items to choose from.<sup>1</sup> When I was growing up, it seemed like I just had a few choices – now there are hundreds of cereals.

### **Marriage**

Marriage partners. Years ago, you married the person living next door or maybe in the town just over. Now, you can go online and find thousands of options.

### **Jobs**

In the old days, you tended to do what your parents did. Now, there are so many different options. You don't just do one thing; you can change many times throughout your working life.

Choice is a great thing. It is a blessing.

In some ways, it doesn't make the decisions any easier.

### **Transition**

So, how do we know God's will for our life?

We begin first with the question - what do we mean when we say, "God's will?"

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## **God's Will**

### **The Will of God by Leslie Weatherhead**

One of the best resources I know on the topic of God's will is the book "The Will of God" by Leslie Weatherhead. Weatherhead was a preacher in London during World War II and the book is a compilation of five sermons that he gave to his congregation at City Temple.

In this book, Weatherhead talks about three different ways of understanding God's will:

God's Intentional Will

God's Circumstantial Will

God's Ultimate Will

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fmi.org/research-resources/supermarket-facts>

### **God's Intentional Will**

God's intentional will is God's intention from the beginning.<sup>2</sup>

### **God's Circumstantial Will**

God's circumstantial will is the result of the circumstances which result from evil actions by people.<sup>3</sup>

### **God's Ultimate Will**

Finally, God's ultimate will is God's ultimate goal, which cannot be prevented.<sup>4</sup>  
As an example, Weathered writes this:

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*"The intentional will of God was not that Jesus should be crucified, but that he should be followed; The circumstantial will of God, God's will in the circumstances which men's evil provided, was that Jesus should accept death, but accept it in such a positive and creative way as to lead to: God's ultimate will — namely, the reception of [humanity], winning humans back to God, not in spite of the Cross, but using the Cross, born of [our] sin, as an instrument to reach the goal of God's ultimate will."*<sup>5</sup>

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### **Pre-determined Blueprint?**

Does that mean it all pre-determined, that there is some kind of blueprint?

Does it mean that you can miss God's plan? You do one thing wrong and you have missed the whole thing?

I don't think that is the case. I have made many mistakes in my life. Sometimes, I have deliberately ignored the instructions. Other times, I've just got it wrong. Guidance is difficult. I have made mistakes. I have thought God was guiding me about something and I was wrong.

God's purpose for you is bigger than your mistakes. Again, Weatherhead writes this:

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*"The picture in my mind is that of children playing beside a tin stream that runs down a mountainside to join a river in the valley below. Very little children can divert the stream and get great fun out of damming it up with stones and earth. But not one of them ever succeeds in preventing the water from reaching the river at last."*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Leslie Weatherhead, *The Will of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), 14

<sup>3</sup> Leslie Weatherhead, *The Will of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), 14

<sup>4</sup> Leslie Weatherhead, *The Will of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), 14

<sup>5</sup> Leslie Weatherhead, *The Will of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), 49

<sup>6</sup> Leslie Weatherhead, *The Will of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), 49

### **Transition**

So, how, in practice do we hear that voice? How do I know God's will for my life? God guides us in many different ways.

What I have found is that there are these 5 CS's that have been helpful in hearing God's word for us. They are different ways in which God speaks to us. Sometimes, it is just one of them. Sometimes, in a big decision, it might be all five.

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## **Commanding Scripture**

So, here's the first:

### **Commanding Scripture**

The Bible is God's guidebook for your life.

### **Key Bible Passage – Psalm 119:105**

The psalmist says,

**"Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey."<sup>7</sup>**

As we read the Bible – and I try to read it every day, because I love to hear God's voice – God speaks about God's love for us, God's kindness, mercy and grace – how important you are to God.

## **Primary Calling – Love God and Neighbor**

It also tells us what God's primary calling is on your life.

God's primary concern is not about what you do, who we marry, whether we get married or not, have a lot of children or none at all, the primary calling in your life is a relationship with God.

### **Become Like Jesus**

God's purpose is that you would become like Jesus – that you will be transformed into his likeness.

It is so important to realize that what matters is not what you do, but who you are. God wants us to become like Jesus. He wants us to be people of integrity and in the Bible you see the kind of things that you need to do to be a person of integrity.

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## **Compelling Spirit**

Here is the second CS,

### **Commanding Scripture**

### **Compelling Spirit**

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 119:105, CEB.



## **Recognize and Follow the Spirit**

To be a Christian, is to be led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts. We begin to hear the voice of Jesus, through his Spirit within us. It takes a bit of time to recognize the Spirit of God speaking to us.

### ***Don't Follow the Spirit***

Sometimes in my case, I'm afraid I don't follow it. There are times when I feel a prompting of the Spirit and I ignore it. Sometimes, we are talking about someone behind their back and I know I shouldn't tell it, yet it is such a good story that I can't resist.

I hear the Spirit saying, "Don't speak badly about them behind their back." But I go on and tell it. Then, I know that the Holy Spirit says don't do that kind of stuff.

As you pray and read the Bible, the Holy Spirit speaks to you.

## **Desire to Do**

God guides by the Holy Spirit by giving us a strong desire to do things

### ***Key Bible Passage – Philippians 2:13***

"God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out his good purposes."<sup>8</sup>

God gives you the desire to do things.

Sometimes God guides in different ways – visions, pictures, prophecies.

Sometimes God just gives us impressions to pray for people.

Sometimes as you pray, something comes to mind.

So the Bible is one way — Commanding Scripture;

the Holy Spirit — Compelling Spirit.

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## **Counsel of the Saints**

Then, there is the counsel of the saints.

Commanding Scripture

Compelling Spirit

Counsel of the Saints

## **Community of Church**

Saints, not in the special idea of very special people, but in the way that the word is used in the New Testament. In the New Testament, 'saints' is used for ordinary Christians – in other words, the church.

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<sup>8</sup> Philippians 2:13, CEB.

### **Small Group**

We are not alone in this. God has put you in a community. You have experienced that in the group here. The Holy Spirit doesn't just speak to me, the Holy Spirit speaks to you, the Holy Spirit speaks to all of us.

### **Key Bible Passage – Proverbs 12:15 and 20:18**

The writer of Proverbs says,

"Fools see their own way as right, but the wise listen to advice."<sup>9</sup>

"Plans are firmed up by advice; wage wars with good guidance."<sup>10</sup>

I am so grateful for the advice of friends, the advice of my parents and the advice from Nicole. Ultimately, of course, we are responsible for our decisions. However, it is such a blessing to be able to talk to people about the decisions we are making.

### **How do we know a word is from God?**

How do you know that the prompting of the Spirit or the advice of a friend is really God speaking to us? Not the devil or the pizza, I had the night before?

There are various tests.

### **Key Bible Passage – 1 John 4:1**

We read this in 1 John 4:1:

"Dear friends, don't believe every spirit. Test the spirits to see if they are from God because many false prophets have gone into the world."<sup>11</sup>

### **Bible**

So, one test is this, "Is it in line with the Bible?" If it's not, God will not contradict God's self.

### **Love**

Is it loving? God is love. You read of people saying that they went off and killed someone because God told them to. No, God did not tell you to do that. God is love.

### **Encouraging**

What it says about prophecy, when you have a picture or a word for someone, is it encouraging, strengthening or comforting?

### **Peace**

Another test is, do you feel peace about the decision?

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<sup>9</sup> Proverbs 12:15, CEB.

<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 20:18, CEB.

<sup>11</sup> 1 John 4:1, CEB.

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## Common Sense

The fourth CS is common sense.

Commanding Scripture  
Compelling Spirit  
Counsel of the Saints  
Common Sense

## Thinking and Guidance

God's promises of guidance are not given to save us the problem of thinking.  
In fact, thinking and God guiding us often go together.

### Key Bible Passage - 2 Timothy 2:7

Paul wrote this to Timothy,  
"Think about what I'm saying; the Lord will give you understanding about everything."<sup>12</sup>

In other words, use your mind and as you are thinking, God will guide you. This is one of the main ways that God has guided me over the years. God presents reasons to the mind for acting in a particular way.

## Reasons from God

I don't think it's very helpful to say, "God has told me to do this." You may sense that God has told you, yet God has probably given you reasons. It is better to give the reasons, then people can argue with that. It gives it openness.

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## Circumstantial Signs

Finally, circumstantial signs:

Commanding Scripture  
Compelling Spirit  
Counsel of the Saints  
Common Sense  
Circumstantial Signs

Sometimes you find yourself in circumstances that make it clear what God has in mind for you. There are times when we can discover God's will in the people and places that surround us.

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## Conclusion

### Good News

The good news is that God is guiding you. God's will for your life is good.

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Timothy 2:7, CEB.

Often, you can only see that when you look back in hindsight.  
Sometimes we can't see and we just have to trust.

### **Call to Action**

Don't look back with regret. Don't look around with worry.  
Trust God that in everything in your life God is working for your good.

### **Invitation**

#### ***Story - Child and Parent at the Piano***

Imagine you are staying in a hotel with a piano in the lobby and you hear a little girl playing, and she is making the most terrible noise — she was going plink-plonk, plink-plonk! enough to drive you crazy. And then a man comes and sit beside her. And this man didn't stop what she was doing, but he started to play in between what she was playing. And you hear this most beautiful music. Only to find out later that the man playing alongside her was the girl's father and a great composer.

And in an even more amazing way, as we go through life, going plink-plonk, plink-plonk, what God promises here is if we love him, if we ask him to be our guide, he will come alongside us and play alongside us, so that our lives can be something beautiful.

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, we thank you for the amazing promise that you will be our guide. And Lord, I pray for every single one of us here that we may experience this relationship — you coming alongside of us and making something beautiful out of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen