

Understanding the Will of God

1. Overview of this lesson.
 - a. In *Radical Restoration* F. LaGard Smith quotes Jesus as saying, “Not Rules, but righteousness.” P. 22
 - 1) Though Smith used quotation marks, is that an actual direct quote from Jesus?
 - 2) If there are no rules, how will we define righteousness? How can we know when we are doing the right things?
 - b. Some of the most critical questions we face as a local church and as individual Christians deal with the importance of **doing** God’s will.
 - 1) Many contend that an insistence upon strict obedience to the teachings of the Bible is legalism and contrary to the principles of the New Testament.
 - 2) In this lesson we will see that, though He is a God of grace, the Lord still expects us to obey Him strictly and carefully.
 - 3) We will also look at how we can know what the Lord expects of us.
2. According to Matt. 7:21-23, who will enter the kingdom of heaven?
3. Is man capable of knowing God’s will by feelings or guesses? Isa. 55:8, 9
4. “No one knows the things of God except the _____ of _____.” 1 Cor. 2:11
 - a. Where did the words Paul wrote and spoke come from? 1 Cor. 2:12, 13, 16
5. How was a man of God to be equipped for every good work? 2 Tim. 3:16, 17
- Summary of #2-5.
 - a. It is important that we come to know God’s will through the study of the Bible and knowing His will we must obey it.
 - b. In the next two sections of questions, we consider a couple of related questions. Is the Bible intended to be a loose or strict guide? Are we making the same mistakes as the Pharisees if we try to follow the Bible too closely?
6. Who is a wise man? Matt. 7:24-29
7. What was the sin of the Pharisees in Matt. 15:6-9?
8. In Matt. 23:1-4 the Pharisees were guilty of teaching the Law while failing to _____ it.
9. Read Matt. 23:23, 24 carefully. Did Jesus rebuke the Pharisees for insisting on tithing the herbs of the garden? Did He encourage them to begin “eating the gnats?”
10. Jesus is author of eternal salvation to whom? Heb. 5:8, 9
11. According to John 14:15 and 1 John 5:3, how is love for God and Christ demonstrated?

12. Why was God not pleased with Cain (before he killed Abel)? Gen. 4
 13. What two priests died because of an unauthorized offering of incense? Lev. 10
 - a. How was God to be glorified? 10:3
 14. Why was Uzza killed in 2 Samuel 6 / 1 Chron. 13?
 - a. Look at the emotion and sincerity of that occasion. 1 Chron. 13:8
 - b. David had failed to consult God about the proper _____. 1 Chron. 15:13-15
 15. According to Gal. 1:6-9, who has the right to change the gospel?
 16. What warning is sounded in Rev. 22:18, 19?
- Summary of #6-16.
- a. While we are saved by grace, God demands obedience. The Lord has never tolerated changes to His word.
 - b. In the next section, we will look at how God communicates His will to mankind.
- Discussions of how God's will is revealed are often referred to as issues of Bible authority. Because *authority* can have different meanings, we need to define what we mean in this lesson.
- a. The basic meaning of authority is the power or right to do something. To have Bible authority for an action means it has God's approval.
 - b. Though the word authority primarily refers to things permitted but not required, when we talk about Bible authority we also include things required by Scripture.
 - c. In fact, rather than use the term Bible authority, perhaps we should speak of determining "God's will." Matt. 7:21
- How do we determine what is required or permitted?
- a. Among churches of Christ, the answer has usually been command, example, and necessary inference.
 - b. In recent years, this means of establishing Bible authority (knowing God's will) has come under attack from many as a contrived tradition that distorts the meaning of Scripture.
 - c. In the next few questions we will see that it may sound man-made or contrived, but it is actually a valid concept used in the Bible and in everyday language.
- Imagine you have just been hired for a new job and are told the following your first day.
- ✓ Load those boxes in that truck.
 - ✓ All our drivers are allowed 30 minutes for lunch.
 - ✓ We want to make it clear that all our drivers are expected to abide by the law.
 - ✓ For the first week we want you to ride with Fred. He's been doing this for years and will show you the route and how we do things.

17. Think about what has just happened, what you have learned about the employer's expectations for you, and how you learned them.
 - a. How do you know you need to start loading the truck?
 - b. Are you allowed to drive over the speed limit?
 - c. Are you allowed to stop and get a sandwich? A burrito? Required to do either?
 - d. Why are you asked to ride with Fred?

18. Commands.
 - a. Some consider any emphasis on commands to be legalism, Pharisaical, and missing the point.
 - b. Does Jesus issue commands or does He simply tell us to be guided by the principle of love? See Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 John 2:3-5.
 - c. Read Col. 3:9. What is God's will for us? How do we know that He does not want us to be dishonest?
 - d. Sometimes commands are implied in conditional statements or declarations. From Mark 16:16, what do we know to be God's will for us?

19. Examples.
 - a. We learn by example in everyday life and the same is expected in the Scripture.
 - b. 1 Jn. ____:3-6 links the example of Jesus to keeping God's commandments.
 - c. _____ was an example to others. 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 2 Th. 3:7-9
 - d. The apostles taught the churches to observe all the commandments (Matt. 28:18-20), so the example of these churches helps us understand the will of God. 1 Cor. 4:16, 17

20. Necessary inference/implication (inescapable conclusion).
 - a. Parent: "If this room is not clean by Friday, no one is going to the football game." Though never told he "had to clean" the room, the son knows the will of the parent.
 - b. How did Jesus arrive at the conclusion that what God had joined together was not to be separated? Matt. 19:3-6
 - c. How did God convey to Peter that Gentiles were not to be called common or unclean? Acts 10:28
 - d. Can we come to an inescapable conclusion about infants as proper subjects of baptism by reading Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 18:8; Rom. 6:3, 4?

- Once we realize God reveals His will through commands, examples, and necessary inferences, another question arises. How are we to react to God's silence?
 - ✓ We understand that if commanded to do something, we must do it, and if forbidden to do something, we must abstain, but if God does not prohibit a thing, is it permitted?
 - ✓ Is silence permission or prohibition?

21. Whose will are we commanded to obey? Matt. 7:21
 22. Our wishes are not always the same as God's. Isa. ____:8, 9
 23. If we are given complete instructions, do we need to be told all the things we are not to do?
 - a. Is a building contractor allowed to add things to the house plans? Is he allowed to add additional rooms if the plans don't specifically forbid him to do so?
 - b. Has God given us complete instruction?
 - 1) Jesus promised the apostles that _____ truth would be revealed. John 16:13
 - 2) The mind or desire of God has been fully revealed. 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 _____ 3:16, 17
 24. How did Jesus view the silence of the Scriptures? Cf. Gen. 1:26-31 and 2:21-24 with Matt. 19:3-6. Did Gen. 1, 2 specifically forbid divorce?
 25. Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, could not be priest under the Law because Moses said _____ concerning priests from that tribe. Heb. 7:11-14
 26. If God has revealed all truth and we use His silence as our permission to do something, are we not adding to God's word? Deut. 4:1, 2; 5:32; 12:32; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18, 19
 - a. What specific command did Nadab and Abihu break? Lev. 10:1-3
 - b. Was Uzzah specifically forbidden to put the ark on a cart? 2 Sam. 6; 1 Chron. 15:12-15
- Summary of #21-26.
- a. God has not provided us with an exhaustive list of all that is prohibited, but by command, example, and implication has shown us what He wants.
 - b. Let us search the Scriptures for what God wants and know that if He had wanted anything different He would have told us.
- Does respect for silence of the Scriptures mean that we must have specific authorization for everything we do? Some, wishing to justify instrumental music in worship, churches building gyms, etc., argue that by the principles in #21-26 we cannot have song books, a building, etc. and be consistent. We must understand 2 fundamental principles:
- a. Some commands are specific, while others are general.
 - b. There's a difference between an aid to doing God's will and a change to doing something else.

GENERAL and SPECIFIC AUTHORITY; AIDS and ALTERATIONS

Imagine being given \$75 and the following list:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Grits | Cereal (3 boxes) |
| Heinz® Ketchup | Apples (1 doz.) |
| Clorox® Lemon Scented Bleach (1 gal.) | Boneless Chicken Breasts |
| Pillsbury® Hungry Jack Biscuits (10) | Le Sueur® English Peas (2 cans) |
| Instant Banana Pudding (6 serving box) | Skim Milk (1 gal.) |

27. Which of the actions below follow the instructions given for the shopping list? Be able to explain your answers.
- a. Purchased Martha White[®] “instant” grits?
 - b. Purchased Jim Dandy[®] “quick” grits?
 - c. Substituted chicken thighs since they were on sale?
 - d. Used a calculator to keep up with your total?
 - e. Bought Rocky Road ice cream?
 - f. Purchased 6 Rome apples and 6 Red Delicious apples?
 - g. Purchased 12 yellow apples and 1 watermelon?
 - h. Purchased 6 apples and 6 oranges (adds up to 12 pieces of fruit)?
 - i. Purchased 3 boxes of Cap’n Crunch[®] cereal?
 - j. Bought Heinz 57[®] sauce?
 - k. Carried your groceries around the store in a plastic basket?
 - l. Pushed a shopping cart through the store?
 - m. Carried the groceries home in plastic bags?
 - n. Carried the groceries home in paper bags?
28. If we understand how general and specific commands are used in everyday life, we should be able to see how they are used in Scripture.
- a. Can we see that Heinz[®] Ketchup is specific as to product and brand, while the size is optional (within the \$75 constraints)?
 - b. Some brands were specified and others were left in the generic category. Even the specific instructions left certain choices to our discretion.
29. The same goes for aids and alterations.
- a. In everyday life we recognize that an orange changes the list, while a shopping cart only expedites the purchase and is an expedient or aid.
 - b. One might keep up with his money spent in his head or use the calculator. Both aid the process of carrying out the expressed will of the grocery list without altering it.
30. Do the following aid or alter the command to sing? Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16
- a. Song books?
 - b. A song leader?
 - c. A piano?