

4. What the Bible Says About Knowing & Following God's Will - Handout

(Psalm 119.25-40, 1 John 2.15-17)

Type [bit/ly.nlncmu](http://bit.ly/nlncmu) into the address bar of any browser for a series overview and session notes.

Getting started (Tim)

- In 30 seconds or less, share a personal example of a good learning experience..
- Now consider lists as learning methods: Do you learn better from "Do Lists," or "Do Not Lists? Can you think of Do Lists in the Bible? Do Not Lists? Combo *lists*?
- Ryan: What is an acrostic poem? Can you name any famous poems or letters?

(Ryan) Psalm 119.25-40 NLT List of "To do" items

Daleth (*Dah-let*, 4th letter in the Hebrew alphabet)



I lie in the dust; revive me by your word.

I told you my plans, and you answered. Now teach me your decrees.

Help me understand the meaning of your commandments, and I will meditate on your wonderful deeds.

I weep with sorrow; encourage me by your word.

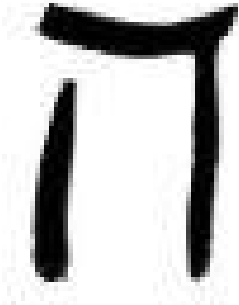
Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your instructions.

I have chosen to be faithful; I have determined to live by your regulations.

I cling to your laws. Lord, don't let me be put to shame!

I will pursue your commands, for you expand my understanding.

He (*Hey*, 5th letter in the Hebrew alphabet)



Teach me your decrees, O Lord; I will keep them to the end.

Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart.

Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my happiness is found.

Give me an eagerness for your laws rather than a love for money!

Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word.

Reassure me of your promise, made to those who fear you.

Help me abandon my shameful ways; for your regulations are good.

I long to obey your commandments! Renew my life with your goodness.

Questions:

- Is this a passage of struggle? Why or why not?
- What actions and prayers does the psalmist use to find God's will?
- What is the difference between an obedient lifestyle and just avoiding evil?
- How does walking the path increase your ability to identify God's will?

Take Home Questions:

- Am I faithful to the commitments I've already made?
- Are my decisions faithful to what I know about God?
- Am I conforming to the guidance of scripture?
- Am I teachable, or stubborn in my ways?

(Tim) 1 John 2.15-17 NLT List of “Avoid these items”

15 Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. 17 And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

Questions:

- V15: How many times does John refer to the world “world” in this passage? Can anyone guess what the Greek word is?
- Can anyone quote John 3.16? How can we reconcile these two passages, written by the same John?
- From What four things does John counsel his readers to turn away?
- How might losing an awareness of God’s love for us affect our ability to discern his will?
- How can we know God’s will about something Scripture does not address?

Connecting to Life questions

- In addition to scripture, what other strategies help you discern God’s will?
 - Prayer is not about getting what we want – the fulfillment of our will; it is about learning what God wants – the bending of our will to God’s will. – *Missional Church*, Darrell Guder.
 - Prayer above all, is a means of forming character. What God gets out of our lives - and, indeed, what we get out of our lives - is simply the person we become. It is God’s intention that we should grow into the kind of person he could empower to do what we want to do. Then we are ready to ‘reign forever and ever.’ (Rev 22.5). – Dallas Willard
- Today we talked about To Do and To Not Do lists from scripture that helps us find God’s will. Do you have any go-to scriptures of your own? – James 1.5, Romans 12.1-2 (which we’ll read as our Benediction).

Closing benediction (Romans 12.1-2)

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you.

Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable.

This is truly the way to worship him.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world,

but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

Then you will learn to know God's will for you,

which is good and pleasing and perfect.

4. What the Bible Says About Knowing & Following God's Will

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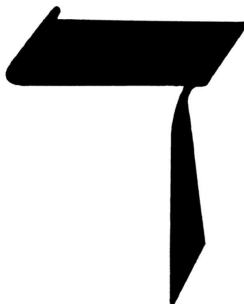
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Getting started (Tim)

- In 30 seconds or less, share a personal example of a good learning experience..
- Now consider lists as learning methods: Do you learn better from “Do Lists,” or “Do Not Lists? Can you think of Do Lists in the Bible? Do Not Lists? Combo *lists*? – 10 Commandments is a combo, Jesus teaching about the greatest two commandments in Mark 12.28-34, Phil 4.4-9 (THRPLGR), Beatitudes (not really, I understand these to be more descriptive of a close follower of Jesus than a prescriptive list), Malachi 6.8, 1 Corinthians 13
- Ryan: What is an acrostic poem? Can you name any famous poems or letters? *An Acrostic* (spells ELIZABETH), Edgar Allan Poe; *Acrostic* (ALICE), Lewis Carroll; Psalms 9, 10, 25, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145; Proverbs 31; and Lamentations

(Ryan) Psalm 119.25-40 NLT List of “To do” items

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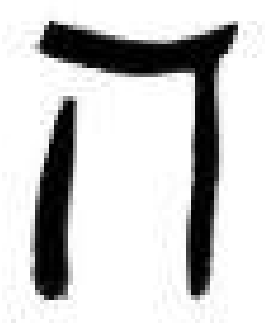
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I long to obey your commandments! Renew my life with your goodness.

Questions:

- Is this a passage of struggle? Why or why not? *No, there is a sense of determination and hope.*
- What actions and prayers does the psalmist use to find God's will? *Ex: I have chosen, I will pursue, teach me, etc...*
- What is the difference between an obedient lifestyle and just avoiding evil? *Following God's will vs. just doing what's morally right.*
- How does walking the path increase your ability to identify God's will? *Keeping God close and on our minds builds the relationship with God and His will for us.*

Take Home Questions:

- Am I faithful to the commitments I've already made?
- Are my decisions faithful to what I know about God?
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(Tim) 1 John 2.15-17 NLT List of “Avoid these items”

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Questions:

- V15: How many times does John refer to the world “world” in this passage? Can anyone guess what the Greek word is? – 6 (counting “it” in v15. – *Kosmos*.
- Can anyone quote John 3.16? How can we reconcile these two passages, written by the same John?

– At first I thought that this might be a translation problem. But all the Greek words translated “world” in both passages use the same word: “Kosmos”. And all the Greek words translated “love” in both passages use the same word, too. So think of it this way: God can/does love the world in a redemptive way, as in John 3.16. On our own, we cannot love the world without falling into sin. But through loving God first, we can grow to become God’s redemptive agents to a fallen world..

- From What four things does John counsel his readers to turn away? – 1) craving for physical pleasure, 2) craving for everything we see, 3) pride in our achievements, 4) pride in our possessions.
- How might losing an awareness of God’s love for us affect our ability to discern his will?
- How can we know God’s will about something Scripture does not address?

– In our attempts to understand how God speaks to us and guides us, we must above all hold on to the fact that this is to be sought only as a part of a certain kind of life, a life of loving fellowship with the King and his other subjects within the kingdom of the heavens. – Dallas Willard, in Hearing God.

Connecting to Life questions

- In addition to scripture, what other strategies help you discern God's will? – Wesleyan Quadrilateral, godly counsel (who is your go-to human counselor on such matters?), patience (once I make an important decision I soak on it for a while before action, soak time = $f(\text{importance of the decision})$), and prayer, such as in Psalm 19.33-39. Also see James 1.5. (Comment to one of the quotes below):
 - Prayer is not about getting what we want – the fulfillment of our will; it is about learning what God wants – the bending of our will to God's will. – *Missional Church*, Darrell Guder.
 - *Prayer above all, is a means of forming character. What God gets out of our lives - and, indeed, what we get out of our lives - is simply the person we become. It is God's intention that we should grow into the kind of person he could empower to do what we want to do. Then we are ready to 'reign forever and ever.'* (Rev 22.5). – Dallas Willard
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