

**Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry Unit 3
Module 2: Practical Issues
Week 3 – Discovering the Will of God
& Spiritual Gifts**

Introduction

Two important questions

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Three foundational considerations

1. God's personal will for your life has two dimensions:

A.

(Rom. 12:2*) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Eph. 2:10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(Rom. 8:29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

(1 Thess. 4:3) For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

B.

(Rom. 12:2a,3-8) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is . . . (3) For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (4) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (6) And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy. . . (7) if service. . . , or he who teaches. . . (8) or he who exhorts . . . , he who gives . . . , he who leads. . . , he who shows mercy. . .

2.

(Col. 1:9,10) For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

(Heb. 5:14) But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

(Col. 4:12) Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

3.

Acts 8:26-40 Philip

Acts 10 Cornelius and Peter

Acts 16:9ff The man from Macedonia

Qualification:

(Oswald Sanders) "I believe God has an individual will for my life and for every life, but its realization depends on a true surrender of *my* will and *your* will to Him for the fulfillment of His

plan as and where He sees best. He may, however, leave considerable freedom of choice within His moral will...”¹

Practical Guidelines for Discovering God's Will

1. Principles of guidance

A. Scripture – soak your mind in it.

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(Isaiah 55:8,9) "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

(1 Corinthians 2:9-16) but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." (10) For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. (11) For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, (13) which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (14) But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (15) But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. (16) For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

(Romans 12:2a) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is . . .

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"The Spirit cannot recall what the mind has not installed."

¹ J. Oswald Sanders. *Every Life is a Plan of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Discovery House Publishers, 1992), p. 39.

(Colossians 3:16) Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

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(James 1:22) But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Qualifications:

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B.

(John 7:17*) "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.

(James 1:5ff, 6-8) But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith without any doubting, . . . (7) For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, (8) being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

C.

Heb. 3:7-19

(Matt. 13:12*) "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

(Matt. 26:39) "...not my will, but your will be done..."

Are you committed to sanctification and serving God in ministry as your highest priorities?

(C. S. Lewis) "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end,

‘Thy will be done.’ ...No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.”²

D.

(Watchman Nee) “Faced with a pile of problems, we may say with our lips that only prayer can solve them, yet we talk more than pray, worry more than pray, and scheme more than pray. In sum, we put everything before prayer; other things are placed in prominent positions while prayer is relegated to last place; it is the only thing which is not so important.”

Beware of creeping autonomous dualism.

(Proverbs 3:5,6) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Urge students to read Bill Hybels’ book, *Too Busy Not To Pray*, pp. 117-121.

Conclusion:

2. "Road Signs" - Things that sometimes reveal God's will.

A.

"Spiritual expedience"

"Look before you leap."

(Titus 1:8) "...but hospitable, loving what is good, **sensible**, just, devout, self-controlled..."

Qualification:

Use a "Pro's and Con's" list, but...

² C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York, New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. New York. 1946), p. 72.
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B.

(Prov. 11:14; 24:6) "In the abundance of counselors is victory."

(Prov. 12:15; 13:10,18) "The wise man listens to advice."

(Prov. 15:22) "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed."

(Prov. 19:20) "Listen to advice."

(Prov. 20:5) "A plan in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding draws it out."

(Prov. 20:18) "Plans are established by counsel"

(Prov. 27:17) "Iron sharpens iron"

Qualification:

Remember:

C.

Avoid extremes of _____ ("Whatever I want, the opposite is God's will") and _____ ("If I want it this badly, it must be God's will").

D.

E.

F.

Qualifications:

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G.

Includes parents, husband, government, employer, and church leaders.

Qualification:

If we choose to go against a delegated authority, we should ask: “Why am I going against this delegated authority?” “Am I aware of any character issues that God is teaching me through this person?” “Have I sought counsel to this effect? Have I learned the lesson?”

H.

Circumstances play a relatively minor role in major complex decisions.

Fleecing (see Gideon, **Judges 6**).

Open or closed doors (compare **2 Cor 2:12,13** and **1 Cor 16:8,9**)

I.

Qualification:

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Important Qualifications

- Avoid the extremes of _____ vs. _____.

(Francis Schaeffer) “There are two things to be leaned against simultaneously: the first is living as though God did not exist and as though He could not or would not lead us; the second is living as though God's leading were almost magic without any use of the mind.”³

- We can never be as certain about God's personal leading in our lives as we can be about scripture.

(Francis Schaeffer) “Another thing to lean against is [the idea]...that we can know God's leading with the same finality that we have concerning the teaching of Scripture, for example, about the deity of Christ. When we are led, we must acknowledge that since we are both finite and sinful we can be mistaken. Thus, the Lord can lead us so clearly [in a particular moment], and yet we can never say at that moment that we personally know this to be truth on the same level as Scripture.

When the Lord led my wife and myself to begin L'Abri, the leading was so clear that not to have moved forward would have been disobedience. And yet if you had asked me at that time if I was as sure of this as I was that which Scripture taught, I could not have said yes. But as the years have passed there is no doubt that we did understand the leading of the Lord [in beginning L'Abri].”⁴

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(Francis Schaeffer) “Thus we face a balance--by living in a personal relationship to God, and by not living as if God were not there. But this does not mean that I must find God's leading in a mechanical and legalistic way, and perfectly in every case, or God will cast me off.

I personally could not live for twenty-four hours without looking to the leading of the Lord, and this is how I live my life, not in theory, but in practice. But I also

³ Francis Schaeffer, *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985), p. 163.

⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985) p. 163.

know the freedom I have of knowing there is no mechanical formula given in the Scripture, but that it must be a day-by-day closeness to God...And I have the freedom of knowing that if I honestly miss this way somewhere, God will still deal with me gently.”⁵

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Conclusion:

Teach others the importance of personally discerning God's will for their lives.

Avoid the extremes of “paralysis by analysis” vs. “Husky Dog”

(Psalm 32:8,9) “I will instruct you and guide you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. (9) Do not be as the horse or the mule with no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check.”

Remember to apply God's grace.

(Francis Schaeffer) “While disregarding God's leadership may result in loss, we should never feel that our lives are destroyed. God is a God of grace, and this means that when we turn back to him, he will continue to lead us from there and to bless us and use us.”⁶

Finding your role in home group ministry

(Ephesians 4:11,12) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

(Jn. 13:34,35) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

⁵ Francis Schaeffer, *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985) p. 164.

⁶ Francis Schaeffer, *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985) p. 163-164.

“One another” commands:

(Romans 12:10) “Be devoted to ONE ANOTHER in brotherly love; give preference to ONE ANOTHER in honor...”

(Romans 12:16) “Be of the same mind toward ONE ANOTHER; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly.”

(Romans 14:13) “Therefore let us not judge ONE ANOTHER anymore...”

(1 Corinthians 12:25) “...the members should have the same care for ONE ANOTHER.”

(Ephesians 4:32) “And be kind to ONE ANOTHER, tender-hearted, forgiving EACH OTHER, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Uniformity in Ministry

The main idea: *evangelism and discipleship in context of community*

What are the areas of ministry uniformity (areas of ministry we have in common)? THIS WILL BE ON THE EXAM!

- (Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18)
- (1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:15; Col. 3:17-4:1; 1 Pet. 2:12-3:7; Titus 2:7-3:8; 1 Tim. 6:1,2)
- (Matt. 28:19 of all nations; Acts 1:8)
- (Mt. 28:19; see also 2 Tim. 2:2)
- (Lk. 12:33,34; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17,18).

Diversity in Ministry: Spiritual Gifts

(1 Cor. 12:4-6) Now there are varieties of GIFTS, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are varieties of MINISTRIES, and the same Lord. (6) And there are varieties of EFFECTS, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (See also ROM 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:8-11; Eph 4:7-16)

Diversity of Gifts

Definition spiritual gifts: God-given capabilities to serve others so that they are impacted for and/or built up spiritually in Jesus Christ.

Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift

(1 Cor. 12:7,11) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . (11) But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Note:

Diversity of Ministries

Definition of ministry: The use of spiritual gifts to serve others.

We tend use the word ministry in two ways:

1. Ministry is
2. Ministry can refer to

Diversity of Effects

Definition of effects: Effects are the outcome of our ministries.

Why it is Important to Discover and Exercise your Gifts

1. It gives you a greater sense of significance and purpose for your Christian life.

(2 Timothy 4:6-8) For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2. Provides more insight into God's will for your life.

3. Provides additional motivation toward spiritual growth.

4. Lets you experience more consistently and to a greater degree the power of the Holy Spirit.

(2 Timothy 1:6-9) And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which was given to you by the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

5. Frees you from making unhealthy comparisons to others and increases healthy interdependence within the Body of Christ.

(1 Corinthians 12:14-26) For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the

hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, 24 whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Ways to discover your spiritual gifts

1.

2.

(Mark 10:45) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

(Philippians 2:3-5) Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.

(Ephesians 4:11,12) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

3. Develop foundational ministry skills in your home group.

4. Take steps of faith to try new ministries.

5. What kinds of ministry do you especially enjoy doing?

6. What kinds of ministry needs do you consistently notice?

7. What kinds of ministry do you experience consistent empowering for?

8. What kinds of ministry are you effective in (others' feedback; fruit)?

Memory Verses

Rom. 12:2*- God's will for our life revolves around our sanctification and his role for our lives in his purpose here on earth.

Jn. 7:17*- Learning God's will is predicated upon our first being willing to do his will, even before knowing what it is.

Matt. 13:12* - As we are responsive to God's will in our lives, he will continue to unfold his will in the other areas. The reverse is also true.

Assignment

Read chapters 4 & 5 of *Loving God's Way* and answer the questions at the end of each chapter.