

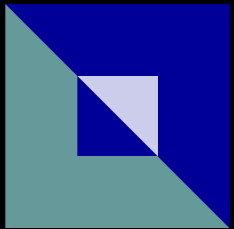


*The Road to Success in Christian Living*

# The Road to Bethlehem...

## **Knowing God's Will**

**Lesson Four**



# The Road to Success in Christian Living

The Road To Bethlehem...Knowing God's Will Page 2 of 5

## COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
- that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, was buried, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to many people, ascended to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, and will one day return to earth taking all believers of all the ages to be with Him in Heaven forever.
- that when I made declaration of this, my belief, to God, I became His adopted child and His Holy Spirit came to be with my spirit forever.
- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

## The Road to Bethlehem...Knowing God's Will

**Lesson Goal:** To encourage believers to know God's will for their lives.

**Scriptures:** Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 6:46-48; I Corinthians 3:9; II Timothy 3:14-17; Philippians 2:13

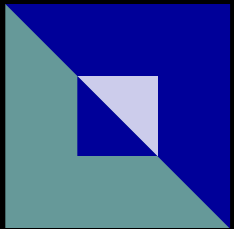
**Memory Verse:** "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a star appeared in the sky. Some wise men, who lived a great distance from Bethlehem, saw the star. They were most likely from Persia, and must have known the Scriptures. They knew that a very special Jewish king would be born. Just how the star appeared and to whom it appeared other than the wise men is unclear in Scripture. We are not sure why the wise men associated the new star with the promised king of Israel. Yet, amidst all this uncertainty, the wise men felt that it was God's will for them to go to Judea, find the new king, and worship him. They took a difficult road to Bethlehem. The trip could have taken them as long as two years. Then, when they had found Him, they were warned, in a dream, to go straight home without telling Herod the King where Jesus was. Again, they saw this as God's will and did just that.

These men, could have been influenced by the teachings of Jews who were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, hundreds of years before. Somehow they knew that God had a plan, and God's plan included them. And, they were right. It was God's plan. We know this because He included the story in His Word. That story gives indication of the role of Jesus. They brought gifts worthy of a king. Jesus was the King. They were given instructions to avoid Herod who wanted to kill Jesus which tells us how protective God was of His Son. God's will was accomplished.

The road to Bethlehem, as traveled by the wise men, teaches us that God's will is carried out, even by those who don't fully understand it. The person seeking out and knowing God's will is in the very center of the plan of God for all humanity.

Often we are instructed that, within our role as Christians, it is our responsibility to know God's will for our lives. And, we should be most interested in what God has planned for us. However, it is larger than that. Christians should want to know God's will for all things. What is it that God has planned for you, your church, your community, your nation, your world? God hasn't hidden this from us! Not only has He made Himself known, He has made His will known. It is as obvious as the words in the Bible. It is as obvious as church history. It is as obvious as the lives of



# *The Road to Success in Christian Living*

The Road To Bethlehem...Knowing God's Will Page 3 of 5

other Christians. It is as obvious as your abilities and interests. It is as obvious as the whispered words of His Holy Spirit in your quiet times. You may have been told that you should search for God's will. Maybe that is not the best way to say it. Probably a better way to say it is you should let God's will become clear to you.

God has a purpose for each of us. He is aware of us from before the world began. He knows all about you and what your life will be. He knew even the number of hairs on your head...before He created the universe. God loved you from long before you were born. And, because He loves you, not only did He give His Son to earthly life, death, and resurrection, but He developed a plan for the best life you could possibly have.

It is God's will that your life have genuine meaning in this troubled world. He can bring order to disorganized lives. He can bring peace to lives that are frantic and painful. He can bring joy to lives that are sad. He can bring hope to lives that are hopeless. He can bring meaning to lives that seem to go nowhere. He has a plan! God's will for you is that you be the best that you can be!

So, you might ask, what about people who are permanently disabled...what about people who are called to go to some foreign land to minister...what about people who are stuck in a miserable life of poverty? Truthfully, there are no complete human answers to some of these questions. However, there are many, many people in these circumstances who consider themselves to be in the center of God's will. They find hope, joy, and peace every day. They praise God for that which they have and live out their lives in the comfort of knowing He loves them and has called them to be His children.

These people are the most effective witnesses to the love, saving grace, and provision of God. They are confident witnesses who can say: I know who I am, I understand my circumstances, and I thank God for His participation with me in these circumstances.

For you to know the will of God for your life you should:

1. Pray—Talking to God and listening for His guidance is primary.
2. Assess your spiritual relationship—Think about how often you are praying, participating in worship, reading the Bible. Are you learning and growing as a student of His Word and His work?
3. Read the Bible—Most often God speaks to us through His Word. It may not be specific words. It is very often thoughts and feelings that accompany our reading.
4. Consider your environmental circumstances—What are your living arrangements? What are your educational opportunities? What obligations do you have?
5. Evaluate your abilities—What skills do you have? What are your natural abilities? What activities bring you joy, satisfaction?
6. Learn from family and friends—Others have valuable information about you and your circumstances. What do they think of you, your abilities, your potentials? What do they see in your environment that will guide you in knowing God's will? What are trusted spiritual leaders saying?
7. Be informed—God is at work in all the world. What is He doing in your community? What is He doing in your nation? What is He doing in your world? What ways can you bring His presence into these?

\*Underlined sentences in the Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.

# The Road to Success in Christian Living

## COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
- that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, was buried, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to many people, ascended to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, and will one day return to earth taking all believers of all the ages to be with Him in Heaven forever.
- that when I made declaration of this, my belief, to God, I became His adopted child and His Holy Spirit came to be with my spirit forever.
- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

## The Road to Bethlehem: Knowing God's Will

### Memory Verse:

**“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2**

### Knowing God's Will

>The wise men knew that God had a \_\_\_\_\_, and God’s \_\_\_\_\_ included them.

>The person seeking out and \_\_\_\_\_ God’s will is in the very \_\_\_\_\_ of the plan of God for all \_\_\_\_\_.

>Not only has God made Himself \_\_\_\_\_, He has made His \_\_\_\_\_ known.

>God has a \_\_\_\_\_ for each of us.

>God’s will for you is that \_\_\_\_\_ be the \_\_\_\_\_ that you can be.

### >For you to know the will of God for your life you should:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Assess your \_\_\_\_\_ relationship.
3. Read the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Consider your \_\_\_\_\_ circumstances.
5. Evaluate your \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Learn from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Be \_\_\_\_\_.

# Knowing God's Will

**Every Christian should be aware of God's will for themselves and their world.** Knowing God's will is not a lifetime search. As a matter of fact, it is not a search for the unknown at all. God wants us to know His will. He is hiding nothing! So how do we come to know His will?

**Pray.** Yes, knowing God's will begins with prayer. Not, "show me Thy will O God!"...the better prayer is telling God your feelings: your understandings of His words. Speak to Him of those things in your heart that you may have a difficult time explaining; but that you know, in your heart, are things you want to share with Him. Tell Him the questions you have about His will. Tell Him you trust Him to guide you to His will. Then listen. Now, he may not speak to you out of a burning bush as He did Moses. He may not strike you down with blazing light as He did getting Saul's (Paul's) attention. But, He will speak to you. Your thoughts will continue to be on Him. Your emotions will continue to experience His presence. And, in the quiet of that moment, He can give you thoughts that will lead you to truth.

**Assess your spiritual relationship.** We experience things in life, or certainly ought to experience them, that are centered on God. Praying, as discussed above, is elementary in our spiritual life. Worship is fundamental. We engage in public and private worship. When we read God's Word and pray, we worship. When we follow Jesus in ministering to others, we worship. (See Isaiah 58) Attending church is an essential in spiritual living. Giving testimony to God's greatness and goodness are basic to spiritual living. The most important thing we gain from such a spiritual assessment is the knowledge of our growth as a Christian. God's will for all Christians is spiritual growth. Out of this assessment you will understand more of God's will for your life as you become aware of His work in you.

**Read the Bible.** Regularly reading the Bible and seriously studying it are primary in Christian living. Reading it often and studying what it says can lead to great insights as we understand God's will. In His Word, we find significant evidence as to how God relates to humans. We also see how God has related to His creation, to the church...even to nations. We see what God led the writers to say about Him and how we should relate to Him. We find there instruction for living, and for dying. We find there how we should go about relating to others, with special emphasis on relationships with other Christians. You see, God's will is no secret.

**Consider your environmental circumstances.** Those may be big words for some. However they describe a vital step in knowing God's will. People live in all kinds of arrangements: with family, alone, in cities, in rural areas, in single family dwellings and in multifamily dwellings. Some are overwhelmed with activity when they go home, some have no one with whom to interact or to join in noise making. The same is true of work places. Some are one-person offices and some are giant factories...and all points in between. Why is this important in knowing God's will? The circumstances in which you live and work often influence how you perceive God and how you relate to God. A person who is solitary all the time may need to understand that God's people are community people. Paul said that we were like the body, no part fully functional without the other. Your environment also includes your education and/or skill training. God uses us according to our abilities, see below. Another consideration is our obligation to family and others.

**Evaluate your abilities.** What natural abilities do you have and what skills have you developed? How do those things affect your outlook and your value to the Kingdom of God? The activities that bring us the most joy and fulfillment in life are most likely those God wills to use for the Kingdom.

**Learn from family and friends.** Knowing God's will often comes from what those closest to us know about us and about God's work. What they observe about us and our abilities are often more objective than our own assessments. Spiritual leaders often have had opportunity to study the Word and work of God more than we, and those we trust are able to give us insights that we ourselves do not have.

**Be informed.** God is alive and well and at work in our world today. Can we be wise enough to observe what He is up to in our community and our world? And, what do you need to be doing to bring God's presence into your church, your community, your world? Keeping up with the news, from sources that are less biased, is important. Drawing your own conclusions, rather than allowing someone else to do that for you is best. Secular media may be less about spiritual things; may even promote secular values. However, if you only listen to, participate in, and dialogue with those who agree with you, you may miss a message from God. Think about how the religious leaders of Jesus' day missed the greatest message of all because they thought that Jesus was from Satan and was trying to tear down their religion. They were unwilling to listen to "new" ideas which were actually old revelation which they had misinterpreted.

Finally, we should all respond positively to God's invitation in Jeremiah 33:3, **"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."**