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Discerning God's Plan for You

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Discerning God's Plan for You

ZERO IN *on* God's Plan *for* your life

God has an individual plan for your life—a life mission that will reveal His best for you.

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” —Ephesians 2:10

God wants us to develop a “discerning heart”. God knew what He wanted us to accomplish with our life before we even came into being. He has a specific plan in mind and wants us to learn how to recognize it.

(Jesus speaking)

“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” — John 17:4

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”— Jeremiah 29:11

(Jesus speaking) “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” — John 10:10

“Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.” — Psalms 40:5

But how can we discover God’s unique plan for our life? How can we understand God’s leading in our situation on issues that are not specifically addressed in the Scriptures?

And furthermore, how can we be assured that directions we are sensing are from God?

➤ When were you in a situation where you did what you believed God wanted you to do but then later you questioned if that had really been God’s will after all?

In this lesson we will be look at five principles that can help us discover God's specific will for current situation and our life.

1. Understand *the nature of God's unfolding plan for your life.*

God's plan for our life is revealed progressively, one situation at a time. But we want to know the final outcome of our life right now. If we could see what God intends for our life, then, we could determine if we wanted to accept the plan He has for us. But that doesn't involve any trust or faith in God. If we liked what we saw and what we would get out of God's plan, then we would be willing to commit ourselves. Otherwise, we would decide to pursue our own plan.

God's plan is like a tapestry that interweaves common threads with unique ones.

God doesn't operate that way. He wants us to trust Him and walk by faith. And ultimately, the issue is not if we are pleased with the results of our life but whether God is pleased, honored, and glorified.

So it's much more beneficial to concentrate on discerning the next step, instead of trying to guess the ultimate outcome.

A few of the common threads...

We please God:

- By pursuing intimacy with God
 - By becoming Christlike in our character
 - By building up others in Christ
 - By being His Kingdom ambassadors to those who don't know **Him**
- ✦ God wants you to please Him... (John 5:30; Colossians 1:10)
- ✦ God wants you to have an everlasting relationship with Him. (Acts 17:26-2; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:1-2)
- ✦ God wants you to experience His best for all eternity. (Psalms 40:5; John 10:10; Romans 12:2)

✦ God wants you to live by faith, trusting Him to help you and the Holy Spirit to empower you. (Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 3:3; Ephesians 3:16; Hebrews 11:6)

✦ God wants your character to be developed through adversity. (Job 23:10; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7)

✦ God wants you to cooperate with Him so that together you will fulfill the mission He has for you. (Deuteronomy 13:4; Job 22:21; Matthew 6:33)

God's plan involves more than just knowing what He wants you to do.

Elements of God's specific plan for your current situation

➤ What are some Biblical examples that illustrate these various components of God's plan?

2. Prepare yourself *to* hear God.

God is not reluctant to make His will known to us. If we are not receiving direction, it may be that we don't have a receptive heart attitude. God will not reveal specifics until we are ready and willing. There are several ways in which we may prepare our heart to hear God.

✦ By getting right with God.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

"Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." —James 4:8

(2 Corinthians 6:16; 7:1; Hebrews 10:22; 12:14)

✦ By surrendering your will to God.

We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will. —John 9:31

"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground." —Psalms 143:10

(Proverbs 16:3; 23:26; Romans 12:1; 1 John 3:21-22)

✦ **By humbling yourself before Him.**

And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. —Micah 6:8

✦ **By renewing my mind with His truth.**

...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

(Proverbs 3:5-6)

✦ **By having a mindset of faith, trust, and expectancy toward God.**

We live by faith, not by sight. —2 Corinthians 5:7

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

(Romans 14:23; Hebrews 10:23, 36, 38; 11:6)

✦ **By being patient and willing to wait on God.**

“Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.” —Psalms 27:14

3. Recognize *the* directional signposts.

If you want God to lead you then you must watch for it with anticipation.

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions...

The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if He calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’”

So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” —1 Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel had not yet learned how to recognize God's voice. There are a variety of ways in which God tries to get our attention. But we have to learn how to differentiate between His supernatural involvement and common everyday occurrences.

“I know, O LORD, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.” —Jeremiah 10:23

What do God’s directional signposts look like?

✦ **God directs our steps through His Word, the Bible.**

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” —Psalms 119:105

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” —2 Timothy 3:16-17

“For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” —Hebrews 4:12

(Joshua 1:8; Proverbs 6:22-23)

➤ When have you approached the Scriptures with a specific need and almost had a passage jump off the page at you in response to that need?

✦ **God directs our steps through the prompting of the Holy Spirit who indwells us.**

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.” —John 16:13

“...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” —Romans 8:14

“...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” —Philippians 2:13

(John 14:26)

➤ When did you have an inner impression or feeling that you sensed may be from the Holy Spirit trying to direct your steps?

✦ **God directs our steps through other people.**

Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance. —Proverbs 20:18

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” —Proverbs 15:22

“For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.” —
Proverbs 11:14

> When have you listened to someone and suddenly it was as if God was speaking through them to you about your situation?

✦ **God directs our steps through providential circumstances.**

But Joseph said to them, ...You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.—Genesis 50:19-20

“In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.” —
Proverbs 16:9

“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” —Proverbs
16:33

“In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will...” —Ephesians
1:11

(Acts 17:26-27)

> When have you noticed events or circumstances that seemed to be orchestrated by God trying to direct your steps?

4. Seek God’s confirmation *to* avoid presumption.

We should always use caution in trying to discern God’s leading. Satan can masquerade as an angel of light and he employs legions of deceiving spirits. Just because you have a strong feeling or belief that something is from God, doesn’t mean it is.

Our perception doesn’t validate reality. We must always look to God for confirmation before committing ourselves. It is too easy to slip into the trap of presumption (James 4:13-15).

1) Does it comply with the directions given in God’s written Word?

God’s written Word should always be the first standard we use to verify assumed direction.

If the leading is not compatible with the Scriptures then it is not from God. What Biblical passages relate to this issue? Would this violate any scriptural principle or command? Is there an account of someone's situation that can provide an insight?

The following questions highlight a few of the major directives of the Bible that should be considered.

"Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me." —Psalms 119:133

✦ **Does it demonstrate love for God?**

"If you love me, you will obey what I command." —John 14:15

✦ **Does it demonstrate love for others?**

The commandments... are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. —Romans 13:9-10

✦ **Does it promote personal holiness?**

For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. —1 Thessalonians 4:7

✦ **Does it reflect the fruit of the Spirit?**

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." —Galatians 5:22

✦ **Does it require faith and trust in God?**

"And without faith it is impossible to please God,..." —Hebrews 11:6

2) Does it make sense when you use sanctified reasoning that is based on God's truth?

"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

As we renew our mind with God's truth our reasoning will become more sound. If something doesn't make sense ask the Holy Spirit to show you why. Don't proceed until it does.

3) Does it seem to be confirmed by the surrounding circumstances?

“In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will,...” —Ephesians 1:11

How does the assumed direction relate to other circumstances effecting your situation? Does God appear to be opening doors or closing them?

4) Does it concur with the advice you have received from wise Godly counselors?

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” —Proverbs 15:22

As you discuss the assumed direction with others who are wise, mature believers, what is their advice?

5) Does it generate a supernatural inner peace and calmness that cannot be attributed to your circumstances?

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” —Philippians 4:6-7

Do you have an inner peace about the proposed direction? Natural peace may be associated with any plan that promises to change a difficult situation.

But the peace of God is only identifiable in the midst of trials and tribulation.

It is not necessary to have an affirmative answer for each of these five questions before moving ahead. It may not be possible to answer every question. However, if any one question suggests the direction may not be good, you should wait until it is resolved. In other words, any one of the five has veto power over moving forward. But you don't need five “yeses” to proceed, assuming you are unable to answer one or two of the questions.

5. Take the next step by faith- unless God is telling you to wait.

Walk in the direction that God has pointed you and watch for signs of confirmation or re-direction.

It's difficult to steer a car that's not moving. So prayerfully take steps based on what God has already showed you and expect Him to guide you.

“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul... Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your
good Spirit lead me on level ground.” —Psalms 143:8-10

“Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen
for him.” —Psalms 25:12

Walk in the direction of the light that you have been given. Remember, you don't need to know everything. You just need to know enough to take the next step by faith. When you do, the Holy Spirit will either give you more direction and light so you may take another step, or you will have to wait for further instruction.

When God is guiding you one step at a time, you will still arrive at His predetermined destination. But you are totally subject to God's timetable. Whenever we are able to see a long ways down the road, it's easy to stop depending on God and take over the journey. Then, invariably, we wind up getting ahead of His schedule too.

God doesn't want us to run ahead—He wants us to hold His hand and make the journey together. That's when we are most responsive to His leading.

(Psalms 25:8-9)

> How have you seen this principle demonstrated in your life?