

SESSION 1: DOING THE WILL OF GOD

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 6:10, 7:21; Mark 12:28-32; John 20:29

QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, what is God's will?
2. Why do people do things in God's name for reasons other than doing His will?
3. *God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.* How do you trust God when you don't understand what He's doing in your life?
4. How can you continue to be obedient to God's will when everything falls apart?
5. Following God's will can take us down different paths in life compared to others. Why is this important to understand?
6. How does our free will affect our obedience to God's will?
7. If God's will is for us to love others, how can we overcome judging others' sins more harshly than our own?
8. What are you really saying when you pray, *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*? What has to happen for God's will to be done in your life and on earth?

[illegible]

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

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Near the end of His sermon, Jesus said, in Matthew 7:21, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*

Jesus says that not everyone who invokes His name enters the kingdom of heaven. Why not? Well, not all things *said* to be done in God’s name truly reflect God’s will. Throughout history, and still today, people do things in God’s name for reasons other than doing His will.

Let’s consider God’s will in the context of His plan of salvation:

1. God’s will is that we love Him, trust Him, and obey Him.
2. God’s will is that we love our neighbor.
3. God’s will is to give salvation to all mankind.

Our Father’s will is that we love Him. In Mark 12, verses 28-32, we read of an encounter between Jesus and a scribe. The scribe asked which is the first commandment—in this context, “first” meaning most important. Jesus responded that it is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

It’s our Father’s will that, out of our love for Him, we trust Him completely and implicitly. He wants us to use our free will to do **His will**. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. He is perfect, He is sovereign, He is love. This makes Him very much unlike us, and though He always acts in our best interest, His will and ways are often quite difficult to understand or accept. In the words of Charles Spurgeon, a 19th century Baptist minister, *“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.”* When Apostle Thomas doubted the Lord’s resurrection, Jesus encouraged him to believe, and offered His hand and side to show it was Him. Thomas touched His scars, and then believed, calling Jesus, “God”. Jesus replied, *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Sometimes we question God’s will because our life experience does not seem as easy or pleasant as our neighbor’s. In His sovereignty, He does not require that we all experience the same things in life, nor does He reveal himself to all mankind at the same time. We see this clearly in the New Testament. Jesus told Apostle Peter that he would be a martyr, while Apostle John died a natural death. The disciples Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were allowed to remain in Bethany, while other disciples were called to leave their families and go with the Lord on His journeys. Joseph of Arimathea, who

prepared Jesus’ body for burial, was permitted to be wealthy, while the rich young ruler was asked to sell all that he had. In the parable of the workers in the field, Jesus taught that while in the end the reward is the same for all who believe, not everyone will be introduced to God’s plan of salvation at the same time. Despite these differences, God loves us all equally, and wants us to love Him enough to trust Him and obey Him.

God’s will is that we love our neighbor. When we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, and as Jesus loves us, we want salvation for our neighbor as much as we want it for ourselves. This will prompt us to act according to God’s will:

- We will not judge our neighbor or demand that God punish sinners, especially those who sin differently than we do. Instead, we are willing to forgive.
- We will act in a way that conforms to the gospel, and not in a way that becomes a stumbling block for someone else on their path to the Lord. If we are true Christians, believers, and followers of Jesus Christ, we will comply with Jesus’ teachings and do as He did – act according to the will of His Father all the time.
- We will serve our neighbor out of love, and support our neighbor’s efforts to follow Christ.

God’s will is to give salvation to all mankind, but each of us has to want that salvation. God will not save anyone against their will. To fulfill God’s will, we need to accept His word and sacraments in faith, renounce all that displeases Him, allow the Holy Spirit to renew us, and permit the new creation within us to evolve into spiritual maturity.

Though doing God’s will is a simple concept, it is not easy to accomplish. Jesus acknowledged this when He taught the disciples to pray. In His model prayer, the Lord included the phrase, *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* This phrase is a statement of desire and a plea for strength. Surely, God will hear us when we sincerely pray these words, for He is eager to help us do His will.