

MAXIMUM IMPACT IN OUR WORLD

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SERMON TITLE- ACTS-traordinary: Acts, Christmas & the Will of God

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What do these three elements have in common? They all reveal that our God is actively involved in history and the lives of people. He desires us to know His will and to participate with Him in it. He **speaks** to us (in many ways) to guide us as we listen and obey.

- We see this throughout the book of Acts as God speaks, guides and interacts with His followers to establish His church in the world, ie.- [Acts 16:6-10](#)

- We see this in the Christmas story as God speaks (through dreams, angels, stars, and people) to reveal His plan of incarnation and to guide people in their part in His glorious will.

- We can see this in our own lives as we believe, listen, and respond . . .

Three Expressions of the Will of God:

1. God's Perfect (eternal) Will - - what He intends to do that He will *unconditionally* bring to pass
2. God's Conditional Will - - things He desires to do and even reveals to us, but these are dependent on our willful response. God will not violate our free will that **HE** has given to us.
3. God's Permissive Will - - things that are open. We have options, and God says, "I will bless you and be with you whichever option you choose."

Two Primary Sources by which God reveals His will:

1. His anointed, written WORD that we have as The Holy Bible. We **KNOW** His will through the scriptures.
2. His Holy Spirit that indwells us. We **DISCERN** His will as the Spirit guides us.

(These two will never be in *actual* conflict with each other. They may seem in conflict sometimes because **WE** understand or discern incorrectly, but the Holy Spirit will never speak or lead in contradiction to God's Word).

- About His Word - -

- The scriptures are a miracle . . . that God has spoken clearly, over thousands of years, through dozens of writers to reveal His character and purposes so consistently, that we might KNOW Him!

- The scriptures lead us and transform us by renewing our minds (with His truth): Psalm 119: 105; Romans 12: 1-2
- We must come to His word, not as one of our “duty checks”, but with a genuine desire to hear from Him; to commune with Him.
- About His Spirit - -
- God still speaks by His Spirit to people today
- Faithfulness to reading and knowing His Word lays the foundation for hearing and discerning the Spirit’s voice
- The Spirit speaks in many ways:
 - Lots and fleeces
 - Open and closed doors (see again Acts 16: 6-10)
 - Dreams, visions, visitations
 - Words of knowledge or wisdom (to us directly or through others)
 - His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit – a sense of clarity in our own souls.

The #1 Key to Knowing God’s Will:

- To seek **HIM** (not so much His will) with all our heart, and He will shape our heart to know His.
- Jeremiah 29: 11-13
- Matthew 6: 31-34
- John 15: 5-8

Practical Guidelines for Discerning God’s Will:

1. Cultivate a deep relationship with God. (Make communion with Him ***in His Word*** a vital part of this relationship).
2. Honestly assess (and admit to God) if you have a bias in the issue about which you are seeking guidance.
3. Explore how God’s Word might speak ***directly*** to the issue.
4. Ask God to clearly lead if He has a specific will in your situation and then pay attention.

- a. In asking, will you ***commit to follow*** in whatever He reveals to be His will? He's not just another source of advice; He is Lord!
5. If the matter is still unclear, it may be a "permissive" situation - - evaluate and make your best choice.
6. Ask God to confirm or disconfirm this decision.
7. Abide in Him and do as you see fit (trusting God will be with you).
 - (My add – Confer with others you trust. Ask them to pray about the matter and share with you what they think/perceive.)