

Locus and Focus: God's Will for Your Daily Life

by Todd Wilken

Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. — 1 Corinthians 7:17

Do you know God's will for your daily life? Apparently, most Christians don't. Christian publishers have discovered that Christian Living equals cash and Self-help sells best. Christians will pay handsomely to find God's will for their lives.

Now, the only way to definitively know God's will is through His Word, the Bible. But the Bible doesn't prescribe every detail of your daily life, does it? Does this mean that you God's will for your daily life is a mystery? No. Does this mean that you have to look for a sign from God to know what to do at any given moment? No.

The unspoken assumption goes something like, "Well, if God's will were obvious, everyone would know what it is, right?" Wrong. Contrary to what almost every book or tape on the market will tell you, God's will for your daily life *is* obvious. The only reason we don't know what it is because we ignore the obvious.

God shows you His will every day in a hundred ways. His will is right there under your nose. His will is as close as your spouse, your kids, your family, your friends and your co-workers. His will is right there, where you are and where they are.

It's all about Vocation (Calling). The Bible's teaching of Vocation is that God has assigned you a station in life. Your station is that place where God has put you to live in faith toward Him and in love toward your neighbor.

Locus: Where Am I?

Think about it this way. You are in your car, driving to work. There, behind the wheel, what does God want you to do? Does He want you to read your Bible? No. It's obvious. Reading and driving at the same time are dangerous (and probably illegal). As good as Bible reading is, this is not the time. It is God's will that you keep your eyes on the road and your mind on the traffic. This is God's will for your life at this moment.

Does God want you to detour to the local soup kitchen and feed the homeless? Or stop by the church to pray for an hour or two? No and no. It's obvious. Remember, you are on your way to work. Feeding the homeless and going to church are great, but now is not the time. It is God's will that you get to your job on time and put in a good day's work. This is God's will for your life at this moment.

This example might seem a bit silly, but it really isn't. Think of how it plays out throughout the rest of the day. You are at work. What is God's will for you while you are there? It's obvious. It is God's will that you do your job. You get home in the evening. What is God's will for you now? It's obvious. Help your wife, hug your kids, feed the cat and take out the trash. Now it's bedtime. What is God's will for you? It's obvious. Lock the house, put out the cat, check on the kids, set your alarm and go to bed.

This really isn't that complicated. At any given moment in life, 99% of the time, God's will is obvious based on that simple question, "Where am I?" This isn't rocket-science (unless, of course, you are a rocket scientist).

Focus: Who Is My Neighbor?

Now think about all the different roles God has given you to live out. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, citizen, employee, employer or friend? You are probably several of these things all at once. All of these roles are relationships with other people. These other people are what the Bible calls your "neighbors".

Neighbors are very important. Remember, God has put you where you are at any given moment to live in faith toward Him and *in love toward your neighbor*. I once heard a very wise theologian say, "Love finds its task in the need of my neighbor." It's obvious, and it's true. Your station in life is not only about Where you are, it's also about Whom you are with.

Again, this really isn't that complicated. At any given moment in life, 99% of the time, God's will is obvious based on the simple question, "Who is my neighbor?" This isn't brain surgery (unless, of course, you are a brain surgeon).

The Comfort of Vocation

Are you beginning to realize how comforting this way of understanding God's will is? Most of us have lived day to day in quiet desperation over God's will for our lives. And there it was, under our noses all along.

Now, this means that we have to change the way we think about God's will. Paul writes:

By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Why do we agonize so much over God's will? Isn't it because we secretly think that it is up to us to please God with our own good works? But nothing could be further from the truth. It isn't up to you to please God. This is what Grace is all about. God is already pleased with you because of Jesus' good works, Jesus' perfect obedience and Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus did all of this for you. In fact, God couldn't be more pleased with you than He already is for Jesus' sake.

Why do we worry so over God's will? Isn't it because we think that God's will has to be big and flashy, spectacular and out of the ordinary? We have been convinced that God doesn't care about the mundane details of our lives. But He does.

In fact, it is in those mundane details of your life that God has given you the good works He has prepared for you to do. Luther once wrote:

What you do in your house is worth as much as if you did it up in heaven for our Lord God... We should accustom ourselves to think of our position and work as sacred and well-pleasing to God, not on account of the position and work, but on account of the Word and faith from which the

obedience and the work flow ... Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool—though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith—my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures is smiling—not because the father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith.

But no, instead of seeing the will of God right there under my nose, in the needs of my wife, kids, family co-workers, I speculate about God's will, I invent things to do that I think would please God. These self-invented works, no matter how much good they might do, are not good works at all. They haven't come from faith in what Jesus has done for me to please God, but from a futile attempt to please God myself.

God doesn't need my works; I don't need them either. But my neighbor does need them. Luther puts it this way:

Although I am an unworthy and condemned person, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that from now on I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ.

Sadly, a lot the books and tapes we've bought to help us find God's will were really just teaching us to do a lot of self-invented works that didn't please God or help our neighbor.

Christian Freedom

When a Christian wants to know what God's will is, he need look no further than to his station in life and his neighbor's needs. This is enough to keep the Christian busy for the rest of his life. The Christian is free to turn his attention to his neighbor because the Christian no longer needs to worry about pleasing God.

Don't get me wrong, this isn't a license to sin. It is freedom to live before God by faith, and before the neighbor in love. And this is the best kind of freedom there is. It is the freedom of sins completely forgiven, the freedom of being declared right with God, the freedom to devote myself to someone else other than myself. It is freedom from self-invented works, freedom from worrying about whether or not God is pleased with me, and freedom from self-centered, self-serving works.

Not Without Sin

Will the life lived before God by faith and before my neighbor in love be a perfect life? Absolutely not. First, my faith is never what it should be. I daily fall into the sin of trusting myself and not Jesus. And I never trust Jesus completely. Second, my love for my neighbor is never what it should be. I daily fall into the sin of serving myself and not my neighbor. And I never serve my neighbor as I should.

The only person Who ever lived before God and man perfectly is Jesus. He is without sin. I am not. And this is good. This brings us full circle, back to where Christian vocation begins. Again, Paul writes: *By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*

This is the best thing about finding God's will in your life. When you find it, right there under your nose, you realize that your place in life, the neighbors you find in it, and the works God has prepared for you to do, are also a gift of God. God has given them to you to point you away from yourself. God has given them to you to show you that you can't depend on your works. God has given them to you to turn your attention back to the only thing that pleases Him: the works that Jesus has done for you.

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