

## How to Discover God's Will

Acts 1:12-26

Purpose of **Acts 1:12-26** primarily shows how God sovereignly worked to advance His mission, but it also provides insights into how the early church sought God's guidance.

Changing jobs, relocating, college, graduate school, major purchases, marriage - these require discernment and wisdom. The question most Christians ask: **"What is God's will?"**

### I. Know God's General Will

- **Acts 1:16: "It was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled."** Scripture is God-breathed (**2 Timothy 3:16**) and authored by the Holy Spirit. The early Christians knew they were supposed to fill the apostolic office vacated by Judas because Scripture said so. They understood God's general will but needed clarity on specifics (who would replace Judas).
- **Application for Today:** We know general principles from Scripture, but we need specifics, too!
  - Live holy lives, pray, witness, tithe, work hard, love our families, and build God's kingdom.
  - We know marriage is honorable, but we may not know who to marry.
  - We know we should work hard, but which job? What degree? Where to live?

### II. Look for God's Specific Will

- The disciples sought God's specific will by:
  - 1. Narrowing Options by Gathering Information**
    - Qualifications: They knew the replacement apostle had to be someone who:
      - a. Had been with Jesus from the beginning.
      - b. Was an eyewitness of the resurrection.
    - Why these qualifications mattered:
      - a. Apostles needed firsthand training from Jesus to be the church's theological foundation.
      - b. Eyewitness testimony was crucial, especially in Roman courts.
      - c. Without these, apostles might be tempted to falter under persecution.
  - Only Matthias and Joseph (Barsabbas) met these criteria.
- 2. Asking God's Guidance**
  - They prayed, trusting God to reveal His choice.
  - **Acts 1:24: "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen."**
- 3. Trusting God's Sovereignty**
  - They cast lots (a method similar to drawing straws or rolling dice).

- Names were written on stones, placed in a container, and shaken until one stone fell out.
- **Proverbs 16:33:** "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."
- **12 Apostles and God's Plan:** Jesus promised the 12 apostles would judge the 12 tribes of Israel (**Matthew 19:28**). The New Jerusalem's foundation includes the names of the 12 apostles (**Revelation 21:10-14**).
- Paul was not part of the 12: Paul himself stated he was not classified with the 12 apostles (**1 Corinthians 15:8, Galatians 1:15-24**). The 12 apostles were primarily sent to the tribes of Israel, while Paul was sent to the Gentiles (**Galatians 2:1-10**).

### III. How to Discover God's Will Today - Use the acronym DISCOVER:

**Decide you are willing to do God's will before you find out what it is.** (Rom. 12:1; Prov. 3:5-6)

- Surrender to God's will fully, trusting His plan.

**Invite God's help through prayer.** (Matthew 7:7-8; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

- Persistent and dependent prayer demonstrates trust in His guidance.

**Study God's Word to find His will.** (Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 1:2-3)

- God will never lead you to do something contrary to Scripture.

**Conform your life to what you already know to be God's will.** (James 1:22; John 14:15)

- Be obedient to the general will of God revealed in Scripture.

**Observe circumstances and obstacles.** (1 Corinthians 16:9; Revelation 3:8; Proverbs 16:9)

- Look for open and closed doors: **1 Corinthians 16:9:** "A great and effective door has opened to me, **and** there are many adversaries." Obstacles don't always mean you're out of God's will.

**Value the wise counsel of other Christians.** (Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 19:20-21; Hebrews 10:24-25)

- Seek guidance from mature, godly believers who can provide perspective.

**Endure times of testing if you are confident it is God's will.** (Jas. 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-5; 1 Pet. 4:12-13)

- God may allow challenges to strengthen your faith or refine your character.

**Resist the urge to move ahead of God's timing.** (Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 27:14; Ecclesiastes 3:1)

- Better to be two steps behind God than one step ahead of Him.

#### Practical Applications:

- 1. Trust the Holy Spirit's Guidance.** Like a spouse helps with decisions, the Holy Spirit provides wisdom and direction. **Romans 8:14:** "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."
- 2. Avoid Fleecing or Casting Lots Today.** In **Acts 1**, the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon believers (**Acts 2**). Today, the Holy Spirit indwells believers and leads through His Word, peace, and inner conviction.
- 3. Focus on Delighting in God.** **Psalm 37:4:** "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." God's will is for your good and His glory. Either God's will is revealed in your personal desires, or your personal desires will line up in time with God's will. Either way, our job is to delight in God.