

Christian perspectives: thankfulness

What is God's will? That is a great question ? one that we often ask ourselves, particularly at critical junctures in our lives where a major decision is to be made. Do we take the job and move the family? Do we buy the house now or wait? We're not going to be able to open our Bibles and find specific answers to those questions. We search for God's will in those situations, but do we ever take the time to see what God's Word clearly says is His will?

How can we ask God for His will when we don't know how He's already asked us to respond? When we don't know what our attitude is to be? Before we get to asking God for His will in a specific situation, it's crucial that we understand His clearly defined will for us in all situations. He's shared it plainly in His Word yet in this age of immediate gratification where libraries of information and answers to many questions are just a click away we expect quick, easy answers.

So what does God say is His will? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says:

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 5:20 says:

Give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pretty simple, right? Are you thankful ? in all circumstances? It's easy to be thankful when things are going our way. My son's birthday is coming up, and I know that when he opens his gift up, there will be thankfulness in his eyes. Are we only thankful when we receive what we see as ?gifts? from God? What about the other stuff in your life? The stuff you definitely wouldn't call a gift?

Can you be thankful?

I can't even begin to know what difficult things are going on in your life. Things I may never have nor ever will experience. Based on my own experiences, how could I tell you to be thankful? But it's God who says that it is His will that we are thankful. God, who wrote those words knowing every tough situation that every person would ever go through! All circumstances means exactly that ? all circumstances. True thankfulness flows from an understanding and knowledge of how loved, valued and precious you are to God. Do you know how precious you are? Precious enough that He sent His Son Jesus, who was lacking nothing by His Father's side, to come down and die in your place. You're loved. You can be thankful.

Thankfulness (or lack thereof) is a good indicator of our understanding of God and His Word. Thankfulness shows that we trust His promises and what He says about His character. God's character never changes. He's always loving. Do you believe that, even when things are tough? Can you be thankful, knowing that He cares? Thankfulness can flow when we know and understand God's promises. Can you take the promises from James 1, apply them to your situation and be thankful?

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. (James 1:2-4)

The trial you find yourself in is hard - no doubt about it. But don't waste it. See it for what it is ? an opportunity for you faith in God to grow. It's an opportunity for great joy, and something that we can incredibly thankful for.

Thankfulness takes our focus off of the situation and places it on God ? where it should be. It keeps us rooted in the truths of who God is and what He has done for us. These are truths that transcend any situation you find yourself in. Thankfulness will pull you out of self pity and let you see what God wants to accomplish. Thankfulness keeps us from being self absorbed. Thankfulness stops us from spending our time worrying.

?We would worry less if we praised more. Thanksgiving is the enemy of discontent and dissatisfaction.?

? H.A. Ironside

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