

The Will of God

The will of God is a topic which seems to baffle a lot of believers, and it shouldn't. For me personally, it has always been one of the simplest aspects of the Christian life. Knowing the will of God for me has always been fairly simple. It is obeying the will of God which is much more difficult for me.

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1. There are three categories of will:
 - 1) Divine will, which is also known as sovereignty. Job 1:12
 - 2) Angelic will. Job 1:9–11 Isa. 14:12–14
 - 3) Human will. It is important to recognize that you have free will and that you are not simply a product of your genes and your environment. This explains why even identical twins are never identical. Gen. 3:1–7 Isa. 53:6
2. The will of God for the human race:
 - 1) For the unbeliever, God's will is salvation. 2Peter 3:9: **The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance** [= a changing of the mind toward Jesus Christ]. God wills for all men to believe in Him. **Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved** (Acts 16:31a).
 - 2) For the believer, God's will is spirituality. Ephesians 5:18: **And do not be drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit**. That is in the imperative mood, which means, *Be filled with the Spirit* is a mandate. Furthermore, for the believer, God desires for us to grow spiritually: **Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ**—2Peter 3:18). This is also a mandate, as we have the imperative mood here as well.
 - 3) Therefore, for us as believers, God desires for us to name our sins to Him in order to restore fellowship with Him (1Cor. 11:31 1John 1:9); and for us to learn the Word of God in a church which teaches the Word of God (Heb. 10:25) under the authority of a pastor-teacher (Heb. 13:17). Simply obeying the will of God in these 2 things sets up a believer for always being in the will of God (when he chooses to be).
 - 4) Jesus has promised that becoming a believer and discipleship under Him is not a difficult or burdensome thing. **"Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke on you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."** (Matt. 11:28–30).
3. God desires for us to grow into spiritual adulthood. This can be illustrated with

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you and your children. You want your children to grow up to become independent, productive adults. When you first put little Jimmy on a bicycle with the training wheels, and you are behind him, keeping the bike balanced, pushing it, the last thing you want is, for this to end up being the norm for bike rides for Jimmy. What you desire is, after awhile, that the training wheels are removed and that he will no longer require you to be behind him, pushing and balancing the bike. God is the same way—ideally speaking, He wants us to progress to become spiritual adults, able to direct and organize our own lives. The term R. B. Thieme, Jr. used for this is, *spiritually self-sustaining*. We do not outgrow God any more than we dissolve our relationship with our parents when we grow up; but God wants us to become spiritual adults. This is a matter of free will on our part.

4. The humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ had free will.
 - 1) No free will in mankind would imply no free will in the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hyper-Calvinism teaches that there is no true free will in man, but they never follow this out to its logical end, which would be that Jesus Christ, in His humanity, lacks true free will.
 - 2) The basic principle of Divine Guidance, however, is based on the fact that man possesses volition (free will) of the soul.
 - 3) Matthew 26:42 is an example of Jesus Christ expressing His free will: **Again a second time having gone away, He prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to pass away unless I drink it, then let Your will be done."** Jesus did not want to go to the cross. In His humanity, He prayed not to have to go to the cross. Going to the cross involved suffering which we cannot imagine, and God the Holy Spirit makes certain that we know, Jesus, in His humanity, did not want to do this. However, **He became obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross (Philip. 2:8).**
 - 4) The Lord's free will, in principle, is expressed in Hebrews 10:7, 9a: **Then I said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book." Then He added, "Behold, I have come to do Your will."** (Psalm 40:7). Jesus Christ willingly placed Himself under the authority of the plan of God the Father; this was a choice which He made in His humanity.
 - 5) It only makes sense for Jesus to have free will in His humanity if we have free will. These things are either both true together or both false. Otherwise, Jesus Christ is *not* true humanity.
5. Free will, foreknowledge and predestination (this point is parenthetical, to explain the relationship between these things).
 - 1) There is one stripe of Christian theology (hyper-Calvinism) that does not believe in human free will. They believe that, not only is God sovereign, but that His sovereignty controls our choice to believe in Jesus Christ. They point to predestination to explain this. They may quote Eph. 1:11 to

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support this position: **In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose, Who works out all things according to the counsel of His will.** This theology is wrong, although the verse is, of course, correct.

- 2) God has a plan, and His will (sovereignty), our will and angelic will are all a part of this plan.
- 3) God foreknows all things; that is, He knows every single free will choice that will be made by man or angelic being in advance.
- 4) His plan is based upon His foreknowledge. The best illustration of this is, you and your children. Throughout the young life of your child, you make plans upon how to train him correctly and how to bring him up right. Your child has free will, and you adjust your plans in such a way as to consider his free will. The fact that you, as a parent, know what your child is going to do in certain situations, is called foreknowledge (in a limited, human way). That you anticipate the choices of your child and make plans which anticipate those choices, that is predestination and the divine decrees (again, in a limited, human sense). A good illustration of this is the way that we discipline our children—we may spank this one, sternly talk to that one, and ground another. We apply the discipline which we believe is appropriate and might have the greatest affect upon the child's behavior. That is an application of limited human foreknowledge.
- 5) We do all of this imperfectly; we do all of this apart from knowing each and every choice our children will make. However, God knows each and every choice that we will make and He makes this a part of His divine decrees.
- 6) All of this occurs simultaneously, but is presented to us logically in Rom. 8:29–30: **For those whom He foreknew, [those] He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.**
- 7) Logically, it works like this. God foreknew us, therefore He predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son (which is His plan, the divine decrees). Since we are predestined (foreknowledge and predestination occur in eternity past), God must call us in time. When we respond with positive volition (remember, God foreknew us, so He knew in eternity past that we would respond to His call), we are justified (God declares us positionally righteous because Jesus died for our sins). Then, in time and in eternity future, God will glorify us, with the result that we will be conformed to the image of His Son).

6. There are 3 categories of the will of God as related to the human race. An example of all 3 types of will are illustrated by Balaam:

- 1) Directive will of God. Numbers 22:12: **God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."** The

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- King of the Moabites wanted to hire Balaam to curse the Jews and God told him not to go.
- 2) Permissive will of God. Numbers 22:20: **And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only do what I tell you."** Balaam had, by that time, decided that he would go, in violation of God's directive will. Therefore, God had plan B, which is what He wanted Balaam to do, *if* he went to the King of Moab.
 - 3) Overruling will of God. In this example, Balaam wants to do one thing, and God overrules what he wants to do. Balaam wanted to curse the Jews and God did not allow him to do this. Numbers 23.
 - 4) So you do not misapply this, this incident does not mean that God will ultimately overrule all of your bad decisions. This is simply a classification of God's various wills. Man quite obviously will commit sins and God will allow man's free will to function. Therefore, you do not get to make a bad decision and then turn around and blame God for that bad decision that you made. To illustrate this, 99% of parents do not want their children to take drugs, and they will do what they can to keep them from taking drugs. However, if a kid starts using drugs, he cannot turn around and blame his parents for this bad decision. Therefore, if you marry the wrong person, take the wrong job, go to a church where you do not grow spiritually, this is all on you; it is not God's fault.
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7. What we need in order to ascertain Divine guidance.
 - 1) Knowledge of the Word of God.
 - (1) Psalm 32:8: **I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.** God pays attention to us and His will is ascertain from being taught.
 - (2) Proverbs 3:1-6: **My son, do not forget My teaching, but let your heart keep My commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Do not let grace and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart, so that you will find grace and success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, learn to know Him, and He will direct your path.** We are not to depend upon our own thinking, but we are to endeavor to know Him, and, as a result, He will guide us.
 - (3) Isaiah 58:11: **And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.** This is a promise, and the mechanics are stated in the previously cited verses.
 - 2) Yieldedness, which is the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) Romans 6:13: **Do not present parts of your body to sin as**

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instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and every part of your body to God as instruments for righteousness. The word *present* in this verse means *to proffer; to provide; to place a person or thing at one's disposal; to place yourself under orders to*. The Christian life is not some one-shot decision that you make when under great duress or under some sort of emotional or social coercion; it is a minute by minute set of decisions which you make each and every day of your life (the tense of this verb in the Greek indicates continuous action).

- (2) Romans 12:1–2: *I appeal to you therefore, members of the royal family, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [which means, place yourself under orders to God] as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world [= the cosmic system], but be transformed by the renovation of your mind [the key is what occurs in your thinking], that by testing you may discern what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.* Note that you need to have your thinking renovated in order to know what the good and acceptable will of God is. Furthermore, there is periodic testing. That is spiritual growth; when God tests the Bible doctrine in your soul. Notice first and foremost that the transformation which we go through occurs **by the renovation of our thinking** (which is exactly what is occurring right now, as you read this and if you believe it).
- (3) Ephesians 5:17-18: *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.* Notice that the two key features are: knowledge of doctrine (*understand what the will of the Lord is*) and the filling of the Holy Spirit.
- (4) We get out of fellowship with sin; we get back into fellowship by naming these sins directly to God. 1John 1:9: *If we admit [cite, name, acknowledge] our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* *Faithful* means that God does this every time; *just* means that forgiveness does not violate God's character (Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins, so God is just in forgiving us our sins). *Cleansing from all unrighteousness* means that God forgives us for our unknown sins as well as the sins which we name to Him.
- (5) As we advance in the Christian life, by the filling of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of Bible doctrine, we experience spiritual growth, which leads to spiritual maturity. This, in fact, is what God commands us to do. *Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (2Peter 3:18a). As we grow spiritually, we become more grace-oriented. James 4:6: *He gives*

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more grace. Therefore, He has said, God resists the arrogant but He gives grace to the humble [or, *grace oriented*] (Prov. 3:34).

8. The principle of spiritual growth: as a believer in Jesus Christ, you can choose to remain an infant (child, or adolescent) believer, or you can choose to grow spiritually. Where you presently work, there was some training to get you to the point where you are now. If someone had picked you up as an infant, and assigned you your present job, it is quite likely, as an infant, that you would be unable to perform the duties assigned to you. Assuming that you have personal integrity when it comes to your job, then your maximum production is dependent upon your age, schooling, maturity and training. The same is true of the Christian life. As an infant believer, you are saved and will spend eternity with God, but, insofar as the plan of God goes, you are nearly worthless. If you have chosen not to grow spiritually (and, let me make it clear, *that* is a choice that you make), then you will never amount to much spiritually. Your production will be minimal or nonexistent. Only a believer who has doctrine in his soul and who remains in the Spirit for extended periods of time actually does anything worthwhile in the plan of God. Your spiritual growth or your lack of spiritual growth is a personal choice that you make each and every day.
9. The will of God for the Christian here on earth.
 - 1) God wants us to think like He thinks. **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus** (Philip. 2:5). See also Rom. 12:1–2
 - 2) We need to know what God wants us to do. This can be determined by obeying all of the mandates found in the New Testament epistles.
 - 3) The geographical will of God, which is closely related to our study of Abram. Where does God want Abram to be? In the land of Canaan or in the land of Egypt?
10. The mechanics of the will of God is revealed in Acts 11:
 - 1) Guidance through prayer. Acts 11:5: **"I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me."** I need to say something about prayer, because this is the most misunderstood and misused gift of God. Let me give you an analogy to help explain how prayer is misused: a hammer is a fantastic tool. You can use it to pound in nails and to remove nails. When I go to work, I always carry a hammer. However, you do not use a hammer when you want to cut off a 6' piece of 2x4. You use a saw. Believers without doctrine use prayer as their primary tool—in fact, as their only tool—and they try to use it for everything ("You want me to saw those board there? Good, because I brought my hammer."). Most of the time, when someone wants to know something or to discern God's will, they pray. Depending upon their predisposition and emotions at the time, after praying a lot and working up some emotion, they then go ahead and do exactly what they wanted to do

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in the first place (with some exceptions, of course, who do the opposite of what they want to do). When you are faced with a decision, do not expect to pray and for God to tap your left shoulder for *no* and your right shoulder for *yes*. God speaks to us and guides us *through His Word*. Most of the time, if you are growing, God is guiding you to make whatever decisions need to be made. However, if you are not growing, then God puts in front of you serious decisions which make you recognize that you do not have enough doctrine in your soul to make these decisions.

- 2) Guidance through the thinking. Acts 11:6: **Looking intently on this, I observed. And I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, and the wild beasts, and the creeping things, and the birds of the heaven.** If you understand principles from the Word of God, then you can properly evaluate the circumstances that you are in.
- 3) Guidance through the Word. Acts 11:7-9: **And I heard a voice saying to me, "Peter, rise up, slay and eat." But I said, "No, Lord, because never has anything common or unclean entered into my mouth." But a voice answered me the second time out of the heaven, "What God has cleansed, you do not make common."** Hopefully, it is clear to you that God does not periodically speak to us out of heaven. However, His words in this passage represent the words found in the Bible (also called, by the way, the *Word of God*).
- 4) Guidance through providential circumstances. Acts 11:11: **And, behold, at once three men stood at the house in which I was, having been sent from Caesarea to me.** There are things which are going to cause you to take certain steps in your life. Personally, I had to move in order to find a job, and the places I wanted to move to, had no jobs available. The place I considered moving to, but did not really want to move to, is Houston; and, of course, every door opened for me to move here. Therefore, you may find yourself spinning your wheels in city A, and God is simply guiding you to city B. Or, you may get a job offer out of town, and that is God's way of saying, "Move to that town."
- 5) Guidance through the filling of the Holy Spirit. Acts 11:12: **And the Spirit said to me to go with them, not discriminating. And these six brothers also were with me, and we went into the man's house.** Just as God the Father does not speak to us audibly out of heaven, God the Holy Spirit does not tell us what to do audibly or through our emotions. However, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, then we are in His will (we are doing what God wants us to do).
- 6) Guidance through fellowship and comparison of data. Acts 11:13-15: **And he told us how he saw an angel in his house, standing and saying to him, Send men to Joppa, and send for Simon who is surnamed Peter, who will speak words to you by which you and all your household will be saved. And in my beginning to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as also on us in the beginning.** One of the things which I have observed is, believers

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who have the opportunity to gather with others but choose not to, tend to get a bit wacky. This is even true of those who take in doctrine regularly. Maybe it is the academic discipline of listening to teaching with others, but it tends keep believers more balanced.

- 7) Guidance through recalling Scriptures. Acts 11:16: **And I recalled the Word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.** You have to know the Word of God in order to remember the Word of God. It is not legitimate, when you are in a jam, to grab your Bible, close your eyes, and put your finger on some miscellaneous verse. It is legitimate to go to the Bible for guidance, and look up this or that particular subject (or, far better than this, get the teaching of your pastor on MP3 on that particular topic). It is legitimate to google *promises of God* so that you can find a promise which applies to your situation. However, it is far better to have this information in your soul as a result of good Bible teaching (which is more difficult to find than you may realize).

11. Young believers, immature believers, and carnal believers and the will of God: simply put off big decisions until you have grown spiritually. For most people, this means daily Bible doctrine for a year (or 2 or 3) before they ought to make a decision like, getting married, getting divorced, changing jobs, moving, etc. In any case, do not allow yourself to be bullied into some particular course of action. 1Cor. 7:18–28

12. Young believers, immature believers, and carnal believers and the will of God: avoid cults or churches where other members of the church attempt to bully you into some course of action. When pastors or others inside the church tell you what to do outside of the church, and enforce this in some way, they are out of line. A pastor can certainly teach what you ought to do (do not commit adultery, for instance), but once you walk out the doors of your church, you make the decision before God to do these things or not. There should not be some kind of pressure applied to you (e.g., social ostracism, or assigning someone to *disciple* you, etc.). If there is any kind of pressure for you to do something within the church (give your testimony, confess your sins before others, pray in front of others, speak in tongues, come forward for any reason, give money, etc.), then you are in the wrong church. A pastor and deacons must maintain some semblance of order in a church, taking into account that this is a gathering of dozens (hundreds or thousands) of sin natures; but whatever you are required to do within the church building ought to be related to the teaching of the Word of God, your personal privacy and the privacy of others. So, if you are a disturbance during the teaching of the Word of God, a pastor may go so far as to chew you out or have you removed; because this impacts the ability of others to be taught. However, if there is pressure put upon you to, say, get baptized in front of everyone, that is a different matter. There, the pastor has exceeded his authority.

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13. Do not confuse legitimate authority with someone bullying you into a course of action.
 - 1) Parents have authority over their children, so if you are under the roof of one or both of your parents, they do have the authority to tell you what to do.
 - 2) Employers have authority over employees on work-related matters.
 - 3) In the armed forces, commanding officers have authority over their subordinates.
 - 4) The coach has authority over his team, the teacher over his students, etc.
 - 5) The pastor over the congregation with respect to what goes on inside of the church in order to maintain academic discipline to teach the Word of God. That is, the pastor cannot tell you that you must go out and witness to 10 people this week, nor can he assign a spiritual mentor to invade your privacy, but he can certainly tell you to shut up if you are a disturbance during the teaching of the Bible.
 - 6) We are all subject to legitimate authorities, and we need to obey those authorities. Rom. 13:1–7
 - 7) Furthermore, let me add a little application. You ought to have figured out that, your behavior and actions are between you and God. No one in a church has the right to bully you into some course of action, even if the end result is avoidance of sin. The free will decisions which you make are significant, but not if you are simply going along to get along.
 - 8) However, you may have a morals clause where you work. That is legitimate, and you have to obey this morals clause if you choose to work for that school district, business or company. As an example, if you are a school teacher, and you are involved in gross immorality, then a school district ought to be able to remove you as an employee. That is not an invasion of your privacy, as you are not just a teacher of young adults but an example to them.
 - 9) More application: you can choose to allow people to invade your privacy for your own good, e.g., interaction with a sponsor if you belong to Alcoholics Anonymous or some similar organization. You have made a choice to give them this authority over you.
14. Summary Points: How to be in the will of God and how to remain in the will of God.
 - 1) You need to be in fellowship, which is achieved by 1John 1:9: **If we name our sins, He [God] is faithful [i.e., He does it every time] and just [God operates within His Own essence] to forgive us our sins [these are the sins we name] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [these are sins which we do not name].**
 - 2) You need to be growing spiritually. This does not mean that you reduce the number of overt sins in your life or that you speak a holy language now and again (*Amen, God willing*) or that you become more and more

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involved at your church (teaching Sunday school, acting as a deacon, etc.). Spiritual growth is achieved by the daily intake of the Word of God taught by a doctrinal pastor-teacher. **Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ** (2Peter 3:18a). *Grace* is the grace system which God has provided. All believers in Jesus Christ are given the means and the opportunity to grow spiritually, regardless of geographical location. 99% of the time, this will be learning under the ministry of a doctrinal pastor-teacher (I provide a list of them here: <http://kukis.org/Links/thelist.htm>). Many of these pastor-teachers, if they are outside of your geographical area, provide an online MP3 ministry, where you can download (or order) previous lessons and listen to the teaching of the Word of God without any financial obligation. Many of them will provide these lessons by sending them to your home by mail. If you are relatively near to any of these churches, then that is where you ought to go.

- 3) If you are not in the geographical area of any of these churches, then you need to operate under normal academic discipline when listening to a lesson. You don't surf the internet, you do not text, you do not do housework, nor do you do anything else which takes your concentration away from the message that you are listening to. Ideally speaking, if you live within driving distance of a doctrinal church, then that is where you need to be when the church doors are open.
- 4) The short explanation is, as long as you are in fellowship and growing, then you will be in the will of God.
- 5) Now, let's say that you are a new believer or a believer who has decided to get with God's program and to start growing, and you face a momentous decision (to get married, to change jobs, to move elsewhere). If you face this as a new believer or as a believer just about to get with doctrine, then you choose not to change your status until you know enough doctrine in order to make this decision. 1Cor. 7:18–24.
- 6) If you are at city A and God wants you to be in city B, do not worry. God will make that happen. Where I was raised up, I had studied God's Word for about 5 years, but I was spinning my wheels career-wise, and it did not seem as if that would change anytime in the near future. I began exploring my options in other cities. On my list of 3 cities to move to, #3 on the list (and, way, way down from #2) was Houston. I thought of moving to Houston because Bob Thieme was teaching Bible doctrine there. However, this was so far down the list from my 1st and 2nd choices. In any case, every door closed to me for my first two choices; and door after door after door opened for me for choice #3. God did almost everything necessary to move me in that direction.
- 7) When it comes to your day-to-day life, God has things mapped out. You have a job or school that you go to, which takes up perhaps 9–10 hours of your day. You do this job (or attend this school) as unto the Lord. That

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- is, you function as if you are working for God, and you remain faithful in all respects, whether anyone else can see what you are doing or not. You have a couple of hours that you spend eating, an hour for Bible teaching, and a few hours for relaxation. If you stay in fellowship all of this time, or get back into fellowship when you get out, then you are in the will of God.
- 8) If you do not have a job or school, then (1) you spend 9 or 10 hours of every single day looking for a job or (2) you set your sights to moving to a different city or to a different state. If you have begun to listen to a particular pastor from the list I provided, then you seriously consider packing up all that you own and move to the city where he teaches (obviously, it is normal to seek out job opportunities in that city by phone and by the internet and then you go there for interviews). God uses your lack of opportunity in city A to get you to move to city B. God allows man to enact foolish political policies, which negatively impact a particular geographical area, to move some believers from point A to point B.
- 9) Gathering together with other believers is extremely important. Heb. 10:25 exhorts us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. I have known a lot of believers over the years, many of them squared away on doctrine. However, when they go off on their own—they make no attempt to gather under the authority of a well-qualified pastor-teacher or as a group—they get goofy, and I can name a whole host of believers I have known in my life who stopped gathering under this sort of authority, and got goofy. Personally, I gather with believers under the ministry of R. B. Thieme III every time the church is in session, and, on off-nights, listen to his father's teaching. Even though I clearly understand what God's will is for my life, that does not mean I no longer need to study under my pastor's authority.

Again, the key to being in the will of God is to be in fellowship, to grow spiritually, and to carry out your duties in life (at your job, in school, or in the home) as unto the Lord.

This is taken, in part, from http://www.divineviewpoint.com/Gods_will_your_life.pdf (Buddy Dano's website) and edited and appended. Also used as a reference: http://rbthieme.org/Divine_Guidance.pdf which is an online booklet which I strongly recommend, if this is an area of the Christian life where you want more information.