

June 29, 2003

Week Thirty-four: "Discerning God's Will"

Day One: Small Group Guide

Read: Ruth 4 (p. 293)

Read: Commentary (p. 292)

Reflect: How do you usually try to discern God's will for your life?

Dig: What tragedies appear in this story?

See Genesis 19:30-38 (p. 23)

See Ruth 1:1-5 (p. 290)

See Genesis 38 (p. 46)

What does this research tell you about God's use of even evil circumstances?

How is Ruth related to King David? See Ruth 4:21-22.

Apply: History is God's story, a weaving together of human responsibility and God's sovereignty. Reflect on how that has been true in your own life.

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Day Two: "Do All to the Glory of God"

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 (p. 1316)

Read: Commentary (p. 1317)

Reflect: What comes to mind for you in the phrase "the glory of God"?

Dig: This passage deals with eating meat offered first to other gods. Read Romans 14:1-8 (p. 1298). What other issues were current in Paul's day about which people had differences?

What is the "rule of thumb" that Paul uses to restrict our freedom in verse 32?

How is what Paul said about pleasing people in verse 32 different from the character flaw of being a "people pleaser"?

Apply: Think of something that you need to make a decision about. It could be as simple as who to spend time with or what to do with your day. Now consider this quote from George Mueller:

"I seek in the beginning to get my heart in such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will. When one is in that state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what his will is."

Ask God for such a surrendered heart. Then go face your day!

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Day Three: "Divine Guidance"

Read: 2 Kings 2 (p. 402)

Read: Commentary (p. 403)

Reflect: Who do you rely on to guide you when considering what God's will is for your life?

Dig: Read the "Freedom Point" on p. 404. What is Elisha's first miracle (see verse 19) and what does this first miracle tell you about Elisha's character?

How close was Elisha to Elijah? Who did Elisha need to rely upon now that Elijah was gone?

How had God already prepared Elisha to follow in Elijah's footsteps? What gifts did Elisha have from God?

The commentary on page 403 states that our desires and gifts and abilities are all involved in discerning God's will. What did you learn by reading these two paragraphs?

Apply: In seeking what God's will is for your life and fulfillment, ask God to give you the heart to delight in him and then to live your life as he has gifted you.

For example, if you are gifted to have mercy, then you will probably love a ministry to those who are disadvantaged. What desire has God placed deep within you?

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Day Four: "Making Wise Decisions"

Read: Deuteronomy 32:28-29 (p. 228)

Read: Commentary (p. 229)

Reflect: What makes for a discerning, wise person? Do you know such a person? If so, why did you choose that person as your example of a discerning person?

Dig: What is the context of this scripture passage? See the beginning of the chapter and verses 44-47 to understand this.

In the margin, we are encouraged to look up two cross-references:

Deut. 5:29 (p. 198)

Psalms 81:13 (p. 646)

Look these up and tell how they illuminate the passage from Deuteronomy.

Considering the 10 questions listed in the commentary, why is the last one last? Why might it be that the previous questions are important to ask first?

Apply: Psalm 37:4 says "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." Ask God for his delight to envelop you today.

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Day Five: "God Guides a Moving Ship"

Read: Acts 16:1-10 (p. 1256)

Read: Commentary (p. 1258)

Reflect: Is it right to ask for God's guidance when you are not already moving in God's ways?

Dig: The theme of this lesson is that "God guides a moving ship." How was Paul already moving in God's will when God gave a mid-course correction?

What might the phrase "...having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia" mean about the normal frustrations to our plans from day to day?

The commentary states "Rattling doors in an attempt to find an open one is not God's way. We should be content where we are and prove ourselves faithful in what God has already assigned us to do." How did Paul follow this truth? Do you?

Apply: In what area of potential obedience do you need to take a step so that you are a "moving ship" that God can guide?