

God's Lifetime Calling for You

By Deron J. Biles

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Using an online Bible study site (such as www.biblegateway.com), do a search for the phrase “all your heart.” Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What kinds of things does God tell us to do with all our hearts?

Assignment Two

Read John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; and 7:16–19. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What do these passages tell us about Jesus’ pursuit of God’s will?

Assignment Three

Read Acts 16:6–10. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: Why do you think the Spirit of God prevented Paul from going to Asia and Bithynia?

Scripture to Memorize

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that the plan God has for our lives is not just better than any plan we could ever have for ourselves; it’s the answer to the question of why we exist.

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He and his wife Jaye have been married twenty-eight years and have four sons: Joshua, Timothy, Jonathan, and David. They also have three daughters-in-law and one granddaughter. Deron served as a pastor for fifteen years and has also served as interim or transitional pastor in nine churches.

Deron is the author of *After God's Heart: Becoming the Man God is Seeking* along with its companion volume, *After God's Heart: Becoming the Man God Is Seeking, a Forty-Day Bible Study*. He is the coauthor of *Seminary Education by Extension: Process, Principles, and Practices*. In addition, he has written or cowritten manuals on pastor search committees, making resumes, interim ministry, and associational ministry. Deron and his wife currently reside in North Richland Hills, Texas.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

True story: One night a young man was coming home after church and set his Bible on the top of his car before driving off. Later that night a young couple saw the Bible lying in the street, open to Proverbs 3. The Spirit of God spoke to the young man as he read Proverbs 3:5–6. He recommitted his life to the plan he knew God had for him. God will work to reveal His will to you. It's your job to follow.

Introduction

There's a difference between an occupation and a vocation. An occupation is what you do to pay the bills. A vocation is a calling. Someone has said an occupation is what you get paid for and a vocation is what you were made for. Os Guinness said, "Answering the call of our Creator is the 'ultimate why' for living."

God's will for your life doesn't have to be a mystery. Far too often people fundamentally over-complicate God's will. Even the way we say "finding God's will" suggests that it is something elusive or difficult to find. The words "God's will" obviously suggest that it is something God wants for us. Think about that. If God wants something for your life, don't you think He will work to make it clear to you?

Solomon gave us a better approach—following the direction of God in our lives. Proverbs 3 begins with an admonition from Solomon to his son. Solomon addressed his son twenty-five times in the book, suggesting that the book is at least partly intended to be practical instructions from a father to a child. Look what he said about God's will in Proverbs 3:5–6. He told his son the two things God wants from every young person. They are both written in the form of a command, and they are followed by a promise.

Read Proverbs 3:5–6 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 5. Trust. This is the first command. **Trust in the LORD.** What or whom do you trust? Our coins state that, as a country, we trust in God, but do our actions reveal that? To *trust* means "to believe or to have confidence in someone or something." Just as you trusted that the chair on which you are sitting would hold you up, God wants you to trust in Him.

That means we recognize that the plans we make are not as important as God's plans for us.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now answer the following question: What kinds of things does God tell us to do with all our hearts?

Studying the Passage

God wants you to trust Him with every part of your life, not holding back any part. What happens when we trust God with only some of our hearts?

Verse 5. do not lean on your own understanding. The last part of verse 5 further explains how we are to trust God. We trust Him by not relying on ourselves. We should never try to do

God's will our way. Instead, the Hebrew word translated *lean* suggests our dependence on Him. Interestingly, the one thing Solomon instructs us not to rely on is our own understanding. In other words, we don't trust in what we think is right or what the culture says is right. This means we are to trust God with our hearts and our minds.

Remember that Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane just before His crucifixion, asked if there was another way than the cross. However, He ended His prayer by saying, "Yet not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36). Jesus trusted God's plan for His life.

Discussion Question

Do you trust that God's plan for you is better than the preferences you have for yourself?

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now answer the following question: What do John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; and 7:16–19 tell us about Jesus' pursuit of God's will?

Studying the Passage

Verse 6. acknowledge Him. This is the second command. The word *acknowledge* comes from the Hebrew word "to know" and conveys the idea of knowing something through the senses. The parenthetical phrase explains how we are to acknowledge God, "In all your ways." Thus, our ways should demonstrate that we have come to know God. Every area of our lives should reveal God, be changed by Him, and make Him known.

The phrase "all your ways" stands in parallel with the phrase "all your heart" in verse 5. They accentuate the expectations behind the command. We are to trust God with all our hearts and acknowledge Him in all our ways.

On Your Own

In the space below, write several ways you want to acknowledge God with all your heart.

Studying the Passage

Verse 6. He will make straight your paths. This is what happens when we do our part. When we trust Him with all our hearts and acknowledge Him with all our ways, He gives direction to our lives. That means He shows us where to go. Are you waiting on God's direction in your life? This is where we start.

This verse in Hebrew is an emphatic promise that when we trust and acknowledge Him, He surely "will make your paths straight." Straight paths are better than crooked ones. The word *straight* implies the direct path to the accomplishment of His will. Perhaps your life has taken a detour. Trust God. He can make your path straight again.

Read Romans 12:1–2. Here Paul explains that our lives are intended to be offered as sacrifices to God. We are not to conform, but be transformed, which takes place by the renewal (or complete change for the better) of our minds. The change in us is proof that His work in us is

real. The evidence is in our transformation. Then when the conduct of our lives is combined with the transformation of our minds, we demonstrate the will of God. God declared in Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the plans that I have for you." If we want to know His plans, we look to Him and listen for Him. You find God's will by

- following Him (John 10:27).
- giving your life completely to Him (John 15:5).
- trusting in His Word (Psalm 119:105).
- seeking Him in prayer (Jeremiah 33:3).

That's what it means to trust and acknowledge Him.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now answer the following question: Why do you think the Spirit of God prevented Paul from going to Asia and Bithynia?

Do you want to know God's will for your life? It begins with your absolute trust in Him and your complete acknowledgment of Him. Then He promises to make it clear to you. And God always keeps His promises.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

The Bible speaks often about knowing God's will. God has a plan for your life and desires to make it clear to you, but God will not force you to do it. You must choose to follow Him.

Sensing God's direction is hard when your life is going the wrong way. Some people want to chart their own direction for their lives and ask God to bless their plans, but that's not how God works. If we want to know His will for us, we must begin by following Him.

Solomon reminded his son of two expectations God has of us if we want to pursue God's plan for our lives.

1. The first command is to trust in God with all of our hearts and purposefully choose not to follow what we think is best.
2. The second command is to acknowledge Him. That means to admit that His way is right.

So we are to trust Him by surrendering our will and accepting His for our lives. Then the promise is that God will straighten out the crookedness of our paths.

The Bible records that when the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt they journeyed through the wilderness of Sinai for forty years. Much of that time was spent traveling in circles, but when they committed to follow God's plan, He led them straight into the land of His promise. That's what God will do for your life, too, if you will trust Him.

In a sense, everything in Proverbs 3:5–6 that comes after the word "trust" simply defines what that word means and describes what happens when we embrace that attitude. Trust Him. Acknowledge Him as the Lord of your life. Then He will give your life direction.

Follow up Question

How much faith and trust do you have in God's plan for your future?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.