

DID JESUS SAY THAT?

“Can you miss God’s will for your life?”

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34; 7:21

Delivered during the COVID-19 crisis via Livestream at Central Baptist Church on July 19, 2020,

by Pastor Steven Edelman

(SLIDE 1) INTRODUCTION:

Good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us online. We are so glad you are with us. My name is Steve, and I am one of the pastors here at Central. A big congratulations to Josh and Leanne on their new baby boy!

Today, we are on part 2 of the series “Did Jesus say that?” and I would like to focus on the question “**can you miss God’s will for your life?**” In other words, if you make a wrong decision, can you be outside of God’s will? **Does Jesus say that?**

STORY: I have personally really wrestled with this question.

I remember in high school when I had to create an integrated post-graduation career plan. It involved me completing a self-assessment test, which can lead to many different career choices. Ultimately, I had to answer the question **what do I want to be when I grow up? There are so many options and it’s like walking into a mall or mega store and saying you only get a couple purchases that will last a lifetime. Make sure you choose right! Most of us had no idea and just picked something that interested us.**

However, when it came time to actually picking a career, I filled out an application to Berkley and an application to Bible school. I remember holding both of them in my hands not knowing what to do.

During this time, I also was struggling with a decision about what to do for a summer job. **I had two really good options.** One option paid well and would allow me to be debt free. The other option was going to work at Camp Qwanoes as a counselor and help with the music. Honestly, I was losing sleep over this decision. I talked to my dad, friends, and I was leaning toward keeping making more money as it would set me up for a better future. However, I still couldn’t make up my mind. Then one day I felt like I needed some outside advice. As I was walking down the hallway in the music wing at Briercrest, one of my professors named Ken Dosso had his door open and I just

dropped in. I laid out the two options: debt free or a really great ministry option. He said, **“how much more are you really going to make if you take the high paying job? Think about the big picture, is that amount of money really going to make a difference 10 or 20 years from now?”** It was a quick three-minute conversation, but it became clear. I needed to go to Camp Qwanoes!

You too may be facing different decisions related to your career, your relationship to God and others, and the use of your time and money. Some of you may be asking questions like: what kind of work or career should I pursue? Should I change jobs? Should I get married or stay single? Should I get a cat? Dog? Or a Guinea pig? What kind of volunteer work should I do in the church or outside the church? When should I retire or retire again?

And behind these choices may be a niggling question about what if I get it wrong? What if I can't pay my mortgage? Or if I get a divorce does it mean I wasn't following God's will for my life.

Many of the choices we make are often connected to a broader question: **What is God's plan for my life? and can we get it wrong?** We often hear things like, I will pray that God will open or close a door for you so you will know God's direction. **With so many questions, it's no surprise that so many of us are desperate to know the will of God for our lives. If God has a wonderful plan for my life, how can I discover what it is? Does it even matter?**

So, the question is, how do we know if we are doing God's will or not? To help us address this question, I want to focus on three things:

- 1. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL**
- 2. GOD'S PRESCRIBED WILL**
- 3. GOD'S DIRECT WILL FOR YOUR LIFE**

First, to find God's direction for our life, we must understand what God's sovereign will is.

(SLIDE 2) QUESTION #1 – WHAT IS GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL?

(SLIDE 3) *Look with me at Matthew 7:21 says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”* What is the will of my Father? Is this God's sovereign will?

WHAT IS GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL?

It's God's rule over creation, history, and what is to come. It means He is the all-powerful creator who preserves and steers everything in the universe. God didn't just create the world and then essentially abandoned it. But God is actively related to and involved in the creation at each moment, creation is distinct from him.¹

(SLIDE 4) a) God's control over big events:

(SLIDE 5) Let's look at *Ephesians 1:11* says, "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."

(SLIDE 6) *Isaiah 46:9–1* says, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"

The Bible says that God is in control of all the big events like creation, Noah's flood, and the crucifixion of Christ. It was all part of his plan. God is even in control when natural disasters happen like hurricanes and tornados. God is still sovereign when we struggle to understand terrorist attacks like 911, pandemics, or when one human mistreats another. As you are going to see, God works out these circumstances according to His own good and sovereign purposes that somehow include us.

Question: Does God only control the big events? No, God is also in the details!

God is in control of the tiny details.

(SLIDE 7) b) God's control over tiny events:

(SLIDE 8) Look with me at *Matthew 10:29–30*: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

Notice that Jesus says, "not one of them fall apart from God the Father. In other words, God is deeply involved in all the details. He doesn't just plan out a few of the big-

¹ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 315). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

ticket items. He knows the smallest sparrow and the grayest hair. And neither falls to the ground unless our heavenly Father wills it.²

(SLIDE 9) *Psalm 139:16*: “Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.” Notice that the Psalmist says, that God wrote and knows your story before it even happened.

ILLUSTRATION:

(Show TITLE SLIDE 10) I remember a time when I was driving on a sunny winter day with beautiful glistening snow on each side of the road. I was driving home on the highway and I started to turn with the bend in the road and I suddenly hit black ice and started losing control of the car. The black ice pushed me into ongoing traffic, and I had to make a decision! In a split second I had to make a calculation and act. I knew that if I did nothing it would result in a head on collision. At 100 km per hour that would not end well. I also knew that if I corrected the turn on ice, it would put me in a spin, and it would still result in a collision. My instincts caused me to swerve the other direction and hit the snowy ditch at 100 km per hour. Everything went into slow motion. When I hit the snow in the ditch, I felt the car starting to flip over and somehow there was just enough snow to absorb the car keeping it from flipping. I remember seeing white as we were buried in the snow. **I was emotionally shaken but physically intact.** I had escaped what seemed to be certain injury and probably death.

What do we say about this incident? Some people would say I was “lucky.” I escaped “by chance.” It just *happened* to be the case that I was able to maneuver the car into the ditch. Or was it the hand of God? We may even feel as if an angel guided the car. But we did not actually see an angel. Nor did we see a hand reaching down from heaven to protect us. Was it just our imagination? Was our escape a “miracle,” or was it lucky?

What if someone tells a real-life story of being in a horrible accident, maybe it ends in death or losing an arm or a leg, and spending months recovering. From our standpoint, the accident could have been avoided, if only the oncoming car had swerved a little earlier

² DeYoung, K. (2014). [*Just do something: a liberating approach to finding god's will*](#). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

or a little later. **Was the accident “by chance”? Was God in control?** If I am ready to acknowledge God’s control when myself or a loved one escapes an accident, should I also acknowledge that God is in control when someone else suffers from an unpredictable tragedy? Or is this beyond God’s control? Or did they just miss God’s will?

In other words, the Bible says we are not at the mercy of random chaos.

Does this mean that we are all just robots? No. As you are going to see God leaves room for us to make decisions and we are responsible for them.

(SLIDE 11) Charles Spurgeon says, “The Christian believes that an invisible hand is always on the world’s tiller, and that wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That re-assuring knowledge prepares him for everything. He looks over the raging waters and sees the spirit of Jesus treading the billows, and he hears a voice saying, “It is I, be not afraid” and so, believing that God rules all, that He governs wisely, that He brings good out of evil, the believer’s heart is assured, and he is enabled calmly to meet each trial as it comes.”³

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 12)

***The skeptic would say that everything happens by chance.**

Chance events play a role not only in ordinary life but also in some scientific theories. Darwinism says that the first life originated by chance. Random mutations led gradually to other forms of life; random combinations of genetic material gradually resulted in humanity and the world that we live in today.

How do we respond to chance and the Darwinist account? **We also need to ask, what is this idea of “chance” on which Darwinism builds?** Some have illustrated this theory as a random explosion that goes off in a photocopier room and rather than creating chaos, it creates an orderly detailed library. I think it takes more faith to believe that this world just happened by chance rather than by an all-powerful God who is in control.

APPLICATION:

³ Poythress, V. S. (2014). *Chance and the Sovereignty of God: A God-Centered Approach to Probability and Random Events* (p. 31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

This means whoever is President or Prime Minister, or if you are in a difficult marriage, or if you are struggling with making ends meet, **God is in control.**

You may be asking yourself. Did I marry the wrong person? Well, what does your marriage license say? Did I get the wrong kid when I came home from the hospital? Well, who did you take home from the hospital? **Yes, there will be trouble because of sin.** Yes, you are going to make some really bad decisions. However, God is using all the details to make a masterpiece. This should give us assurance that good and bad things in life don't just happen by chance.

To answer the question, can we miss God's sovereign will? By God's sovereign will, I mean.....The answer is no. As it cannot be broken or disobeyed. It will come to pass.

Secondly, to find God's direction for our life, we must understand what God's prescribed will is.

(SLIDE 13) QUESTION #2 – WHAT IS GOD'S PRESCRIBED WILL

The other category - is God's prescriptive will. What is God's prescriptive will?

(SLIDE 14) *Look with me at Matthew 7:21 says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

So, take note that Jesus is talking about a future event here. He is talking about the day and the moment in which we die and stand before God and say, "Lord, Lord, or King, King," please grant me access to the kingdom of heaven with you. Jesus is saying if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, **you need to do the will of the Father.**

What is the will of the Father here? It's God's prescribed will. It's talking about a life of **obedience which is connected to knowing Jesus in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven.** It's following the example of Jesus on a regular basis. It's God's commandments and desires for humanity as expressed in scripture.

In other words, God's prescribed will can be broken. It can be disregarded and disobeyed every day by each one of us.

Let me highlight a few passages that speak of God's prescriptive will for our life. I will underline the prescriptive instructions or commands.

(SLIDE 15) Matthew 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The will of God in this passage does not refer to the way God ordains things, but to the way God commands us to live. Walking in the will of God for the apostle John is the opposite of worldliness.

(SLIDE 16)

John 14:15 says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Acts 5:29 “We must obey God rather than men.”

1 Peter 1:14 “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance...”

1 John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”

The will of God, as His will of desire, means that we do what is pleasing in His sight and delight in Him. **Doing the will of God means we say no to the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and our pride in possessions. But rather delighting in a life of obedience.** This is his prescribed will for us.

ILLUSTRATION:

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 17) Think of doctor who gives a patient direction and a prescription after getting hurt. The doctor will write up and prescribe medicine so that you can treat the injury. In most cases, after the medicine is prescribed it’s your responsibility to pick it up and take the measured dose at the right time. If you don’t take it, you know what happens.... you may get worse, not better.

However, there are also times in which we can’t apply the prescription and we need to rely on the expertise of a medical professional.

APPLICATION:

In a similar way, God has prescribed what is best for us and administers the spiritual medicine through the Gospel message and the Holy Spirit because of Jesus did on the cross. It is the will of God that we do not live in a life of sin. It is the will of God

that we have no other gods before Him; that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves; that we refrain from lying, stealing, coveting, and hating your brother or sister. It's the will of God that we make disciples of Jesus. The will of God is violated and broken whenever His law is broken.

So, the answer to the question, **can we miss God's prescriptive will for our life? The answer is yes.** Each time you and I make a decision to sin we are breaking God's will.

To summarize, the two theological categories (God's sovereign will and God's prescriptive will) can help us reconcile both God being in control and human responsibility. However, we must note that God is sovereign, but He is not the author of sin. We are under His sovereignty, but we are not free from responsibility for our actions.⁴

Someone said, **“Obviously there is a large element of mystery to how these two wills of God work together. The best way I've come to understand their relationship is that God brings about his sovereign will through the free choices of human beings. People make real choices that have real consequences, but God is still in control of the outcomes of those choices.**

People often want to emphasize “cause” in these conversations about the will of God. I think it is more helpful to emphasize “control.” God doesn't cause everything (like sin), but he is in control of everything (even sin).”

As you can see, the prescriptive will of God can be broken and disobeyed each day by each one of us.

Lastly, what is God's direct will for your life?

(SLIDE 18) QUESTION #3 – WHAT IS GOD'S DIRECT WILL FOR YOUR LIFE?

Most of the time this is the question that we are trying to answer when we make big decisions! These are the decisions that keep us up at night and give us anxiety when we don't know what to do! “Do I stay or do I go!”

⁴ DeYoung, K. (2014). *Just do something: a liberating approach to finding god's will*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

(SLIDE 19) Look with me at Matthew 6:25-27; 31-32, which says, “²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”

Jesus is saying, that He does not want us to worry about the future. God knows what we need to carry on for tomorrow. **God knows the number of our days and when we will die. And as long as He wants us to live, we will live.** He will provide us with resources like food, drink, housing, with everything that we need to live and glorify Him in this life until He wants us to glorify Him by dying. **Our worrying and obsessing about the future and trying to figure out the direct will of God, will not add one single hour to your life! It will certainly not make you happy or more like Jesus.**

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 20) Worry and anxiety reflect our hearts’ distrust in the goodness and sovereignty of God. Worry is a spiritual issue and must be fought with faith. God’s way is not to show us what tomorrow looks like or even to tell us what decisions we should make tomorrow. That’s not His way because that’s not the way of faith. God’s way is to tell us that He knows tomorrow, He cares for us, and therefore, we should not worry.

To borrow from Kevin DeYoung, “So, here’s the real heart of the matter: **Does God have a secret will of direction that He expects us to figure out before we do anything?** And the answer is no. Yes, God has a specific plan for our lives. And yes, we can be assured that He works things for our good in Christ Jesus. And yes, looking back we will often be able to trace God’s hand in bringing us to where we are. But while we are free to ask God for wisdom, He does not burden us with the task of trying to figure out His will of direction for our lives ahead of time.

The second half of that last sentence is crucial. **God does have a specific plan for our lives, but it is not one that He expects us to figure out before we make a decision.**"⁵

So, what is the will of God for your life?

(SLIDE 21) Look with me at Matthew 6:33 which says, ³³ **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**" Jesus is saying that the will of God for you is to "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." In other words, this gives us a clear target to aim for. For example, God's will for your life is not sitting idle and do nothing before we get clear direction from God. Actually, it's the exact opposite.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 22) At times, we can over spiritualize things. Should I go golfing today? Should I eat KD or a Hotdog? No clear sign. If you don't get a clear sign should you do nothing? **Jesus is saying I have told you what to do. Don't over complicate it.**

He is calling you to run hard after Him, His commands, and His glory. The decision to be in God's will is not the choice between restaurants and beaches. **It's the daily decision to seek the face of God and His God's kingdom rather than yours! It's submitting to His lordship or not, live according to His rules or your own.** The question God cares about most **is not** "Where do you live and did you have a great vacation?" **but** "Do I love the Lord with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind, and do I love my neighbor as myself?"

To clarify, at times God will help you to make decisions (it's called wisdom). God does care about your future. God is directing your path and in guiding you amidst the chaos of your life. Yes, at times we need to rest and be still before God. However, once we have the most important thing in place, God is calling us to just do something! That something involves making disciples and seeking first the kingdom of God. One pastor, Dr. Herb Anderson, once said that the boat needs to be moving forward before God can steer it.

⁵ DeYoung, K. (2014). *Just do something: a liberating approach to finding god's will*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

So, yes in the process of making decisions as you are seeking first the kingdom of God the bible talks about some **guideposts to making good decisions:**

(SLIDE 23)

- a) **Seek godly input (Proverbs 11:14)**
- b) **Pay attention to how God has wired you (1 Peter 4:10)**
- c) **Surrender your will to God's (Romans 12:1-2)**
- d) **Listen to God's Spirit (John 10:27)**

John 10:27 says, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."*

The problem in the western world is that we almost have too many choices. We try to create fancy plans for our life. However, God may have a better plan that involves making you and I more like him!

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 24) ILLUSTRATION: A young man named Chris Norton who was on course to be a professional football player had his plans changed. He says, "I was a college football player. I saw the opening for a tackle, but I mistimed my jump by a split second. Instead of being in front of the ball, I collided with the ball carrier's legs. And in an instant, I lost all feeling and movement from my neck down. I was told I would never be able to move again. I could have let it define me. But our lives aren't shaped by circumstance. They're shaped by us. Perseverance isn't about the physical act of standing: it's about attitude, and the ability to shape yourself in the face of adversity."

Let's watch his story together: (PLAY VIDEO)

CONCLUSION:

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 25) What can easily get lost in all the decisions people face today, is the very thing God has called you to do. So, ask yourself this: **How can I better seek first the kingdom of God and have long-term impact? How can I serve most effectively and fruitfully in the local church? How can I free myself up to help make more well-rounded disciples of Christ?**

In the words of Kevin DeYoung, "Simply put, *God's will is your growth in Christlikeness.* God promises to work all things together for our good that we might be

conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28–29). God never assures us of health, success, or ease. But He promises us something even better: He promises to make us loving, pure, and humble like Christ. In short, God’s will is that you and I get happy and holy in Jesus.

Just do something for Christ! But, put aside the passivity and the quest for complete fulfillment and the perfectionism and the preoccupation with the future, and for God’s sake start making some decisions in your life. **If you are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, you will be in God’s will, so just go out and do something.**

Don’t wait.”

Announcements:

Ask anything

Urban Adventures

Communion next Sunday