

e-concepts

A Weekly Publication of Relational Concepts Inc. By Dr. David DeWitt

Problems with Seeking an Individual Will of God

I suggest that the Bible nowhere teaches us to look for an individual will of God for our lives. There is a sovereign plan of God being worked out in the lives of believers individually, and the righteous character of God is revealed in the Bible for everyone to follow individually. But there is no personal will of God which we should try to identify in (non-moral) areas not revealed in the Bible—such as, taking a certain job, going to a certain school, buying or selling a house or marrying a certain person.

1. When we pray for something and look for something, we tend to find something, whether or not it exists. When I ask, “Should I buy a different house?” something will come along sooner or later which I will interpret as an answer. Of course, God may specifically give us what we specifically ask for, and we should give thanks in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18). But there is no conclusive way to know any specific event is that answer. We cannot determine God’s individual involvement. God is God, not a “Jeannie in a bottle.”
2. Circumstances and feelings (often interpreted as “the work of the Holy Spirit”) can lead to frustration when we get mixed signals.
3. Foolish, even disastrous, decisions are justified by “God led me to...”, thus removing personal responsibility.
4. In non-moral areas, there is no simple way to tell if circumstances are from God, the Devil, or wishful thinking.
5. Circumstances and hindrances to circumstantial leading might be a closed door or a test of faith, each requiring the opposite response.
6. Foolish delays can be incurred while “waiting on God.”
7. The individual-will mentality must be subjectively abandoned at some point. We do not usually look for “guidance” in putting on our socks in the morning.
8. Seeking one right individual will, can keep us from gratitude for several good opportunities.
9. To add something to the Bible (like circumstances or feelings) only tends to color or negate the Bible’s input. Circumstantial opportunities might justify sinful debt, an unbiblical marriage, or illegitimate leadership.
10. Using the Bible out of context, by, say, opening it to a chance verse or phrase, is to use it as a pair of dice or a deck of cards, such as the old joke, “Judas hanged himself ... go thou and do likewise.”

Finding God’s Will—The Way of Wisdom

Since God has only revealed His sovereign plan (realized through what actually happens) and His directive will (stated in the Bible), then we can assume these are sufficient for decision making. In other words, the teaching of the Bible dictates our moral actions, and wisdom derived from the Bible directs our non-moral decisions. (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17)

*For more information see study paper **The Will of God and the Call of God at relationalconcepts.org P.O. Box 141456 • Grand Rapids, MI 49514***