Knowing God’s Voice

AND WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

Dr Steve Van Wyk | Senior Pastor at TEAM IMPACT CHURCH - Tweed Heads

A relationship before a decision

Learning to recognise the Shepherd and follow His guidance

What is God’s will for my life?

It is a question many believers ask when facing decisions about relationships, work, ministry, family and everyday life. Learning to recognise God’s voice helps us understand His will and respond in obedience.

Our decisions shape the direction of our lives. Even small choices can have lasting consequences. Yet knowing God’s will begins with knowing God Himself.

Listening began in the garden

Adam and Eve were created for fellowship with God and given responsibilities within His creation. They also received a clear command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their story introduces a question that continues throughout Scripture: whose voice will we believe and obey?

Read: Genesis 1–3.

The Shepherd knows His sheep

> *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”*
> ***John 10:27***

Jesus describes a personal relationship between the Shepherd and His sheep. He knows us, we learn to recognise His voice, and we follow Him. Listening therefore involves more than receiving information; it includes responding.

Through Scripture, prayer and fellowship, we grow in familiarity with God. We seek His guidance as people who belong to Him, rather than simply looking for an answer to an immediate problem.

Further reading: John 10:14, 16, 27.

REFLECT
Am I seeking only an answer from God, or am I growing in my relationship with Him?

Which voice has our attention?

Friends, family, advisers and the wider culture all influence us. Our own preferences, fears, feelings and ambitions also shape what we hear. Temptation and deception can draw us away from God, while our Father calls us to trust and obey Him.

The loudest voice is not necessarily the wisest voice. A familiar voice is not automatically God’s voice. Recognising the Shepherd matters because other voices compete for our attention.

THIS WEEK
Notice which voices most influence your decisions. Make room to listen through Scripture and prayer.

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Guidance in everyday decisions

Wise counsel, changing circumstances, and open or closed doors

Receive wise counsel

God can guide us through wise Christian counsel. We do not always see our own situation clearly, and another person may recognise something we have overlooked. Receiving counsel requires humility.

> *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise."*
> ***Proverbs 12:15***

Proverbs 11:14 also describes safety in a multitude of counsellors. Consider advice alongside Scripture and prayer, rather than seeking only people who will agree with a preferred decision.

ASK YOURSELF
Do I seek wise counsel, or look for someone who will agree with me?

Interpret circumstances carefully

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. Years later, he recognised that God had worked through his suffering to preserve lives during famine. Joseph could not control everything that happened to him, yet God continued to work.

Read: Genesis 37–50; Genesis 45:5–8.

Paul also described being hindered from visiting the Thessalonians. Although he could not visit as intended, his written ministry continued to encourage believers. An obstacle does not place a situation beyond God's ability to work.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

> *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."*
> ***Romans 8:28***

Circumstances still require discernment. Jonah found a ship travelling away from the place God had told him to go. Its availability did not cancel God's instruction. Convenience alone is not confirmation.

Open doors can include opposition

Paul recognised a significant opportunity for ministry at Ephesus even though he faced opposition. He wrote of "a great door and effectual" alongside "many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:8–9). Difficulty alone does not prove that a door is closed.

Closed doors can redirect us

In Acts 16:6–7, Paul and his companions were prevented from entering certain areas for ministry. A closed door does not necessarily mean failure. It may call for patience or a change of direction.

REFLECT
Am I willing to trust God when an opportunity is delayed or redirected?

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Attentive to the Holy Spirit

Growing in spiritual responsiveness and discerning what we receive

Led by the Spirit

> *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*
> ***Romans 8:14***

The Holy Spirit guides believers as they learn to depend on Him. Ezekiel 36:26–27 speaks of a new heart and a new spirit, while John 16:13 describes the Spirit of truth guiding into truth.

Proverbs 20:27 pictures the spirit of man as the Lord’s candle. Like a lamp that illuminates the next steps, this image helps us understand guidance as we walk with God.

Develop spiritual attentiveness

Meditating on God’s Word, making time for prayer and reflection, and responding to conviction help us remain attentive. Consider impressions carefully alongside Scripture and wise counsel.

Read: Joshua 1:8; Proverbs 16:1, 9; Proverbs 21:1.

Our feelings and reasoning influence decisions, but neither should be treated as unquestionable evidence of God’s direction. Our conscience also needs to remain responsive to God rather than repeatedly ignoring conviction.

Further reading: 1 Timothy 4:2.

In Acts 27:10, Paul expressed a perception concerning danger on a voyage. That account does not describe his warning as a dream, vision or audible voice.

Dreams and visions in Scripture

Scripture records dreams that brought warnings, promises and direction. Examples include Abimelech (Genesis 20:3), Jacob (Genesis 31:11–13), Joseph (Genesis 37), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5) and the wise men (Matthew 2:12).

Visions appear in the accounts of Abraham (Genesis 15), Daniel, Peter (Acts 10), Paul (Acts 16:9; 18:9–10) and John in Revelation. In these examples, dreams occur during sleep, while visions are received while awake.

DISCERN CAREFULLY
Biblical examples do not mean every dream or mental picture is a message from God.

An audible voice

Jesus spoke to Saul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:4–5). God also called Samuel, whose response offers a helpful posture for listening:

> *“Speak; for your servant hears.”*
> ***1 Samuel 3:10***

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God is not limited to one method

Recognising His purposes and responding with an attentive heart

Angels and miracles

Angels warned Lot to leave Sodom (Genesis 19), directed Philip towards the road from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26), and announced the births of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1).

At Mount Carmel, fire from the Lord led the people to acknowledge Him as God (1 Kings 18:36, 38–39). In the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and fire guided Israel (Exodus 13:21–22). The focus in these accounts is God's purpose and revelation rather than the spectacle itself.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Spiritual gifts serve God's purposes and His people. This teaching considers tongues and interpretation, prophecy, discernment of spirits, and gifts of wisdom and knowledge.

It also discusses praying in other tongues when seeking God's will. Romans 8:27 describes the Spirit's intercession in agreement with the will of God:

> *"…He that searches the hearts knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."*
> ***Romans 8:27***

Avoid a fixed expectation

Because God has communicated in a particular way before, we may assume He must repeat that method. The variety of Biblical accounts invites us to remain attentive rather than insist on a familiar experience.

REFLECT
Am I listening for God's direction, or waiting for Him to speak in the way I prefer?

Where do we spend our time?

Make room for God's Word, prayer and fasting. The teaching also encourages speaking to Him in tongues. Reflect on the place these practices have in daily life, alongside the time given to social media, eating and other routines.

The invitation is practical: know the Shepherd, become familiar with His Word, receive wise counsel, consider circumstances carefully, remain attentive to the Holy Spirit, and respond in obedience.

A prayer for the week

Father, help us recognise Your voice and understand Your will. Give us wisdom to discern, humility to receive counsel, and courage to obey. Keep our hearts attentive to Your Word and responsive to Your Spirit. Amen.