

DOING GOD'S WILL

Debunking Two Myths Related to God's Will for our Lives

In James Dobson's book *Life on the Edge* he talks about his father, who even before he was in kindergarten was tenaciously intent on becoming a great artist. His life's passion was to become another Rembrandt or Michelangelo. His desire to be an artist never wavered, from 5 years of age to 15. Then one day when he was 16 years old, he seemed to hear the Lord speaking to him. It was not an audible voice, but he knew that God had spoken to him and the message was clear and simple: "I want you to set aside your great ambition to be an artist and prepare for a life of service in the ministry."

Dobson said his father was terrified by the experience, and responded, "No! No, Lord. You know I have my plans all made and art is my consuming interest." For the next two years, the call of God reverberated in his mind. God was asking—no demanding—that he abandon his dream and become a preacher. He shared his struggle with no one.

Toward the end of his senior year in high school, his father told him to select the college of his choice and he would take care of the expenses. Would he obey God and pursue the ministry, or would he disobey God and pursue a career in art?

A few weeks before graduation, he heard the voice again. It was as if the Lord said, "Today you will have to make up your mind."

He grappled with the issue all day at school. After his last class he came home to an empty house, and began to pace back and forth in the living room, praying and struggling with this unrelenting demand of God. Finally, in an act of defiance, he suddenly turned his face upward and said, "It's too great a price, and I won't pay it!"

His father later described that moment as the most terrible experience of his life. He said the Spirit of the Lord seemed to leave him as one person would walk away from another. It would be 7 long years before he would hear the voice of God again.

We need to debunk two myths related to God's will. The first myth is that God's will is dull or boring, or something you wouldn't possibly be interested in. Too many people assume that if they were to surrender wholly to the will of God, they would have to do something they didn't want to do, go some where they didn't want to go, marry somebody they didn't want to marry, or be someone they didn't want to be. Nothing could be further from the truth. God's will is thrilling and exhilarating. No Christian who has ever submitted to the lordship of Christ has struggled with boredom. You may have some other struggles, but boredom will not be one of them.

The second myth is that God's will is difficult to find. The assumption here is that God is some sort of cosmic Easter bunny who hides His will in places we would never expect. People say, "If I only knew what God wanted me to do I would do it." Honest Christians will admit that the most difficult aspect of God's will is not *finding* it, but *doing* it. D.A. Carson is insightful here: "Very frequently we are inclined to use the expression the *will of God* to refer to God's will for my vocation or for some aspect of my future that is determined by an impending choice. We 'seek the Lord's will' over whom we should marry, over major purchases, over what church to attend when we move to a new city.

"None of this is intrinsically bad. There are many ways in which the Lord does lead us, and we should not despise them. Nevertheless this focus is often misleading, perhaps even dangerous, for it encourages me to think of 'the Lord's will' primarily in terms of my future, my vocation, my needs—and that is often another form of self-centeredness, no matter how piously put. Worse, it expunges from my consciousness the dominant ways in which the Bible speaks of the will of the Lord.

"Consider such passages as the following: 'Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground' (Ps. 143:10)... What God has mandated is his will and our responsibility is to do it" (D.A. Carson, *The Prayers of Paul*, p. 101). Simply put, the Bible plainly reveals God's will that we are to follow.

Seven years after Dobson's father said "No" to God, he finally yielded to His will. He went into the ministry, and God used art to enhance his ministry. When he died he was chairman of the art department at a Christian college. He left beautiful paintings and sculptures all over the U.S. More importantly, thousands of

people came to know Christ through his preaching ministry. For him, God's will was not dull or difficult to find, but it was hard to do at first. Can you relate?

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