



SUNDAY, JANUARY 28
8AM & 11AM ET

THY WILL BE DONE

**DISCERNING AND DOING GOD'S
WILL FOR YOUR LIFE | PART 1**

JEREMIAH 29: 4-14

A SERMON BY
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SCAN FOR PHJW
SERMON NOTES

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Date: January 28, 2024
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Sermon Title: *Thy Will Be Done, Discerning and Doing God's Will for Your Life - Part I*
Scripture: Jeremiah 29:4-14 (NRSV)

4 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. 8 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, 9 for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord. 10 For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, 14 I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

SERMON SUMMARY

This morning, Pastor Wesley begins a new sermon series entitled "Thy Will Be Done." In this morning's sermon, we learned that the greatest tool we have in our "spiritual toolbox" is knowing how to discern the will of God. Beginning with the promise from God, through the prophet Jeremiah to the exiled Israelites, Pastor Wesley opens a path for us to discover, discern, and do the will of God.

In order to do God's will we must:

- Acknowledge the struggle that is inherent in knowing God's will.
- Recognize that each of us has experienced times in our lives when God has made a decision that, in hindsight, proved to be something other than God's will for our lives.
- Believe that God has a plan/will for every aspect of our lives. There is nothing too small or unimportant. God is concerned about every aspect of our lives.

- Trust God in the small things because obedience to the small things positions us for the larger things and our next steps.
- Know that God’s plan/will address our today and our future.
- Understand that God dreams about us and imagines our lives as the fulfillment of his plans for us.
- Recognize God’s plan for us is not a prison. God will never force us to follow the Divine plan.
- Desire, seek after, and tune in to God’s will, if we are to find it.

KEY POINTS

1. The purpose of God’s will is to direct and bless our lives.
2. As disciples of Christ, the top three things Christians find difficult to do are:
 - a. #3 *Lead others to Christ*
 - b. #2 *Forgive others*
 - c. #1 *Discern the will of God*
3. Discerning the will of God is not easy, even for mature and steadfast Christians.
4. If you have never felt confused about or without clarity regarding the will of God, you probably either do not care about discerning God’s will or you are convinced you know the minds and the will of God, which no human does.
5. We wish God would send an email each morning with daily instructions.
6. When we make decisions that do not align with the will of God and find ourselves in difficult positions, God can still work things out for our good (cf. Romans 8:28).
7. In the scroll of Jeremiah, God is teaching the people to follow God’s will both for their current days and for the return to Jerusalem, which will happen 70 years in the future.
8. Discerning, discovering, and doing God’s will in the small things positions us to be ready for bigger things.
9. God will not reveal his will to a hard heart. We must truly desire to know God’s will.
10. Much like finding a particular station on the radio dial, to discern God’s will, we must:
 - a. Recognize that God is always “broadcasting” and speaking to us.
 - b. We must turn on the “receiver” of an open heart and a desire to hear God’s voice.
 - c. We must seek God with all of our hearts.
 - d. We must listen so we know what we hear from God is truly from God. We can know this because what we hear must align with the truth of God’s word.
 - e. We must turn down outside noise through fasting.
 - f. We must stay close to the source, our God, so the signal does not fade. This we do through prayer.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. The sermon opened with responses from a poll of believers, asking about the most difficult discipline of being a Christian. Which of the top 3 results match your response to the question?
2. What dreams do you imagine God has for your life, church, and world?

3. Describe something that happened in your life that you believed WAS God's will and something that you believe WAS NOT God's will. What did you see, read, hear, think, feel, or even dream that convinced you it was or was not God's will?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end is the way of death." Can you think of a way that you followed that, at the time, seemed right, but once you followed it, it killed some dream, hope, desire, or plan? What did you learn from this experience? What scriptures helped you overcome this moment?
2. Jeremiah 29 4:5 says, "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce." Have you ever been led into exile by God, and while there, you had to carry on with life even though it was an uncomfortable and foreign place? What did you learn about the will of God in that experience? How did you cope?

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Pastor Wesley reminds us to trust God in the small things because that act positions us for larger blessings. In today's sermon, we learned of a woman who trusted God with the color of her blouse, resulting in a job and more. Has God ever instructed you regarding a small detail that held an unimaginable blessing? If so, please what was the blessing? What did the experience teach you?
2. The Israelites were in captivity because of their disobedience before God. However, even in exile, God planned a future filled with hope for his people. When we fail to follow God's will and find ourselves in our own "exile," how can we find the courage to continue to seek and do God's will? What steps might we take to realign ourselves with the will of God?
3. Pastor Wesley comments that it would be great if God sent us an email or text each morning with his will for our lives for that day. What would happen if you did receive a test of this sort, but it told you very difficult news? How would you respond? Or would you prefer to avoid getting the text in the first place?

4. Pastor Wesley's sermon gives examples of three exemplary biblical characters (Samuel, Isaiah, and Jesus) who let go of their will to follow God's will. Who are the personal and public exemplars whose lives teach you how to align with God's will? Who do you trust to help you discern God's will?

5. In the sermon, we learn that if we cannot hear God, we may have moved too far away from God's "signal." What are the things, people, thoughts, or situations that draw you away from the frequency that is God's voice? How do you discern God's will when you are within range?

6. For some of us, our bodies can reveal wisdom before our minds recognize the revelation. Has your body ever been better aligned to God's will than your mind? If so, what was that experience like? What did your body teach you?

7. In this week's sermon, Pastor Wesley suggests that God does not reveal his will to a hardened heart. How does Hebrews 3:8 define a hardened heart? What are some ways we harden our hearts? How can we soften a hardened heart?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS

1. As we witness the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza, we seek to discern the will of God. Part of that discernment should include each of us asking, ‘What does God want me to do regarding the Palestinian/Israeli conflict?’ If you participated in our Seminary Saturday series, share what you learned to help Villagers answer this question.

FOR INDIVIDUAL OR VILLAGE STUDY

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever ***willfully*** disobeyed God's will for your life? As you remember this time in your life, did God ultimately use the situation for good? Might God still be working out the good from this experience? What did you learn from this time?

2. The sermon applied the metaphor of a radio station to understand the steps to hearing and doing God's will. One of the steps was to have a heart open to receive God's will. How do you prepare your heart to receive the will of God? What steps must you take?

3. Pastor Wesley tells the story of pressing the seek button to find an R&B station. He bypasses several stations until he finally hears an R&B station. Have you ever searched for God and ended up with things, people, or thoughts that seemed like God but were not? If so, how did you finally distinguish the authentic voice of God?

4. Pastor Wesley said we *must* desire to know God's will to find it, yet our human desires are often our greatest enemy when seeking God's will. Name some ways our human desires can fight against our desire to know and do God's will. What tools or practices of our faith can help us align our will with God's will?

ACTIVITY

1. The Jeremiah text tells us that God will allow himself to be found if we seek God. In this season of SEEK2024, whether you are participating or not, we must consider how we seek God. Other than prayer and fasting, what are the ways you seek God? Please be prepared to share an activity that helps you joyfully seek God.

2. Pastor Wesley quoted the gospel singer Karen Clark Sheard's song "The Will of God." Read over the lyrics and identify two lines of the song that resonate most with you. Please share your thoughts with your Village. (See Additional Resources)

SPIRIT WORK

1. The Hebrew word for thoughts or plans, in Jeremiah 29:11 is, **מַחְשְׁבָה** (makh-ash-aw-baw') and it means to dream or imagine. God is dreaming and imagining a life for Israel, both during and after the exile. God also imagines your life and may even have a Vision Board for you in heaven (see Resource Section). What do you pray is on your vision board for the future? How will you work toward discerning if this is God's will for your life? Make a vision board and use your time during the SEEK2024 fast to pray and ask God to clarify your next steps for 2024 and beyond.

2. Take a look at all of the paths, roads, episodes, twists, and turns of your life that bring you to your present position. Which of these was God's will for your life? Which ones were not? List what you learned from this retrospective and how you will apply these lessons going forward.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Vision Boards, what are they and how might you create one? <https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-create-vision-board>
2. The song "I am Available to You" by: Rev. Milton Brunson and the Thompson Community Seniors
<https://youtu.be/hxC6UD33Ah4?si=iDWeu5yiN2COCChy>
3. The song "Yes, Lord, Yes" by: Pastor Shirley Caesar
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCeAnyhooOQ>
4. The song "Will of God" by: Karen Clark Sheard
https://youtu.be/XUhK9c8cjB4?si=tq5haFuskZ_8GAWO
Lyrics: <https://genius.com/Karen-clark-sheard-the-will-of-god-lyrics>
5. If you have not registered, consider joining the Alfred Street Baptist Church's annual corporate fast, SEEK2024/iThirst. <https://www.alfredstreet.org/seek/>
6. To receive daily encouraging messages during SEEK, text 'iThirstSEEK' to 571-977-4525
7. To join the daily 7a and 7p EST prayer call, click on the photo below, or use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81246227565#success>

SEEK 2024 PRAYER LINE HAS A NEW PLATFORM

JANUARY 22 - FEBRUARY 11, 2024

CHECK OUT THE NEW VIRTUAL ZOOM LINK FOR PRAYER & SEEK 2024!

GET READY TO LOG ON OR DIAL-IN FOR LIVE PRAYER AT 7:00AM ET. >

DAILY PRAYER CALL • 7AM & 7PM ET
MONDAY THRU SUNDAY

ZOOM ID: 812 4622 7565
PHONE NUMBER: 1-301-715-8592

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