

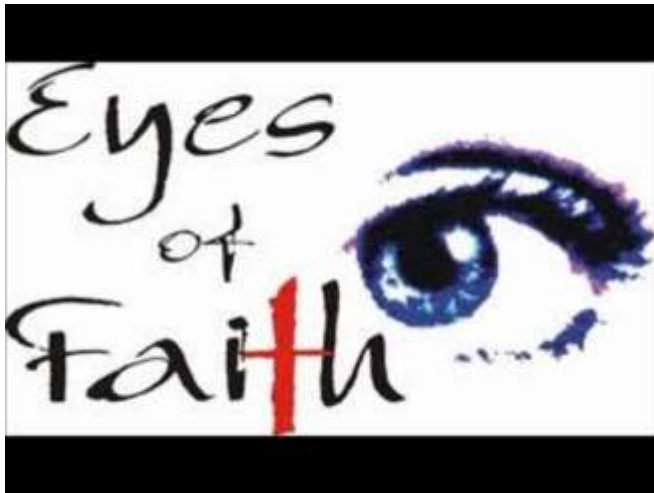
How Can I Know God's Will for Me?

When we say “God willing...” in regards to something that we hope will happen (as so many of us so often do), what are we really trying to say? Are we acknowledging the inevitability of God’s will, or are we really wishing that God’s will be changed to conform to our own? What is God’s will for each one of us and how can we discover it?

The Christian conception of Creation is that there is order and there is meaning in the world; God did not create a random universe. And God’s hope for His creation is not His alone- God’s intention from the beginning was to have humans participate in the ongoing renewal and re-creation of the world. Therefore, God has a purpose for each and every person, a purpose which is for our benefit and well-being as much as it is for the sake of those whose lives we touch.

God has made us in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), giving each of us an inherent and unbreakable relationship with Him. In a real sense, we are reflections of what God is, and by grace we have the capacity to become what God is, each in our own unique and unrepeatable way. We were not created on an assembly line- God loved each one of us with a special and unique love before we were even conceived and so God wants what is best for each one of us.

But the thing is that what God wants for each one of us is not a static and unchanging reality. It’s not just a matter of figuring out



God’s will and adapting ourselves to it whether we like it or not. God is not a tyrant and so God does not command us to do something. God works with us to discover what is best for us and what is best for the world. God works with us to find that special place in his Providence that only we can fill. All that we have to do is to pay attention, to listen to what God is saying to us, and then to follow him on the road marked out for us. We come to know God in the details of our lives- in all the good times and difficult times, in the joy and in the sorrow- and we begin to see what God is doing in our lives and what God is calling us to do.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus asks the disciples of John the Baptist who very hesitantly began to follow Jesus, “What are you looking for?” (John 1:37-38); in other words, “What are you seeking?” “What are you looking for that will satisfy you?” And of course, they are searching for God, as all of us are, whether we know it or not. We are all searching for something that will give us meaning in our lives, something that will give us a purpose in life, and ultimately only God can do that. It is possible to know and experience God in a direct way, but most of the time we come to know and experience God in the ordinary

circumstances of our life. We have to discover the truth for ourselves and that means we have to reflect on what is happening in our lives- the everyday events of our lives, what people are saying to us, the questions, the fears, the doubts we have- and then we can begin to see what God is saying to us in all that.

It takes a discipline of prayer and it takes patience and you won't hear the voice of God telling you exactly what to do, but you will get the sense of what you are supposed to do with your life and of what your part is in bringing about the Kingdom of God. There will be false starts and there will be times when we cannot make out what God is trying to say to us; there will be mistakes on our part- but all that's OK. All that is necessary is that we go forward in our relationship with God and discover with Him what our call, what our vocation is.

Reflection Questions

1. **What "attachments" do you need to be free of?**
2. **How do you allow the Gospel to form/guide you? How could that improve?**
3. **What do you see as the difference between humility and low self esteem?**
4. **How do you come to deeper self knowledge?**
5. **In religious life why would it be important that work/studies not extinguish the spirit of prayer?**
6. **Below: Write the main ideas you want to take away from this reading and reflection.**