

Scripture text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 (ESV)

Outline

^{ESV} 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 Finally, then, brothers,¹ we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live² and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body¹ in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

1. Most frequently asked question: **“What is God’s will for my life?”**
 - a. Two groups of people who would ask this question. One group of people sincerely seeks God for direction. Another group of people might have already discovered what God’s will is for a certain decision they are trying to make; however, they kept asking the question because they would like to hear a different answer.
 - b. Story of the young sailor and compass.
 - c. Are we at times like the young sailor?

Three guiding principles

1. God’s will is found in God’s Word
 - a. Some do not believe that “God’s will” can be found in God’s Word; some do not know if God’s Word is applicable to their situations.
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 as case study – Does verse 3 apply to us? (Sanctification [*hagiasmos*]: process or journey whereby we are called to grow in holiness; to be set apart for God’s glory; commit to the narrow path to be Jesus’ disciples. Use the following questions to determine:
 - Does the author mean it to be an instruction to be followed for a particular situation or to be constantly lived out as a believer? (Hint: See Verse 1 and “For” connectors)

- Are there similar instructions found in the Bible that can help to inform us of its application? (Romans 12:2)
 - Does it reflect an ongoing problem for believers across the ages? (Yes to problem of sexual immorality)
- c. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 is summation of God's will for the believer; especially where Christian living is concerned.
 - d. Other "will of God" phrases: 1 Peter 2:15; 1 Peter 3:17; Ephesians 5:15-17. Other passages in the Bible that points to God's will for us: Sermon on the Mount, Old Testament narratives.
 - e. First resource to go to when seeking God's will = God's Word. Question: We might be "seeking God", but what are we seeking Him **with**? Those who walk closely with God can hear Him better!
 - f. "The more we abide in God's Word, the less we ask what is God's will for me.....because by then we are already lost in the joy of being in the center of God's perfect will."
2. God's specific will is to be guided by His general will
 - a. General will: For all believers found in God's Word
 - b. Specific will: For the believer's unique circumstances e.g. career, marriage, faith.
 - c. Case study – We are to be sanctified or grow in holiness in all areas of our life; not just sexual purity. How does this general will of God guide our seeking of God's specific will? Can ask the following questions as we seek God:
 - i. What is my current spiritual condition? Am I spending time with the Lord on a regular basis or am I leading a secret life which nobody knows? This is an important question because it determines if you are actually in a condition to hear God; or are you so muddled in the faith that potentially you hear yourselves (or other spirits) more than you hear God.
 - ii. Will the decision that I am going to make honors God's will for me (as well as my family members) to grow in Him; even if it means to suffer for His righteousness sake?

- iii. What are my motives for thinking of the decision to make? Are my motives honorable to what is taught to me in the Bible?
3. God's will can be collectively discerned through the community of faith
 - a. Epistles are meant to be read out to the congregation
 - b. God's general will for the believers to grow in holiness is not an individual commitment; but a communal one. (Further substantiated by 1 Thessalonians 5.
 - c. In other words, when we become a Christian, our decision making process automatically includes our fellow brother and sister in Christ.
 - d. God can use other people to communicate His will to you.
 - e. Seek counsel and discernment from: those whom you know well; those whom you know will tell you the truth and not sugarcoat their words; those whom you know are having a healthy relationship with God.

Conclusion

1. Even if you discovered that you have made a bad decision, or someone has hurt you because of a bad decision, don't be too disheartened.
2. While it does not absolve us from our responsibilities and we might even have to suffer the bad consequences; remember that God is always in control. We should continue to persevere in being faithful and seek Him. (Romans 8:28)