

**How to discern
the voice and work
of the
Holy Spirit**

AND

**How to know the
Will of God**

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Truth vs. Lies and Deception

Guidelines for Christians to differentiate between the leading of the Holy Spirit and the deception and lies of Satan

What is truth?

Pilate asked Jesus, *What is truth?* Today, people still ask the same question. More and more Christians ask, *How can I know what is the truth? How does one distinguish between the voice of God and the deception of Satan?* At this time in the history of the world it is extremely difficult to distinguish between right and wrong because there is extreme tolerance for various views. For this reason, Christians want to know: *What is right? What is the Truth?* A second question that disciples often ask is, *How can I know what is God's will?* More than any other, this one question, *Lord, what is your will?* is probably the question most often put by Jesus' disciples.

The third question that is being asked more frequently in this age of deception and temptation is, *What is right? Is what is taking place from God?* This century has seen the emergence of many questionable spiritual movements and revivals. The objective of this pamphlet is to provide a few guidelines and principles that will, hopefully, help Christians to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, and serve as signposts in difficult situations.

The character of God's kingdom versus the character of the kingdom of the Evil One

To distinguish between right and wrong, truth and lies, and to discern whether something is the will of God or not, is it important to understand the character of God's kingdom. If we understand this, it will be easier for us to know when something is not born of God and that we should have nothing to do with it. If you find yourself in a situation in which you wonder whether it is God or the devil that is at work in your life, you should evaluate the situation in spiritual terms.

Love vs. hate: The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of love. Everything that falls within the framework of mercy, love and grace belongs in the Kingdom of God: love for one's neighbour, love for one's enemies, love for God and love of the truth. Where Satan is at work, there is hate, indifference, contempt and disdain of God, one's neighbours and one's enemies. Where there is no love, God is not at work.

Obedience vs. disobedience: In God's Kingdom there is obedience: people and angels obey God. Within the Trinity even the Son and the Holy Spirit are obedient to the Father. Where Satan is at work, disobedience, rebellion, lawlessness and self-righteousness reign. When God works, people subject themselves to one another, there is order, authority and submission: children submit to their parents, employees submit to their employers, church members submit themselves to the authority of the church, wives to their husbands, and believers submit to God.

Holiness vs. unholiness: Where God is at work through the Holy Spirit, all is pure, holy, clean, open, in the light. Nothing is hidden; everything is transparent. Satan flourishes on impurity, immorality, perversity, sin, unholiness, filth and sloveness -

everything is in the dusk or darkness; there is a pretence of honesty, but many things are hidden.

Giving vs. taking: Jesus was unselfish, He gave Himself without expecting payment. He came to teach us what unselfishness, generosity and self-sacrifice, grace and mercy are. Jesus came to give: to give his life, to give us gifts, to give us the Holy Spirit, to give us eternal life.

Where Satan is at work in people's hearts, there is selfishness and ambition: these people want everything and take whatever they can lay their hands on. They go overboard in many respects; they are miserly and stingy and find it very difficult to part with what belongs to them. In particular, they collect things that can be destroyed by moth and rust.

Truth vs. Lies: The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of Truth. Jesus is the Truth and whatever comes from God is Truth. The devil is the father of lies. Where lies abound, God is not involved. Satan works with injustice, iniquity and fraud. God is never associated with fraud. The disciples of Christ should never be involved in fraud, lies and injustice.

Hope and Faith vs. Despair and Doubt: The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of Hope. Hope characterises every aspect of a Christian's life. Where God is present, there is hope of and for life. All that God says and does is born of hope. But the kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of despair, darkness, disbelief and doubt. Where there is despair, darkness, disbelief and doubt, God is not at work.

Humility and Brokenness vs. Haughtiness and Pride: Jesus said, "*Learn from me humility and gentleness*". When the Spirit of God is at work in the lives of Jesus' disciples, they are characterised by humility, gentleness, brokenness, a willingness to sacrifice self-interest and take on the position of a servant, putting others first. They do not seek recognition and they are willing to crucify self and be the least.

Where Satan gains access to people's hearts, there is self-elevation, a search for own honour and recognition, pride, haughtiness, snobbery, unbrokenness, affectation, superciliousness and boasting.

Peace vs. Unrest: When God is at work, there is peace, satisfaction, restfulness, and stability. When Satan creates something it is characterised by instability, war, arguments, anger, fighting, backstabbing, antagonism, envy, unrest and dissatisfaction.

Unity vs. Dissension: God's Kingdom is characterised by unity, unison, agreement and consent. Satan's kingdom is characterised by division, strife, dissension, party forming and schisms.

Gentleness vs. Hardness: Where the Spirit of God is at work, there is gentleness, soft-heartedness, empathy, sympathy, mercy and grace. But when evil spirits are at work in people's hearts, they become hard-hearted, cold, unapproachable, brutal, merciless and judgmental.

Patience vs. Haste: In the Kingdom of God there is patience, understanding, restfulness and self-control. When Satan is at work he drives us to be hurried and over hasty. He makes us impatient; causes insanity, desperation and hysteria in our lives.

Certainty vs. uncertainty: In God's Kingdom there is certainty of salvation, security and balance. In Satan's kingdom there is uncertainty, imbalance, doubt and purposelessness. A particular characteristic of Satan's influence is fear: where Satan is at work, people are full of fear, doubt and uncertainty.

Where the Spirit is at work, the fruit of the Spirit prevails: love, joy, peace, patience, friendliness, goodness, kindness, faithful, gentleness and self-restraint **(Gal.5:22)**.

Voice of the Holy Spirit vs. the voice of Satan

Under this heading there are a number of guidelines that will help you to distinguish between the voice of the Holy Spirit and the voice of Satan.

Apply these principles in practical situations.

- When the Holy Spirit is at work, Christians hear a soft, inner voice. There is no coercion to be hasty. The Spirit talks to us through our conscience and through the Word. The Spirit of God never unfairly demands obedience. Obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit bears spiritual fruit. Satan, on the other hand, talks in a loud voice from outside the person. He always tries to force people to act immediately. When Satan speaks, fear sets in (fear of God). Satan wishes to enslave us to supernatural power. Obedience to the voice of Satan yields no spiritual fruit. Instead, it leads to confusion and death.
- When the Holy Spirit is at work, He seeks our active co-operation. He never negates our intellect, reason and our will. With our will we must choose to co-operate with the Holy Spirit. The Evil One wants to abuse us: he denies our personal will and intellect and demands passive acquiescence so that he can "use" us.
- The Holy Spirit convinces mankind of sin. The devil accuses (and condemns) us of sin. The Holy Spirit always shows us the road of salvation and deliverance from sin. He always directs us to the cross. Satan brings despair and an excessive awareness of sin. He tries to hide the cross and make us feel so guilty about our sins that we lose courage and hope. He leads us into a dead-

end. An excessive awareness of sin leads to despondency. Then we begin to believe that God no longer loves us.

- When the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, He is very specific and clear. When Satan talks about sin, he is usually vague - he evokes a vague feeling of sinfulness and much guilt. To confess these vague feelings, never leads to liberation. If we confess particular sins directly, there is always absolution and liberation.
- The leading of the Holy Spirit always corresponds with the Word and the character of God, and always brings hope and life. When the Evil One speaks, he says that you do not need Scripture or a Scriptural principle to justify your actions, you may just do it.
- The Spirit of God is never in a hurry, whereas Satan always wants to hurry us into action. The Spirit of God gives us time to think, to reflect, to be sure. The devil wants us to act hastily and impulsively, because then we easily make mistakes.
- The Holy Spirit leads, Satan forces. Whereas the Holy Spirit inspires, Satan intimidates. The Holy Spirit motivates, but Satan dominates. The devil does not allow me to think something over, or to discuss it to make sure that it is right, or to run it by other people.
- The Holy Spirit seeks our co-operation. He invites us to be co-workers. Satan compels, forces and manipulates. The devil does not seek our co-operation, he forces and abuses us.
- The Holy Spirit wants to show believers how precious they are to God and that God wants to be in a relationship with them and have fellowship with them. When Satan speaks to us, he wants us to believe that we are worthless, that we are so bad that God wants nothing to do with us and that He does not care

for us. The devil wants to make us believe that we are worthless; that we need not even try to convert our lives, or live holy lives, or testify. He tries to convince us that it just will not work.

- The Holy Spirit wants to show people that there is absolution for their sins, irrespective of how great these sins may be. Satan convinces people that their sins are too great and that they cannot be saved or liberated from their sins.
- The Spirit of God wants us to understand that He can redeem and heal us completely, irrespective of how deep the sorrow, how great the sin, how despicable the deeds from our past. Judas betrayed Christ and Peter denied Him. Peter was forgiven because he regretted what he had done and sought absolution. Judas committed suicide because there was no regret in his heart. God is not overwhelmed by our failures and sins: our failures and sins provide God with an opportunity to demonstrate his love and mercy towards us. God provided for our weaknesses and sin by sending his Son Jesus, to be crucified. The devil wants to convince people that God cannot do it, or that He might do it just partly, so that we will have to limp along for the rest of our lives - that we will never be completely cured, completely forgiven and set free.

The person of the Holy Spirit, his character and the way He works

It is extremely important to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person, that He has a particular character and that He works according to certain principles.

1. **The Holy Spirit is the Third Person in the Trinity of God.** He can and may not be ordered around by people. He is God and nobody, no human being, may give orders to God.
2. **Any spirit that testifies about itself is not the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit does not testify about Himself but of Christ: *"But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit,*

Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things. And He will remind you of everything I have told you" (Joh.14:26). "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the Truth. For He will not speak his own message; but He will tell whatever He hears, and He will announce and declare to you the things that are to come. He will honour and glorify Me, because He will take of what is Mine and will reveal it to you." One of the reasons why the Welsh revival and several other revivals broke down was because too much emphasis was placed on the work of the Holy Spirit instead of on Jesus. The Holy Spirit serves the Father and the Son and does not draw attention to Himself. The Holy Spirit does not testify about Himself; nor does He teach people about Himself, but about Jesus.

3. **The Holy Spirit is holy.** That is his character. He is the Spirit of Holiness (Romans 1:4), the Spirit of Wisdom (Isaiah 11:2), the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17), the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2), the Spirit that Judges and Consumes (Isaiah 4:4), the Spirit of Self-control (2 Tim.1:7). The actions or behaviour of people that are typified by the following cannot be ascribed to the Holy Spirit:

exaltation or personal aggrandisement / vulgarity / insensitivity towards others / stupid or dumb actions / degrading/destructive behaviour / cruel or brutal deeds / arrogant attitude / childish actions.

4. **No animal behaviour can be attributed to the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit does not cause people to crawl on the ground and hiss like snakes, crow like roosters, bark like dogs, roar like lions and cry like wolves and foxes, burp and puke.

To summarise: Satan manipulates, the Holy Spirit motivates. Satan intimidates, the Holy Spirit inspires. Satan dominates, the Holy Spirit directs. Satan abuses us,

the Holy Spirit seeks our co-operation. The voice of Satan is loud and compelling; the voice of the Holy Spirit is a soft, inner voice. Satan forces and coerces; the Holy Spirit convinces, encourages and invites. When Satan speaks there always an element of haste; the Holy Spirit is never in a hurry - He always gives us enough time to consider before we decide. Satan accuses and condemns; the Holy Spirit convinces and convicts. When Satan speaks to us, he condemns us. There is no absolution. There is usually no way out of the situation except to sin even more and become further ensnared. There is no hope. When the Holy Spirit speaks to us, there is always a way out, absolution of sin and liberation. There is also hope for the future.

Precautions against deception

Anybody can be deceived. No human being will ever be spiritually so mature that he or she cannot be deceived. Irrespective of your spiritual position or how much you have grown spiritually, how great the work you have done for God is; irrespective of the number of spiritual gifts God has entrusted to you; irrespective of the holy life that you lead, irrespective of the denomination that you belong to, *you can be misled*. No-one on earth has not been misled at one time or another. It is also important to know that not all signs and wonders, all supernatural phenomena are from God. Satan can also do supernatural things. Satan can also heal, do wonders, give signs, dreams and visions. He can make fire fall from heaven, let people speak in (demonic) tongues, and produce spiritual manifestations. The fact that we know that this is possible should help us to discern and establish whether something is from God or not. In **Isaiah 17:9** we read: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse and*

corrupt and severely, mortally sick!" The Hebrew word for deceitful is in the active form. It is not a passive word. This literally means that our hearts are constantly working at deceiving us.

No revelation may contradict Scripture. No revelation, no guidance or advice that you receive may ever contradict any Scriptural principle, promise or command. This is not negotiable. Naturally we can receive guidance on matters that are not in Scripture, for example about buying a computer or not. The Bible says nothing about computers, but there are rules about buying and selling, handling money and the will of God. If we keep these things in mind, it will immediately provide us with guidance against deception. Scripture should be interpreted in terms of the Scripture. When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert (**Luke 4**) he stated twice, *"It is written..."*. To this Jesus answered, *"It is **also** written..."*. The truth does not lie in *"It is written..."*, but in *"It is also written..."*. This simply means that Scripture should be explained in terms of Scripture. We should never quote Scripture out of context to suit our own interests and desires.

The Person of the Holy Spirit: We need the indwelling Person of the Holy Spirit to help us in every situation. *"So too the Spirit comes to our aid and bears us up in our weakness; for we do not know what prayer to offer nor how to offer it worthily as we ought, but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication and pleads on our behalf with unspeakable yearnings... And He who searches the hearts of men knows what his intent is, because the Spirit intercedes and pleads on behalf the saints according to and in harmony with God's will."* (**Romans 8:26-27**)

The Spirit of God lives within us. He teaches us how to pray and pleads for us with God. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (**John 14:16-17**) and He leads us in the truth. He reminds us of Jesus' words, and teaches us how to discern. He reveals to us the will of God. Without the Person of the Holy Spirit that lives within us, we

would not be able to discern the Truth. The Holy Spirit is the Sevenfold Spirit of God: *"The Spirit of God shall rest upon him - the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of knowledge and of the reverential and obedient fear of the Lord"* (Isaiah 11:1-2; Revelations 4:5 and 5:6). God's desire is for all his disciples to be filled with the Sevenfold Spirit of God, that they will trust Him in faith and that they will understand his work and function.

Wait upon the Lord. Today, much is made of spiritual warfare, but we must understand that 95% of spiritual warfare consists of "waiting on the Lord". We often pray but receive no answers - not immediately. Because we live in a supersonic age that demands quick answers, we are hasty. However, God is not intimidated by time. We must watch and pray. We should not be in a hurry. The Word says that those who believe, will not be hasty. If you are in doubt, wait. If we are prepared to wait, God will reveal the truth to us at the right time and we will not be deceived.

Take a neutral stance in every situation. To be able to distinguish between right and wrong, between what the will of God is and what not, we should always move towards neutral ground. We should begin by putting aside our own emotions, will and arguments and taking a neutral stance. Often this is the most difficult thing to do. However, if we do not move to neutral ground, set aside our desires, interests, will and preferences, we will find it very difficult to discern the will of God and the Truth.

Walk in the light that you have: As disciples we must learn to live in the light that we have. Too often we want to know what will happen tomorrow, next week or a year from now. God gives enough light for the next step, and with good reason. Nobody is strong enough to handle all the pressures, successes, temptations and

struggles of a lifetime at once. That is why God gives us our instructions step by step - one step at a time, day by day.

Good advisers are essential. Do not try to live in isolation. Every disciple should have at least one believer as a friend to whom he/she is accountable. As one person can easily make a mistake, the council, support and prayers of fellow believers is essential for spiritual wellbeing. *"...in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14); "Where there is no counsel, purposes are frustrated, but with many counsellors they are accomplished" (Proverbs 15:22); "For by wise counsel you can wage your war, and in an abundance of counsellors there is victory and safety" (Proverbs 24:6).*

Test all things. Any group or spirit that tries to tell you that you will grieve the Spirit of God if you wish to test whether what is taking place is of the Spirit, is not in line with Scripture. The Word teaches very clearly that we should test all prophecies and every spirit: *"Beloved, do not put faith in every spirit, but test the spirits to discover whether they proceed from God." (1 John 4:1) and "But test and prove all things until you can recognise what is good; to that hold fast" (1 Thess.5:20).*

Do not fear the devil. There is a story that one night as he lay sleeping John Wesley felt someone nuzzling his feet. When he lit the candle and looked over the end of the bed, he saw that it was the devil. Without being in the least frightened, he simply said, "Oh, it's you Satan". Then he blew out the candle, turned over and went back to sleep. Wesley understood that Satan is a defeated enemy and that believers are hidden with Christ in God (**Col.3:1-3**).

Keep the cross in the centre. It is remarkable that deception occurs more easily in communities where the cross of Christ is not the central issue than in

communities in which the message of the cross is preached clearly and lived out. The cross deals radically with pride, self and sin. The fruit of the cross is humility, brokenness, dying to self, love of God and truth. It produces the right kind of fear of God in people's lives. In this kind of spiritual environment there is very little room for the Evil One to work in, so the chances of deception are reduced.

12 Guidelines for knowing the will of God in a particular situation

1. Is it good and wholesome for your spiritual and or transient life (1 Cor.6:12)?
2. Are you addicted to it or could it lead to addiction (1 Cor.6:14)?
3. Will it damage your body (1 Cor.6:14)?
4. Do you have total peace about the matter? Can you declare that you decided to do this specific thing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Col.3:15)?
5. Is it a responsible way of spending your money?
6. Is it to the glory of God (1 Cor.10-31)?
7. Are you still in doubt or are you certain that you must do it (Romans 14:23)?
8. Is it a wise way of spending your time (Eph.5:15-16)?
9. How would you feel about it on your deathbed (Hebrews 9:27)?
10. Will you be able to justify it before the great white throne (Revelation 20:11)?
11. What would Jesus have done in this situation (1 John 2:6)?
12. Have you checked the matter out with one or two other people that are spiritually mature and who know your situation (Proverbs 24:6)?

How do I know what the will of God is?

One of the basic problems when people begin to seek the will of God in a matter is the conscious - and often unconscious - doubt whether God's will is really the best for us. Satan often tries to portray God as a spoilsport. In addition, there are many things that we find difficult to comprehend. This makes us uncertain whether we should really entrust God with our money, our futures, our lives, etc.

More than anything else, we should be assured that God's way and will is the best for us. We must cling to this fact. God means well by us. We should also remember that God is unchangeable and will not suddenly act unreasonably or in an evil way in a moment of fickleness.

To discern the will of our Heavenly Father, we should apply the following guidelines in our lives:

1. **The salvation of people:** It is the Lords' will that people should be saved. Very often unsaved people seek the will of God about several matters and then find no answers. The salvation of an individual is more important to God than any other matter. We must, therefore, first be reconciled with God before we ask anything of the Lord (**2 Peter 3:9**). In the first place, your salvation is God's will. *"The Lord does not delay and is not tardy or slow about what He promises, according to some people's conception of slowness, but He is long-suffering toward you, not desiring that any should perish but that all should turn to repentance."*
2. **Your sanctification is the will of God.** In **1 Thessalonians 4:3** it is written: *"It is the will of God that you must live holy lives"*. Anything that prevents you from living a holy life, or that hinders your dedication to God, is not the will of the

Lord. Any decision that you must take that will deter you from living a holy life, is outside the will of the Lord.

3. **Confess and break with all conscious, unconfessed sins and seek God's will with a pure heart.** God hates sin and wants you to cleanse yourself of it. He has made provision for you to be cleansed of your sin.
4. **Word of God:** The Holy Spirit will never lead you to contradict the truths in God's Word. Guard against selecting particular verses and using them as guidance, unless this can be affirmed in other ways as well.
5. **A willingness to subject yourself to God's leading is a basic prerequisite.** It serves no purpose to ask the Lord what his will is if you are not prepared to do his will. Is it really your heart's desire to do the will of the Lord? Then choose with your will do God's will. Pray and say to the Lord, *"Father, I choose with my will to do your will"*.

"But seek first of all His Kingdom and His righteousness, and then all these things taken together will be given you besides." **(Matthew 6:33)**

But Jesus said to them, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work."* **(John 4:34)**

6. **When you seek the guidance of the Lord, it is important to stand on neutral ground.** This means that you must reach the point where you can tell the Lord that you are prepared to do whatever his will may be. You must give up your own preferences and dislikes and, as far as it is humanly possible, be neutral about the matter.
7. **Live in close communion with God.** When you live close to the Lord, it is generally easier to know what the Lord's will is. Be dedicated **(Rom.12:1-2)**. *"Make a decisive dedication of your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well*

pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the entire renewal of your mind".

8. **Wait upon the Lord.** This means that one must continually bring a matter before the Lord in prayer. **Isaiah 28:16** says, *"He who believes will not hasten away"*. God has his own set time. Do not try to move faster than the Lord. God knows exactly when to give you a clear answer, so trust Him to do so. While you are waiting upon the Lord, you should search your heart to determine whether your concern is about God or only about things that you want from God. God makes us wait to test our hearts and often to prepare us spiritually for his answer. To wait upon the Lord does not mean that you must now be passive. You should remain active: consider, debate, investigate, listen, evaluate and study the Scriptures because this is part of waiting upon the Lord.
9. **Total trust: Proverbs 3:5-6** says, *"Trust in and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind"*. **James 1:6-8** declares that if a person prays, but harbours doubt in his heart, he should *"not imagine that he will receive what he asks for from the Lord"*. Pray to the Lord in faith that He knows exactly what you need and that He will reveal his will to you at the right time.
10. **Always act according to the light that you have at that stage.** This is a very practical suggestion. Often we first want to know down to the finest detail what the will of the Lord is before we act. Mostly, there are many things that we can already do before we know exactly what the final objective of the Lord is.
11. **Take up Jesus' yoke. Matthew 11:28-30:** *"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden and I shall give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble and you will find rest for your souls."* To take up His yoke means

- a) to learn through close contact with Him;
- b) to be guided in the right direction by Him;
- c) to move at the right pace with Him.

12. **Consider the circumstances.** Interpret events in a spiritual way. Remember that Satan is always trying to prevent us from doing God's will by placing stumbling blocks in our way. God can also use circumstances to lead us. However, do not look only to circumstances for guidance. *"Because it was our will to come to you. I, Paul, again and again, but Satan hindered and impeded us."* (**Thess.2:18**)
13. **The wisdom of advisers:** Share the situation with older people who are spiritually inclined and whose opinion you value. One often receives confirmation and guidance through the reactions or advice of other believers. *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who listens to counsel is wise"* (**Proverbs 12:5**). *"Where no wise guidance is, the people fall, but in a multitude of counsellors there is safety"* (**Proverbs 11:14**). *"For by wise counsel you can wage your war, and in an abundance of counsellors there is victory and safety"* (**Proverbs 24:6**).
14. **Ways in which other people have been lead:** Study the Scriptures, church history and the biographies of missionaries, the ways in which God has lead his servants, for example in **Acts 10**.
15. **Put out a fleece.** If you find it difficult to distinguish between personal feelings and the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, ask God to do something objective outside of yourself as an indication of his will. Refer to **Judges 6:37-39** for the story of Gideon's fleece. However, be careful that signs do not prescribe your actions. Generally, the Lord uses this method in exceptional cases only. The Holy Spirit must lead you very clearly to ask such a sign from

the Lord, otherwise you might be guilty of trying to "force" the Lord to answer your prayer. You must also remember that Gideon's fleece did not work like a dice: Gideon used it to confirm what the Lord had already revealed to him in a different manner.

16. **Draw up a balance sheet.** It always helps to draw up a list of the advantages and disadvantages of a decision and to weigh these two lists up against each other. Often when you list the advantages and disadvantages with regard to a certain issue honestly in writing, the answer becomes so obvious.
17. **Share with a prayer partner or group.** If the decision is going to have long-term effects, it is a good idea to share it with someone who will stand before the Lord in faith with you until God's will becomes clear.
18. **Be true to spiritual principles.** In some situations one does not need specific guidance because the issue can be resolved according to spiritual principles, for example: "*Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them.*" (**Hebrews 13:17**) "*No soldier when in service gets entangled in the enterprises of civilian life*" (**2 Tim.2:4**). "*You shall not commit adultery*" (**Matthew 5:27-28**). Scripture is very clear on many issues so we don't have to seek the will of God in this regard because it is already set out clearly in the Word.
19. **Take note of the gifts of the Spirit.** The gifts of the Spirit that are manifested in you may also be an indication of what God wants you to do in a certain situation.

"Having gifts... let us use them... prophecy... practical service...teaching... exhortation... giving aid... superintending..." (**Rom.12:6-10**)

"To one is given in and through the Spirit a message of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge and understanding according to the same Spirit... To another faith... to another extraordinary powers of healing...To another the

working of miracles... the ability to discern between spirits... to another various kinds of tongues, to another the ability to interpret tongues." (1 Cor.12:7-11)

20. **Guidance of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit confirms what God wishes you to do by giving you inner assurance. *"And let the peace from Christ rule in your hearts..." (Col.3:15).* But beware of a peace that is simply the absence of tension once a decision has been taken.
21. **Guard against the flesh.** Guard against decisions that relate to excess, comfort and carnal desires. *"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Gal.5:24-25)*
22. **Do not try to evade the cross (1 Pet.3:17).** The more difficult way is often the right way. God's ways are not our ways. Do not shrink from humiliation and suffering, but guard against unnecessary self-punishment and abstinence. Remember that it is not a spiritual law that Christians should always suffer. *"If anyone desires to be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt.16:24).*
23. **Guard against falsification.** Satan employs spirits who mislead. Good is often the enemy of best. Guard against being deflected to a less important goal. *"So the Twelve convened the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not seemly that we should have to neglect the Word of God in order to attend to serving at tables and superintending the distribution of food... we will continue to devote ourselves steadfastly to prayer and the ministry of the Word.'" (Acts 6:1-6)*
"The Holy Spirit expressly declares that in the latter times some will turn away from the faith, giving attention to deluding and seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach." (1 Tim.4:1)

24. **The world can mislead!** The world is actually more of a system than a place. Make sure that your decisions are not influenced by a desire for position, security, promotion, a career or by family pressure.

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own mother and father and his wife and children and his brothers and sisters - and even his own life also - he cannot be my disciple." (Luk.14:26-27)

"Do not cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life - these do not come from the Father but are from the world itself." (1 John 2:15-17)

25. **Guard against rationalisation.** It is possible to use natural wisdom to rationalise one's decisions. **Proverbs 3:5** says, *"Be confident in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight or understanding"*.

God has given us our reason (minds) to use but our reason should always be under the guidance of the Spirit and subjected to the truths of the Word.

26. **Withstand fear.** *"There is no fear in love" (1 John 4:18)*. With God as our loving Heavenly Father, his will is *"the best thing that could happen to us"*. We should rather fear being outside the security of his perfect will. Withstand any fear and lack of faith that makes you hurried and impatient.

27. **Weakness does not disqualify.** Christians often resist God's will because they feel incompetent to do that to which God has called them. If God calls you, He will make you competent to do whatever He has called you to do. *"I have strength for all things" (Phil.4:13)*. *"But He said to me, "My grace is enough for you; for My strength and power are made perfect and show themselves most effective in your weakness." (2 Cor.12:9)*

28. **Walk in faith.** Be prepared to act in faith. If you know that God has spoken, the only way is forward, *"...the righteous man shall live by his faith"* (**Hab.2:4, 0V**)

29. **Pray and ask God what his will is.** We often do everything but to pray to the Lord to ask Him what his will is.

"Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you." (**Matt.7:7**)

If we want to know what God's will is, it is important for us to be in the right relationship with Him and to argue principally from this relationship. The following Scriptural principles are fixed and provide basic guidelines for almost all situations:

1. It is God's will that people should be saved. If what we want to do may, for example, hinder the salvation of people, we must know that we are acting outside of the will of the Lord.
2. It is God's will that we should be totally committed to Him. *"Make a decisive dedication of your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God..."* (**Romans 12:1**).
3. It is God's will that we should love all people (also the lost). *"Love thy neighbour like thyself"* (**Matt.22:39**).
4. It is God's will that we should do good works. *"For we are God's own handiwork, recreated in Christ Jesus that we may do those good works which God predestined for us..."* (**Eph.2:10**)
5. It is God's will that we should grow spiritually. *"For this very reason, adding your diligence, employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue, and in virtue knowledge. And in knowledge self-control, and in self-control*

steadfastness, and in steadfastness godliness. And in godliness brotherly affection, and in brotherly affection Christian love." **(2 Peter 1:5-7)**

6. It is God's will that we should submit to the authorities appointed over us. *"Let every person be loyally subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist do so by God's appointment."* **(Rom.13:1)**
7. It is God's will that we should grow spiritually through suffering and temptation. *"Moreover let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patience and unswerving endurance."* **(Rom.5:3-5)**
8. It is God's will that we should be filled with the Holy Spirit and that we should follow Him and not our own selfish desires. *"... but ever be filled with the Holy Spirit."* **(Eph.5:18)**
9. It is God's will that we should protect the rights of the poor and have compassion for them. *"Do justice to the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; rescue them out of the hand of the wicked."* **(Ps. 82:3-4)**
10. It is God's will that we should forgive those that hurt us and love them in a positive way. *"But love your enemies and do good and lend expecting and hoping for nothing in return but considering nothing as lost and despairing of no-one; and then your reward will be great and you will be sons of the most High, for He is kind and charitable and good to the ungrateful and the selfish and wicked. So be merciful even as your Father is."* **(Luke 6:32-36)**
11. It is God's will that we should happy/satisfied with what we have and that we should not desire earthly riches and possessions. *"But if we have*

food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who crave to be rich fall into temptation" (1 Tim 6:8-10)

12. Add the Ten Commandments (**Exodus 20**) to the above and you will find that in most situations you will immediately know what the will of God is.

Together with the guidelines above, the following questions will help you to arrive at a clearer answer in various situations. Answer these questions one by one and carry out the instructions. All the questions do not necessarily apply to every situation.

1. Draw up a balance sheet of all the positive and negative aspects with regard to the issue on which you seek to know God's will.
2. Are you conscious of any known, unconfessed sin in your life? If so, first put the other matter to the side and ask God to forgive and cleanse you. Break with that sin.
3. Does the Bible say anything about this specific issue? If so, write down the principles given in Scripture.
4. Does your situation give you any indication in which direction you should move?
5. Have you already decided that if you find out what God's will is, you will obey Him unconditionally?
6. Are you on neutral ground as far as your personal feelings and emotions are concerned?
7. What light do you have at this stage? Write this down and in the meantime act accordingly until God reveals his will further.
8. If you have no light on the issue, and you cannot do anything practical in the meantime, wait upon the Lord for further guidance.

9. Is there a trustworthy fellow believer whom you could consult about this matter, or perhaps someone with whom you can discuss your problem and with whom you can pray about it?
10. Think about the gifts and talents God has given you. This may give you an indication of God's will for you.
11. Before you make a final decision, you must determine whether you have peace in your heart about it.
12. As long as you are in doubt, you should not act.
13. What do you think Jesus would have done in this situation? How would He have reacted?
14. Consider the consequences of your decision: will it be to the advantage or disadvantage of other people's spiritual lives?
15. If you judge this matter in view of eternity, would it influence your decision? Will you feel the same fifty years from now and would it still be as important as you feel it is now?
16. Are your motives selfish? Or is the main concern the glory of God?
17. Are you in any way trying to manipulate God or to prescribe to Him what you want?
18. Will the Lord be glorified by the decision you are going to make or will it dishonour his Name?
19. Will you be able to say, "I am doing it in Jesus' Name"?
20. Would your decision be influenced in any way if you bear in mind that you will personally have to give reckoning to God about it one day?