

LESSON

2 Will God Tell Me What to Do Next?

No doubt you have already accepted Christ as your Savior. And by now you have found that God does indeed have a design for your life. I am certain that you wish to follow His will for you.

But perhaps you are wondering about your relationship to God's design *now*. You may not be sure that you are part of it and that God wants to speak to you about it.

In this lesson you will discover what is your present position in God's design. You will learn several facts that show why you can be confident that God wants to speak to you. You will also learn about the promises and the provision He has made to guide you into fulfilling His design for you.

The Plan

- A. You Have Already Entered God's Design
- B. God Wants You to Follow His Design
- C. God Wants to Reveal His Design

The Goals

1. Describe your present relationship to God's design and how it came about.
2. State three reasons why God wants you to continue to follow His design.
3. Give evidence that God wants to reveal His design to you.

A. YOU HAVE ALREADY ENTERED GOD'S DESIGN

Goal 1. Describe your present relationship to God's design and how it came about.

As a believer, you have confidence that you have accepted Christ and that you *are* a child of God. This is the same confidence you need to understand the unfolding of God's will and design for you. Let us review your experience in receiving Christ to help build that confidence. Though your experience was unique and personal, it had several essential points that are shared by all who receive Christ.

You Believed In Christ

Your experience of receiving Christ did not happen by coincidence or chance. You did not stumble into this great relationship by accident; no one has been saved that way. Somehow, God communicated His love to you. More than that, He gave you the chance to hear the good news of Jesus and His plan for salvation. God's communication by itself was not your salvation, however; that came when you obeyed.

What did you obey? You obeyed the divine command to believe or have faith completely in Christ and not any human effort for your salvation. There is one common element in the directions the Scriptures give for salvation—*belief* (faith). The obedience, then, that is always demanded is this: *we must believe*.

Notice, for example, how Paul and Silas replied to the Philippian jailer's question: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Their answer was the simplest possible instruction for salvation: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). The jailer had to *obey the instruction* to believe in Christ.

In the same way it was in response to your obedience that Christ came into your heart.

Application

1 Read the Scriptures given in the references below. Circle the letter in front of each one that tells of someone who responded in obedience by believing in Christ.

- a) Mark 15:13
- b) Luke 1:45
- c) John 17:8
- d) Acts 18:8

2 In what way is it true that salvation is the result of obedience?

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You Obeyed the Word

In becoming a Christian you were obedient to God's Word, the Bible. It is from the Bible that we learn of the person of God, His holiness, and of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the Bible that tells us Christ came into the world, that He died and arose, and that He will forgive sin. In other words, when you received Christ you were obedient to God's will as revealed in the Bible. You learned enough of God's will to obey and become a child of God.

You Obeyed the Spirit

At the same time you were confronted with the facts God's Word teaches, you no doubt experienced an inner *conviction*. You did not just learn about the fact of the resurrection of Christ, for example. You were actually convinced that Christ did rise and is alive. This conviction came from the Holy Spirit's work of leading you into the truth. You obeyed Him by responding to His conviction.

You obeyed both the Word and the Spirit. The result is that you are a child of God. God's design for you is not beginning in the future. God had a design for your life before you were born and it began in you when He made you His child. He was able to communicate His plan to you even while you were separated from Him. As His child, you can be sure He will continue to speak to you.

Application

3 In your notebook, explain your present relationship to God's design and how you came into it. Use two or three sentences to do this.



B. GOD WANTS YOU TO FOLLOW HIS DESIGN

Goal 2. State three reasons why God wants you to continue to follow His design.

As His children, God desires us to obey Him. This is the way we follow His design. Many times throughout Scripture this demand is made (see for example Deuteronomy 27:10, 1 Samuel 12:14, and Matthew 19:17). The major idea of Psalm 119 is the close relationship between love for and obedience to the law and Word of God (see for example vs. 47, 97, and 167). In addition, Christ considers obedience to be the most important expression of love we can make (John 14:15).

Your Obedience Brings Blessing

One of the greatest reasons why God wants us to obey Him is because it brings His blessing on our lives.

The people of Israel had suffered much hardship while they were slaves in Egypt, but God had brought them out. They were going to be in the wilderness for a whole generation.

Application

4 Read in Exodus 15:26 the startling promise God made to His people. Then answer the following questions in your notebook.

- a)** What did God tell the people to do?
 - b)** What would happen if they did what God told them to do?
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Psalm 1 tells us about the man who finds joy in obeying the law of the Lord (v. 2). This person receives many blessings, and his life is like a fruitful tree whose leaves do not wither.

Other Scriptures also describe the blessings that come when we obey God's will. In the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5–7), Christ promises happiness to those whose character is like His—pure in heart, merciful, and peacemaking. In Romans 2:7 we read that those who continue to do what is right will receive eternal life.

Your Obedience Builds God's Kingdom

The growth of the kingdom of God often depends on our obedience. Consider the words of the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray to God: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Our obedience is essential to God's kingdom. His kingdom is built on earth as we are obedient to His will.

In the Bible we read of times when God's plan was followed and His kingdom was built. We also read of other times when disobedience by the children of God seemed to thwart His plan.

In the Garden of Eden, for example, Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:6). Was God’s creation blessed or cursed by Adam’s action? Before Adam ate, peace was everywhere. There is no record of even animals killing each other. There were no thorns. Adam had the opportunity of filling a peaceful earth with his offspring. But look at what happened when he disobeyed.

The image of God in Adam was dulled. He began to accuse his wife and hide from God. Then the earth, God’s creation, was cursed. All of the earthly creation shared in this—the ground, the animals, and humans. Disobedience affected the kingdom God had created (Genesis 3:8–19).

Just as Adam’s disobedience so drastically affected the kingdom in a negative way, the perfect obedience of Christ affected the kingdom in a positive way. In fact the whole earthly kingdom was affected by both Adam and Christ. Their acts had the most extreme results of all. In Adam the whole creation was cursed; in Christ the whole creation was redeemed.

Application

5 Read Romans 5:15–21. Write each result listed under the name of the person whose act brought it about.

- a)** Pardon came to all.
- b)** Death began to rule.
- c)** Mankind was set free.
- d)** Life was given.
- e)** Condemnation came upon all.

1) Christ’s obedience	2) Adam’s disobedience
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Other people also affected God's kingdom. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, and Elijah all had a great impact on God's kingdom through their obedience.

Your Obedience Pleases God

God desires His children to obey for their blessing and for the welfare of His kingdom. Also, in a more intimate way, He gets pleasure from their obedience.

Christ did not seek to do His own will, but the will of the Father. He testified that He did only those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29). His obedience showed the fullness of the Father-Son relationship.

What pleasure the Father must have had as He saw His only Son so perfectly obedient! Notice in Matthew 3:17 and 17:5 how He responded to His Son's life of obedience. He actually spoke out of heaven and said that He was pleased. You also, as His son, can bring Him pleasure through your obedience.

Application

6 In your notebook, state three reasons why God wants you to continue to follow (be obedient to) His design.

C. GOD WANTS TO REVEAL HIS DESIGN

Goal 3. Give evidence that God wants to reveal His design to you.

If God is able to tell us His will *before* we are His children, and if He is pleased with obedience *in* His children, will He not also tell us His will so that we can obey it?

Some approach God as though they must *convince* Him to reveal His will. They labor in prayer and even find it impossible to act as they try to "find the will of God." Is this really the picture the Bible shows us?

Think of the parables Christ taught about man's responsibility, such as the ones recorded in Matthew 25:14–30 and Luke 12:42–48. In no case did He teach as though people would have a problem knowing *what* God wanted them to do. God wants to reveal His plan! But what facts show us that God wants to do this?

He Has Promised to Lead You

We know God wants to reveal His plan because He has promised to lead us. He would not leave us without guidance.

When Christ was on earth the disciples had no problem learning His will; He simply told them what it was. He sent them to witness when and where He wanted them to go. When He fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, He told them how to serve the people (Luke 9:14).

Not only did they learn from what Christ said, but they also learned from His example. No doubt they were part of His ministry wherever He went. That is how they learned His will.

But Christ knew He would not always be with them in the same way. How would they know what to do when He went back to heaven? Would they become confused? How would He tell them His will?

John 14–16 records what Christ shared with His disciples to prepare them for the time when He would no longer be present. He told them what He would be doing (preparing a place for them). And He told them that they should not sorrow at His going. In fact, His return to heaven would be an advantage for them. It was only in His going away that the Holy Spirit, the key to understanding the will of God, would come (John 16:7).

In just these three chapters are recorded many assurances that Christ gave His followers that they would not be left alone. In the next exercise you will look at some of these.

Application

7 Jesus described the work and character of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures given in the references below. Match each description (left side) to the reference of the Scripture in which it is found (right side).

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| ... a) He will teach them. | 1) John 14:16 |
| ... b) He will give Christ glory. | 2) John 14:17 |
| ... c) He will stay with them forever. | 3) John 14:26 |
| ... d) He will cause them to remember all that Christ told them. | 4) John 16:13 |
| ... e) He will tell them of things to come. | 5) John 16:14 |
| ... f) He will take what Christ says and tell it to them. | |
| ... g) He remains in them. | |

He Made Provision to Lead You

What provision, then, has God made to lead you? Were the promises we studied just for the future, or have they already been fulfilled?

In Acts 2 we read that the Holy Spirit was given as Christ had promised. Christ *did* go back to heaven; He *did* ask the Father to give the Holy Spirit; the church *did* receive what had been promised.

But the book of Acts records not only the fulfillment of Christ's promise to give the Spirit to His followers, but also records that this provision for their leadership was sufficient. In fact they were able to do more for God after the Holy Spirit came than they had been able to do when Christ was on earth. His going away brought them an advantage, just as He had promised.

So the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit was Christ's provision for leading us into the knowledge of God's will. But more than that, the Bible also gives us specific examples of how the Holy Spirit works and instructions on how we can cooperate with His work.

THE SPIRIT PRAYS

No doubt in asking *Will God tell me what to do next?*, you have faced this problem: *How and for what should I pray?* God has made a provision for this problem: the Holy Spirit can even pray through you, and will do so in the *perfect* will of the Father. Your prayer *can* be the perfect expression of the desire of the Father (Romans 8:26–27).

Application

- 8** Read Romans 8:26–27. According to those verses, our prayers can be the perfect expression of God's desire because
- a)** the Spirit tells us what to say.
 - b)** the Spirit himself prays through us.
 - c)** we know what we should say.
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THE SPIRIT GIVES GIFTS

Another way the Holy Spirit gives us knowledge of God's will is through His gifts. These are described in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. In exalting Jesus Christ the gifts build up the church and the individual. Through the word of wisdom or word of knowledge we receive specific insight into the person and mind of God. This insight goes beyond what we can learn through our natural intelligence.

THE SPIRIT INDWELLS

In a real way the Holy Spirit dwells in you as a child of God. You are a channel through which He speaks.

Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1). Philip was led by the Spirit to witness to an Ethiopian official (Acts 8:29). Paul wanted to go to Asia but

was led by the Spirit into Europe (Acts 16:6–10). In the same way the Holy Spirit who dwells in you is the provision of God to lead you into His will.

THE SPIRIT GAVE THE WORD

There is one more specific way that God has provided for the Holy Spirit to lead us. This is in giving us His Word, the Bible. In another lesson we will learn *how* God uses the Word to speak to us. Now it is important, though, for you to understand that God's Word is the product of the Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). It is the channel through which the Holy Spirit speaks now. It is the one by which we judge all other messages.

Application

9 Suppose a friend were to ask you this question: *How do I know that God wants to reveal His design to me?* First review this section. Then write a reply in your notebook following these suggestions: a) describe the promise Christ gave concerning how we would be guided into the knowledge of His will; b) state how Christ's promise was fulfilled; and c) name four ways through which the Holy Spirit makes God's design known to us.

You are a child of God. Will He tell you what to do next? Yes! You can be sure that God is able to speak, that He wants you to know His will, and that He has already made provision to speak to you.

Check Your Answers

- 5** Under **1)** *Christ's obedience* you should have listed these:
- a)** Pardon came to all.
 - c)** Mankind was set free.
 - d)** Life was given.
- Under **2)** *Adam's disobedience* you should have listed these:
- b)** Death began to rule.
 - e)** Condemnation came upon all.
- 1** **c)** John 17:8
d) Acts 18:8
- 6** God wants you to continue following His design because your obedience brings you blessing, builds His kingdom, and gives Him pleasure.
- 2** Because salvation comes when a person obeys the instruction to believe in Christ (Your answer should be similar.)
- 7** **a)** 3) John 14:26
b) 5) John 16:14
c) 1) John 14:16
d) 3) John 14:26
e) 4) John 16:13
f) 5) John 16:14
g) 2) John 14:17
- 3** Your answer. If you are a believer in Christ you have already entered into God's design for you through obedience. You obeyed God by believing in Christ and by believing in the testimony of His Word and His Spirit.
- 8** **b)** the Spirit himself prays through us.
- 4** **a)** He told them to obey all of His commands.
b) He said they would not suffer from any of the diseases that came upon the Egyptians.
(Your answer should be similar.)

- 9 Your reply should be similar to the following:
- a) Christ said the Holy Spirit would come to guide His followers.
 - b) Christ's promise about the coming of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.
 - c) The Holy Spirit prays through us, gives us gifts of knowledge and wisdom, indwells us, and has given us God's Word, the Bible.

