

The Will of the Lord **Ephesians 5:15-21**

The book of Ephesians exhorts us to walk worthy of our calling (4:1) by walking in the love of Christ (5:2) and by walking in the light of Christ (5:8) as we will walk in good works (2:10). The walking theme continues in 5:15-17 which says, "Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. On account of this, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

He who walks wisely understands what the will of the Lord is, but he who walks unwisely and foolishly fails to seize the opportunities and does not understand the will of the Lord.

Topic: The will of the Lord involves three aspects—God's permissive will, God's directive will, and God's active will. God is sovereign, which means that He has rule and dominion over everything. Yahweh is the source of all being; nothing exists apart from Him. This means that everything that happens, He permits to happen. God's permissive will allows all that happens to happen. But not all that happens is what God wants to happen. God's directive will is what He wants to happen. Just as a movie director wants a scene to happen a certain way, so he directs the actors to act a certain way, God wants people to live in certain ways, so He directs us by His presence, His word, and His people. Yet, just as actors in a movie can adlib, so too people can rebuff God's direction. God's active will is what God makes happen by His own actions.

These categories are like concentric circles. The outer most and largest circle is God's permissive will since that includes everything that happens. The next circle in, is God's directive will. This is a large circle and includes everything that God wants us to do—every command, every nudging, every imperative of His. The smallest circle is God's active will. God acts to fulfill prophecy, perform miracles, or exert His will by His own power.

- Why does God permit certain things to happen if He doesn't want those things to happen according to His revealed directive will?
- Why doesn't God just actively force us to do what He wants us to do according to His revealed directive will?
- How does free will play into God's permissive will? Why do you think free will is so valuable to God?
- What are some of examples of God's directive will that you notice in the book of Ephesians?
- What are some of the most critical examples of God's directive will from the rest of the Bible?
- What are some of the most important examples of God exerting His active will?
- Does God have a directive will concerning every single aspect of my life?

Association: How well do you walk in God's directive will? Share about struggles or successes you experience in seeking to follow Yahweh's directive will.

- Which aspects of His will are the toughest for you to follow—commands, evangelism, submission to others, etc.?

Guidance: Share your best tips for discerning the lord's will. Encourage one another to walk in obedience to God's directive will. Pray with and for one another.