

Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 5, The Will of God in the New Testament Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 5, The Will of God in the New Testament, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture, "The Will of God in the New Testament," examines how believers can understand and live according to God's will as presented in the New Testament. The lecture emphasizes that knowing God's will is not about seeking hidden information but rather about understanding and obeying the moral teachings found in Scripture. Meadors identifies categories of God's will, including his sovereign actions and his call to moral conformity. He argues that New Testament language about God's will often relates to recognizing God's sovereignty and adhering to revealed moral declarations. The lecture stresses that Christians are called to actively pursue God's will by living out biblical teachings and developing a transformed worldview based on those values. Ultimately, Meadors posits that obedience to the Bible's instruction is the primary way to be in and guided by God's will, not through a quest for unrevealed guidance.

2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Knowing the Will of God).



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3. Briefing Document: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 5, The Will of God in the New Testament

Briefing Document: Dr. Gary Meadors on Knowing God's Will in the New Testament

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Gary Meadors in Session 5 of his lecture series, "Knowing God's Will," specifically focusing on the New Testament perspective. Meadors emphasizes that understanding God's will in the New Testament builds upon the foundation laid in the Old Testament and argues against the common notion of "finding" God's will as unrevealed information. Instead, he posits that knowing and doing God's will primarily involves understanding and obeying the moral declarations of Scripture and developing a transformed mind with biblical worldview and values.

Key Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Interconnectedness of the Old and New Testaments:

- Meadors stresses that the Bible is a unified whole, not separate entities. "Remember that the Bible is the Bible; it's not Old Testament and New Testament; it's the Bible. And that the New Testament is very dependent upon what the Old Testament laid down as its foundation."
- He notes that while the vocabulary might differ, the underlying principle of pleasing God equating to doing His will remains consistent across both testaments.

2. Categories of God's Will in the New Testament:

- Meadors identifies three main categories related to the will of God in the New Testament:
- **Will of God Language:** The direct use of phrases like "will of God," "will of the Lord," etc., which are more prevalent in the New Testament (51 texts). "Stereotype language about God's will is mostly from the New Testament."
- **Will of God Categories:** Distinct ways the "will of God" is presented, including God's sovereignty and His moral declarations.
- **Pursuit of God's Will:** How believers are to engage with and live out God's will.

3. God's Sovereign Will:

- The New Testament recognizes God's ultimate control over redemptive history and individual lives. Salutations in epistles ("by God's will, I'm an apostle") illustrate this.
- The passage in Acts 21:14, where the elders say, "let the will of the Lord be done," in response to Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem despite warnings, is presented not as resignation but as a "recognition of God's sovereignty."
- Paul's desire to visit the Romans "by God's will" (Romans 1:10) demonstrates submission to God's timing.
- Suffering for doing good is also presented as potentially being "God's will" (1 Peter 3:17), a part of His sovereign plan in a fallen world.
- Meadors emphasizes that while God is sovereign, we usually understand His sovereign acts after they occur and are not meant to constantly seek to predict them. "Sometimes, we know it. We usually only know it after the event, certainly not before the event. And we are not to try to figure it out."

4. God's Moral Will (Declarations):

- This category focuses on God's revealed commands and ethical teachings throughout Scripture. "The will of God is a call to conform to God's moral declarations. This is our territory."
- Romans 2:17-18 highlights that the Jewish people boasted in knowing God's will through the Law. "And you know his will. What is his will? It's the law."
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3 clearly states, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification," linking God's will directly to moral growth and transformation. Sanctification is described as "the development of a transformed mind" and abstaining from immoral behavior.
- 1 Peter 2:15 connects doing good and submitting to societal structures (when they don't violate God's moral truth) with God's will. "For this is the will of God that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people."

5. The Exhortation to *Do* God's Will, Not Just *Find* It:

- Meadors argues strongly against the notion that knowing God's will is primarily about discovering some hidden plan or unrevealed information. "The will of God phrases never exhort the believer to find God's will but to do it."

- He quotes Waltke's book title, "Finding God's Will, subphase, a pagan notion?" to underscore this point.
- He asserts that seeking God's will apart from engaging with Scripture and developing a transformed mind can be akin to "doing a divination thing that is condemned by scripture."
- The emphasis is on applying the already revealed moral principles of Scripture to the situations believers face. "Knowing God's will is not a search for unrevealed information. It's a search for applying the transformed mind with its worldview and values to the situations you confront in life."

6. Engaging Scripture and Context:

- Understanding the original context of New Testament writings (occasional literature) is crucial for proper interpretation and application. "The Bible is for us, but it's not for us. We have to understand the audience to whom it was written so we can understand the point that Paul is making as he writes to them."
- Believers are expected to "engage what you know" from Scripture, not wait for new revelations.

7. The Pursuit of God's Will:

- Pursuing God's will is an active process involving:
- Living up to the moral will of God.
- "Managing the direct, implied, and created construct levels of biblical teaching." This requires careful study and discernment.
- "Developing a critically self-conscious worldview and value set" based on Scripture.
- "Being sensitive to providence" – recognizing God's outworking in events (both positive and negative).
- "Trusting in a sovereign God" even in difficult circumstances.

8. Conclusion: Obedience and a Transformed Mind:

- Meadors concludes that "When I obey the teaching of the Bible, I am in God's will."

- Guidance comes from God's Word and the development of a biblical worldview and values, not from a "search-and-find mission."
- He encourages believers to be diligent in learning and applying Scripture, acknowledging that spiritual growth is a continuous process.

Illustrations and Examples:

- **Jesus' Example:** Jesus came to do the Father's will (Hebrews 10, Psalm 40), lived according to God's plan based on the Old Testament, and instructed his apostles to continue teaching what he had taught.
- **Apostles' Example:** Peter and Paul perpetuated authoritative teaching they had received, not their own ideas. They expected their disciples to do the same, emphasizing the importance of education and passing on biblical truth.

Cautionary Notes:

- Avoid "proof texting" – taking verses out of context to support pre-conceived notions.
- Be aware of the different levels of biblical teaching (direct, implied, created construct) and prescriptive vs. descriptive texts.
- Recognize the challenges of contextualizing Scripture for different times and cultures.
- Beware of treating the Bible as self-interpreting.

Call to Action:

- Engage actively with Scripture through study and reflection.
- Develop a biblical worldview and value system.
- Focus on obeying the known moral will of God rather than seeking unrevealed information.
- Be curious and diligent in pursuing understanding of God's Word.

This lecture provides a framework for understanding God's will in the New Testament that emphasizes active engagement with Scripture, moral obedience, and the development of a transformed mind, rather than a passive search for hidden directives.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 5, The Will of God in the New Testament

Study Guide: Knowing God's Will in the New Testament

Key Concepts and Themes

- **Continuity and Change between Old and New Testaments:** Understand how the New Testament builds upon the foundation laid in the Old Testament regarding God's will, while also exhibiting differences due to time and context.
- **"Will of God" Language:** Recognize the prevalence of this specific terminology in the New Testament compared to the Old Testament's different vocabulary for similar concepts (pleasing God).
- **Categories of God's Will in the New Testament:**
 - Sovereign Will:** God's overarching plan and control over redemptive history. Understand that we often recognize this after the fact and are called to submit to it.
 - Moral Will:** God's revealed commands and ethical standards found throughout Scripture. This is the primary area where believers are called to obedience.
 - Finding vs. Doing God's Will:** Grasp the central argument that believers are exhorted to *do* God's will (revealed in Scripture) rather than to *find* some hidden, unrevealed will.
 - The Role of Scripture:** Emphasize the Bible as the primary source for knowing God's moral will and the foundation for developing a Christian worldview and values.
 - Interpreting Scripture:** Understand the importance of considering the original context of New Testament writings (occasional letters) and the use of metaphorical religious language.
- **Pursuing God's Will:** Recognize that this is an active process involving:
 - Living up to God's moral will.
 - Managing direct, implied, and created construct levels of biblical teaching.
 - Developing a critically self-conscious worldview and value set.
 - Being sensitive to providence (the outworking of God's sovereignty).
 - Trusting in a sovereign God.

- **The Value Deposit System:** Recall how the New Testament builds upon the Old Testament idea of an ongoing accumulation of values derived from Scripture that guide believers.
- **Defining a Spiritual Person:** Understand that a spiritual person is characterized by abiding by God's Word, learning and applying a biblical worldview and values, and growing in knowledge and grace.
- **Distinguishing Proof Text from Pretext:** Recognize the danger of using isolated verses out of context versus understanding the broader teaching of Scripture.
- **Prescriptive vs. Descriptive Teaching:** Understand the difference between texts that are specifically directed to a particular time and audience and those that hold normative value for all believers.

Quiz: Short-Answer Questions

1. Explain the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament regarding the will of God. (Focus on continuity and the New Testament's dependence on the Old Testament foundation.)
2. What is a key difference in the language used to describe God's will in the Old Testament compared to the New Testament? (Mention the shift towards "will of God" terminology.)
3. Describe the category of God's sovereign will as presented in the lecture. (Include the idea of God's plan and our posture towards it.)
4. What does it mean for the will of God to be a "call to conform to God's moral declarations"? (Relate this to the idea of obedience to God's revealed standards.)
5. According to the lecture, what is the primary focus for believers regarding God's will: finding it or doing it? Explain why. (Emphasize the role of Scripture.)
6. Why is it important to consider the original audience and context when interpreting the letters (epistles) in the New Testament? (Explain how these writings were "occasional.")
7. Briefly describe what it means to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will" according to the interpretation provided in the lecture, using the metaphor discussed. (Focus on being characterized by knowledge rather than gaining more information.)

8. List two key aspects of actively pursuing God's will as outlined in the lecture. (Choose from the list provided in the "Key Concepts" section.)
9. How is a "spiritual person" defined in the context of this lecture and the New Testament passages discussed? (Connect it to obedience and application of God's Word.)
10. What is the main distinction between using a "proof text" and understanding the broader teaching of Scripture when seeking to know God's will? (Focus on context and comprehensive understanding.)

Quiz: Answer Key

1. The New Testament builds upon the foundation of the Old Testament, which is considered the prolegomenon. While there are differences in time and context, the Bible is a unified whole, and understanding the Old Testament is crucial for a better understanding of the New Testament's teachings on God's will.
2. The Old Testament uses a different vocabulary to express the idea of God's will, often focusing on the concept of pleasing God. In contrast, the New Testament translations predominantly use the explicit language of "will of God," "will of the Lord," and similar phrases.
3. God's sovereign will refers to his overarching control and plan in redemptive history. We often only recognize this will after events have occurred, and believers are called to submit to God's sovereignty even when they may not understand or agree with the circumstances.
4. The will of God as a call to conform to God's moral declarations means that God has revealed his ethical standards and commands throughout Scripture, and believers are expected to obey these moral principles in their lives within their specific contexts.
5. The primary focus for believers should be on *doing* God's will, which is revealed in the Scriptures, rather than trying to *find* a hidden or unrevealed personal will. God has already provided guidance through his Word, and the task is to understand and apply it.
6. The letters in the New Testament were "occasional," meaning they were written to specific audiences in response to particular situations or issues they were facing. Understanding this original context is essential to correctly interpret the authors' intended meaning and apply their teachings appropriately today.

7. Being "filled with the knowledge of God's will" is a metaphor meaning to be characterized by the knowledge of his will that has already been taught. It is not about receiving new information but rather about having one's understanding and actions shaped by the spiritual wisdom and understanding derived from God's Word.
8. Two key aspects of actively pursuing God's will are: (1) living up to the moral will of God as revealed in Scripture, and (2) developing a critically self-conscious worldview and value set based on biblical teaching to apply to life's decisions.
9. A spiritual person is defined not by reaching a certain level but by consistently abiding by God's Word, learning and applying a biblical worldview and values that transform their mind, and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
10. Using a "proof text" involves taking an isolated verse out of its original context to support a particular idea, while understanding the broader teaching of Scripture requires considering the context, genre, and overall message of the Bible to determine normative principles and avoid misinterpretation.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the significance of understanding the Old Testament as the foundation for comprehending the New Testament's teachings on the will of God. Provide specific examples of how Old Testament concepts or themes are further developed in the New Testament regarding this topic.
2. Compare and contrast the two main categories of God's will presented in the lecture: sovereign will and moral will. How should believers understand and respond to each of these aspects of God's will in their lives?
3. Critically evaluate the common Christian pursuit of "finding God's will" in light of the lecture's emphasis on "doing God's will." What are the potential pitfalls of a "search-and-find" approach, and how does a "follow the teaching given" model offer a more biblically sound perspective?
4. Explain the importance of proper biblical interpretation when seeking to understand and apply God's will. Discuss the challenges of interpreting occasional literature and metaphorical language in the New Testament, and suggest principles for responsible interpretation.
5. Analyze the concept of pursuing God's will as an active endeavor. Discuss the various components of this pursuit, such as engaging with Scripture, developing a Christian worldview, being sensitive to providence, and trusting God. How do these elements work together in the life of a believer seeking to live according to God's will?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Prolegomenon:** A preliminary discussion or introduction, especially to a treatise or discourse. In this context, it refers to the Old Testament as the foundational introduction to the entire Bible.
- **Sovereignty (of God):** God's ultimate power, authority, and control over all things according to his divine plan and purpose.
- **Moral Will (of God):** God's revealed standards of right and wrong, his ethical commands and principles found throughout Scripture that guide human behavior.
- **Sanctification:** The process of being made holy or set apart for God; it involves growth in understanding and the development of a transformed mind in accordance with biblical teachings.
- **Worldview:** A fundamental set of beliefs, values, and assumptions about reality that shapes a person's understanding and interpretation of the world.
- **Value Set:** A coherent system of principles and ideals that guide an individual's behavior and decision-making, ideally rooted in biblical truth for Christians.
- **Providence:** God's active involvement in and governance of the world and human affairs, working out his sovereign will. It can be seen as both positive (blessings) and negative (allowing suffering).
- **Proof Text:** The practice of taking biblical verses out of their original context to support a pre-existing belief or argument, often disregarding the broader meaning of the passage.
- **Pretext:** A false reason or motive put forward to conceal the real one; in this context, it can relate to misinterpreting Scripture to fit a personal agenda.
- **Prescriptive Teaching:** Biblical texts that provide commands, rules, or principles intended to be normative and binding for believers across all times and cultures.
- **Descriptive Teaching:** Biblical texts that recount historical events, narratives, or the experiences of individuals without necessarily prescribing them as norms for all believers.
- **Contextualization (of Scripture):** The process of interpreting and applying biblical teachings in a way that is relevant and understandable within a specific cultural, historical, or contemporary context, while remaining faithful to the original meaning.

5. FAQs on Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 5, The Will of God in the New Testament, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Understanding God's Will in the New Testament

1. How does the New Testament language about "God's will" relate to the Old Testament understanding of pleasing God? While the New Testament heavily utilizes the specific language of "will of God," "will of the Lord," and similar phrases (appearing in 51 texts with a divine referent), the underlying concept is consistent with the Old Testament. To please God, as emphasized in the Old Testament, is fundamentally the same as doing God's will in the New Testament. The New Testament language represents a honing of these ideas within a new context, but it builds upon the foundation laid by the Old Testament.

2. What are the primary categories of God's will as presented in the New Testament?

The New Testament presents at least two major categories of God's will. First, there is the **sovereign will of God**, which recognizes God's ultimate control and orchestration of redemptive history and all events. Examples include statements in epistle salutations ("by God's will, I am an apostle") and the acceptance of unforeseen circumstances ("let the will of the Lord be done"). We typically recognize this will after it occurs and are called to submit to God's sovereignty. Second, there is the **moral will of God**, which is revealed through God's moral declarations and commandments found throughout Scripture. This is our primary area of responsibility, calling us to conform to God's ethical teachings and live in a way that pleases Him.

3. Does the New Testament primarily focus on believers "finding" God's will for specific decisions, or something else?

Contrary to a common emphasis on "finding" God's will for individual choices, the New Testament primarily exhorts believers to **do** God's will, which is already revealed in Scripture. The emphasis is on understanding and obeying God's moral declarations and living according to a transformed mind shaped by biblical worldview and values. The idea of constantly searching for unrevealed information for every decision is presented as akin to divination. Instead, believers are expected to apply the knowledge they have from Scripture to the situations they face.

4. What does it mean to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will" according to the New Testament, and how is this achieved? The phrase "filled with the knowledge of God's will," as seen in passages like Colossians 1:9, should not be interpreted as receiving new, secret information directly from God. Rather, "filled" is a metaphor meaning to be **characterized by** the knowledge of God's will that has already been revealed through apostolic teaching and Scripture. Achieving this involves actively engaging with and internalizing this existing information, developing spiritual wisdom and understanding to apply it skillfully in daily life. It's about living out the truths already known, a process of sanctification.

5. How does one actively "pursue" God's will according to the New Testament?

Pursuing God's will is an active endeavor that involves several key aspects: living up to God's moral will as revealed in Scripture; diligently understanding and managing the direct, implied, and created construct levels of biblical teaching; developing a critically self-conscious biblical worldview and value set to guide decision-making; being sensitive to God's providence (the outworking of His sovereignty); and ultimately trusting in a sovereign God even amidst difficulties.

6. What is the significance of understanding the original context when interpreting New Testament commands related to God's will? The New Testament epistles are occasional literature, written to specific audiences in particular historical and cultural contexts to address specific situations. Therefore, to accurately understand the commands and teachings related to God's will, it is crucial to consider the original audience and the issues they were facing. We are not the original audience, so proper interpretation requires probing the original context to grasp the author's intent and then appropriately contextualizing those principles to similar situations in our own time and culture, rather than simply taking verses out of context ("proof texting").

7. How does the New Testament view "spirituality," and how does it relate to knowing and doing God's will? In the New Testament, the term "spiritual" (when applied to people as a noun in a few instances) describes individuals who abide by God's word, follow God, and actively learn and apply a biblical worldview and values to their lives. Spirituality is not a static state achieved by chance but rather a process of growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and His Word. It is directly linked to knowing and obeying God's teachings; a spiritual person is one who demonstrates the characteristics of skillful living based on the knowledge of God.

8. What is the central principle for understanding and living in God's will according to the New Testament? The overarching principle for understanding and living in God's will in the New Testament is **obedience to the teachings of the Bible**. When believers obey what Scripture teaches and live according to its dictates, they are in God's will. God's guidance is not primarily about a search for hidden information but about following the teaching that has already been given. Continuous growth in understanding and applying this teaching, leading to a developed biblical worldview and value set, is the ongoing path of God's will for believers.