

How Can I Know God's Will?

There are four ways in which He reveals His will to us

- through the Scriptures,
- through providential circumstances,
- through the convictions of our own higher judgment,
- and through the inward impressions of the Holy Spirit on our minds.

The Scriptures come first. If you are in doubt upon any subject you must first of all consult the Bible about it, and see whether there is any law there to direct you. Until you have found and obeyed God's will as it is there revealed, you must not ask nor expect a separate direct personal revelation.

... Where our Father has written out for us a plain direction about anything, He will not of course make a special revelation to us about that thing. And if we fail to search out and obey the Scripture rule, where there is one, and look instead for an inward voice, we shall open ourselves to the deception of Satan, and shall almost inevitably get into error.

... But if, upon reaching, you do not find in the Bible any directions upon our point of difficulty, or if the directions given do not reach into all the special details of the case, then you must seek guidance in the other ways mentioned; God will voice Himself to you either by conviction of your judgment, or by providential circumstances, or by a clear inward impression. And in all true guidance these four voices will necessarily harmonize, for God cannot say in one voice that which He contradicts in another.

...If either one of these tests fail, it is not safe to proceed, but you must wait in quiet trust until the Lord shows you the point of harmony, which He surely will, sooner or later, if it is His voice that is speaking. Anything, therefore, which is out of this divine harmony must be rejected as not from God. For we must never forget that Satan can make impressions upon our minds as well as the blessed Spirit of God, and in this matter of guidance it is especially necessary not to be ignorant of his devices.

Hannah Whitall Smith in The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life

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