

Christian books on the subjects they are considering.

Let me caution parents: if it becomes clear that your child has made the wrong decision regarding a potential mate or career, he should not be afraid to change his mind. God gives revelation progressively and our perspective changes as we grow. It takes courage for someone to admit that they've made a wrong decision, but the time to remedy it is sooner rather than later.

Discerning God's will in making life decisions is a matter of exercising faith, obedience and patience. Without faith, a child won't care about finding God's will; he'll only be concerned with his own. Your child must know and believe the gospel to have the burning passion to live it out.

It is possible to have faith while not consciously disciplining oneself to obey God's Word. Our fleshly natures cause us to stray from obedience. So urge your children to study God's Word, asking the Holy Spirit to lead them to repentance and obedience. The greater their spiritual maturity, the sweeter their appreciation will be for a life of obedience to God.

In the final analysis, discerning God's will is not a mathematical formula but a lifestyle of faith, obedience and patience. As we live in Him, we may also advise our children to walk in *the Word*, in *the light*, in *the wisdom*, and in *the love* of God, who guides them, helps them live separate from the world, and showers blessings upon them as they seek to do His will.

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Free Book by Joel Beeke

With registration for the July 16
Faithful Families Conference
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PROCLAMATION

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ULTIMATE QUESTIONS:

Helping Your Child Discern God's Will



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We have only one opportunity to walk through this world. Our life is like a vapor that appears for a short time and then vanishes (James 4:14). The choices we make in this life are critically important; if we make the wrong ones we cannot come back and redo them.

These realities should impress upon parents and other mentors the important role we play in helping our children discern God's will. Our children wonder what schools they'll attend, what career they will choose and who they will marry. We validate their search for answers when we give respectful and sober consideration to their questions. We can do so by helping them consider the important

decision-making roles of the Bible, providence, prayer and counselors.

God's Will and the Bible

If our children are to fear God in truth, they must know the Bible. They should read it, love it, search it, live it and make its truths the center of their decisions. Knowing God's will from the Bible cannot come merely by opening the Book and finding random verses but by being saturated with Scripture. One of the first things we can give our children is a love for God's Word.

The Word of God is as relevant today as it was when God inspired it. The Apostle Peter says that God gives to us "all things that pertain unto life



and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us in glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). The Bible is the blueprint for our lives; one that we can only follow with the Spirit’s illumination and guidance.

The first thing a child should do is to honestly examine himself in the light of Scripture. He should ask, “Do I hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is my only hope in Jesus Christ? Is He Lord of my life? Do I long to live out of gratitude to Him?” The first step in discerning the will of God is realizing where we spiritually stand before Him.

Second, the child must make an honest assessment of his or her gifts. The Bible teaches us that God gives us gifts for our good and His glory. Encourage your child to ask, “In what areas has He given me gifts that I could best use to support myself and serve others?”

In monumental life choices such as choosing a mate for marriage, the Bible offers important principles to answer specific questions such as: what are important qualities in a mate?; what is the purpose of marriage?; what are the roles of a husband and wife and how can one respectfully fulfill them?; what are the rules of conduct in a godly relationship?; and how may God be glorified in our relationships?

Our children should know the Bible well enough to recognize its commands, prohibitions, principles, examples and illustrations and to apply those to the spiritual, occupational and practical areas of their lives.

God’s Will and Providence

Through providence, God provides everything we need for life and godliness. Happily, God often provides more than one acceptable option. This requires the application of wisdom, which God has promised to freely give those who ask of Him.

For example, your son or daughter may say, “I’m looking at four good schools and have to make a decision soon. How do I know which to choose?” To start, help him ask a number of questions about the schools under consideration. Consider their academic and moral reputations. Are there good, sound churches nearby? Is one school closer to home than another? Does one provide better scholarships? What are the living conditions like at the schools?

If this process leaves the child with more than one option, encourage him to apply to each school. Perhaps the choice will be made for him by the admissions board, knowing that God superintends every decision. In the meantime, encourage him to prayerfully examine his choices, to make a final choice and to rest in God’s sovereignty of all things.

Or, out of the millions of young people in the world, how does a child choose the one she (or he) will marry? First, counsel your daughter that the Bible teaches us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. She can automatically eliminate anyone who is not a believer. Within this selection of believers, she must look for someone who shares her spiritual and moral principles and is as committed to following them as she is.

Once she finds a young man who meets her criteria, she can discern his suitability as a mate further by observing him in many aspects of life, looking for characteristics of spiritual maturity, character, integrity and disposition; taking note of the things that interest him most, what he talks most about, and what he spends time on. Last (perhaps least, but not unimportant), are both young people physically attracted to each other? The Puritans used to say that when a match is fitting, desire will come. In terms of choosing a mate for life, desire is a factor. Sadly, in our day, physical attraction seems to trump more significant standards given by God.

Suggest to your child that it’s wise to start looking for a special person from his own social sphere. He or she will likely have more in common with someone who’s grown up with the same beliefs, environment, friends and experiences.

Considering providence and career choices, God gives us certain aptitudes. For example, He did not grace me with mechanical prowess, so it would have been unthinkable for me to have chosen to be a mechanic. God does not tell us to deny our gifts and take a job that we absolutely hate. Still, we must be practical about our vocation, which means some of the things we enjoy doing most will have to remain hobbies rather than primary occupations.

God’s Will and Prayer

Advise your children to pray for God’s wisdom in making life

decisions. Urge them to begin each day with prayer seeking God’s face, aligning their will to His, then asking for help in making the best decisions they can. Ask Him to equip them for the path they choose, then trust Him to help prepare them for it.

Advise your children to pray for God’s guidance in directing them to their future mates. They should pray, asking God to prepare this person—and themselves—for each other. When your daughter becomes interested in a certain young man, encourage her to lift him up to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to give clear guidance in determining whether or not to pursue a deeper relationship with him.

Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the need for prayer. Instruct your child not to stop praying after making a choice but to pray throughout their education, personal relationships, career, family life and quest, to know Christ better.

God’s Will and Counselors

Encourage your child to first use you, his parents, as sounding boards. Offer opinions and resources, but especially as they mature, beware of telling them what to do.

Being involved may mean advising our children to seek guidance from other wise, godly, discrete and experienced counselors (Prov. 11:14). Encourage them to talk to some spiritually mature peers, meet with a trusted school counselor or someone experienced in his proposed field. Provide your children with good