

The Teacher and Helping Students Discover the Will of God

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”
(Acts 16:9-10).

Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the participant will be able to accomplish the following:

1. Assist students in discovering God’s will for their lives and discover the will of God, on a regular basis, in one’s own life.
2. Identify God’s Word, will, and way in life’s decisions and journey.
3. Define and explain the importance of submission.
4. Explain the importance of studying God’s Word as it relates to understanding God’s will.
5. Express the benefits of receiving counsel from godly men and women.
6. State who we should receive counsel from when discovering God’s will.
7. State who we should be careful to not receive counsel from when striving to discover God’s will.
8. Recall the five reflective questions proposed by Rev. R. K. Rodenbush when it comes to sensing God’s will.
9. Outline the downward spiral experienced by Jonah when he was running from God’s will.
10. Provide Dan Southerland’s definition of God’s will.

Introduction

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The first thing I have learned about discovering the will of God is that it is a continuous journey. It is not something that happens one time and everything remains the same for the rest of one's life. What does this tell us, teacher? That is right. All of us are on the never-ending journey of walking in the will of God. So, how do you best teach this lesson to your students? Set the example. Lead the way. Show that you have traveled—and continue to travel—on the winding, endless highway of following the will of God. We will take the personal approach. How do you discover God's will for yourself? Answer that and you are well on the way to helping others journey along the road.

Perhaps, you will remember a story (by Randy Adams) used in another lesson in the *Advance Educators Series*. Forgive me for using an adapted version here. But, it does demonstrate the point needed.

“His name may be David, John, Kofi, William, or one from a host of names from anywhere around the globe. He has come to the Bible school looking for help. He steps into the classroom representing great potential. He comes, hopefully, having already experienced the full new birth and likely feeling that God has called him to some area of ministry. He no doubt, has aspirations of doing a work for the Lord. He may not know when, where, how or even why, but hopes to find answers to all these questions in Bible School. Can you (Bible School teacher) help him? He is like a seed—complete yet undeveloped; full of untapped and possibly unknown potential.

“His dormant and undiscovered talent may be that of a dynamic and effective evangelist, or that of a wise and compassionate pastor. He may become a Sunday school teacher or the dean of the Bible school. He could have the potential of being the future national leader of the church, or become a missionary to some far away land. One thing is certain; he represents the potential of reaching untold multitudes of lost souls.

“He has come to Bible school because he needs help. Help that only God-called, Spirit-filled, Holy Ghost anointed, teachers can give. He needs men and women to come into his life that have given themselves to the purpose of God, and prepared themselves for such a challenge.

“In many ways he is like wet cement, waiting for someone to shape his life. He wants to be first of all like Christ, but also wants to preach like Peter, pray like Daniel, prophesy like Isaiah, and win souls like Paul. He needs a teacher to identify his strengths and understand his weaknesses. He needs compassionate counsel; He yearns for a friend; He seeks answers but also wants to express his own ideas.

“He is a Bible school student and he is yours for a short time. What will you do with him? What changes will you help bring about in his life? Will you make a difference? Or, will you leave him as he is? What will he learn from you? Will the time and money spent for his Bible School education be a waste or a good investment?

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“He is a seed, and seeds are destined for the field and not to be kept in the barn. He desperately needs to fall in good ground, take root, grow and develop, and bring forth much fruit. His family needs this to happen. There is a town somewhere that needs this to happen. An un-evangelized region is waiting for his ministry. Perhaps an entire nation waits in darkness for him to come with the light of truth. Teacher, can you help him?”

He has been brought into your classroom and the kingdom for such a time as this. He is anxious to do the will of God (if he understands it). Time spent in your classroom should never be a waste. It is time spent sharpening sickles to harvest the souls God has in store. What a fabulous opportunity—you and your student—embarking on discovering God’s will and plan.

Discovering God’s direction; why does it cause such a brain pain, and so much worthless worry? Too often, we see it as an ultimate destination, not realizing it is a continuous journey. We erroneously envision ourselves being led through a huge maze and being plumped down and told, “The puzzle of your life is in a thousand pieces. Put it together!” God is not messing with our minds. He longs to provide us the direction we need. He orders our footsteps. And He reveals His will in the increments that would be best suited for us. The process unfolds according to the Master’s master plan. The will of God does not have to be a mystery. It reminds me of the winding road. As you start out on the trip, you can only see as far as the headlights shine, or until you reach the bend in the road. Once you travel faithfully through the twist, and around it, you can see further.

“God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *NLT*).

God says, “I have a plan for your life” (Jeremiah 29:11). You respond, “Great, Lord. What is it?” The race is “set before us.” It has already been decided. The path, the race, which God has set, has been selected.

Paul, in obedience to his missionary call in Acts 13 established a number of churches in the faith and was seeking the will of God for his life. Finding the will of God seems to be one of the major areas where people struggle. Paul thought that he would go to Asia but he was “...forbidden of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 16:6). Then his team considered going to another place “...but the Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16:7). Finally Paul had a vision of a man who stood on a distant shore and called across the sea, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us!” (Acts 16:9).

Daniel Scott in his lessons on “The Body Ministry: Striving for Excellence” points out, “The first church had learned by experience that the will of God was the shortest route to the greater results. The obedience to His will produces success...At times the Spirit forbids an action a person thinks is right...the army of the called march in formation. Each step is ordered as though by prearranged training and practice; the will of God being the drummer calling the steps, the resolute faces of those in the columns indicating the willingness to move with submission.”

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“The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans” (Page 274, The Message).

Eugene Peterson suggests that Paul and his team felt that all of the pieces had come together to the will of God. There seems to be a process that they went through to determine this since they knew for sure that it was God’s will. Their assurance was not based on the vision alone. Christians often ask, “How can I be sure of God’s will for my life?” To many, this is a difficult question and one that most Christians struggle with.

Dr. Bill Hamon in his book *Prophets and Personal Prophecy* suggests that there are three “W’s” in decision making when it comes to the will of God.

God’s <u>W</u> ord	...on the matter.
God’s <u>W</u> ill	...about it.
God’s <u>W</u> ay	...to fulfill it.

Traveling the Road of the Will of God

Dr. Hamon (whose book was very helpful in the preparation of this portion of this lesson) compares the three “W’s” to three sets of traffic lights. You must make sure that you have a green light on all three before proceeding. Three colors are normally used on traffic lights. They are: Red - which means to “Stop.” Yellow - which means to “Yield, get ready to stop, or caution.” Green meaning “Go.”

God’s Word

The Bible is God in print. It is the revelation of God in written form. The Greek word is “Logos”, which refers to the Word of God in general. Another Greek word is “rhema” which is a specific “word from the Word.” It is a personal word from the Lord giving us direction and a command.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Andy Stanley in his DVD series “Discovering God’s Will” explains why it is so pivotal to study God’s Word when seeking His will:

- We study His Word to find the big picture: God’s plan for everything that happens.
- We study His Word to find the commands and law He gives for all to obey.
- The more we study and learn about God, the closer we get to Him. The closer we get to the understanding of who He is, the easier it is to make a decision about God’s plan for our lives.

Howard Hendricks said, “The will of God is found in the Word of God. The more a person grows, the more he begins to think instructively and habitually from a divine perspective.”

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God will never provide guidance, or ask you to do anything that is contrary to His Word; “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psalm 32:8).

Stay in the Word! Saturate yourself in the Word! As the hub keeps the wheel centered on the axle; so the Word of God keeps us centered on truth. The Bible is primarily and essentially the written will of God for our lives. Examine the Scriptures. The Bible is our guidebook in all things. He also provides certain unwritten directives. Obey God’s written Word first (Psalms 1:2-3). Know God. Love God.

God guides us as we search the Scriptures: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Rick Warren said, “Teaching shows us the path on which we are to walk; rebuking shows us where we got off the path; correcting tells us how to get back on the path; and training in righteousness teaches how to stay on the path. This means that the Bible is the comprehensive guidebook for living the Christian life.” Teacher, did you notice how teaching is enabling your students in seeing the path, getting on the path, and staying on the path of fulfilling God’s will and leading them heavenward?

John Wesley said, “It’s how God teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains us for the journey so we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

If you could summarize up the Bible in one word it would be “submission.” We need to submit to the will of God as revealed through His Word. Submission is willingly giving up your own desires in favor of God’s desires. “Submit” comes from the Greek word *hupēiko* which means to yield or retire. Each time one submits he is yielding to the authority and influence of another. A prerequisite to knowing the will of God is the willingness to submit and obey. Jesus asked, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not what I say?” (Luke 6:46-47, *NIV*).

“His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

It’s one thing to know. It’s quite another to do. Are you teachable? Will you follow God’s will once you know it?

Students without a teachable attitude will stray endlessly in the journey. The Bible school environment is an excellent environment to teaching submission. Rules. Rules. Rules. Students learn to submit to parents, pastors, professors, and even peers.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Psalms 23:1-3). An old song by E. W. Brandy says, “Where He leads me, I will follow. I’ll go with Him, with Him all the way.”

“Show me the way I should go; for to you I lift up my soul. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good spirit lead me on level ground” (Psalm 143:8, 10, *NIV*).

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Submission is the willingness to do things God's way; "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded" (James 4:7-8).

It is wrong to decide what you want to do and then make the Bible conform to it. People have the habit of doing this. They make their plans and then they expect God to go along with it. Doctrines have even been formed using and/or abusing one isolated Scripture. When determining the will of God the first traffic light that you drive up to is called "**God's Word.**" What you feel is the will of God for your life must be measured up against the Word of God. The Word of God has been provided as a "...lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119: 105). Most of God's will is revealed through His Word.

We cannot base our decision on one Scripture alone. "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

The Spirit will never speak to us—even through spiritual gifts—and tell us to do anything that would be contrary to the Word of God. God's will for us conform to the principles of His Word. The Spirit guides us in agreement with the Bible.

God's Will

People today feel they are able to find the Will of God on their own and do not need the help of men. They say, "I'm not going to listen to men but only to the voice of God." First of all, it will be a very lonely life if you determine not to listen to men. Secondly, this attitude is very dangerous.

Road Signs on the Road to Discovering the Will of God

God has provided us with the five-fold leadership (Ephesians 4:11-12) in the church to assist us. These men and women of God are capable of confirming and providing counsel in the area that you feel is God's will for your life. It shouldn't be felt that they are enemies and will destroy God's plan if it is exposed to them. Others feel that if the will of God is voiced then the devil will send his demons to destroy the plan of God. Jesus came to destroy the work of Satan. Satan cannot destroy the plan of God; and neither can man.

Gamaliel was a man that was honored by many. In Acts 5 he advised, "Keep your hands off these men. If what they are doing is their own idea, it will fall apart. But if it is of God, you can't stop it and you don't want to be fighting with God."

Wise and Godly Counsel Provides Safety on the Road

The will of God will stand up to the examination of spiritual men of God. They will be able to give wise and godly counsel. We can go to men of God that have been seasoned in the ministry and are mature.

The Wise Man said, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14).

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“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established” (Proverbs 15:22).

“For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Proverbs 24:6).

Who should you receive counsel from?

- Those that have made the journey before.
- Those that have our best interest at heart.
- Those that are spiritually-minded and can give good advice (Psalms 1:1-2).
- Those that are in spiritual leadership or authority over us.
- Those we trust and have confidence in.

What are the benefits of receiving counsel?

- Wise advice.
- Confirmation.
- Affirmation.
- Mentorship.
- Discerning questions.
- Clarity.
- Focus on the right path.

When Samuel heard God’s voice: He heard it in the voice of his pastor, Eli. He went to his pastor for confirmation. His pastor gave him the right counsel.

Avoid people who:

- Tell you exactly what you want to hear.
- Always see it your way.
- Have something to gain or lose through the counsel they provide.

Watch out for ear-tickers: “Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth” (2 Timothy 4:3-4, *NIV*).

A great friend and mentor, Robert K. Rodenbush, expresses his concept of God’s will through asking five reflective questions:

1. Is there a need greater than where I am?
2. Are my ministry skills suitable to be used to meet that need?

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3. Is my family able and willing?
4. Do my elders agree and will they give their blessing?
5. Is the door open to me?

Hearing the Voice of God

Another way that we can hear the voice of God concerning His Will is through the “still small voice.” Elijah stood upon the mountain and waited for the Lord to pass by. The wind came and broke the rocks but God was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but God wasn’t in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, after the fire there was the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11-12).

We need a close relationship to the Lord that will allow us to hear and know His voice. Paul came “declaring the testimony of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1). Paul knew this because he determined “not to know anything...save Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). He later mentioned that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

The Holy Spirit will “guide us” (John 16:13). The Lord is compared to a Shepherd in John 10 and we are His sheep.

When God speaks to us with a still small voice; we can hear it, and we will have a deep assurance in our heart that God has spoken.

Gifts of the Spirit

The will of God can be confirmed to us through the Gifts of the Spirit. The revelation gifts that reveal something are especially helpful.

Desire

Another way to confirm the will of God is whether or not we have a desire in our heart to do what we feel God is telling us. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psalm 37:4).

God gives us the desires of our heart because He puts the desire there in the first place. However, desire alone, is not a safe way to determine the Will of God.

Clearance from Road Control

Dr. Hamon mentions “the witness, clearance, or restraint of the Holy Spirit.” In Acts 16:6 Paul was “forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.” In Acts 16:7 “the Spirit suffered them not.” Paul also testified “the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city” (Acts 20:23).

We should never ignore the prompting of the Holy Ghost, because it will dull our spiritual senses. It can also change the green light into a red light.

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A missionary traveling back to his home in the night passed through a city. He was traveling with two nationals. Anxious to see their families they continued on toward their home. Soon armed robbers ambushed them. The vehicle was shot many times with a gun and the missionary and national preachers barely escaped with their lives. Later each one testified that they had thought that they should not go on, but did not tell each other. It is better to listen than to regret it later.

Did You Pass the Test?

When you pass the majority of these tests, you have a green light and can proceed on to the next light.

God's Way

You have passed through the first two traffic lights and have now come to the third light. You may have the mind of God but will need to wait on the correct timing.

Confusion usually indicates that the timing is not correct. The will of God normally falls into place at the appropriate time. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace..." (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Walking and Driving in the Will of God

God has a way that He wants us to walk in order to fulfill His will. "...This is the way, walk ye in it..." (Isaiah 30:21).

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23).

God's ways are not our ways. Therefore we must wait on Him to reveal the correct timing, direction, and the manner in which we will accomplish the will of God.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

The Light is Getting Ready to Change

Once you have a green light at each of the three traffic lights you should move quickly. You must obey the light when it is green, knowing that it can change colors at any moment. You need to act when God wants you to act.

"...Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you..." (John 12:35).

"To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge;
To find the will of God is the greatest discovery;
To do the will of God is the greatest achievement."

Anonymous

"Being Out of the Will of God Stinks" Jonah's Testimony

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There is such peace being in the perfect will of God. However, when we run from the call and will of God it is a different story. God sent Jonah to preach to the city of Ninevah. Instead of passing through the traffic lights on the road to the will of God, Jonah changed roads all together and started running from it. Jonah's failure was not delighting himself in the Lord. Instead of running to God; he was running away from God. This took Jonah down.

- Down to Joppa. (Jonah 1:3)
- Down into the Ship. (Jonah 1:5)
- Down into the Sea. (Jonah 1:15)
- Down into the belly of the Big Fish. (Jonah 1:17)

It was in the belly of the big fish that Jonah started praying for the will of God to be done. God can put us into situations where we will become delighted to do the will of God. We need to make sure that our heart is right with God and that it is ready to do the Lord's will. This means that we must first surrender our own will and bring it under subjection to His will.

Lord, What Do You Want Me to Do?

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”
(Acts 9:6).

Knocked down on the road, Paul asked, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” He never stopped asking this question throughout his life and ministry. It is the same question we should ask.

The will of God is not a destination or an end in itself. It is a progressive journey experienced daily throughout a lifetime.

Daily we should ask, “Lord, what is your agenda for today? What is Your plan?”

Paul told his friends and followers, “I will return again unto you, if God will” (Acts 18:21).

James advised, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:14-15).

Dan Southerland in *Transitioning: Leading Your Church through Change* gives a working definition of God's will.

- Doing the right *thing*
- In the right *way*
- For the right *motive*
- At the right *time*

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Warren Wiersbe said, “Obeying the will of God involves not only doing the right thing in the right way for the right motive, but it also means doing it at the right time.”

The writer of Hebrews calls us “pilgrims” on this road called “life.” The Christian life is often referred to as the Christian walk; a journey. As we journey, many times we see only as far ahead as the road will allow. We do not see what is around the next bend, or what is beyond the roadblock. However, we know there is a God leading us who does see. He knows the way because He is “the way” (John 14:6). We must stay on His road and keep going, even when we cannot see far ahead. We must continue walking in the will of God though the view may be short. We persist to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Preparing to Take a Trip

Preparing for any journey requires groundwork. This includes the daily journey in discovering and obeying the will of God.

- Daily present your body a living sacrifice. Visualize placing yourself on the altar of sacrifice surrendering yourself and your will to God (1 Corinthians 15:31, Matthew 10:38-39). Someone has said, “In God’s service, our greatest ability is our availability.”
- Don’t be conformed to this world. The world’s thinking and solution may not apply in spiritual situations. Let your heart be fixed on the Lord (Psalms 57:7). Focus your attention on Him. Get the Lord’s thoughts (Isaiah 55:8).
- Trust the Lord for direction. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- Do not try to work out His will with your limited understanding. Ask for the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16-3:1).
- Acknowledge Him through prayer, fasting, and reading His Word (Jeremiah 33:3).
- Develop a listening (spiritual) ear to hear the Lord’s voice (John 10:3-8, 1 Kings 19:12, Mark 8:18).
- Wait until the answer comes (Lamentations 3:25-26, Psalms 130:5, Isaiah 40:31).
- God will order and direct your footsteps.

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“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (Psalms 37:23).

- Finally, “whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

You may be thinking, “That all sounds so simple, yet finding the will of God has been difficult for me.” The longest journey begins with a single step. God reveals His will as we walk with Him from day to day. We place a lot of emphasis on the journey ahead. This results in needless worry. Concentrate on doing what God has revealed to you. Proceed as far as you can see. When you get to the bend in the road, God will be there. He will let you know all you need to know about the next phase of the journey. Happy traveling!

Please Note: This material was taken from *Acts: God’s Training Manual for Today’s Church, Sensing God’s Direction*, and *Ministerial Development*, written by James Poitras

Lesson in Review

1. What are the three (3) “Ws” to be used in decision making concerning the will of God?

2. What are the three (3) colors of traffic lights and what do each mean? _____

3. If you were to sum up the Bible in one word, what would it be? Explain what this word means.____

4. According to Psalm 119:105, what is the Word of God to us? _____

5. According to 2 Corinthians 13:1, what principle should be followed in establishing doctrines and the will of God for our lives? _____

6. According to Rick Warren how does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 assist us in following the path of God’s will?

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7. Provide Scriptures that prove that we need to receive wise and godly counsel. _____

8. Private revelation must stand which test? _____

9. List some ways that we can determine and confirm God's will for our lives. _____

10. What is the greatest knowledge, discovery, and achievement? _____

11. Jonah's refusal to do the will of God brought him down to four places. What are they? _____

12. What question(s) did Saul (Paul) ask on the Damascus Road? _____

13. Explain the will of God by relating it to a journey. _____

14. What should we ask on a daily basis? _____

15. What is the working definition of God's will? _____

16. What does the writer of Hebrews call us? _____

17. How can we present our bodies as a living sacrifice? _____

18. Why should we not be conformed to this world? _____

19. Quote Proverbs 3:5-6. _____

20. What kind of mind should we ask the Lord for? _____

22. What should we do until the answer comes? _____

23. Who will order our footsteps? _____

24. What is the result of putting emphasis on the spiritual journey ahead (that we cannot see)?

25. Instead of placing emphasis on the journey ahead that we cannot see, what should we do?

26. List three characteristics of those that one should receive counsel from. _____

27. List five benefits of seeking and receiving counsel. _____
