

# The Secret to Phenomenal Growth

Col 1:9 -12

Illustration – Overwhelmed by prayer needs of the church?  
- Man and prayer “scroll” on computer

How do you pray for your friends??? What one thing?  
Knowing how to pray the right prayer! Paul prays key,  
strategic prayer warfare.

## STRATEGIC PRAYERS

- a. **Thanksgiving** : Our prayers tend to flounder on several counts – first is that we pray for people only when they are in trouble. When was the last time you prayed for someone because they were doing so well in their Christian walk? Ours are damage control prayers, not visionary prayers. Paul in Vs 3 prays for the Col. BECAUSE they were doing so well!
- b. **Intense** – “*we have not ceased praying for you . . .*”
- c. **Focused** : He prayed one thing - that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will. Simple prayer that does not seek to advice God.

“*In all spiritual wisdom and understanding. . .*” is *sunesis* (2 occurrences) – ie that you may be filled with practical wisdom, not just head knowledge, but wisdom that knows how to distinguish between right and wrong, and has the power to live itself out.

Why does he pray this, what is so strategic about this sort of simple prayer?

Explain the Domino effect. - Vs 10

- Live lives worthy of the Lord
- Be fully pleasing to Him
- Bear fruit
- Grow in the knowledge of God
- Be strengthened
- Display endurance and patience
- Joyfully give thanks to the Lord

7 results out of this one prayer – that’s strategic praying! How do you pray for your friends? Pray that “*they may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.*”

But what does it mean to be filled with a Knowledge of God’s will? or to know God’s will? How do we know God’s will. A month ago, when Bob preached here in the evening service, he told us that it sometimes disturbs him to see the way believers go about seeking God’s will – they seem to agonize, to sweat, to be terribly anxious, to have to fast and pray – all in all to be twisting God’s arm so that he can reveal his will to them. And Bob said we don’t have to twist God’s arm to know his will!

If you read God’s word on how to know his will, it’s actually quite easy – it’s easy to know God’s will for 2 reasons

**1. KNOWING GOD'S WILL :** The first is that God wants you to know his will! Beatrice, my wife is fond of saying "We don't earn the right to know God's will, he freely gives it".

Deut 30:11 *Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.*

Jer 29: 11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD,*

Ps 32:8 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*

**2. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL :** Secondly, we don't have to agonize over God's will because God **has already** revealed his will to us. What do I mean by this - 90% of God's will for your life has already been clearly revealed. This is what we call God's sovereign will for you and I. It applies to all men, and acts as a guide for most of life's challenges and issues.

## Illustration of knowing God's will

In the same way – it is God's will . . .

I Thes 4:3 *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;*

I Thes 5:18 *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

I Pet 2:15 *For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. <sup>16</sup> Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. <sup>17</sup> Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.*

I Tim 2:4 <sup>3</sup> *This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

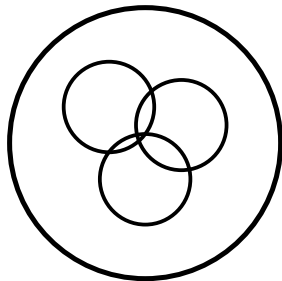
God's sovereign will extends beyond this to include all his moral and specific commands – you will not steal, you will not kill, love one another, be kind to one another, do not bribe, etc.

The problem with most people is not that they need to know God's will for their life, they already do, it's already revealed in his word. The problem is with OBEDIENCE. Having known God's sovereign will, and having sufficient guidance in that sovereign will, WILL YOU obey it, or will you complicate life by asking needless questions that cloud the issue, trying to justify sin, ignoring what scripture says - under the guise that yours is a special condition?

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**3. GOD'S SPECIFIC WILL :** But thirdly, on top of God's general will, we may also speak of God's specific will. Some details of God's will for your life are particular to you, and they go beyond his general will for your life, but hear me clearly **THEY NEVER CONTRADICT OR GO AGAINST HIS GENERAL WILL.** This, for example is true in the case of a life career – what does God want of my life in terms of career? Should I choose this freely, or should I seek him on this? Should I be a doctor, a pastor, a missionary, a missionary doctor or what?

Time will not allow us to answer those sorts of questions in full, but with what we have, we know that God will not have us be a professional thief – we don't need to pray about that because his sovereign moral will does not allow that.



But within his sovereign will he gives us a lot of freedom to choose, and with some of us he makes or predetermines the choices for us. If we are trying to discern his will, we begin by assuming the freedom that he has given us in Christ, that as long as we are walking on a godly path, we are free to

choose a career or a spouse. However, sometimes God prompts us that he has something more specific than this, and this he does by

- Convicting us thru scripture, a verse, a passage that stands out for us and holds us captive with conviction.
- We can know it thru our conscience Col 3:15 *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,*
- We can know it thru friends and Godly counselors
- We can know it thru prophetic dreams and vision (Acts 16 Paul and the man from Macedonia)
- We can know it thru circumstances

One helpful, easy way to remember how God can guide us specifically into his will for us, once we know that we have examined and are walking in his sovereign will, is by knowing our spiritual **SHAPE**

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS** – Our spiritual gifts are given by God to guide us and make us able and effective to contribute significantly to his Kingdom growth. Know, find out your spiritual gift – and the only way to do this is by being involved in ministry, volunteer for the opportunities that come your way, and see if your gift lies in that area – it will not take long for you to know. And once you know, don't fight the gift, don't try and force God to give you a gift that in his wisdom he has chosen to give someone instead. If someone comes and tells you you don't have the gift of teaching, don't fight them and don't try and force God on it. Find out what your gift is instead.

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather*

*think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. <sup>4</sup> Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup> If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

You'd be surprised to know how liberating knowing your spiritual gift can be for if you know where God is leading you, then you don't keep wondering off into every nook and path you see.

**H**HEART'S DESIRE – Secondly, know your hearts desire.

Where we have sought to walk pure before the Lord, and are committed to listening and obeying the Word of God, then listen to your heart's desire. Note, this is not license to do whatever your heart desires for as we are warned in Jer 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

And we need to really examine our heart and it's motives BUT remember too that God uses the heart's desire too. In Ps 37:4, 5 he says *Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD: trust in him and he will do this:*

See that connection between delighting yourself in the Lord and listening to your heart? Sometimes we are too suspicious of our hearts desire, when infact God is trying to guide us.

**A**ABILITIES : The third is know what your abilities are. What do you naturally do well as a result of your makeup? Abilities are different from spiritual gifts because the one is a God given thing at your spiritual birth, and the way God uses it cannot be engineered or explained in terms of human abilities and learning. The evangelist who preaches and hundreds are converted, even if you were to take his exact message and memorize it and mimic him perfectly, you would not have the same result BECAUSE his was a work of the spirit. But abilities are human talents that come from your learning and natural gifts, even gifts that you had before you accepted Christ, but that can now be redeemed for the Kingdom's sake. This is how I understand the parable of the talents in Matt 25 – each one was faithful to his own talent, even though some had more than others.

**P**PERSONALITY : Fourthly is your personality. Your personality leads you in certain directions. Some people have a very strong pastoral personality and a natural tendency in that direction, others have a personality that lends itself to working with children, or to being a medical caregiver. Once again your personality makeup is a good indicator as to what God's will for your life may be. Some are aggressive risk takers; others are quiet strong disciplinarians, some are loud public figures, others are meditative, contemplative authors.

**EXPERIENCES** : Finally are your life's experiences. I believe that in the economy of the kingdom, while we may waste away our life, God never does. He makes each and every experience count, as Rom 8 says – all things work out for the good of those that love God and are called to his purposes. In other words, even what may seem to us to be needless hardship, or wasted time, God is able to redeem as a life experience and use it for his purposes.

Joel 2:25 *I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten -*

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*the great locust and the young locust,  
the other locusts and the locust swarm*

**CONCLUSION** : Let's bring our thots back to Col 1:9. Paul was praying a strategic prayer for the believers in Colossae, a prayer that we should be praying for one another and for all those who are doing well in the Lord, for this is a powerful prayer that unpacks itself into amazing fruit. But even as we pray it for others, it should be one that inspires us to growth ourselves.

In my years of ministry, I have come to believe that Christian growth takes place in 4 general phases for most of us (Overhead of growth spurts – Foundation/involvement/leadership/ reproduction . . . this prayer lies at the heart of those 4 phases, launching them off. Where are you?