



Campus Crusade for Christ

The Paul Brown Letter

*How to Know the Will of God in Your Life
according to the
"Sound-Mind Principle" of Scripture*

Mr. Paul V. Brown*
The Graduate House
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Re: How to Know the Will of God in your Life
according to the "Sound-Mind Principle" of Scripture.

Dear Paul:

Thank you for your recent letter sharing some of the exciting experiences, which you are having in your new and adventuresome life with Christ.

When I read that part of your letter in which you expressed the desire to invest your life fully for Christ. I paused to give thanks to the Lord: first, for His great love and faithful direction of the lives of all who will trust Him; and second, for your response to His love and your willingness to trust Him with every detail of your life.

It is at this crucial point that many Christians deprive themselves of the full, abundant and purposed life which the Lord Jesus promised in John 10:10. Failing to comprehend the true character and nature of God, His absolute love, grace, wisdom, power, and holiness, many Christians have foolishly chosen to live according to their own plans rather than consider and do the will of God. Some have such a distorted view of God that they think of Him as a tyrant whom one must either appease, or experience His wrath, as those who worship a pagan god. Since they are afraid of Him, they cannot love and trust Him. This is sometimes true of individuals who have transferred to God their fear of an earthly father who may have been overly strict, unduly demanding, or even tyrannical.

In all fairness, I should say that there are many sincere Christians who want to do the will of God but do not know how to go about discovering His will for their lives.

A choice young college graduate came recently for counsel concerning God's will for his life. "How can I know what God wants me to do?" he asked. Briefly, I explained the safest approach to knowing the will of God--to follow what I have chosen to call the "Sound-Mind Principle" of Scripture.

In less than an hour, by following the suggestions contained in this letter, this young man discovered what he had been seeking for years. He knew not only the work which God wanted him to do, but the very organization with which he was to be affiliated.

Now you may ask, "What is the "Sound-Mind Principle" of Scripture?" In the 2 Timothy 1:7 we are told that *"God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love and of a sound mind."* The sound mind referred to in this verse means a well-balanced mind: a mind that is under the control of Holy Spirit, "remade" according to Romans 12:1,2: *"Therefore, my brothers, I implore you by God's mercies to offer your very selves to Him, a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for His acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart. Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of the present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God and to know it is good, acceptable, and perfect."* (NEB)

There is a vast difference between the inclination of the natural or carnal man to uses "common sense" and that of the spiritual man to follow the "Sound-Mind Principle." One, for understanding, depends upon the wisdom of man without benefit of God's wisdom and power; the latter, having the mind of Christ, receives wisdom and guidance from God moment by moment through faith.

Are your decisions as a Christian based upon unpredictable emotions and chance circumstances, the "common sense" of the natural man? Or do you make your decisions according to the "Sound-Mind Principle" of Scripture?

Through the years, as I have counseled with many Christians, the question most frequently asked has been, "How can I know the will of God for my life?" Inevitably, the majority of Christians who come for counsel are looking for some

dramatic or cataclysmic revelation from God by which they will know God's plan. Without minimizing the importance of feelings, which Jesus promised in John 14:21 as a result of obedience, more emphasis needs to be placed upon the importance of the sound mind which God has given. Multitudes of sincere Christians are wasting their lives, immobile and impotent, as they wait for some unusual or dramatic word from God.

The Scripture assures us that *"God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love and of a sound mind."* Thus, a Christian who has yielded his life fully to Christ can be assured of sanctified reasoning, and a balanced, disciplined mind. Also, God has promised to give His children wisdom according to James 1:5-7. Further, we can know with "settled and absolute assurance" that when we pray according to the will of God, He will always hear and grant our petitions. (1 John 5:14,15.) Since the Christian is to live by faith, and faith comes through an understanding of the Word of God, it is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of the Scripture in the lives of those who would know and do the will of God.

If you would like to know the will of God for your life according to the "Sound-Mind Principle" of Scripture, may I suggest that you follow this bit of logic. First, consider these questions: "Why did Jesus come?" He came *"to see and save the lost."* (Luke 19:10). Then "What is the greatest thing you can do to help others?" The answer is again obvious, "Introducing them to Christ."

Jesus came to see and to save the lost, and every Christian is under divine orders to be a faithful witness for Christ. Jesus said, "Herein in my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye prove that ye are my disciples." It logically follows that the most important thing I can possibly do as a Christian is to allow the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His Resurrection power to have complete, unhindered control of my life, otherwise he cannot continue seeking and saving he lost through me.

Thus, every sincere Christian will want to make his God-given time, talents, and treasure available to Christ so that his fullest potential will be realized for Him. For one Christian, this talent which God had given him may be prophetic preaching, evangelism or teaching; for another, it may be business; for another, the ministry of missions; for another, homemaking, as expressed in Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12; 1 Corinthians 14; Ephesians 4; and other Scriptures.

As you evaluate the talents that God has given you in relation to your training, personality, and other qualities, may I suggest that you take a sheet of paper and make a list of the most logical ways through which your life can be used to accomplish the most for the glory of God. With the desire to put His will above all else, list the pros and cons of each opportunity.

CCC		Teaching		Pastor		Marketplace	
Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con

Where or how, according to the "Sound-Mind Principle," can the Lord Jesus Christ through your yielded life accomplish the most in continuing His great ministry of "seeking and saving the lost?" Like my young friend, you will find that such a procedure will inevitably result in positive actions leading to God's perfect will for your life. But note a word of caution: The "Sound-Mind Principle" is not valid unless certain factors exist.

- ❖ There must be no un-confessed sin in your life; following I John 1:9 takes care of that: *"If we confess our sins, God us faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
- ❖ Your life must be fully dedicated to Christ according to Romans 12:1,2, and you must be filled with the Holy Spirit in obedience to the command of Ephesians 5:18. As in the case of our salvation, we are filled and controlled by the Spirit through faith.
- ❖ In order to know the will of God, you must walk in the Spirit (aiding in Christ) moment by moment. You place your faith in the trustworthiness of God with the confidence that the Lord is directing and will continue to direct your life according to His promise that the "steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord." For "as you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." How? By faith, by placing your complete trust in Him. Now, you must go on walking by faith. Remember, "that which is not faith in sin," and "the just shall live by faith," and "without faith it is impossible to please God." Faith is the catalyst for all our Christian relationships.

The counsel of others should be prayerfully considered, especially that of mature, dedicated Christians who know the Word of God and are able to relate the proper use of Scripture to your need. However, care should be taken not to make the counsel of others a "crutch." Although God often speaks to us through other Christians, we are admonished to place our trust in Him. In Psalm 37 we are told to delight ourselves in the Lord and He will give us the desires of our hearts, to commit our ways unto the Lord, to trust Him and He will bring it to pass. Also, in Proverbs 3 we are told, *"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."

God never contradicts Himself. He never leads us to do anything 'contrary' to the commands of His Word; for according to Philippians 2:13, *"It is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purpose."* (Phillips)

Through the centuries sincere religious men have suggested spiritual formulas for discovering the will of God. Some are valid; others are unscriptural and misleading. For example, a young seminary graduate came to see me. He was investigating various possibilities of Christian service and had come to discuss the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. Applying the "Sound-Mind Principle" approach to his quest, I asked him, "In what way do you expect God to reveal His place of service to you?" He replied, "I am following the 'closed door' policy. A few months ago I began to investigate several opportunities for Christian service. The Lord has now closed the door on all but two, one of which is C.C.C. If the door to accept a call to a particular church closes, I shall know that God wants me in C.C.C." Many sincere Christians follow this illogical and unscriptural method, often with most unsatisfactory and frustrating consequences. Don't misunderstand, God may and often closes doors in the life of every active, Spirit-controlled Christian. This was true in the experience of the Apostle Paul. As recorded in Acts 16:6-11, he was forbidden by the Spirit to go into Bithynia because God wanted him in Macedonia. My reference to 'closed door' policies does not preclude such experiences, but refers to a careless "hit or miss" attitude without the careful evaluation of all the issues.

This approach is illogical because it allows elements of change to influence a decision rather than a careful intelligent evaluation of all the factors involved. It is unscriptural in that it fails to employ the God-given faculties of reason that are controlled by the Holy Spirit. Further, the 'closed door policy' is in error because it seeks God's will through the process of elimination rather than seeking God's best first. It should be understood that true faith is established on the basis of fact. Therefore, vital faith in God is emphasized rather than minimized through employing Spirit-controlled reason. In making decisions some sincere Christians rely almost entirely upon impressions, or hunches, fearful that if they use their mental faculties they will not exercise adequate faith and thus will grieve the Holy Spirit.

There are those who assume that a door has been closed simply because of difficulties that have been encountered. Yet, experience has taught and Scripture confirms that God's richest blessings often follow periods of greatest testing. This might include financial needs, loss of health, objection of loved ones and criticism of fellow Christians. God's blessing is promised, however, only to those who are obedient, who keep on trying, who demonstrate their faith in God's faithfulness. The apparent defeat of the Cross was followed by the victory of the Resurrection.

An acceptable consideration for discussing God's will contains four basic factors somewhat similar to "Sound-Mind Principle." God's will is revealed in: 1. The Authority of Scripture; 2. Providential circumstances; 3. Conviction based upon reason; 4. Impressions of the Holy Spirit upon our minds. However, such as appraisal is safer with a mature Christian than with a new or carnal Christian, and there is always danger of misunderstanding impressions."

You must know the source of "leading" before responding to it. To the inexperienced, what appears to be the leading of God may not be from Him at all but from "the rulers of darkness of this world." Satan and his helpers often disguise themselves as "angles of light" by performing "miracles, signs, forgetting events," etc. The enemy of our souls is a master counterfeiter.

Remember, just as the turning of steering wheel of an automobile does not alter its direction unless it is moving, so God cannot direct our lives unless we are moving for Him. I challenge you to begin employing the "Sound-Mind Principle" today in all your relationships. Apply it to the investment of your time, your talents and your treasure; for this principle applies to everything you do in this life. Every Christian should take spiritual inventory regularly by asking himself these questions: Is my time being invested in such a way that the largest possible number of people are being introduced to Christ? Are my talents being invested to the full, to the end that the largest possible number of people are being introduced to Christ? Is my money, my treasure, being invested in such a way as to introduce the greatest number of people to Christ?

Every Christian is admonished to be a good steward of his God-given time, talents, and treasure. Therefore, these investments must not be dictated by tradition, habit or by emotions. Every investment of time, talent, and treasure, unless otherwise directed by the Holy Spirit, should be determined by the "Sound-Mind Principle" of Scripture according to 2 Timothy 1:7.

Regarding the questions asked by your girlfriend, the same principle applies to her. How does the "Sound-Mind Principle" apply in the case of a secretary, homemaker, an invalid, or one who, because of circumstances beyond her control, does not have direct contact with men and women who are in need of Christ?

First, each Christian must be a witness for Christ; this is simply an act of obedience for which one need not possess the gift of evangelism. If normal day-to-day contacts do not provide opportunities to witness for Christ, an obedient Christian will make opportunities through personal contacts, church calling, letter writing, etc. Two of the most radiant, effective and fruitful Christians whom I have known were both bed-ridden invalids who, though in constant pain, bore a powerful witness for Christ to all--stranger and friend alike. "That which is most on our hearts will be most on our lips," was demonstrated in their lives. Second, a careful evaluation should be given to determine if God may not have a better position for one. Again, the "Sound-Mind Principle" applies. For example, a secretary in a secular organization may have less opportunity to make her life count for the Lord. It may be that God wants to use one's talents in a Christian organization. One should be very careful, however, not to run from what appears to be a difficult assignment. A careful appraisal of one's present responsibilities, with this new understanding of God's leading, may well reveal a great potential for Christ.

(I happen to know that there is a great scarcity of qualified secretarial help in many Christian organizations, including Campus Crusade for Christ.) Quite obviously, members of an office staff do not have much contact with men and women who are in need of our Savior as those who are actually working on the campus or conducting evangelistic meetings. However, according to the "Sound-Mind Principle," if their lives are fully dedicated to Christ, they can make a vital contribution to the effectiveness of any Christian ministry. By relieving others who have the gift of evangelism without the talent for business or secretarial responsibilities, the overall ministry for Christ in such an organization is strengthened greatly. In this way, they can more fully utilize their talents on helping to seek and save the lost.

For example, a dedicated member of the secretarial staff of the worldwide ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ is just as vital to the success of this campus strategy as those who are working on the campus. My own personal ministry has been greatly increased by the dedicated efforts of several secretaries who are more concerned about winning students to Christ than their own personal pleasure.

One further word of explanation must be given. It is true that God still reveals His will to some men and women in dramatic ways, but this should be considered the exception rather than the rule. God still leads men today as He has through the centuries. Philip, the deacon, was holding a successful campaign in Samaria. "Sound-Mind Principle" would have directed him to continue the campaign. However, God overruled by a special revelation, and Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to preach for Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch. According to tradition, God used the Ethiopian eunuch to communicate the message of our living Lord to his own country.

Living according to the "Sound-Mind Principle" allows for such dramatic leadings of God. But, we are not to wait for such revelations before we start moving for Christ. Faith must have an object. A Christian faith is built upon the authority of God's Word supported by historical fact, and not upon any shallow emotional experience. However, a Christian's trust in God's will revealed in His Word will result in the decisions which are made by following the "Sound-Mind Principle." The confirmation may come in various way according to many factors including the personality of the individual involved. Usually, the confirmation is a quiet, peaceful assurance that you are doing what God wants you to do, with expectancy that God will use you to bear "much fruit."

As any sincere Christian gives himself to a diligent study of the Scripture and allows a loving, all-wise, sovereign God and Father to control life, feelings will inevitably result. Thus, the end result of a life that is lived according to the "Sound-Mind Principle" is the most joyful, abundant, and fruitful life of all. Expect the Lord Jesus Christ to draw men to Himself through you. As you begin each day, acknowledge the fact that you belong to Him. Thank Him for the fact that He lives within you. Invite Him to use your mind to think His thoughts, your heart to express His love, your lips to speak His truth. Ask Jesus to be at home in your life and to walk around in your body in order that He may continue seeking and saving souls through you.

It is my sincere prayer, Paul, that you may know this kind of life, that you may fully appropriate all that God has given to you as your rightful heritage in Christ. I shall look forward to hearing more from you concerning your personal application of the "Sound-Mind Principle."

Warmly in Christ,

Bill Bright

* Though not actually written to Paul Brown, this letter contains the basic counsel which Dr. Bill Bright gave to students and adults concerning, "How to know the will of God for your life."