



## Lesson 3 Learning to Obey God's Will

### A World Out of Control?

How many times do we hear the simple question "Why?" as people try to figure out the unseen cause behind what is happening in life? Is the world on its own course or is there a purpose behind everything?

1. Come up with a "top five" list of events, conditions, or life situations that make people ask, "Why?"
2. Look at your list. Examine what it reveals about assumptions concerning God and his interaction with our lives.

[Watch scene: The Capture. Notice how confident Jesus was as the events unfold.]

- What struck home most as you watched?
- What questions emerge for you (to be considered later)?

### Misreading Situations – Making Wrong Assumptions

The religious leaders were about to put the most innocent of men to death, but there was more to it than could be seen with their eyes.

 Retell or read the account of Jesus' capture (Matthew 26:36-56).

3. Put yourselves into the mindset of the chief priests and elders. Sort out how they could have been so misguided and yet thought they were right.
4. What is the danger of thinking you are on the right path and discovering you aren't?

**Jesus' capture**

Read the Account:

**Matthew 26:36-56**

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**Matthew 7:21-23** <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

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Several times we read that Jesus predicted his death and described the details to his disciples (Matthew 16:21-23) saying Scriptures must be fulfilled which say it must happen in this way.

5. Even with the warnings, Peter took matters into his own hands ...with good intentions.
  - Explain how using his sword to protect Jesus showed that Peter was still misunderstanding God's purpose and plans. What was he thinking (or wasn't he)?
  - Think of times you or others totally misread a situation and misunderstood what God's plans actually were. How did it actually turn out?

## Not My Will but Yours Be Done

Jesus' disciples might have hoped that following him would make life more comfortable and easy, but it was leading them into greater danger and suffering. At the moment it appeared Jesus was a victim of the world of darkness and evil. How could that be what God wanted?

6. Where do you see the forces of evil and the prince of darkness seemingly getting the upper hand today?

7. As you look at Jesus' capture, how does he make it clear he had the power to prevent all of this from happening?

8. Why didn't Jesus intervene and stop this? Listen in on Jesus' prayer just before he is captured and begins this final path of suffering. What do we learn from him?

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**Matthew 26:38-42** *Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."<sup>39</sup> Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."... <sup>42</sup> He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*

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Indicate what this prayer reveals about Jesus' understanding and relationship with God? How would that influence his attitude and actions?

- "My Father" (written elsewhere, "Abba, Father")
- "Everything is possible for you."
- "Take this cup from me."
- "If it is not possible...Not my will, but yours be done."

9. Review those phrases from Jesus' prayer again.

- Which of those phrases are hardest for you to pray?
- Discuss how different your approach might be to the situations in your life if your prayers were just like Jesus' prayer.

10. Compare Jesus prayer with the prayer he taught his disciples. What is similar? Different?

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**Matthew 6:9-13** *"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

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### The Clash of Two Kingdoms

*in the spiritual realm:*

Prince of darkness vs. King of kings

Colossians 1:12-14

Ephesians 6:10-20

Obedience

has a FACE:

JESUS

## Following God's Will

Once when his disciples urged Jesus to stop long enough to eat, he said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Can we say the same? Following God's will is built on recognizing that he is the Creator who rules the universe and has designed my part in his grand plan (Acts 17:24-29), I am his workmanship to do the good he has prepared in advance for me to do (Ephesians 2:10), and God knows my greatest needs and will make all things work out for good in the end (Romans 8:28-32).

11. When it comes to following God's will, what do Jesus words mean for you?

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**Luke 9:23-24** *Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.*

**1 John 1:15-17** *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

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- What does he want us to deny? How?

How can you discover his will? Here are some helps.

- Weigh your choices in view of the 10 commandments (Matthew 19:16-22, Exodus 20).
- Don't conform to this world but let reading of Scripture transform you (Romans 12:1-3).
- Respond freely to the needs of those he put in your life (Matthew 25:34-40).
- See others through God's eyes who wants all to be saved by coming to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-6, 2 Corinthians 5:14-16).
- Do all things for the glory of God (John 15:8, 17:4, 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Depend on him in prayer asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).

## The Glory Rising Beyond Suffering

God is a hidden God working behind the scene (or behind the "seen") to accomplish something bigger than we can see – even when at the moment it doesn't seem good. Jesus walked right into danger because he knew this was what he came for. In his prayer to his Father he shows his clear focus: "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4).

12. In his letters Peter explained what had happened during those crucial moments of Jesus' suffering.

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**1 Peter 2:22-25** *"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."<sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."<sup>25</sup> For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (cf. \*Isaiah 53)*

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\* Similar details can be read in Isaiah 53 (written over 700 years before Jesus' death).

- Discuss what was in the “cup” of suffering that “overwhelmed Jesus with sorrow to the point of death.” Why did it serve for God’s glory that his son would “drink” it.

Soon the disciples would also experience difficulty and trouble – suffering for the name of Jesus. How did they get through it? They *set their minds on things above, not on earthly things* (Colossians 3:1-3). They considered *the present sufferings not worth comparing with the glory that awaits us* when Jesus returns (Romans 8:18).

13. Evaluate some of the insights Peter learned that help us through our trials in this life.

**1 Peter 1:3-7** <sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (cf. Romans 5:1-5)

- How can you apply Peter’s insights when you face the difficulties?

Following Jesus and doing his will also involves “denying myself” – submitting my desires, plans, and dreams to God’s desires, plans, and dreams. It involves willing obedience and yielding to God’s leading knowing his plans for me work all things out for good.

An important part of preparing to understand and do God’s will is getting “down on your knees” in prayer. Through our struggles we often get to know God more intimately, recognize his presence more fully, and appreciate that he is *able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us* (Ephesians 3:20). God meets us at the place of our deepest need and puts us where we can help others at their deepest needs (2 Corinthians 1:3-10).

*Part of  
Denying Self  
is  
Asking that God’s  
will and plans, not  
mine, dominate  
my attitude and  
actions*

### Put it into Practice

Remember the eternal good that God brought out of Jesus’ suffering and how he promised to be with you also as he continues to carry out his will in your life.

- Memorize Jesus’s phrase, “Not my will, but yours be done” and use it before every choice and decision asking to be obedient to his will no matter how difficult it seems
- Set aside times during the day for prayer. Determine to talk to God throughout your day.
- Ask and look for God to bring glory to his name in all your choices as well as all your trials.

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