

PRAY AND PLAN PLENARY SESSION

Discovering and obeying the heart of God

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1. Introduction

Doing the will of God involves knowing the will of God. The ability to know God's will depends on one's perspective. We need to approach God's will with the heart of a child who totally trusts Him for everything. If our understanding is hindered by doubt in God's ability to meet our needs, or if we think that we can handle life situations better than God, using our own intellect and resources, then we will experience difficulty knowing and following His will. Pray and Plan involves healthy preparation of hearts and minds to eliminate ungodly biases and understandings so that God's truth will guide all of our thoughts and actions.

2. Worldly versus heavenly wisdom (James 3:13-18)

- a. Character of worldly wisdom
 - i. Jealous and selfish
 - ii. Arrogant and lying
 - iii. Earthly, natural and demonic
 - iv. Leads to disorder and evil

- b. Character of Heavenly Wisdom
 - i. Pure and peaceable
 - ii. Gentle and reasonable
 - iii. Full of mercy and good fruits
 - iv. Unwavering and without hypocrisy
 - v. Leads to righteousness and peace

- c. Seeking and finding wisdom
 - i. King Solomon's prayer for wisdom (2 Chronicles 1:8-12)
 - 1. Asked for wisdom and knowledge to lead God's people
 - 2. God granted him wisdom and knowledge as well as riches, wealth and honor since he did not ask for the latter things.

 - ii. God promises us heavenly knowledge and discernment (Philippians 1:9-11)
 - 1. The only requirement for us is to have a love for God that abounds more and more.
 - 2. Then, God promises to give us real knowledge and all discernment so we can approve the things that are excellent.
 - 3. This leads us to being sincere and blameless and being filled with the fruit of righteousness until the day of Christ Jesus.

3. Who do you work for? (Colossians 3:23-24)

- a. Each person must choose who he will work for: God, other people or for self.
 - i. When a person works for self, they become enthralled with their own needs and protecting their own identity. Such people tend to be immersed in doing things their own way without any guidance from God. In other words, human intellect overrides God's will and guidance.
 - ii. A person who works solely for other people misses the mark of God's best by limiting their counsel to human wisdom and their resources to what humans can provide. Often human wisdom changes frequently and thus leads to wasted time and effort. Also, human resources are always in limited supply which causes tasks to be thwarted.
 - iii. When a person chooses to work for God instead of self or other people, then they connect themselves to perfect guidance as well as unlimited resources.
- b. Let's see what Colossians 3:23-24 says about who disciples are to work for
 - i. First of all, we are instructed to do our best or to "*work heartily*" in "*whatever you do.*" In this case, there is no room for sloppy or second class work. It is all to be only first class. And, it can only be first class when we allow God to lead us in all that we do.
 - ii. Secondly, everything we do should be "*as for the Lord rather than for men.*" This instruction does not mean that we are not allowed to work for men. Instead, it means that as we work for men, our focus and motivation needs to be centered on the Lord and not on others or self.
 - iii. The last portion of the verse tells us that our sure reward will come from the Lord and that reward will be an inheritance because it is the Lord Christ who we serve.
 1. 1 Peter 1:3-5 tells us more about this promised inheritance.
 2. It is an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away.
 3. It is an inheritance reserved in heaven for you. In other words, it is an eternal inheritance and is provided for everyone who is protected by the power of God through faith for salvation. It is provided by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
 4. There can be no greater reward for a servant of Christ. And, certainly no man can provide any reward that compares with the reward of Christ.
 5. We are all warriors of Christ, and as such, we should always be seeking our eternal reward instead of temporal substitutes.

4. Preparation for doing the work of God's Kingdom

- a. Scriptures on preparation
 - i. Proverbs 30:25, The ants are not strong people, but they prepare their food in the summer.
 - ii. John 14:2-3, Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven even now.
 - iii. 1 Peter 1:13, Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- b. Preparation for our work in God's kingdom is absolutely essential.

- i. When we are doing God's work, there is no room for laziness, procrastination or less than excellent performance.
 - ii. Preparation gets us ready to do God's work in the best possible manner.
 - iii. Only when a person is prepared for God's task is he able to accomplish what God desires and when God desires it to be done.
 - iv. Lack of preparation leads to failure and frustration.
- c. Let's see what Jesus taught about preparation in the parable of the virgins found in Matthew 25: 1-13.
- i. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like ten virgins, five of whom were foolish and five were prudent or wise.
 - ii. All the virgins went to meet the bridegroom who had gone away to make preparations for the wedding feast. The bridegroom to them is just as Christ is to us.
 - iii. The prudent and wise virgins prepared themselves with extra oil for their lamps because they did not know how long it would be before the bridegroom returned to the banquet hall. Similarly, we need to prepare for every task from God because we do not normally know when He will begin to work in a given area.
 - iv. The foolish virgins failed to prepare for the unknown delay in waiting for the bridegroom and had to leave the banquet hall to purchase oil after it had been announced that the bridegroom was arriving. As a result, they were not present when the bridegroom arrived and were not available to enter the banquet hall with him. When they did return and knocked on the door, the bridegroom told them that he did not know them. He reminded them, *"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day or the hour."*
 - v. There are three important lessons from this parable:
 1. Always be prepared for serving God at all times. Never allow other people or things to divert your attention from making God your first priority.
 2. Always be willing to wait patiently and alertly for God to act in a given area as the wise virgins did in this parable.
 3. Finally, when God does act, be sure that you follow His lead. Never allow yourself to lag behind or get ahead of God's timing. I will discuss God's timing in more detail in the Pray and Plan seminar on Friday afternoon.
 4. By following these three steps, you will find that your life will be more closely aligned with God's desires as to what He wants to do and when He wants His handiwork accomplished.

5. Summary

There are two types of wisdom: heavenly and earthly (or demonic). Children of God need heavenly wisdom to be able to hear, understand and obey God's will. It is very important for God's children to have a clear understanding about who they work for: God, others or self. The only way to get the Lord's reward of inheritance is to work for Him instead of me. Finally, preparation for God's work is absolutely essential. The best preparation involves worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth. Such worship gets our hearts and minds in tune with God's heart and mind so that we can hear, understand and obey His guidance. Obedience of God's commands is crucial to fully understanding His will.