

The Will of God and a Man's Lifework: A Condensation of Henry B. Wright's Masterpiece

Introduction to Condensation

Wright's masterpiece in condensation was going to be Appendix 1 of my magnum opus, *Would You Lie to Save a Life—Love Will Find a Way Home, a Theology on the Ethics of Love* (AuthorHouse, 2007; 414p.). Yet, hence, to save space, I have placed it online.

Would You Lie to Save a Life

Illustrations by Gustave Doré

[Dr. M. G. Maness](#) ~ ©1990 & 1998, Revised 2007

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I cannot express to much my appreciation for Wright's work and only lament that, alas, those who might dive into it may be too few. First is my preface to the appendix of the earlier version of my work, then Wright's preface, and then the body of this fine work. One day, I would like to republish his whole work.

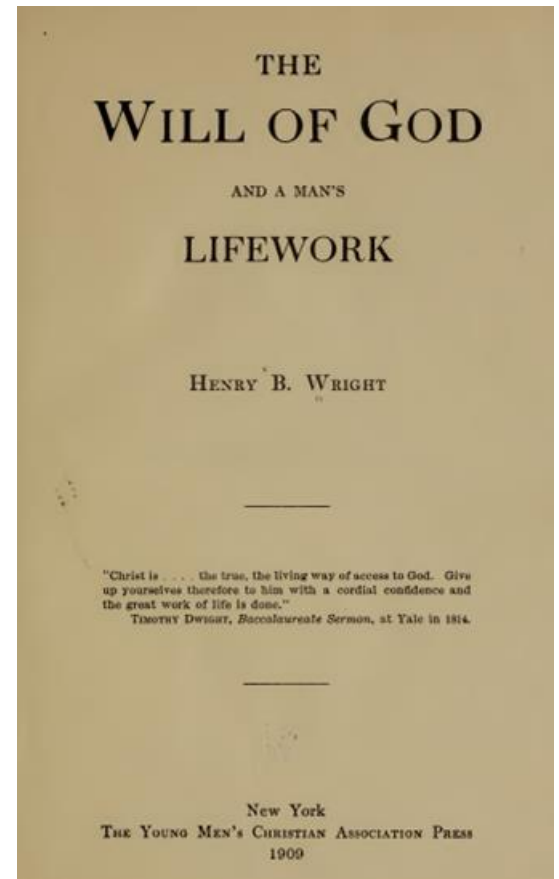
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Contents

Introduction to Condensation.....	1
Maness Preface.....	3
Henry B. Wright’s Preface (Condensed)	3
A. INTRODUCTION	5
I. God Has a Plan for Every Human Life.....	5
II. Jesus and the Will of God.....	5
III. Apostles and the Will of God.....	6
IV. Principle of Surrender of the Self Is a Reasonable One and Fundamental in Other Departments of Life, as well as Crucial to Doing God’s Will	7
B. THE DECISION TO DO GOD’S WILL	8
V. Relation of the Act of Surrender of Self to Other Religious Rites and Spiritual Experiences	8
VI. Alternatives to Doing God’s Will as a Life Purpose	8
VII. Spiritual Crisis Involved in Facing the Issue of Surrender of Self: Its Symptoms and Its Course	9
VIII. To Find Out and To Do God’s Will for One’s Life Is an Achievement Possible for Any Person.....	10
IX. God’s Will May Be Done in Any Honorable Trade or Profession, Either at Home or Abroad.....	11
X. The Necessity for Absolute Surrender of Self	12
INTERLUDE: THE NECESSITY OF SURRENDERING SELF	13
C. FINDING OUT OF GOD’S WILL	14
XI. Finding Out of God’s Will: Willingness To Do God’s Will Is the Necessary Condition for Knowledge of It.....	14
XII. Universal Will of God for All Persons	15
XIII. Particular Will of God for Each Individual Person, for Career, Mate, etc.....	16
XIV. How to Know the Particular Will of God: the Four-Fold Touchstone of Jesus and the Apostles	17
XV. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (a) The First Test—Purity	20
XVI. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (b) The Second Test—Honesty	21
XVII. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (c) The Third Test—Unselfishness	21
XVIII. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (d) The Fourth Test—Love.....	23
D. ISSUES OF FACING THE PROBLEM OF DOING GOD’S WILL	24
XIX. Issues of Rejection and Disobedience.....	24
XX. Issues of Obedience:.....	25
A. Knowledge	25
B. Protection from Harm and Provision for All Needs.....	25
C. Assurance as to One’s Duty and Power to Achieve Results	26
D. Constant Companionship	26
E. Eternal Life	27

Maness Preface

The following is a condensation of Henry B. Wright's *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework* (New York: The Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1911 [Copyright 1909]). Though it was written as a daily study guide, the principles articulated here form a magnificent complement to the principles outlined above on the search for the will of God.

The principles above in *Would You Lie to Save a Life?* outline a general course with specific guidance on how to discern a biblical course in a conflict where absolutes appear to conflict. The principles below condensed from Wright's book outline a general guidance for discerning the affairs of life, especially as products of Stage One in Chart 31 mentioned above. Both the above and below presume a degree of biblical competence and expand upon that competence to provide guidance in situations where we *do not* have a clear biblical passage and we do not know God's wills. These principles help us discern God's will for our life's work and the other myriad decisions that face the common Christian soldier.

The following preface is an adapted portion of that book's preface. That preface and the accompanying condensation are as apropos today as they were at the turn of century. More than that, one will see in the following many biblically based principles and virtues that could be added to the first and second prioritization in Dynamic Absolutism in the 1st and 2nd foundation stones.

Following Wright, the more significant scriptures have been placed in italics. The majority of the book was illustrated by Wright's commentary and his selection of quotes from among two dozen writers: including, Horace Bushnell, Henry Drummond, Phillips Brooks, F.B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, and especially R.E. Speer's *The Man Christ Jesus and The Principles of Jesus*. Wright also credits John Magee and Joseph Roe as co-authors.

As I developed my treatise on ethics, I searched for other works on ethics and God's will. I found none that surpassed Wright's work in so summarily and comprehensively attempting to organize Scriptural references around the topic of "Knowing God's Will." The work that went into it must have been an arduous labor of love.

Henry B. Wright's Preface (Condensed)

Largely as a result of the failure to distinguish clearly between the decision to do God's will and the act of volunteering there exists among many today an erroneous impression that the doing of God's will is synonymous solely with the Clerical and Missionary careers. The call of God is popularly interpreted as a call to the Professional Ministry; Law, Business, Teaching, Medicine, Engineering and like professions are distinguished as secular. They are regarded as fields into which a person may enter without relation to God's will—realms in which more latitude is allowed to the individual in personal morals and in manner of life, and within which he is largely released from responsibility for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ and his Apostles, however, entertained no such conception of the so-called "secular" professions. Our Lord and his followers were themselves laymen, not

members of the professional clergy of the day. To them all honorable careers seemed to demand no less consecration to God than the organized church required of its leaders.

This great truth, which more than any other was the secret of the mighty advances of Christianity in the first centuries, has been long obscured. But during the last decade more than at any other time it has been rediscovered and applied in America. The result has been a great leavening and purification of our public and private life.

The present outlines are a modest attempt to give a basis in experience for all such practical and more general applications of Christianity to modern life. They do not, for an instant, seek to discredit the preaching ministry at home or abroad to which all other careers must ever look for higher leadership and inspiration. But they do insist and strive to demonstrate that this career is not the only field of human activity in which God's will may be done fully and completely.

Every young man in America today ought undoubtedly to subscribe to the declaration, "I will be a clergyman at home or abroad if God so directs." But just as surely should he at the same time subscribe to the declaration, "I will be a doctor, lawyer, business man, teacher, or what not, at home or abroad, if God so directs." The first declaration alone is not absolute but partial surrender to God's will. Only the two together comprise unconditional enlistment in God's service.

To make clear the great fact of God's will and its part in human life in a set of studies is no easy task, for the underlying truth is one of the most difficult in the world of ideas to grasp. Even when clearly apprehended by the individual, *it is well-nigh impossible of demonstration by him to others as a mere intellectual proposition. It is a truth which must be imparted, not taught* [emphasis his]. Drummond fully realized this when he wrote: "The end of life is to do God's will. Now that is a great and surprising revelation. No man ever found that out. It has been before the world these eighteen hundred years yet few have even found it out today." If only partially apprehended it is capable of the most grotesque and dangerous distortion, especially regarding the gifts promised as the issues of obedience.

There exists, however, a wide and for the most part sane literature on the general subject and on its particular phases which has never been brought together and arranged for daily study. Their outlines attempt to systematize and render usable to students the material already at hand rather than make any original contribution to the subject itself. Hence copious quotations from previous writers.

In conclusion, I would that these studies might be privileged to do a little something toward dissipating a prevalent idea that the doing of God's will is synonymous with a narrow, difficult and disagreeable life work. He who has willed to do God's will completely as it has been revealed in nature and humanity, and as it will daily be revealed in the path of duty, has for the first time fully found himself. The issue of such a life—and of such a life only—are freedom, joy and peace.

Henry B. Wright, Taunon, Mass., July 24, 1909

A. Introduction

I. God Has a Plan for Every Human Life

I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me. Is. 45:5

For who withstandeth his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? Rom. 9:19-21

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Matt. 20:5

- 1. God has a plan for the development of the world which extends to all departments of life and to all spheres of human activity.** Is. 44:24-28; Jer. 18:5-6. *Matt. 6:25-34, 10:29-30, 15:13, 25:34; Mk. 13:20 & 32; Acts 1:7, 17:26; Rom. 9:17; I Cor. 12:4-6, 12; II Cor. 10:13; Eph. 2:10; Col. 1:169; Heb. 1:10-12, 3:4; Rev. 17:17.*
- 2. Yet God has decreed that this plan shall not advance without the voluntary and freely given cooperation of humankind:** "We are God's fellow-workers." *Matt. 23:37; Mk. 6:5-6, 16:20; Lk. 1:76, 10:2-3, 11:5-13, 18:1-8; Jn. 5:17 & 36, 8:16; Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 3:6-9; II Cor. 5:20, 6:1; Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 2:6-8, 13:21; Rev. 3:20.*
- 3. God has a particular part for every person to perform in this plan.** Is. 49:1; Jer. 1:5. *Matt. 11:10; Mark 13:34; 19:11, 20:1-16, 23, 25:15; Luke 13:32-33; John 15:16, 17:4, 18:37; Rom. 9:11,12; I Cor. 1:7,17, 12:4, 11; Gal. 1:15,16; Eph. 2:10, 4:7-8; Phil. 3:12.*
- 4. Persons may find out what his particular part is, and it is the true purpose of his existence to discover and do it.** II Sam. 7:8-9; Psalm 32:8-9; Jer. 1:4-10. Acts 26:12-19.
- 5. Yet God forces no person to accept the divine plan for his life. Man may refuse or neglect to find it out; or having found it out, he may refuse to perform it and follow plans of his own making.** *Matt. 19:16-22; Luke 6:35-49; John 3:20, 5:40, 10:17-18; Acts 14:15-17, 17:24-27; Rom. 2:4, 8:20; Col. 4:17.*
- 6. Yet God's great plan for the world will be ultimately perfected despite the delays and disorder introduced by human perversity.** Daniel 4:32. *Matt. 13:24-30, 31-33, 37-43, 15:13; Mark 4:26-29, 30-32; Acts 1:7, 5:38-39; Rom. 3:3, 9:17-18, 28, 11:11; II Cor. 13:8; James 5:1-8.*

II. Jesus and the Will of God

For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. John 6:38

My Father....not as I will, but as thou wilt. Matt. 26:39

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work. John 4:34

I do always the things that are pleasing to him. John 8:29

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father. Gal. 1:3-4

- 1. The idea that the doing of God's will is the supreme purpose of life was not originated by Jesus but was restated and emphasized by him.** Gen 22:1-12; Psalms 4:7-8, 139:24, 143:10; Daniel 4:14. Matt. 13:35; Heb. 10:7.
- 2. To find God's will for his life, and to do it, was the ruling principle and the energizing purpose of Jesus' life.** Matt. 4:10, 6:10, 26:33-42; John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38, 9:4; Rom. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 10:5-10.

This principle,

Was the reason for the incarnation: John 6:38;

Settled the temptation: Matt. 4:10;

Is a central thought in the Lord's Prayer: Matt. 6:10;

Was the energizing cause of Jesus' marvelous ministry of service: John 4:34;

Inspired the sacrifice of the crucifixion: Gal. 1:4; Matt. 26:38-42.

- 3. He faced the alternatives to doing God's will as definite, conscious, and spiritual temptations; and he successfully overcame them.** Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.
- 4. There were certain definite ways in which he learned the will of God for his life.** Matt. 6:28, 18:12-14, 26:39-44; John 5:30, 6:39, 7:17, 8:28; Heb. 10:7.
- 5. There were definite and immediate issues of this obedience in Jesus' earthly life.** Matt. 26:38-42; Phil. 2:5-8.
- 6. There were some ultimate results. Rom. 8:1-39: We were freed from condemnation.** Phil. 2:8-11 (cf. *1 John* 2:17): He was exalted. Heb. 10:2-10: We have been sanctified.

III. The Apostles and the Will of God

Ye are witnesses of these things. Luke 24:48.

Christ . . . in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will. Eph. 1:10,11.

And be not fashioned according to this world: but ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. 12:2.

- 1. To the Apostles and immediate followers of Jesus were entrusted the interpretation and practical application of his teaching regarding the will of God.** Matt. 13:51-52; Luke 24:48; Acts 10:40-43.
- 2. In Acts we have the story of the obedience of the early church to God's call and leading, with the record of its triumphant results.** Acts 1:6-11, 2:1-4, 41, 4:32-35. Ananias, 9:10-18; Philip, 8:26; Agabus, Acts 11:28, 21:11; early disciples, 13:2, 15:28, 21:4; Cornelius, 10:3, 22, 30, 31; Peter,

10:10, 11:12, 12:7; Paul, 9:4-7, 16:6, 9, 10, 18:9-10, 19:21, 22:7, 10, 17, 18, 21, 23:11, 26:14, 27:23.

3. **Peter, the will of God, and the surrender of self.** John 21:15-22.
4. **John, the will of God, and the surrender of self.** Matt. 4:21,22; Mark 3:17; John 19:25-27, 21:20-23.
5. **Paul, the will of God, and the surrender of self.** Acts 9:1-22; Rom. 6:13, 8:14,15, 12:1; I Cor. 1:26-31, 7:7, 20-24, 10:31; Eph. 4:25-5:17; Phi. 1:21, 2:5-11, 4:13; Col. 1:9,10,2:3; I Thess. 4:2-12.
6. **Thomas and Judas, the will of God, and the surrender of self.** Matt. 23:37; John 20:24-29, 21:20-22.

IV. The Principle of Surrender of the Self Is a Reasonable One and Fundamental in Other Departments of Life, as well as Crucial to Doing God's Will

Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit. John 12:24

Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. Rom. 6:16

1. **Self-development is a primary law of life: seemingly contradictory to the law of self-sacrifice.** Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 2:52; Heb. 11:6, 26.
2. **Self-sacrifice satisfies many moral demands of life.** Matt. 10:38, 16:24; Mark 8:34; *Luke 9:23*, 14:27; *John 12:25*; *I Cor. 8:12-13*, 9:22; II Cor. 11:23-29; Phil. 3:7-11.
3. **The solution of the dilemma: realizing God's will is possible only through self-surrender; and this, itself, is crucial to self-development.** Matt. 6:33, 10:39, 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24.
4. **The witness of science and of nature: life arises from surrender.** John 12:24; I Cor. 15:36.
5. **The witness of history and of human experience: life and society depend on surrender and self-sacrifice.** Eccl. 11:1. Mark 10:43-44; II Cor. 9:6; Rev. 7:13-17, 14:13.
6. **The witness of the life of Jesus.** Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:5-11.

“If we estimate the greatest of a man by the influence which he has exerted on humankind, there can be no question, even from the secular point of view, that Christ is much the greatest man who has ever lived.” (Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 169.)

B. THE DECISION TO DO GOD'S WILL

V. The Relation of the Act of Surrender of Self to Other Religious Rites and Spiritual Experiences

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Matt. 7:21

- 1. Every person must, sooner or later, face the issue of his personal relation to God; and when once the question is raised, perfect peace of mind and soul can be thereafter secured only by the deliberate decision to do God's will unconditionally, whenever it shall be clearly revealed.** Ps. 139:1-24. Acts 17:26-27. There are three ideas which no human being, savage or civilized, is without: the distinction between right and wrong, the desire for eternal life, and the conception of a supreme being or God. The problem of a person's relation to God is, therefore, a universal and eternal one; and for the purpose of settling this question, our life on this earth seems to have been given us. And the problem is solved—from the human perspective—by an act: the complete surrender of the self to God.
- 2. This act is not necessarily the same thing as the decision to live a moral life.** Matt. 19:16-22; Acts 11:16, 19:1-7; Rom. 3:21-22, 31, 10:3; I Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:3.
- 3. It is not the same thing as such rites of confession as baptism, or uniting with the church, or partaking of the communion.** Matt. 3:9, 21:28-31; *Mark* 7:6-8, 12:32,33; Luke 3:8, *6:46*, 13:25-27, 18:9-14; Rom 8:9-39, 9:6; *I Cor.* 13:1; *II Tim.* 3:5. All such rites or actions may be the act of our going into God's presence, not of our letting him come into ours.
- 4. It is not necessarily the same thing as the decision to live a life of philanthropy, giving money and time for the uplifting of humankind.** Matt. 7:22-23; Luke 10:38-42; Acts 8:20-21; I Cor. 13:3; Heb. 10:1.
- 5. It is not always the same thing as "volunteering" or the consecration of one's life to foreign missionary service.** I Cor. 13:3.
- 6. The act of self-surrender is a definite, conscious, personal compact between an individual person and God alone, entirely independent of all outward religious rites or actions, forms or services, and for which no outward form, rite, or sacrifice can be substituted.** A person voluntarily gives God absolute possession of his or her life, and God comes in. Matt 11:28-29; John 1:12, 5:40; II Cor. 8:5; Heb. 11:1-6; Rev. 3:20.

VI. The Alternatives to Doing God's Will as a Life Purpose

But he said unto him, "A certain man made a great supper; he bade many, and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said unto him, 'I have bought a field and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought

five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.'"

Luke 14:16-20.

- 1. God or Mammon: enlistment with one or the other is inevitable.** There is no middle course. Refusal to enlist with God is enlistment with Mammon. *Matt. 6:22-24; Luke 11:23; Rom. 6:15-23, 8:14-15; Gal. 1:10; Col. 3:22; II Tim. 3:4; II Peter 2:19; Rev. 3:15-16.*
- 2. In the service of Mammon, there are three possible aspects.**
If a person refuses to live a life surrendered to the will of God, he or she has three other possible alternatives, to the bondage (John 8:34; Rom. 6:16; II Peter 2:19; II Tim. 2:26) of one or the other of which he may devote his life: (1) the life surrendered to self-indulgence; (2) the life surrendered to wealth-getting; (3) the life surrendered to fame-seeking. *Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 14:16-20; I John 2:16.*
- 3. The life surrendered to self-indulgence.** *Matt. 4:2-4, 24:48-51; Luke 14:20, 17:26-30, 21:34; Rom. 8:6-8.*
- 4. The life surrendered to wealth-getting.** *Matt. 4:8-10, 6:19-21, 19:16-22; Luke 14:18, 12:13-21; Mark 10:17-31; I Tim. 6:7-10, 17; James 5:1-6.*
- 5. The life surrendered to fame-seeking.** *Matt. 4:5-7; Mark 9:33-35, 10:35-45; Luke 14:19, 22:24-26; John 5:44, 12:43.*
- 6. Pleasure, wealth and fame are not wrong in themselves, but they must be our servants not our masters.** Psalm 1:4. *Matt. 6:21, 33, 19:28; Mark 4:19, 10:29,30; Luke 18:28-30; II Cor. 9:8-15; I Cor. 6:12.*

VII. The Spiritual Crisis Involved in Facing the Issue of Surrender of Self: Its Symptoms and Its Course

And straightway the spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan. Mark 1:12-13

The gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it. Luke 16:16

- 1. The facing of the problem of self-surrender—to do God's will without reservation; this is the great soul crisis in lives of spiritual power.** Matt. 4:1.
- 2. The decision is preceded by a period of lonely struggle and uncertainty.** Matt. 4:1-2; Gal. 1:15-17. Jesus in the wilderness fasted forty days and forty nights: Luke 4:1; Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:12. Paul at first communed not with flesh and blood. . . . but went away into Arabia: Gal. 1:16-17.
- 3. The various alternatives to doing God's will present themselves with unwonted attractiveness, and there is often a feeling of great revulsion and obstinacy toward everything Christian.** Matt. 4:1, 3, 5, 8, 9; Acts 26:9; Rom. 7:15-25, 9:20-21.
- 4. The final act of surrender or enlistment is a definite conscious act of ethical decision between the individual and God personally, made without**

reservation, in the path of duty; and is generally preceded by the darkest moments of doubt, obstinacy, and fascination for the other life. Matt. 4:8-10, 16-23; Luke 12:57; Acts 22:10. It should be noted that this decision must be made personally. Jesus refused to let a third person intervene and tell him what God's will was (Matt 4:7). So later, in the determining as to what God's will was in a specific case, Jesus refuses to let Peter intervene (Matt. 16:22-23). Paul refused to let the brethren decide for him (Acts 21:11-14) and taught independence (Phil. 2:12). Jesus' last rebuke was for this same reason (John 21:21-22).

5. **The results of this decisive act are not immediately apparent; although the act of decision brings peace, and the feeling of revulsion against religion begins to fade away.** *Matt. 4:11; Luke 8:15, 21:19, 24:49; Acts 26:15-16, 19-20, 29; Col. 1:6; Heb. 11:13; James 5:7-8; I Peter 1:6-7; Rev. 2:3.*
6. **A person's own individuality and personality is not lost by thus conforming to the divine will, but on the contrary it is marvelously intensified.** John 8:32, 36, 15:2, 8; I Cor. 3:8; Gal. 4:5-7; *1 John 2:5.* Jesus, who was perfectly obedient, had the most unique and individual personality that the world has ever seen. Note the originality of the man who lives the surrendered life.

VIII. To Find Out and To Do God's Will for One's Life Is an Achievement Possible for Any Person

But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Eph. 4:7-8,13

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Rev. 3:20

If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 7:17

Have ye not read even this scripture: The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner. Mark 12:10

1. **The execution of God's great plan requires the most brilliant powers of body, mind, heart and soul of which a person is capable.** Matt. 10:16, 22:11-14, 46; I Cor. 14:20.
2. **Yet this task has never been reserved for those alone whom the world regards as specially gifted.** *Matt. 11:25-26, 20:1-16, 22:1-10; I Cor. 1:26-29, 12:4-30; II Cor. 8:11-12; Col. 1:28; James 2:5.*
3. **God enlists and uses mightily for the execution of his plan those who are frail in body and mind.** Matt. 11:25-29; Luke 14:13; Rom 4:17; I Cor. 12:22; II Cor.13:4 f; Heb. 12:12-13.

4. **God has a place in his plan for the timid and unpopular as well as for those whom the world has rejected because of misfortune or sin or some other reason.** God has a place in his plan for every human being. Hosea 1:10, 2:23. Matt. 9:13, 10:6, 11:28-29, 18:12-24, 20:6, 7, 21:16; Mark 2:17, 12:10-11; Luke 1:48, 52, 3:5, 6:35, 9:49-50, 15:1-32; John 6:37; *I Tim. 1:12-16*; Heb. 11:32-40; I Peter 2:4.
5. **Regeneration and transformation come into a human life giving it sufficient power for its tasks, no matter how frail and weak it may have been, when that life has willed to know and to do the work for which God had intended it.** *Matt. 21:42*; Luke 5:30-32, 19:10; Mark 4:8, 20, 6:2-3, 10:27; *Rom. 11:23, 14:4*; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:19, 2:1-10, 4:13; Heb. 7:25; I Peter 1:23.
6. **The miracle of obedience.** *Luke 21:14-15*; John 3:3, 5:20, 14:12; *Rom. 6:4*; I Cor. 2:9; *II Cor. 5:17*; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 3:20-21; I Peter 1:23.

IX. God's Will May Be Done in Any Honorable Trade or Profession, Either at Home or Abroad

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Mark 16:15

The hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. John 4:21

The kingdom of God is in the midst of you. Luke 17:21

Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called. . . . Brethren, let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God. I Cor. 7:20, 24

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. I Cor. 12:17-18

1. **Jesus and the apostles were laymen, not members of the professional clergy.** *Matt. 13:54-56*; John 7:15 (Jesus); *Acts 18:1-4, 20:33-35* (Paul went against his association); I Cor. 4:12, 9:1-18; II Cor. 11:7, 12:13; I Thess. 2:9, 4:11-12; *II Thess. 3:8-12*; I Peter 4:10.
2. **All professions and trades must be ministries.** Matt. 9:9-13; Luke 3:10-14, 5:3-11; John 21:1-6; Rom. 12:6-8, 16:23; *I Cor. 7:20, 24, 12:4-11, 12:31*; II Cor. 5:10; Eph. 4:1-16; Col. 3:17, 4:14; I Tim. 4:4-5; Titus 3:13. Jesus emphasized a great truth which had so far made only a little impression upon men—that the professions and trades of men should not be divided into two hostile camps, the religious and the secular; but that every honorable occupation should be a Christian ministry.
3. **The professional clergy person became necessary by the need for expert leadership among the laymen who, without such stimulus, were either unable or unwilling to grasp the idea and scope of their responsibility.** I Tim. 4:1-16.
4. **The place of the church and of the professional clergy person.** Matt. 10:10; John 10:2-5, 17:18-19; I Cor. 9:14; I Tim. 5:17-18.

1. The church is not a closed corporation which alone has the right to dispense salvation—demonstrated by Luther.
 2. Seminary training and ordination does not necessarily give spiritual authority—demonstrated by D.L. Moody.
 3. The clergy are not an opposition party or society opposed to the secular occupations.
 4. The clergy person is not a convenience to whom the lay person can delegate all his or her heart work that calls for sympathy-care of poor, outcast, bereaved, etc.
 5. The clergy person is not a convenience to whom the lay person can delegate all his or her heart work that calls for sympathy like care of the poor, outcast, bereaved, etc.
 6. The church is not the place to which the lay person is to come to get culture and aesthetic enjoyment.
- 5. The evangelization of the world is to be accomplished through laymen as well as by clergymen.** Luke 17:21; John 4:21; I Thess. 1:8; I Cor. 12:17-18; II Cor. 2:14; I Tim. 2:8.
- 6. The task of a Christian lay person, therefore, is as difficult as that of a minister or missionary.** Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-30; John 15-22.

X. The Necessity for Absolute Surrender of Self

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest. Mark 10:21

So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33

Take now thy son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering. . . . And Abraham . . . took . . . Isaac his son . . . and went. . . . Abraham, . . . lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.” Gen. 22:2-3, 11, 12

- 1. If God’s will may be done in any profession, why not then select the first career that presents itself, or the pleasantest, without facing the possibility of the dangerous and disagreeable careers.** Isaiah 53:6. Luke 14:28-32, 22:33-34. Must every person, whether he or she ultimately goes or not, face this bothering missionary question before he or she decides on his life work? To this we answer unreservedly, yes. Nothing else can be a total surrender of self to the will of God. Indeed, if the question is bothersome, then there is a great question regarding the sincerity and validity of the surrender.
- 2. God’s will may be done in any profession; but unless the man is in that profession by God’s appointment, God’s will, will not be done.** John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38; Rom. 1:6-7; I Cor. 7:20, 24, 12:17-18.

Only one thing can give a person complete joy and power in his or her work. That one thing is the sure conviction that he or she is in that work—medicine, law, teaching, business, ministry, at home or abroad—“called of God.”

3. **The parallel from the enlistment of the soldier.** Luke 9:57-62; I Tim. 6:12-14; II Tim. 2:4; Heb. 11:8.
4. **God does not ask all men to make the supreme sacrifice or to endure great suffering, but he requires that all be willing to do so.** Mark 5:18-19; John 7:17; Gen. 22:1-18.
5. **The spirit of the hero and of the martyr is needed in every profession.** Matt. 5:10-12, 10:16-39, 16:24; *Mark 8:31-38*, 10:29-30; Luke 21:17; John 12:24, 15:18f (esp. v.20); II Cor. 11:23-27; *Eph. 6:10-20*; *Heb 12:1-4*; 10:32-35, 13:12-13.
6. **Enlist without reservation or condition and await orders. God is a commander in whom his followers can trust.** Matt. 6:33; Mark 10:29-30; Luke 14:26-27, 33; Acts 5:29; Rom. 4:21, 8:28, 12:1-12; I Cor. 1:9, 9:24-27; I Thess. 5:24; II Tim. 1:7, 12, 2:4, 13; James 5:11; *1 John 5:3*.

We will simply call attention to two facts. (1) God will never force you to make the supreme sacrifice unless you are perfectly willing to do it; in other words, even after you have enlisted he never forces you by driving (and let us not confuse sacrifice with duress, affliction, and tragedy). (2) God is a loving father, and he will not call upon you to make unnecessary sacrifices.

INTERLUDE: THE NECESSITY OF SURRENDERING SELF

We have now reached a point in our studies which is, in a very true sense, a parting of the ways. Hitherto the truths which we have examined have been simple intellectual propositions—a statement of the Christian conception of God's plan for the world and for the individual, and of the sort of decision which God requires of his followers.

The remaining studies—on the finding out of God's will by each individual and on the issues of obedience—concern truths which must primarily be spiritually apprehended by the will, not accepted merely as intellectual propositions by the mind. He who, at this point, before entering upon the further studies will dedicate his life absolutely and unreservedly to God—and mean it—to do God's will promptly and without conditions, no matter where it may lead, as soon as it shall be clearly revealed, shall know of the teaching that follows—at least of the scripture passages—whether it be of God or whether the various teachers speak of themselves.

He who continues the studies without this decision may find some things that are interesting, even convincing, but the subject as a whole will be as much of an enigma to him as before. It will have no part in his life and he will not know.

Study your answer to the request for decision on the preceding page in the light of the following paragraph:

In nearly all the important transactions of life, indeed in all transactions which have relation to the future, we have to take a leap into the dark. If we waver . . . that too is a choice . . . we stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still, we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road, we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? ‘Be strong and of a good courage.’ Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. Above all, let us dream no dreams, and tell no lies, but go our way, wherever it may lead, with our eyes open and our heads erect. If death ends all, we cannot meet it better. If not, let us enter whatever may be the next scene like honest men with no sophistry in our mouths, and no masks on our faces. (Steven, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, [1882], pp. 331, 333)

While there is a sense in which we cannot know the certain outcome of most decisions, situations into which we fall where a lot of decisions must be made in the dark as it were, there is a confidence that one can obtain in such moments that has exclusively biblical and spiritual origins. That is, if person is surrendering his own self to God as best as he is able, and following a way of life as close to the Bible as he can, then that person can be confident that no matter how dark the path may be God will be there with him, guiding him, and strengthening him. And no matter what the outcome should be, God will have had a part in the outcome, and that outcome will in some way bring glory to His Kingdom. Choose wisely.

C. THE FINDING OUT OF GOD’S WILL

XI. The Finding Out of God’s Will: Willingness To Do God’s Will Is the Necessary Condition for Knowledge of It

If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 7:17

Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. John 8:43

And none of the wicked shall understand: but they that are wise shall understand. Daniel 12:10

Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man. I Cor. 2:14,15

For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay. Luke 21:15

- 1. God’s will may be known, not only for the rare great occasions, but for the ordinary circumstances of life.** John 8:29; Acts 2:28, 18:21, 22:14; I Cor. 4:19; Heb. 13:21; James 4:15.

2. **God's will is not a mysterious and obscure thing impossible to comprehend. Any person may find it out, and furthermore, we are all bidden to do so.** Ps. 25:9. Matt 6:10, 11:25-26; John 7:17; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 1:9, 5:17; Col. 1:9.
3. **Instruments of spiritual apprehension.** I Cor. 1:18-31, 2:1-16; II Cor. 4:3-6; John 8:43; *1 John* 4:5,6.
 1. The human will, being willing to do God's will is the foremost instrument in finding God's will outside of the written revelation of God's will.
 2. The secondary or contributory instrument are many and valid on occasion, but they do often fail.
 - (a) **Reason.** God is taking your life and character through a certain process, for example. He is running your career along a certain chain of events. . . . It is God's will for you to use this thought and to elevate it through regions of consecration into faith.
 - (b) **Experience.** There are many paths in life which we all tread more than once. God's light was by us when we walked there first. . . . But the next time . . . he knew the side lights should be burning still and let us walk alone.
 - (c) **Circumstance.** God closes things around us till our alternatives are all reduced to one. That one, if we must act, is probably the will of God just then.
 - (d) **Advice of others.** Take the advice of others freely, for the advice of a non-Christian may have God's leading in it; but never regard such advice as final. Jesus often disregarded the advice of others.
 - (e) **Welfare of others.** As a general thing we should guide our conduct by its effect on "the other fellow," but not always. Jesus often disregarded the effect of his example on others.
 - (f) **Example to others.** Generally this is a safe guide, but not always. Jesus often disregarded the effect of his example on others. These secondary instruments, if not strong enough always to discover what God's will is, are not too feeble oftentimes to determine what is not," but not always. (Drummond: *The Ideal Life*, pp. 308-309.)
4. **There are limits to criticism and the reasoning processes as instruments of spiritual apprehension.** Acts 18:24-28. If the mind were the final means of apprehending God we should be reduced at once to the position of Cicero with reference to the Roman religion--that only the intellectually gifted can be saved.
5. **The human will is an organ of spiritual knowledge.** John 7:17.

XII. The Universal Will of God for All Persons

Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect. Matt. 5:48

Blessed by the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing. . . . making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ. Eph. 1:3, 9, 10

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Rom. 14:17

1. **The universal and the particular will of God.** Universal: Isaiah 44:24-28; Acts 17:24-27. Particular: Acts 22:10-14, 13:22.
2. **The entire universal will of God for the world cannot as yet be fully known.** Since it is in a process of evolution in a practical and temporal sense, it has not yet been fully disclosed. We may only know that part of it which has been revealed up to the present day. Matt. 13:17; I Cor. 13:12; Phil. 3:12; *I John* 3:2.
3. **God's revelation of his universal will for the world in nature.** Matt. 6:28 The laws of nature are the will of God for our bodies. As there is a will of God for our higher nature—the moral laws—so, and as emphatically, there is a will of God for the lower nature—the natural laws.
4. **God's revelation of his universal will for the world in Jesus, the living word, and in the Bible, the written word, are the moral contents of God's will.** Matt. 5:17-20; *John* 1:14, 14:15, 21-24; I Cor. 13:4-7; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 6:13-18; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:12-17; I Tim. 6:11; *Heb.* 1:1-2; James 3:17; II Peter 1:5-7.
5. **Can we ever hope to fulfill all these laws?** The Christian attempts to keep the will or the laws of God because of his love of God; and the tension we experience from our shortcomings is moderated by the work of Christ. Gal. 5:14; I Cor. 16:14; Rom. 10:3-10; Phil. 3:9; Matt. 7:12, 22:34-40; James 2:8; *John* 13:34; *I John* 5:3.
6. **Although God's universal will for the world cannot be fully known; his particular will for each individual—his will for career, mate, etc.—may be known by that individual, and it is this which the individual is bidden to know and to do.** Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:17.

XIII. The Particular Will of God for Each Individual Person, for Career, Mate, etc.

I will guide thee with mine eye. Ps. 32:8

The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. *John* 10:3

The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will. Acts 22:14

A man after my heart, who shall do all my will. Acts 13:22

Come now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. . . . For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that. James 4:13, 15

1. **The particular will of God for the individual person.** Acts 22:3-21 (esp. vs. 14, 17-18, 21). There is an unknown part of God's will—at least, at part which is known only to you. . . . There is God's will dropped softly on the believer's ear in angel whispers, or the still small voice of God. It is a private thing, between God and you. You want know what to do next—your calling in life, for instance. You want know what action to take in a certain matter. You want to know what to do with your money. You want to know whether to go into a certain scheme or not. Then you enter into this private chamber of God's will, and ask this private question, 'Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?' (Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, pp. 266-279.)
2. **God actually communicates with men to energize and guide them.** Matt. 3:13-17, 4:10-11, 16:13-17, 16:21-17:8, 26:36-46, 27:46; John 10:3-4, 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7, 13, 14; Acts 8:26, 9:1-19 (cf. 22:3-21, 26:2-19; I Cor. 15:8), 10:9-16, 12:7, 16:6-10, 18:20, 21, 19:21, 20:22, 23, 27:21-25; I Cor. 15:8; II Cor. 12:1-10; Gal. 1:12, 2:2 (cf. Acts 15:2); Eph. 3:1-3; I John 3:24.
3. **The human will is the receiving instrument through which divine communication comes.** John 7:17.
4. **There is a compelling conviction to God's will when known.** Matt. 16:17; Rom. 9:1; James 3:17; II Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:1, 13; Rev. 17:17. Any person (John 7:17) may have such assurance with reference to his course not only about great things but also about the little things—every step of his or her life. Any person may have this sure conviction, but before he or she will, two things are essential for the most of us—the receiving instrument must be cleaned, and it must be made strong in order most fully to receive the communications.
5. **How may we prepare ourselves to receive the compelling conviction?**
 - (a) The cleaning of the receiving instrument is crucial to reception of a compelling and powerful conviction.
"Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8:46) Prov. 21:2. Matt. 5:8, 23, 24, 13:15; Mark 3:11; Acts 8:21, 23:1, 24:16; I Cor. 1:8, 4:4; I Thess. 4:3-12; I Tim. 2:19; Heb. 9:9, 14, 10:22, 13:18; James 4:8; I Peter 1:13-16, 3:16; II Peter 3:14; I John 3:19-24.
 - (b) The strengthening of the receiving instrument will be the training and developing of the human will.
"I do always the things that are pleasing to him." (John 8:29) Matt. 21:28-31; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 9:51-62, 14:25-35 (esp. v. 33).

XIV. How to Know the Particular Will of God: the Four-Fold Touchstone of Jesus and the Apostles

Chart 1: Four-Fold Touchstone of Jesus	
PURITY	—Matt. 5:29

UNSELFISHNESS	—Luke 14:33
HONESTY	—Luke 16:11
LOVE	—John 15:12

For this is the will of God . . . that ye abstain from fornication, that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor [Purity] . . . that no man overreach and wrong his brother in the matter [Honesty] . . . but concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you [Love] . . . and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business and to work with your hands [Unselfishness]. I Thess. 4:3-12

Do not kill, do not commit adultery [Purity]: do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud [Honesty], honor thy father and mother, . . . go, sell what thou hast [Unselfishness], give to the poor, . . . and come, follow me [Love]. Mark 10:19-21

Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor . . . let him that stole steal no more [Honesty] . . . and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other [unselfishness] . . . and walk in love, even as Christ . . . gave himself [Love] . . . but fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not even be named among you . . . nor filthiness [Purity] . . . wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Eph. 4:25-5:17

See also: Col. 3:2-14, James 3:17.

- 1. The absolute standards of Jesus are:** Purity, Matt. 5:27-32; Honesty, John 8:44-46 & Luke 16:11; Unselfishness, Luke 14:33; Love, John 15:12. Jesus gives us no direct teaching in regard to such things as smoking, drinking, card playing, theatre, dancing, etc. He recognized that some men could decide one way, and others just the opposite on like questions, and yet both sides be true Christians. But in regard to four things there was no such option. A person must be pure, he or she must be honest, must be unselfish, must express him or herself in deeds of love; or else he or she cannot see the kingdom of God. There is no exception to be made on these four counts.
- 2. These standards can be easily comprehended by all men.** They are unanswerable when once stated. John 7:53-8, 11: Purity. Matt. 21:28-32: Honesty. Mark 10:17-22: Unselfishness. Luke 10:25-37: Love. The peculiarity of these four standards is that, in the first place, they are so simple that any person can understand them him or herself when they are once stated, no matter how simple he or she may be; and that in the second place, they are so fundamental that no person dares deny that they should be followed by others. The reason is that there is inborn in all humanity the distinction between right and wrong, and these standards are the four elements of right.
- 3. Their comprehensiveness and Jesus' teaching about their acceptance or rejection** (as developed by Robert E. Spear).

Chart 2: God's Will & The Four-Fold Touchstone of Jesus				
Absolute standards of Jesus:	Jesus increased in Luke 2:52	Great Commandment to Love God Mark 12-28-31	The full grown person Eph. 4:13	The laws of the kingdom emphasize sinfulness:
Purity	Stature	Strength	Physical	Passion
Honesty	Wisdom	Mind	Intellectual	Dishonesty
Unselfishness	Favor w/ Man	Heart	Social	Selfishness
Love	Favor w/ God	Soul	Spiritual	Lovelessness
<i>-Continued-</i>				
Purity	Passion	Matt. 5:21-32 No person will develop physically who is impure.		
Honesty	Dishonesty	Matt. 5:33-37 No person will develop intellectually who is dishonest.		
Unselfishness	Selfishness	Matt. 5:38-42 No person will develop socially who is selfish.		
Love	Lovelessness	Matt. 5:43-48 No person will develop spiritually who without love.		
~ The Issues of Acceptance or Rejection of These Standards ~				
	Acceptance		Rejection	
Purity:	"Shall see God." Matt. 5:8		Matt. 5:29	
Honesty:	"Entrusted with the true riches." Luke 16:10-12		Luke 16:11-12	
Unselfishness:	"Shall save his life." Luke 9:24		Luke 9:24	
Love:	"Shall inherit the kingdom." Matt. 25:34		Matt. 25-41	

4. Their interpretation and practical application by the Apostles as the means of determining God's will. Rom. 12:1-13, 10; Eph. 4:25-5:17; Col. 3:2-14; I Thess. 4:3-12; James 3:17; I Peter 1:1-2:25.

	I Thess. 4:3-12: "will of God"	Col. 3:2-14 Set minds	Eph. 4:25-5:17 Understanding	James 3:17 Wisdom from above
Purity	3-5	5-8	5:3-14	"pure"
Honesty	6	9-11	4:25-30	"w/out variance"
Unselfishness	11-12	12-13	4:31-32	"peaceable"
Love	9-10	14	5:1-2	"good fruits"

5. Their practical use today as a touchstone to determine the particular will of God for each step of our career.

To every problem, great or small, which presents itself--in a small matter like one's bearing in a game of sport, in a large matter like the choice of a life career--the Christian who is absolutely surrendered to God asks himself these questions: "Is the step which I had planned to take an absolutely pure one? Is it an absolutely honest one? Is it the most unselfish one? Is it the fullest possible expression of my love?"

XV. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (a) The First Test—Purity

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Matt. 5:8

Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Eph. 5:17

Set your mind on the things that are above. . . . Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire. Col. 3:2, 5

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure. James 3:17

1. What do we mean by purity? Matt. 5:8,27-32; II Peter 2:14.

If we go to analogy, purity is, in character, what transparency is in the crystal. It is water flowing, unmixed and clear, from the mountain spring. Or it is the white of snow. Or it is the clear open heaven, through which the sparkling stars appear, hidden by no mist of obstruction. Or it is the pure light itself in which they shine. A pure character is that, in mind and feeling and spirit of life, which all these clear, untarnished symbols of nature, image, in their lower and merely sensible sphere, to our outward eye. (Bushnell: *The New Life*, p. 263.)

3. There are physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual results of impurity. Matt. 5:29-30; Rom. 1:26-27, 32, 6:16-21; I Cor. 3:16-17, 6:9, 12-20; James 1:14-15; II Peter 2:9-10, 18-19; Rev. 21:8, 27, 22:15.

Physical: loss of full efficiency of bodily powers (Rom. 7:5; I Cor. 6:18; Gal. 6:8: the impure person is only one tenth of a person).

Intellectual: loss of mind powers (Romans 7:23).

Social: lack of self-respect, hence morbid self-consciousness (Romans 7:18).

Spiritual: cowardly shrinking from service of others and from duty, and separation from God (Rom. 7:19, 8:8; Eph. 5:5; I Peter 2:11; I John 2:16-17; Rev. 22:14-15).

4. The purity of Jesus. John 8:46; Heb. 2:18, 4:15, 7:26.

5. There is no conflict between the demands of purity and those of honesty, unselfishness, or love.

1. True purity presupposes honesty (Rom. 1:24-25).

2. True purity presupposes victory over self (Mark 7:20-23; Eph. 4:19; I Peter 4:1-2).

3. True purity presupposes love (I Tim. 1:5).

6. How to grow in purity. John 8:36, 15:3; Rom. 6:12-13, 12:1-2; II Cor. 10:3-6; Col. 2:20-23.

XVI. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (b) The Second Test—Honesty

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy mind. Mark 12:30

He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? John 8:32

Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor. Eph. 4:25

Set your mind on the things that are above. . . . lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings. Col. 3:2, 9

But the wisdom that is from above is . . . without variance, without hypocrisy. James 3:17

1. What do we mean by honesty? Mark 14:61-62; Titus 1:2; Rev. 19:11-16.

“Character is what a man is in the dark” (Morgan, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 90.) If carried to its full meaning, absolute honesty would also include victory over every sin, for a person ought to be honest with him or herself and his God as well as with his or her neighbors.

2. Subtle forms of dishonesty. Luke 3:12-14; John 10:1; Rom. 2:8; II Cor. 12:16-18; Gal. 2:12,13; James 5:4.

3. The physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual results of dishonesty. I Cor. 6:10; II Cor. 13:8.

Physical: nervousness due to fear of discovery (John 3:20-21, 8:34).

Intellectual: a deceiver soon comes to distrust himself and his mental judgments (John 8:43-45, 3:20,21).

Social: breaks up unity (Eph. 4:25).

Spiritual: wrath, trouble from God (Rom. 2:8-9; Rev. 21:27).

4. The honesty of Jesus. Isaiah 53:9. John 1:17.

5. There is no conflict between the demands of honesty and those of purity, unselfishness, or love. Gal. 4:16

1. True honesty presupposes purity (John 8:44).

2. True honesty presupposes mastery of self (Eph. 4:28; II Thess. 3:8; Titus 3:8).

3. True honesty presupposes love (Eph. 4:15; James 3:14-16).

6. How to grow in honesty. Psalm 139. John 8:31-32, 36, 18:37; I Cor. 6:11; II Cor. 5:9-10; Heb. 4:13, 12:1. Realize that Jesus is always at your side although you do not see him. He knows everything we do (John 4:17, 2:25).

XVII. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (c) The Third Test—Unselfishness

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Mark 12:30

So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Luke 9:23-24

Set your minds on the things that are above. . . . Put on therefore . . . a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any.” Col. 3:2, 12-13

But the wisdom that is from above is . . . peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy. James 3:17

- 1. What do we mean by unselfishness?** Matt. 5:38-42; John 3:29-30, 17:19; Rom. 14:13-28; I Cor. 8:9. If carried to its full meaning absolute, unselfishness would also include victory over every sin. Unselfishness is a mastery and effacement of self on behalf of another. Unselfishness is to think of the results of your action on the other fellow, to curb yourself in so far as it might injure others. An absolute unselfish person according to Jesus’ standpoint:

Can be Righteously Impatient	Luke 19:45-46
Can be Righteously Jealous	Luke 9:59-62
Can be Righteously Proud	Luke 10:17-20
Can Disregard Polite Formalities	Luke 13:32, 7:44-47
Can be Righteously Self-Assertive	John 8:12
Can be Righteously Angry	Matt. 23:13-36
Can be Righteously Suspicious	John 2:24-25

- 2. Subtle forms of selfishness.** Rom. 12:9-21; Matt. 23:1-12 (cf. 13-39), 6:31.

- 3. There are physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual results of selfishness.** Luke 9:23-24.

Physical: a person can make him or herself sick and become a physical wreck by thinking of himself all of the time.

Intellectual: loss of productivity (Matt. 13:22, 25:14-30).

Social: brings loneliness (Matt. 23:38; Luke 15:28; John 13:30).

Spiritual: loss of God’s life in a person’s soul (Matt. 18:3; Luke 9:24; John 12:25).

- 4. There is no conflict between the demands of unselfishness and those of purity, honesty or love.**

1. True unselfishness presupposes purity, for impurity is always gratification of self.
2. True unselfishness presupposes honesty.
3. True unselfishness presupposes love.
5. **How to grow in unselfishness.** John 8:36; II Cor. 5:17; Phil. 2:5-8, 4:8-9; James 1:4. Study in Jesus' life and teaching that particular trait in which you are weak (Heb. 4:12).

XVIII. The Four-Fold Touchstone: (d) The Fourth Test—Love

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God....with all thy soul. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Mark 12:30-31

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. John 15:12

For this is the will of God. . . . concerning love of the brethren, ye have no need that one write unto you. I Thess. 4:3, 9

And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself. . . . wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Eph. 5:2, 17

Set your mind on the things that are above. . . . and above all these things put on love. Col. 3:2, 14

But the wisdom that is from above is . . . full of . . . good fruits. James 3:17

1. **What do we mean by love?** Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37; John 13:34, 21:15-17; I Cor. 13; Heb. 13:16; I Peter 4:8-10; *I John* 3:16-17.

The fullest expression of love according to Jesus' standard does not mean at least two things. (1) It does not mean working beyond one's powers all the time, taking up every task that comes along (Jesus took vacations); but it does mean doing those things which no one but you can do; e.g., if you receive a gift you are the only one who can express thanks for it. (2) It does not mean simply sentimental, pliable agreeableness. True love often acts with a sternness that hurts.

2. **Subtle forms of repression of love.** Luke 7:44-47, 17:11-18.
3. **There are physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual results of a lack of love.** Matt. 25:1-46.

Physical: a lack of strength (Isaiah 40:31; John 4:31-34; I Peter 4:11).

Intellectual: wasted opportunity and mental fears (Matt. 25:26-28).

Social: Separation from others (Matt. 25:28-30).

Spiritual: A person misses the greatest joy in the world—the joy of service (Luke 16:19-31; *III John* 4).

4. **The love of Jesus.** John 3:16, 21:25.
5. **There is no conflict between the demands of love and those of purity, honesty, or unselfishness.**

1. True love presupposes purity (Matt. 7:18, 12:34; John 7:53, 8:11; I Peter 1:22).
2. True love presupposes honesty (Rom. 12:9; *I John* 3:18).
3. True love presupposes unselfishness: (I Cor. 13:3).
6. **How to emulate to love.** John 8:36, 15:12; I Peter 1:22; *I John* (the entire book). The surest means is by the daily study of the life and example of Jesus.

D. THE ISSUES OF FACING THE PROBLEM OF DOING GOD'S WILL

XIX. Issues of Rejection and Disobedience

And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luke 12:47

And Jesus looking upon him, loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest. . . . But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful. Mark 10:21-22

Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. Rom. 3:16-17

Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. Luke 20:18

1. **What is disobedience?** Acts 7:51; Eph. 4:17-24; Titus 3:3. Disobedience is a deliberate, voluntary transgression of purity, honesty, unselfishness, or love; the refusal (not necessarily the failure) to obey one's conviction of the right.
2. **Honest ignorance and honest open-mindedness are not rejection and disobedience.** Honest ignorance is not disobedience—Jesus freely forgives those who sin through ignorance (Luke 23:34). Honest open-mindedness and refusal to act until convinced is not disobedience. Jesus never forces a person against his or her frank, although perhaps mistaken, convictions; Jesus invites honest, searching investigation of his claims (John 1:39, 20:24-29).
3. **A disobedient life is a certain failure.** *Matt. 6:23, 18:7, 19:22, 23:37-38; Mark 10:22, 12:1-9, 14:21; Luke 3:9, 6:49, 12:20-21, 47, 14:33-35, 19:27; Acts 13:46; Rom. 3:17; Col. 3:6; Heb. 2:2.*
4. **No disobedience is so great that it cannot be rectified before God by a single act of the human will.** Luke 23:39-43; John 6:37, 7:37, 7:53-8:11.
5. **Why not, then, allow sin a free reign?** Although completely rectified spiritually, all disobedience must be atoned for physically, mentally and socially; and when person has once disobeyed, only "the next best plan" is thereafter possible. A person can never be what he or she might have been, had he or she not disobeyed. Yet God has an honorable part, though not so great a one, for him or her in God's plan still. Rom. 6:21-23, 11:23; Gal. 6:7-8.

XX. Issues of Obedience:

A. Knowledge

Jesus therefore answered them, and said, My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself. John 7:16-17

And when they bring you before the synagogues, and the rulers, and the authorities, be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say. Luke 12:11-12

But the comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. John 14:26

1. **Jesus had mental power and insight.** Matt. 7:28-29, 22:46; Luke 2:47; John 2:25, 7:14-15; Col. 2:2-3.
2. **In obedience, God gives knowledge and confirms truth.** Dan. 12:10. John 3:34, 5:30, 7:17, 8:31-34, 16:13; Luke 2:47, 49, 21:15; Acts 6:10; I Cor. 1:5-7; Col. 1:9; James 1:5-8; I Peter 4:11; *I John* 2:20, 27; II Peter 1:21.
3. **Growth in knowledge is possible to any person who obeys God's will.** John 8:31-36.
4. **A person who does God's will, will find a peace and assurance that such is in fact God's will.** John 7:17, 16:13.

B. Protection from Harm and Provision for All Needs

Are not five sparrows sold for two pence? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not: ye are of more value than many sparrows. Luke 12:6-7

But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Matt. 6:33

Jesus answered him, though wouldest have no power against me except it were given thee from above. John 19:11

1. **Jesus was not personally influenced by earthly deprivations, opposition, and physical danger.** Matt. 6:19-34; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 4:29-30, 13:31-33; John 7:6-9, 11:8-9, 12:33, 13:1, 17:1.
2. **No life that stands for any real principle can expect to escape privation, opposition, and often physical peril in this life.** *Matt. 5:11, 12, 10:22, 24:9; John 7:7; Acts 20:19, 22-24; Phil. 1:29; Heb. 2:10, 10:32-39, 13:12; I Peter 3:17, 4:14; Rev. 7:13-17.*
3. **God's promise of provision for our needs and of protection from harm does not exclude privation, suffering, or death if his plan for the world requires such sacrifice on our part.** But he promises us that if we entrust our lives unreservedly to him, such things will only come to us as a part of his plan and that we shall be amply provided for and protected in the path of

obedience in all other instances. *Luke 10:19; John 10:29; Acts 18:9-10, 22:17-18; Rom. 8:28, 14:8; I Cor. 4:9; II Cor. 1:8-11, 4:11; Phil. 1:12-13; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:10-12, 4:6, 17-18; Heb. 11:32-36, 13:5-6; I Peter 4:19.*

- 4. There is a sense in which failing to obey God's will brings peril and deprivation, and a sense in which obeying will bring escape.** *Mark 10:28-31; Luke 13:1-9; Acts 22:17-21; II Cor. 1:8-11; II Tim. 4:18.*

C. Assurance as to One's Duty and Power to Achieve Results

He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. *John 14:12*

And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. *I John 5:14*

So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure. *Phil. 2:12-13*

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. *John 15:7*

And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves: . . . but our sufficiency is from God. *II Cor. 3:4-5*

- 1. Jesus had unfaltering assurance and mighty achievements.** *Matt. 26:53; Luke 4:36, 9:51, 20:2; John 4:32-34, 5:17, 20, 36, 8:14; Gal. 1:3-4.*
- 2. As prerequisites for great achievement, assurance and sure conviction as to duty are possible to those who obey.** *Matt. 18:14; Acts. 4:13; I Cor. 1:1; I Thess. 1:4-5; Eph. 3:1:2; Col. 4:12.*
- 3. The strength which God supplies.** *Isaiah 40:28-31. Matt. 4:4; Luke 1:49; Acts 1:8, 26:22; John 4:32-34; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:17-19; Phil. 4:13, 19; I Tim. 1:12; II Tim. 1:7; I Peter 4:11.*
- 4. The relation of obedience to assurance and achievement.** *Lev. 26:3, 8. Matt. 21:21-22; Mark 9:23, 10:29-30, 11:23; Luke 6:47-49; John 15:5; Rom. 5:19; II Cor. 12:9-10, 13:8; Col. 1:29; I John 4:17-18, 5:4.*

D. Constant Companionship

If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. *John 14:23*

The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant. *Psalms 25:14*

- 1. Jesus had constant fellowship with God.** *John 5:20, 8:16, 29, 54, 55, 10:31, 38, 16:32.*
- 2. Loneliness or isolation are impossible to the surrendered life even though it be deserted by all earthly friends.** *Mark 6:48; John 14:18, 21-23, 15:15, 16:32; II Cor. 4:7-9, 16-18; Rom. 8:38-39; II Tim. 4:16-17.*

3. **Whoever does God's will is a relative of Jesus.** Matt. 12:50.
4. **Obedience is important to having fellowship with God.** John 12:26; *I John* 1:3, 6-7, 2:4; Rev. 3:20. Purity: Matt 5:8; Honesty: Rev. 22:15; Unselfishness: Heb. 12:14; Love: Matt.25:41-46; *I John* 4:12.
5. **Lo, I am with you always.** Matt. 18:20, 28:20; *I John* 1:3.

E. Eternal Life

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. *I John* 2:17

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matt. 7:21

And this is the will of him that sent me, that all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:39-40

Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my word, he shall never see death. John 8:51

He that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. Gal. 6:8

1. **The power of an endless life.** Rom. 6:23; Heb. 2:14-15, 7:16.
2. **Eternal life may begin here and now on this earth through the act of obedience.** Luke 10:20, *17:21*; John 3:14-16, 36, 4:14, *5:24-40*, 6:54-57, 63, *8:51*, 10:27-28; 11:25-26, 17:3; *Rom. 6:4, 8, 11, 13*; I Tim. 6:12, 19; *II Tim. 1:10*; Heb. 11:5, 12:1, 13:14; *I John* 2:17, 2:25, 3:14, 5:11-12, 20; *Rev. 21:3*.
3. **There are several evidences of eternal life which we may enjoy through obedience here and now** (Rom. 14:17).
 - a. **The freedom of righteousness:** *John* 8:31-32, 36; *Rom. 8:2, 21, 14:17*; I Cor. 10:29; *II Cor. 3:17*; Gal. 2:4, *5:1, 13*; James 1:25, 2:12; I Peter 2:15-16; *I John* 4:17-18.
 - b. **Joy:** Matt. 6:22; *John* 15:11, *16:20-24*, 17:18; Acts 2:46-47; Rom. 14:17; *Heb. 1:9*; I Peter 1:8; *I John* 1:4.
 - c. **Peace:** Luke 2:14, 19:41-42; Acts 3:19, 9:31; *John* 14:27, *16:33*; *Rom. 5:1, 8:6, 14:17*; I Cor. 7:15.
4. **He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.** *I John* 2:17.
5. **Conclusion:** Heb. 13:20-21.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

~ **END** ~

Wright’s masterpiece in condensation was going to be Appendix 1 of my magnum opus, *Would You Lie to Save a Life—Love Will Find a Way Home, a Theology on the Ethics of Love* (AuthorHouse, 2007; 414p.). Yet, hence, to save space, I have placed it online.

Would You Lie to Save a Life

Illustrations by Gustave Doré

[Dr. M. G. Maness](http://www.PreciousHeart.net) ~ ©1990 & 1998, Revised 2007

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I cannot express to much my appreciation for Wright’s work and only lament that, alas, those who might dive into it may be too few. First is my preface to the appendix of the earlier version of my work, then Wright’s preface, and then the body of this fine work. One day, I would like to republish his whole work.

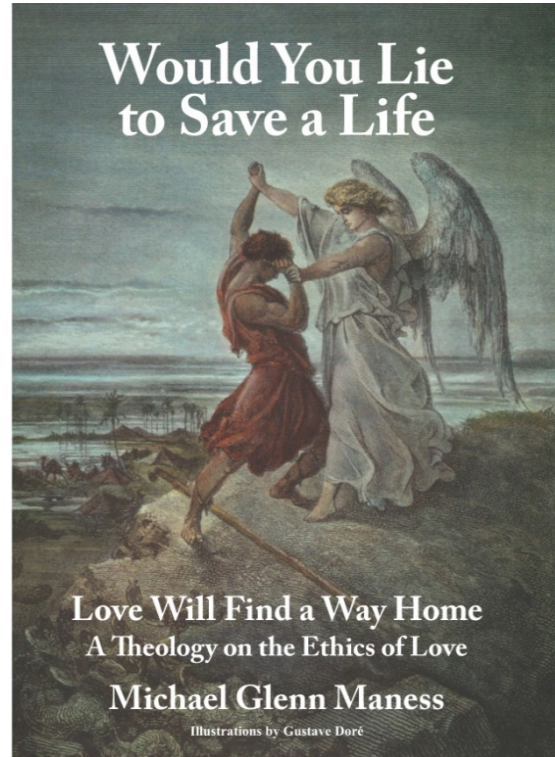
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