



A JOURNEY OF FAITH
SESSION SIX

6 God's Will:
Revealed &
Concealed

Larry Aikens, Jr.

© Copyright 2021
Printed in the United States of America
Only Jesus 4 Me, Inc.
OnlyJesus4Me.com
Virginia USA

“God’s Will Revealed & Concealed”
Session Six of Ten Sessions from the book:
*A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry:
Bible Answers to Life’s Toughest Questions*

Written by: Larry Aikens, Jr.
Contributing Editor: Diane Aikens

Categories: Discipleship Ministries, Spiritual Help, Bible Studies, Bible Answers, Small Groups

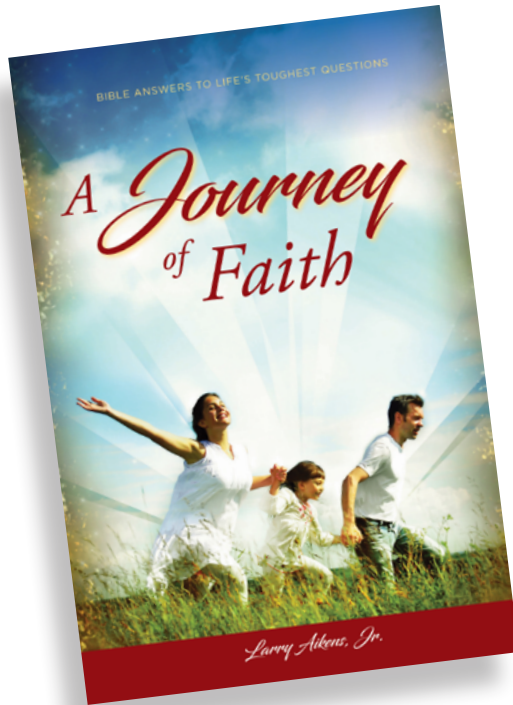
All rights reserved. No part of this resource book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the author except for the use of brief quotations in a book review or scholarly journal.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, a Division of Tyndale House Ministries, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

SESSION **SIX** FROM

A Journey of Faith

BIBLE ANSWERS TO
LIFE'S TOUGHEST QUESTIONS



Only Jesus 4 Me, Inc.
www.OnlyJesus4Me.com
Virginia USA

A SPECIAL INVITATION

As a pastor since 1992, I have realized that many people have questions on their mind about God and the Bible. Sometimes they tell me that they aren't sure they should ask, but they wonder, "Why *do* bad things happen in this world—especially to good people? Doesn't God love us, can't God protect us? Why doesn't God answer *my* prayers?"

So many people have said to me, "Pastor, I have been trying to read the Bible, but I just don't understand it. And besides, where did all these different versions of the Bible come from. Which one should I use? It's just so confusing!"

And the questions keep on coming: "How can I know for sure that I will be in Heaven when I die? Has my life really mattered? Is there any help in the Bible for my personal finances? How can I make better decisions? Do you believe in speaking in tongues? Can a person recover from addictions?" And on they go...

All of these are good and fair questions—completely necessary—and they have caused me to really pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit as I have studied God's Word to try to find answers for what I consider to be *the toughest questions about life*. This book is the product of that research and experience—trying to get at answers that will help you understand God better.

I am quick to admit that I can't answer all of the toughest questions completely—some of life's mysteries God just hasn't fully explained—but I have tried to provide sessions in *A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry* to at least engage with these questions fairly.

These sessions provide a framework to process these mysteries through a biblical understanding of what God has explained to us and really wants us to know. You might be surprised at just how much can be uncovered if you are willing to do a little bit of discovery in a guided setting. So many people with the toughest questions have told me that this study has helped them immensely.

I want to thank these folks who have *journeyed* with us up to this point. Each sincere person has deepened my faith, and has in some way been an encourager to produce the resource that you hold in your hand. I feel indebted to all who have spoken into my *Journey of Faith*, and especially to the Holy

Spirit who has guided each of us, and has revealed the truth of God's Word to our hearts as we have diligently pursued a relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

It is my sincere hope that you will also travel with us and take the time to study these provided materials carefully. This *Journey* very well could be a wise investment in your relationship with Almighty God. My prayer is that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you may emerge from this series of studies a more informed and dedicated follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your fellow Journeyer,

Larry

Psalm 40:1-3

WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY!

We are delighted that you have joined us for *A Journey of Faith*. We know that this is a wise investment you are making in your life, and it is our sincere desire that you will understand more of God's love for you and how you fit into God's plan of grace. We would like to introduce you to a few practical ideas:

- ✓ When you watch or attend the sessions, be sure to have a Bible, this resource, and a way to take notes. We will be studying the Bible, using the *New Living Translation*. While it is not required, it might be helpful for you to purchase this translation. We suggest the *NLT Illustrated Study Bible*.
- ✓ Before each session, please read carefully the material you have received. We believe that *Truth Discovered Is Truth Retained!* Please come to the sessions prepared.
- ✓ We offer this *Journey* with appreciation to those whose questions, together with our own, have challenged us to dig deep into God's Word for answers. It is because of their curiosity that this discipleship ministry has been developed. As you study, we realize that you also may have questions of your own. Please feel free to ask your questions during our discussion time, or contact your facilitator throughout the week. We are always happy to talk with you about your *Journey*.
- ✓ After the session, please complete the Discussion Questions and Abiding Principles on our website. Submit these for extra credit!
- ✓ If you are enjoying *A Journey of Faith*, please refer a friend to Journey with us. Visit www.onlyJesus4me.com to discover how to become a Licensed Facilitator and offer this life-changing resource to others. It is easy and rewarding!
- ✓ Before our study each week, we will say this prayer together:
“Dear heavenly Father, I ask that you open my heart to receive the Scripture for today's lesson. I also ask for the Holy Spirit to give me courage to take the steps of a true disciple in following Jesus, as truth is revealed to me through this *Journey of Faith*. Thank you for your grace at work in my life to draw me closer to your awesome love. I pray in Jesus' holy name, Amen.”

THEME VERSES

2 Peter 1:3a, 5a

³By his *Divine Power*,
God has given us
Everything we need
for living a *Godly Life*.

⁵In view of all this, make
every effort to *Respond*
to God's *Promises*.
Supplement [or add to]
Your Faith.



ABIDING PRINCIPLES

JEREMIAH 10:23

I know, LORD, that our lives are not our own. We are not able to plan our own course.

PSALM 37:23

The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.

JEREMIAH 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION SIX

There is a difference between the *revealed* will of God and the *concealed* will of God. God has revealed his will in general terms to all who are willing to obey. For instance, [2 Peter 3:9](#) explains something very important about God's revealed will: "[God] does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent." So, from this verse and many other portions of Scripture, it would be reasonable to conclude that God's will for every person is that he or she would come to a place of repentance in his or her life, receiving Jesus Christ as Savior. For those who are saved, we know it is God's will that each person be baptized and make a public declaration of his or her faith. In general, God has revealed his will on many other subjects, such as faithful church attendance, consistent worship, holy living, faithful generosity, and so on. We can be clear that God would desire each and every person to follow these steps in his or her life; thus, we consider these things to be the revealed, or general, will of God.

While we may have issues with obeying the revealed will of God, we seldom have issues with knowing what God expects of us in these areas. As a pastor, I found out long ago that I seldom need to point out a person's sin in our private conversations—the Holy Spirit reveals sin in his or her life. Please don't misunderstand. I preach the Bible as faithfully as I know how; and when the Bible deals with sin, I don't gloss over it in my sermons. But I can't tell you how many times someone has shared with me that they had done something that was sin before God—and it wasn't through some powerful sermon about their specific sin that they were convicted. They knew they had done wrong simply because they were convicted by the Holy Spirit. I'm just pointing out that God has made his revealed will very clear. Knowing God's revealed will is not so much our difficulty; it is doing God's revealed will.

So in this session, our study will focus more on finding the *concealed* will of God, or God's specific will for your life. Do you remember [Proverbs 3:5-6](#)? ⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."

If you look at these verses carefully, there is an important truth taught. As you are willing to obey the *revealed* will of God, you will discover the *concealed*

will of God. In other words, the path to being in the center of God's will is that of learning all you can about God's *revealed* will, seeking to faithfully put those things into practice in your life, and then trusting God to allow you to uncover his *concealed* will, or specific will for your life.

*Saved On Purpose
for a Purpose.*

I really believe that God has saved you on purpose for a purpose. Discerning God's will for your life and living therein will bring you joy, fulfillment, and the peace of knowing that you are WISE (**W**alking **I**n **S**tep with **E**ternity). There are so many decisions in life—many of them very important. The Bible has much to say about how to make good and wise decisions. God truly cares about the paths that we choose, and we can avoid a lot of heartache if we are willing to learn how to pray and seek the will of God in all our daily decisions.

ILLUSTRATION

When my children were very young, their mother and I decided to surprise them on Christmas day with a swing set in the back yard. We bought a fine, big set—at least it looked really big all assembled in the store. Picking it up at the warehouse, I was surprised that it was in a rather small box. Well, I found out why when I opened the box—the swing set was in a thousand pieces! If you have ever put one together, you will know I am telling the truth.

Of course, the instruction manual painstakingly listed numerous steps to put all those pieces together. I read a few pages and thought to myself, “I don't need all of these directions; I can handle it. After all, it couldn't be that hard.”

Famous last words...

I would go out at night after the children were in bed and put that swing together, using the corner floodlights behind the house. It was freezing cold, but I was so happy that I could put that swing set together for my two little children. Just the thought of those two lighting up on Christmas morning was all the warmth I needed to keep going. I spent the better part of a week working to assemble all those pieces. I was so proud of myself—it was looking pretty good from what I could tell. “Who needs directions?” I thought rather smugly.

When I was finished, there were still quite a few parts left in the box. “Hmm...” I puzzled over those pieces. “Some idiot must have put extra parts in this box. You just can’t find any good help anymore.” When my wife came out to check on me and saw all those extra parts, she insisted that I call the 800 number on the instruction manual for assistance, just to be sure that I hadn’t missed installing a critical part somewhere. After all, the kids needed to be safe.

“Well, I am sure I did everything right, but if it will make you feel better...” To make a long story shorter, and to my utter amazement, she was right. I was the “idiot” who had left out a few critical parts! I had to take the swing set completely apart and reassemble it—this time with her reading the directions and making sure that I was following the assembly manual step-by-step. The project turned out fine, and the kids were extremely happy on Christmas morning! An especially neat part of it all was that we had somehow kept the kids from seeing the swing out in the yard—that must have taken a lot of doing on their mother’s part. I certainly learned something from that experience: FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS!

Even more so, I think there was a spiritual lesson in all of that. God can guide us through every experience of life. God has already been there, and he has the “assembly manual” to direct our steps. We just need to pray and seek to follow God’s will for our lives. It is my prayer that this important session will help you begin to discern God’s will in your day-to-day decisions, as well as put you on the pathway to discovering the very purpose for which you were born.



TEXT: PSALM 139:1-7, 16-18, 23-24

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

¹ O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

² You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.

³ You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do.

⁴ You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD.

⁵ You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

⁷ I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!



¹⁶ You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

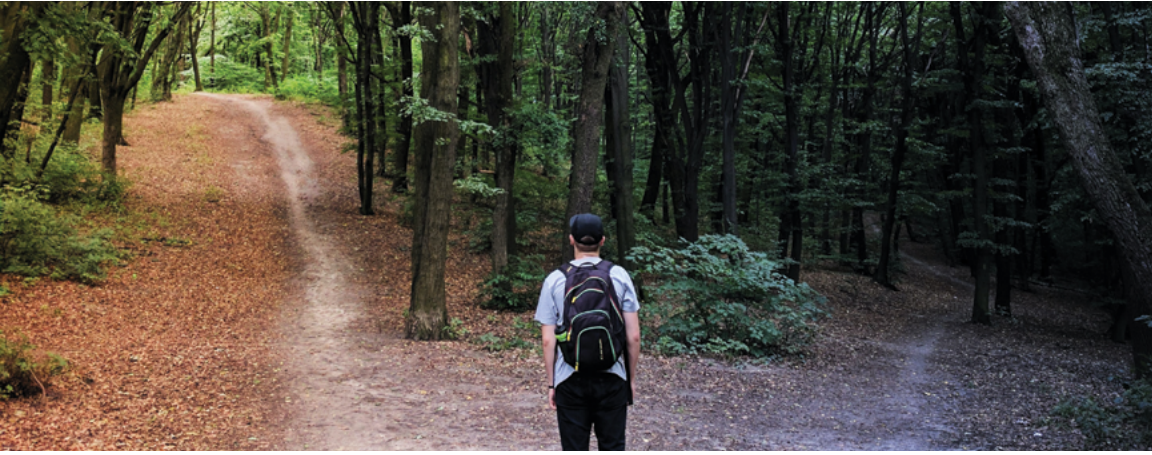
¹⁷ How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!

¹⁸ I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!



²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.



SESSION 6: GOD'S WILL: REVEALED & CONCEALED

Text: 1 Kings 13:1-24 – Please take a few minutes to read this text from your Bible before you study this session. You may find the story riveting—I know that I have. It is a story of extremes, but I invite you to look beneath the story-line and think about some helpful principles taught, that may assist us in uncovering the *concealed* and unique will of God for our lives.

Just to be clear, let me summarize the story in 1 Kings 13. A good and noble prophet is sent by God to Bethel to deliver a two-fold message to a wicked king. King Jeroboam was leading God's people into idolatry and sin. First of all, the prophet was to present an edict against these sins, protesting in warning. Secondly, by his actions the prophet was to issue an indictment against these sins, separating himself from what God despised.

This meant that the good prophet was not to eat or drink in Bethel, but he was to deliver a stern warning from God and then he was to return home. God made this very clear in his instructions.

God spoke directly to the prophet, and the prophet went to Bethel and

performed his duty commendably. He left quickly and started out to go home—just as God had said. On his way home, the prophet was confused by an old apostate prophet (all God’s true prophets had left Bethel – read 2 Chronicles 11:13-16). This elderly man lied to the good prophet, telling him that God reversed his earlier instructions. Whether he was energized by evil or just meddling, we are not told. Even so, the good prophet listened to the apostate prophet and followed the elderly man’s temptation away from God’s will for his life. As a result, the good prophet was tragically killed.

This is a story of extremes to make clear several points and teach us some valuable lessons about discerning the *concealed* will of God for our own lives. In this story, we see an example of how a believer obedient to the *revealed* will of God in his life was entrusted with specific directions, or allowed by God to discern and follow the *concealed* will of God for his life. He did well for a while, but then he was tempted away from God’s will with heart-breaking consequences.

In this session, we will work our way through the lessons we can learn from 1 Kings 13. It is very important to remember that our discussion of these lessons should be interpreted in light of discerning the *concealed* will of God, rather than the *revealed* will of God. Please be certain that you have read the introductory remarks provided for this session that explains our approach to this critical subject.

I. God’s leading in your life will be clear (vss. 1, 9).

- A. God leads within the framework, or structure, of God’s providential surroundings in your life.
 - 1. God leads you in the area of your responsibility and influence.
 - 2. God also leads through godly leadership in your life, and by the input of the people God has put in your pathway.
- B. God leads individually.
 - 1. God has a specific purpose and plan for your life.
 - 2. There are several reasons to believe this:
 - a. God’s Word teaches this.

Psalm 23:3 – [God] renews my strength. [God] guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

Ephesians 2:10 – For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

- b. God’s Word gives us many examples of God’s leading in a person’s life. For example, consider the narrative of Jeremiah: Jeremiah 1:5, 7b – ⁵“I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations. ^{7b}You must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you.”
- c. The personality of God suggests that he has a specific will in mind for every believer.
1 Corinthians 14:40 – But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.

C. God leads in harmony with your gifts, experience, and calling (vss. 1-2).

- 1. Everything in your life is for a purpose.
Romans 8:28 – And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.
- 2. God builds upon the foundation of past experiences while leading us onward to accomplish God’s will.

ILLUSTRATION

I grew up traveling in a missionary evangelist’s home. From an early age, I knew God wanted me to preach, but I was afraid God might want me to be like my dad and mom—traveling and preaching from church to church—or worse yet, living in a foreign country far from home. Fearing what God might ask of me, I was unwilling to trust God with the unknowns and surrender to God’s leading.

In conversing with many others, I have found that I was not alone with these fears. Many people are afraid that God will ask them to do something they don't know how to do, or something that they don't want to do.

You know something, I have found that God prepares us and trains us for the very things that God has in mind for us to accomplish. God doesn't just arbitrarily pick us up and thrust us into something. God is at work—even before we are willing to acknowledge God—to prepare us and train us for God's perfect will.

I finally surrendered to God, putting aside my fears and deciding that God truly knows what is best for me. I have been amazed in my Christian walk since 1986 to see how the things I have experienced and the training I have received have all been part of God's preparation for what I am doing even now.

Trust God's providence. God knows best!



D. God leads in perfect peace (vs. 1).

Colossians 3:15 – And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Pray, Seek, Act...

1. Pray and seek God's will before making *any* decisions.
2. Pay attention to a strong caution in your heart. This caution could be from the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4:6a, 7 – ^{6a}Don't worry about anything; instead, pray

about everything...⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION

I have found the language and guidance of Ruth Haley Barton to be helpful in prayerful discernment of God's will for my life. I had the privilege of hearing her speak and can highly recommend her book on God's will and spiritual discernment.¹ She speaks of a "Prayer of Indifference," or becoming *indifferent* through prayer to the situation at hand. By *indifferent* she does not mean uncaring, but rather she means that we take our hands off the situation and completely trust God to guide us. She then encourages us to pay close attention to the way we feel led by the Spirit of God about the clear choices at hand. What brings "desolation," and what brings "consolation"?

In her words: "The Quakers encourage folks to 'place each path near the heart' and see which one brings consolation or desolation. This takes a great deal of maturity, because matters of consolation and desolation are about more than surface emotion. We are talking about the inner dynamics that move us toward God [...] and those that move us away from God and the life of faith."²



3. Equally important is seeking wise and godly counsel from spiritual leadership. A strong caution from a wise counselor could also be an indication that God is not leading.
Proverbs 15:22 – Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success.
 - a. We are members in a community of believers. Decisions should not be made in isolation, but rather they should be discussed with godly people for input and spiritual direction.
 - b. If God is leading, God can also give peace to the spiritual leaders who counsel you.

4. A caution in your heart could be fear, rather than the Holy Spirit's guidance. Fear is often an enemy of those who seek to follow God's will. You can discern whether the caution is from God or it is simply fear that is keeping you from being obedient to God.

a. Surrender your will to God in prayer. If in prayer you have peace about a decision, but outside of prayer there is no peace, that lack of peace may be fear. Talk this over with a spiritual counselor.

Romans 8:13-14 – ¹³For if you live by its [the sinful nature's] dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

b. Look to the Word of God for direction and encouragement. Again, talk over your understanding of God's Word with a spiritual counselor before making a decision.

Psalm 27:11 – Teach me how to live, O LORD. Lead me along the right path, for my enemies are waiting for me.

E. God leads in spiritual "light," rather than in spiritual "darkness" (vs. 18).

Isaiah 50:10-11 – ¹⁰Who among you fears the LORD and obeys his servant? If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the LORD and rely on your God. ¹¹But watch out, you who live in your own light and warm yourselves by your own fires. This is the reward you will receive from me: You will soon fall down in great torment.

1. Spiritual darkness often comes in times of deep discouragement, heartache, exhaustion, or disappointment in people. On the other hand, it may occur just after a great spiritual victory.

2. I want to remind you of the story of the good prophet in 1 Kings 13. He was misled just after a wonderful experience of God's blessings. He made a hasty decision when his emotions were frayed, and it cost him dearly.

3. When spiritual darkness occurs, you should wait on the Lord to renew your strength before making important, life-altering decisions. Don't get hasty and make big mistakes.

Psalm 27:14 – Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.

[Or as *The Message* says: “Stay with God! Take heart. Don't quit. I'll say it again: Stay with God.”]

II. God's leading is always in harmony with Scripture (“This is what the Lord says,” vs. 2; “For the Lord gave me this command,” vs. 9).

- A. God will never lead you to do something that is contrary to the *revealed* principles of God's Word.

Colossians 3:16-17 – ¹⁶Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. ¹⁷And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

1. God will never ask you to do something wrong in order to accomplish something that seems worthwhile.
2. Again, that is why it is so important to seek godly counsel from the community of faith. Find out if what you want to do lines up with the *revealed* will of God in the Bible.

- B. Warning! Satan delights in bringing doubt into your mind about clear biblical principles. The good prophet should have relied on the Word of God he knew to be true.

Genesis 3:1 – The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

- C. The Bible issues strong warnings to those who would try to change the principles of Scripture to “fit” their own agenda.

Galatians 1:6-7 – ⁶I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of

Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News ⁷but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

III. God's leading may run contrary to earthly advice or wisdom.

Romans 11:33-34 – ³³Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! ³⁴For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice?

- A. Following the will of God requires faith. We see this demonstrated in the good prophet's willingness to accept God's assignment—by faith. Hebrews 11:6 – And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.
- B. Faith means that we trust God for the things that we cannot figure out by human reasoning. When the apostate prophet reasoned with the good prophet, he used reasonable arguments—at least from a human standpoint. However, if the good prophet would have considered the source of his advice, he would not have been tripped up by the elderly man's lies. He should have continued following God by faith. Hebrews 11:1 – Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

IV. When you are following God's will for your life, you can be assured that God will provide your needs (vss. 3-6).

Philippians 4:19 – And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

- A. God has promised to provide the power of the Holy Spirit for effective service. (This will be discussed in detail in Session 9.)
- B. God will provide safety for those in God's will.
 - 1. This safety may not be in a physical sense, but it is always in a spiritual sense.

Romans 12:1-2 – ¹And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

2. If you are in the will of God, you can be assured that God's plan for your life will be completed.
2 Samuel 22:31 – God's way is perfect. All the LORD's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.

*Never **Doubt** in the darkness
What God has shown you in the **Light**.*

V. God leads in a definite progression (“So they went back together,” vs. 19).

- A. It has been often said, “Never doubt in darkness what God has shown you in the light.” Don't allow Satan to cloud your mind with doubts.
- B. God's plan is progressive, meaning that God will reveal his *concealed* will one step at a time on a forward pathway. Don't go back and try to live in the past.
Isaiah 30:21 – Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, “This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left.
- C. Chapters of life will come to a close as God moves you onward in the

progression of God's will.

Philippians 3:13-14 – ¹³No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

VI. As you follow God's specific will for your life, you need to be aware that testing and temptation may come into your life (vss. 14-15).

- A. After you experience God moving in your life in a powerful way, there will often be a trial of your faith right around the corner.

James 1:3-4 – ³For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Jeremiah 10:23-24 – ²³I know, LORD, that our lives are not our own. We are not able to plan our own course. ²⁴So correct me, LORD, but please be gentle. Do not correct me in anger, for I would die.

- B. Through prayer, God can give you the grace to be able to pass these tests of faith.

1 Peter 4:19 – So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.

- C. Satan is seeking to trip up those who are trying to live for God and do God's will. The text doesn't expressly say so, but it seems that the elderly apostate prophet was being influenced by evil to try to thwart the plans of God.

1 Peter 5:8-9 – ⁸Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are.

IN CONCLUSION

At the end of his life, the Apostle Paul gave this stirring testimony of his life, lived in the will of God:

2 Timothy 4:7-8 – ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. ⁸And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

Paul reminds us that there is a reward for all those who will remain faithful to God's will. Like Paul, it is urgent for us to seek the perfect will of God for our lives, and stay faithful to Christ!

*All to Jesus I surrender,
All to him I Freely give;
I will ever Love and Trust him,
In his Presence daily live.
I Surrender All, I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I Surrender All.³*

ENDNOTES

¹ Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2012).

² Ruth Haley Barton, "Can You Hear God Now? Your Most Important Leadership Role," Transforming Center, December 7, 2016, <https://transformingcenter.org/2016/12/can-hear-god-now/>.

³ From "I Surrender All," a hymn written in 1896 by Judson W. Van DeVenter (1855-1935).



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you read and studied this entire session? Yes No

Please answer the Discussion Questions below in complete sentences, using our website. When you submit your answers to OJM, you will get a copy of Larry's and Diane's answers in return via email! (You may wish to keep a copy of your answers to compare yours with theirs as you continue discovering truth.) If you are not sure how to answer each question, go ahead and "take a stab at it." Once you start writing, you may surprise yourself! There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. We want to hear your thoughts!

1. Please explain the difference between the revealed will of God and the concealed will of God.
2. What does it mean when the author says, "God has saved you on purpose for a purpose?" What is your purpose for living?
3. Discuss the difference between cautions in your heart placed there by the Holy Spirit, contrasted with fears in your heart that may be keeping you from being obedient to God. Explain how a person can discern between the two.
4. Who are the spiritual counselors in your life? To whom would you turn for help in making decisions?
5. What is the greatest hindrance to discovering and doing the will of God in your life? Explain.

IN ADDITION...

Remember to write out the Abiding Principles on the website. If you complete these simple assignments, you will earn an upgraded certificate!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the glory and praise goes to God for all of the many blessings we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I truly am grateful to God for the wonderful people God has put in my life since I was but a small child. I chose the theme verses for Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) from [Psalm 71:17-18](#), for truly as the Psalmist said: “[God has] taught me from my earliest childhood.” I am indebted to many voices and guides who have spoken into my faith *Journey* to bring me to this new opportunity to teach others *A Journey of Faith*.

My *Journey of Faith* started many years ago, when in God’s grace and providence, God allowed me to be born into a Christian home. When I was but three years of age, God led my parents, Larry and Linda, into full-time missions work. My early life was enriched by their experiences of faith and service to Christ. I owe them my lasting gratitude for the many ways they gave me a wonderful start in life.

Further, I am very grateful for the church families that have allowed me to serve Jesus in their midst since 1992. So much of what I have learned has been in the pursuit of their needs. Also, searching questions that have come to the surface in both my life and theirs, have called forth a diligent study on my part. I love each and every person with whom I have had the opportunity to minister throughout the years, and I appreciate all that they have taught me. Space would not allow me to thank each person by name, but to those who were part of these church families, know that I am eternally grateful that our journeys have intersected. I feel that we have blessed each other forward in our mutual faith, and I am thankful for what you have brought into my life.

I am grateful for a host of professors, pastors, teachers, and counselors who have spoken into my faith journey. I studied officially in many classrooms, but unofficially, I have sat at the feet of so many wonderful Christians—some whom I have pastored and others whom I have led as part of my church staff. Those very ones whom I was called to lead have led me in many ways. I can’t thank these mentors enough. I only wish that space would allow me to mention each one by name.

I also want to offer my appreciation to my first wife, Holly, and my children, Nathaniel and Jessica, for allowing me the time to pursue ministry, writing,

education, and the lofty dreams that I felt God placed within my heart. While I felt my motives were pure and my intentions were the best, I haven't always known how to balance my time and priorities well. I am sure that in my early zeal for God, I often got caught up in lofty goals that were more than what God had called me to pursue. In those times, my family suffered a great deal for my lack of attentiveness to them, and I regret that. I also made my share of mistakes and needed forgiveness. For those sacrifices they made to invest in who I have become, I offer my sincere thanks and humble gratitude. If I could go back, I would do things very differently. My children are grown now, and I love them very much.

God in his mercy and grace has allowed me to remarry a wonderful partner, Diane. I am very grateful for her support and the expertise that she has brought into my life. She is a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, a grammarian, and an excellent musician. Her humble ways of living out her faith in Jesus Christ are constant lessons to me. She has a gentle spirit and has modeled to me the Christ-life, to which I aspire. I can't say "thank you" enough to her. She has a courage about her that is remarkable, and even though God has entrusted to her a battle with Stage IV cancer, she fights on with great courage. My thanks for her careful review of all of our written materials and the excellent edits. She might just make a grammarian out of me yet. I doubt it, but it is worth her continued try! Also, a special thank you is in order for Diane's parents, Don and Doris Johns. They are special folks, and they sure reared a fine daughter!

I must give a special thanks to my church family at Bethel. They are simply the BEST. I would never be able to express to them how much I love them and the church that we all call "home." It is such a privilege to be their pastor and to help carry on the work of Jesus. I appreciate Bethel's support and belief in the project of OJM. Their partnership is such a blessing to us. I want to give my appreciation to the chairperson of our Church Board, Robert Phillips, and his wife Lena, and also the chairperson of our Deacons, Ron Wampler, and his wife Carolyn. All of the leaders at Bethel are dear friends and encouragers in the work of Christ—I wish I had the space to list all of their names. I also want to thank our District Executive Minister, Bro. John Jantzi, for his review of some of our lessons and his excellent input and ideas. Also, my thanks go to him for believing in me and being the conduit that God used to bring Bethel and us together. He is a blessing and such an encouragement as we endeavor

to serve Christ together. I also want to give a shout out to the Discipleship Ministries Team with whom I have the privilege of serving: David Chappell, Jan Orndorff, and Debby Rimel are wonderful friends and encouragers. My “thank you” to the team! They have made me a better disciple of Jesus, and I appreciate their steady encouragement to look to Jesus and keep the attention on HIM!

Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) was born out of a calling that I felt through fervent prayer on my knees. I shared the vision first with Diane, and she was right there to support me. We both prayed for God’s direction in putting the right people into our path to help launch this ministry. In the early days, God led us to a local businessman, C.L. Russell of C.L. Russell Photography in Broadway, Virginia. He is the creative genius behind the videography and photography! He and his wife, LaShonda, have become good friends, and we are very grateful for the ways they have supported OJM. In those early days, God also led us to Josh Hallahan of Christian Internet Design in Missoula, Montana. He and his team have brilliantly developed the website and have constantly been a source of encouragement in the Lord. They have found the tools to make the vision a reality! We are very grateful to them.

As we began to delve into the work of creating OJM, we realized very quickly that we needed some expertise in graphics design, technical issues, and developing the ministry materials, such as the book that you are reading. After much prayer, the Lord reminded me of a good friend who had assisted us on many previous projects, Tillman Ross of Graphic Imaging in Concord, North Carolina. We asked Tillman to consult with us as our Impressions Manager, and he graciously accepted. He is gifted at bringing colors, web pages, pictures and concepts into a unified whole. His creations speak of excellence, and we feel they are a wonderful reflection on OJM’s passion for Jesus. A “thank you” to Tillman for his steady and creative guidance, as well as being a friend in the Gospel ministry since 2003.

On the business side, we have been working with our CPA and friend, Ed Neese, from Greensboro, North Carolina. I pastored there in the late 1990’s and asked Ed to do my personal taxes. Since that time, Ed has done my yearly return and has counseled me on many financial matters. He loves the Lord Jesus, and he has been a true business friend. I am deeply grateful for his

guidance in financial matters concerning OJM, and ministry in general, but even more so for his consistent friendship and encouragement to both me and Diane. God has also brought into our lives a good friend and attorney, Dan Neher from Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is a solid brother in Christ and has been a source of encouragement and assistance in advising us on legal matters concerning OJM. We are grateful to Dan for his expertise.

Musically, God has put in our path a new friend from Nashville, Tennessee, Peter Young. Peter is an accomplished drummer, arranger, and producer. He has given “wings” to the theme song God allowed me to compose, “Only Jesus 4 Me,” and brought together incredible talent in Nashville to produce the song at the legendary Studio 19. He has been awesome to work with. Our thanks to Peter, and a thank you to the recording studio and all of the musicians who played on the project: Kyle Hershman, Studio Engineer; Chris Nole, Keyboards; Ron de la Vega, Bass; Peter Young, drums; Tony Paoletta, pedal steel; Joe Spivey, Acoustic Guitar, Fiddle and Mandolin, and Chas Williams, Lead Guitar. Mike Lusk is the awesome singing talent on the theme song, and he sounded just great. We appreciate Mike and all the musicians for their contributions!

There are so many others God has used in my life—many friends, family members, neighbors, and colleagues who have prayed for me—and I am truly grateful for each and every one. If I have failed to mention you by name, please understand that it was not on purpose. Yet above and beyond all others, I am humbled by the friendship of Jesus. I am so grateful that Jesus would entrust to me his vision for *Only Jesus 4 Me* and *A Journey of Faith*. I realized long ago that inspiration and creativity do not come from a human being; rather, all that is good comes from the Holy Spirit working through a yielded person to accomplish the purpose of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. When I am at my best, I feel the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and I give all the glory to Jesus. “In him, I live and move and have my being” (Acts 17:28). I know all the glory goes to God and I am eternally grateful for any small part that I have in Jesus’ kingdom. If this ministry touches your heart and is a help to you, please join with us in giving God the glory. God alone is worthy! Praise be to Jesus! Thank you, Jesus. Only Jesus 4 Me! Amen!



PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Images used in *A Journey of Faith* were provided under a Creative Commons License (CCO); yet to show appreciation to these artists, here is a list of the photos used with appropriate credit where possible.

Photo 1: “Sunburst,” Garden of the Gods, Colorado Springs, United States, February 5, 2018, by Andrew Seaman on Unsplash.

Photo 2: “Man at the Crossroads,” Holosiivs’kyy Park, Kiev, Ukraine, June 15, 2018, by Vladislav Babienko on Unsplash.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Larry was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and reared on the missionary field. He is the second of six children. His folks served the Spanish-speaking world until Larry was a teenager, and then they traveled as a family in full-time evangelistic work in the United States. He recalls being in forty-three states and three other countries before going to college. During these formative years, Larry gave his heart and life to Christ and felt a calling to serve the Lord in local church work.

Larry was ordained to the full-time Gospel ministry in 1992, serving as a music and youth minister until 1995. Since that time, he has had the privilege of lifting up Christ as a pastor in the Baptist Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Church of the Brethren (COB). He is currently serving as the pastor of Bethel-Mayland COB in Broadway, Virginia, and the interim pastor of Pine Grove COB in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He also serves with the Shenandoah District COB as a member of the Discipleship Ministry Team.

Larry has earned three seminary degrees: a Master of Theology (Th.M.) and a Doctorate of Theology (Th.D.) from Covington Theological Seminary, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia; and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Larry is the father to two grown children, Nathaniel and Jessica, and a grandfather to Kirsten. Larry and his wife Diane reside in New Market, Virginia. When not busy in the ministry, Larry enjoys music, the outdoors, golf, tennis, riding motorcycles, and reading—especially biographies. Diane shares many of the same interests and is also a wonderful pianist. They both enjoy ministering, spending time together, traveling, and meeting other believers.



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Diane was born near Tacoma, Washington, and grew up as the baby sister of two brothers. At seven years of age, her family moved across the country back to her mother's home in the mountains of Pennsylvania. They took up residence in an old farmhouse on the edge of the family farm and got very involved in their local church and Christian school. Diane's dad served as an assistant to the pastor, and her mother taught high school maths and sciences in the Christian school.

After graduation from high school, Diane went to Pensacola Christian College (PCC) and earned her bachelor's degree in Music Ministry in 1999, traveling with the PCC Ensemble for two years and helping to promote the college. She was offered an opportunity to continue her studies as a Graduate Assistant and earned a seminary degree in Church Music (M.C.M.) through Pensacola Theological Seminary in 2001.

Diane has had a diverse opportunity to experience Christ and how various traditions practice their faith. She grew up in a Community church, belonged to a non-denominational church, served on staff at a Baptist church, attended a Full Gospel church, and has belonged to the United Methodist Church. She is now a member of the Church of the Brethren, where she serves with her husband, Larry. Diane has also served the local church as a choir member and director, pianist, Sunday school teacher, secretary, and financial secretary. She is very involved in supporting Larry's ministry as a pastor's wife.

She offers her input in the discussion questions throughout this book as a person who has experienced the *Journey* many times. She hopes that her input will help to broaden the discussions and further the conversations around these important topics.



A JOURNEY OF FAITH INCLUDES

- Session 1 | God's Wonderful Assurance of Salvation
- Session 2 | What Does Baptism Mean?
- Session 3 | The Meeting House of God
- Session 4 | Is the Bible Relevant for Today?
- Session 5 | A Guide to Prayer and Fasting
- Session 6 | God's Will: Revealed & Concealed
- Session 7 | Financial Wisdom
- Session 8 | The Worldwide Ministry of the Holy Spirit
- Session 9 | Anointed by the Holy Spirit
- Session 10 | Why Do Bad Things Happen to God's Children?



Don't Miss A Session!