



reflecting Jesus

BETA

the king of the Universe
eagerly offers to guide my life **25**

?

did you know...

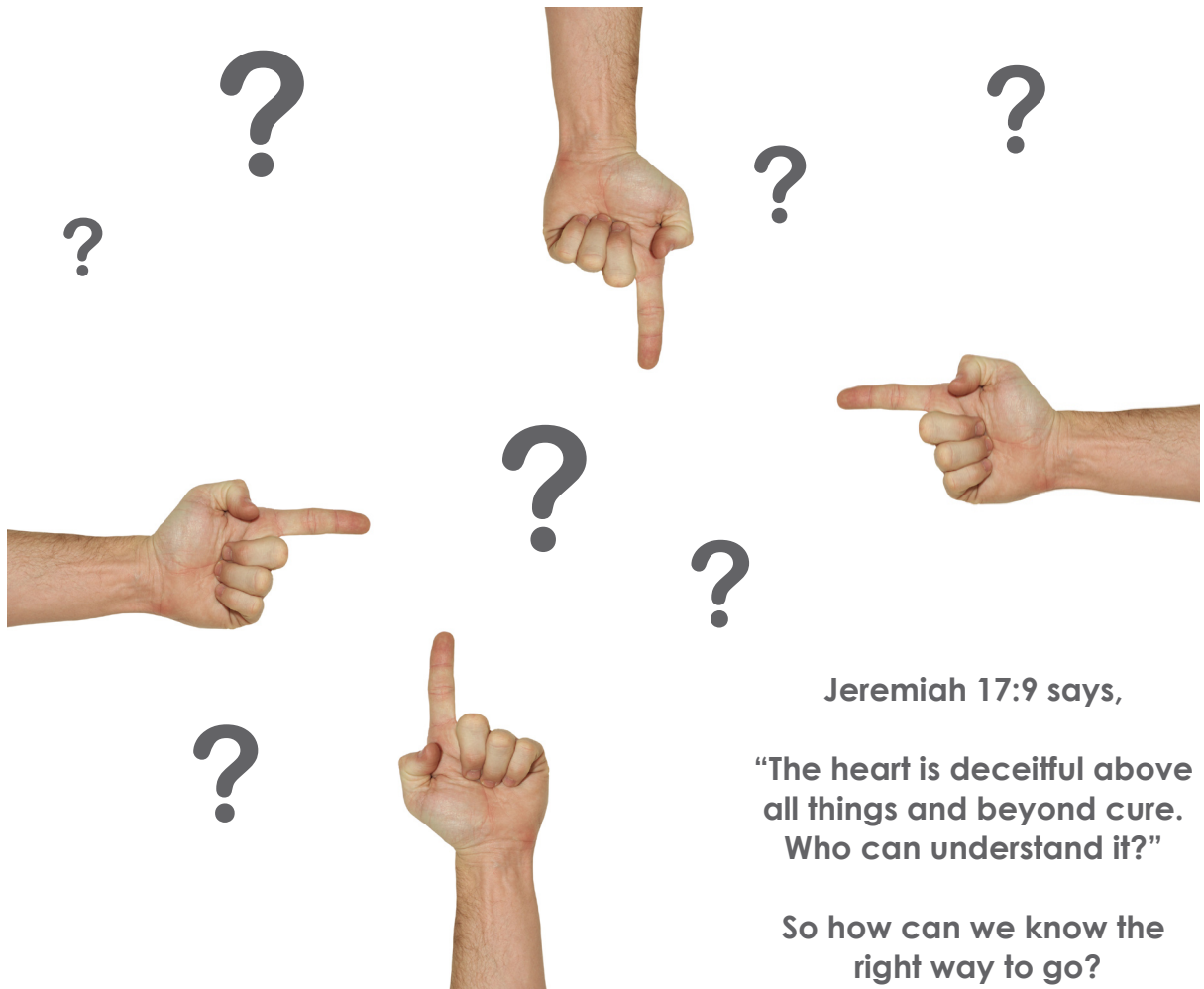


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Jeremiah 17:9 says,

“The heart is deceitful above
all things and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?”

So how can we know the
right way to go?



the facts of his story

1. What problems does God say we face in knowing his will for our lives in Jeremiah 17:9 and Proverbs 14:12?

2. In what ways does God reveal his will to us?

a) Psalm 119:105 _____

b) John 16:13 _____

c) Nehemiah 6:15-16 _____

3. What are some of the conditions to knowing God's will for our lives?

a) Proverbs 3:5-6 _____

b) Proverbs 9:10 _____

c) Romans 12:1-2 _____

Ultimately, learning God's will is not about doing the right thing, or going to the right place, but becoming the right person—a person who reveals the character of God to the world.



thinking it through

1. Which of the texts that you have just read is most important to you, and why?

2. Why do you think God offers to guide your life? How do you think life changes when we allow God to do this?



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ living inside God's Providence

what is "providence"?

Providence has been called "God's invisible hand". Providence is God guiding the events in our lives—but we don't necessarily see God clearly, or at all.

Take the example of Joseph. At the age of seventeen, Joseph was sold by his brothers to some traders, Ellen White notes that "for a time Joseph gave himself up to uncontrolled grief and terror. But, in the providence of God, even this experience was to be a blessing to him." And as Joseph reflected on his life, a new determination filled him. "His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity." (PP 213-214)

For ten years, Joseph remained a slave. He had no contact with his family and his father believed him to be dead. Joseph could have found lots of good reasons to become depressed working so long as a slave. But he did not give in to bitterness. Ellen White comments again, "Joseph's gentleness and fidelity won the heart of the chief captain, who came to regard him as a son rather than a slave. The youth was brought in contact with men of rank and learning, and he acquired a knowledge of science, of languages, and of affairs—an

Following God is not like walking a tight-rope.

Eleanor C. Vandevort

education needful to the future prime minister of Egypt." (PP 217)

The next three years were spent in prison because Joseph was falsely accused of attempted rape. To add insult to injury, someone he had encouraged in prison and who promised to help him later, forgot. Joseph's attitude under pressure was remarkable, and the consequences far reaching. "He found a work to do, even in the prison. God was preparing

Often when we pray for the graces of the Spirit, God works to answer our prayers by placing us in circumstances to develop these fruits; but we do not understand His purpose, and wonder, and are dismayed. (COL 61)

him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline. In the prison, witnessing the results of oppression and tyranny and the effects of crime, he learned lessons of justice, sympathy, and mercy, that prepared him to exercise power with wisdom and compassion." (PP 218)

So Joseph's 13 year journey of suffering became the very means that God used to prepare him to rule Egypt with wisdom. Yet Joseph would not have seen or understood God's guidance until he was able to see all the jigsaw pieces of his life come together. God was at work,

but invisible to Joseph's eyes. So while he could not understand, he could still trust.

how do we live inside God's Providence?

1. **Trust that God is working for your very best, even though your life may currently be difficult or confusing** (Romans 8:28-29).
2. **Consider your circumstances as God's will for you.** God is sovereign over everything in our Universe, including everything happening in our lives (Matthew 10:29). This does not mean that everything is from God, but God ultimately is guiding everything for your good.
3. **Learn to see life as a school.** God uses the things that happen to us as opportunities to grow in reflecting his character. For example, if you pray to learn meekness, you may well find yourself in a situation where you are being unjustly and falsely accused. This does not mean you have done something wrong, but that God permits you to face opposition to grow closer to him. It is only when we are close to God that we receive the grace to reflect him. We must also never forget that we live in a world where God permits Satan to work. When we experience supernatural opposition, it reminds us that we need to go to God for his supernatural help.
4. **In the school of life, going to the next grade depends on passing the current tests.** If God wants to teach you about honesty, he may bring you into a situation which challenges

you to be honest. If you fail, he will bring other things into your life to test your honesty until you pass. Obey God's directions immediately according to what the Bible and the Holy Spirit says.

- 5. Consider opportunities to work for God as personal invitations from him to join with him in his work.** We don't need to be confused if this or that is from God or not. Like the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, God always clearly leads from the front. As long as our eyes and ears are open, we just have to follow him promptly wherever he leads.
- 6. Don't try and force open doors that are closed—or remain miserable because they are closed.** When God knows when the time is right for the next part of his plan, then he will open the closed doors for you himself.
- 7. Like Paul, continually pray for spiritual understanding.** Paul regularly prayed that

“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit a of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” (Ephesians 1:17) Only the Holy Spirit can teach us the meaning of the things that happen to us—if that is God's will for us.

using your journal

You can use your Journal to draw a time-line of your life. On the time-line, mark some of the significant events that have happened to you. Then think about the spiritual impact each of these events had. What did God teach you at these times? Were there any lessons that you didn't notice at the time that you can see now? What lessons can you learn from your past to guide your future? Can you see certain lessons being repeated as you look back?



putting the pieces together

In “did you know...?” we reminded ourselves that by ourselves, our hearts long to go in all the wrong places.

In “the facts of his story” we saw that while 1) our hearts naturally lead us away from God, God 2) offers to guide our lives through the a) Bible, 2) work of the Holy Spirit in us, and our c) circumstances. However, 3) in order to recognise God at work, we must a) trust him completely, b) show reverence towards him, and c) be prepared to die to our own desire to live for ourselves.

In “habits for reflecting the will of Jesus” we explored Providence, the work of God in our lives that we may not always notice immediately. Our challenge is to remember that God is still sovereign, and we can trust that he is working through our circumstances, and in spite of our circumstances, to teach us about growing to be like him.



my time with God

This week, read through the whole book of Esther. God is never mentioned in the book, but it is a book where God is tirelessly working for his people. In your Journal, list of all the times that you think God might have been influencing events. You may like to plot these on a time line. What can you learn about the way God is guiding the ways of his people? How does this apply to your own life?



pass it on!

Can you explain how to follow God's Providence?



extra help

1. See reflectingJesus.org for a compilation of quotations on Providence.