

YOU ASKED FOR IT

Life Group Leaders Guide

Directions

This packet contains all the background information, series information, and weekly curriculum you will need to lead a life group. As a leader, everything on this page is to help you stay connected to the series as a whole. Behind this page is the individual curriculum to help you point people to Jesus. The *Purpose and Move* sections of the curriculum are for the leader to read or paraphrase to the group. The *Notes and Commentary* section is for the leader to get some more background and go deeper into the passages before leading the life group.

Series Overview

You asked, we listened, and now we have answered! Over the next 4 weeks The Point Church will be studying what you wanted to study regarding our faith and difficult topics that arise in the life of a believer. We hope this *You Asked For It* series will give you information you seek, confidence in your faith, and comfort when interacting with the tough questions that are commonly asked on this side of eternity.

Life Group Overview

During the *You Asked For It* series our life group curriculum will cover different topics than what is mentioned from stage. The top four topics have been given stage time, and in an effort to cover as many topics as possible, the life group curriculum will cover other “hot” issues. We believe this format will allow for our people to cover more topics in a shorter amount of time. With your comfort in mind, the staff chose topics for life group that the bible speaks clearly on so you can boldly lean on God’s wisdom regarding the tough topics you will cover. With that said, this curriculum has purposefully come out earlier than normal so you can acclimate yourself with the topics. Please take special interest in the *Notes and Commentary* sections (specifically the links to blog posts, sermons, and articles) of the curriculum for great places to spend time preparing for each life group.

You Asked For It Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of sermon	Topic of life group
Week 1	6/18	SCIENCE --> The questions pertaining to science and its intersection with our faith.	What is a Christian?
Week 2	6/25	SEXUALITY --> The questions pertaining to sex and what the bible says about it.	What is God’s Will?
Week 3	7/2	EVIL --> The questions pertaining to the theology of evil, the demonic, and hell.	Can I Question God?
Week 4	7/9	CULTURE --> The questions pertaining to how our faith intersects with current culture.	Can I Drink Alcohol?

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

You Asked For It - Week 2 - What is God's will?

Purpose of Study

A common question and concern for many Christians is the idea of God's will. Knowing it. Following it. Living by it. This phrase is most commonly used by a person who wants to know what God wants for their life. Whether someone wants to know God's overall purpose for their life or is trying to make a "correct" decision on a major life issue, what we will see in our study is that God's answers to those questions might not be what we are expecting. In this study, we will try to wrap our heads around what people mean when they say "God's will" and then develop a biblical understanding of God's will. The curriculum was designed with your freedom in mind. Read through the curriculum and decide what will work best for your group. SOAP the passages with the group, use only certain questions, write your own questions, or use the curriculum verbatim. As the leader, you know what will point your people to Jesus.

Flow of Study

Optional Icebreaker: Describe a time in your life where you thought you knew the correct way to go but realized that you might have been mistaken.

Move #1: To begin this study let's try to get an idea of what exactly people mean when they talk about God's will. It is a common phrase in Christian culture but it can have different meanings depending on who is speaking.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "God's will"?
2. The idea of knowing "God's will" tends to be a common topic for Christians. Why do you think this is the case? Has this ever been something you have questioned or dealt with?
3. How would you advise a Christian who wants to know what "God's will" is for their life?
4. How would you advise a person who wanted to know what "God's will" is in a certain situation (i.e. choosing Job A over Job B)?

Move #2: Now let's try to get an idea of how the phrase "God's will" is mentioned in the bible and what it tends to pertain to. Surprisingly, it is not commonly used in scripture (only 10x in the New Testament) and also not commonly used in the way we use it in our culture today. To help gain an understanding we are going to work through three of the "God's will" passages we see in the New Testament.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?

2. Let's break down verse 16 alone. What does it look like to rejoice always? How could this be accomplished? How is this difficult?
3. Let's break down verse 17 alone. What does it look like to pray continually? How could this be accomplished? How is this difficult?
4. Let's break down the beginning of verse 18 alone. What does it look like to give thanks in all circumstances? How could this be accomplished? How is this difficult?
5. What is unique about the timing of the three things defined as God's will (hint: always, continually, all circumstances)?
6. The three things God is asking us are God's will. How is this different from what most people are looking for when they are trying to discern "God's will?"
7. If these three things are God's will...then they are commands. What do you think would need to happen for a person to begin viewing these as commands?
8. Is there something comforting about these things being God's will?
9. As Christians the always, continually, and all circumstances tend to become sometimes, when I think about it, and some circumstances. What could we do to encourage one another in these areas?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (NIV)

³ It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Looking at this passage what is "God's will" for the believer?
3. What do you think sanctification means?
 - a. A very simple definition would be the process of us growing to become more like Jesus. Although for a more in-depth answer see the *Notes and Commentary* for this verse.
4. How does knowing God's will is for you to grow to become more like Jesus make the process of discerning God's will much easier? How does it make it harder?
5. A smart man once said "if you want to know God's will, look at God's word." How does taking seriously the word of God help us grow to become more like Christ?
6. How is the "God's will = you becoming more like Jesus" idea different from how most people look for "God's will?"

Read Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. In Romans 1-11 Paul has clearly explained the gospel and in Romans 12-16 he shares how the Christian should live in light of that gospel. This verse is the turning point between those two sections hence the "therefore." Paul is referencing the gospel when he says "in view of God's mercy." How is that a great way to sum up the gospel?
3. By looking at the end of verse 1. What is the Christian's only proper response to the gospel?
4. What is unique about a "living sacrifice?" What does that mean for the life of the Christian?
5. In verse 2 (and really throughout the rest of Romans 12), Paul gives an example of what this life of a "living sacrifice" will look like. Reread verse 2. What stands out to you?
6. The "but" between not conforming and being transformed illuminates the idea that it is not enough just to not conform to the patterns of this world one must also work to renew their minds. What do you think that process of not conforming but renewing would look like?
7. Take a look at the phrase "test and approve" what does that show regarding God's will and our relation to it as Christians? How would one act if they were "testing and approving" God's will?
8. In the end of the verse how does it describe "God's will?" Do you commonly think of His will as "good," "pleasing," and "perfect?"
9. Have you ever felt like God's will might have been "good" but it does not feel very good right now? Describe that situation.

Move #3: Let's spend some time closing out our study with some general follow up questions to see how a better biblical understanding of "God's will" shapes our life.

1. What are some things that stood out to you from our study tonight?
2. Are you going through anything presently that these passages helped with?
3. Where do you think someone should go if they are trying to discern "God's Will" is for a situation?
 - a. Hint: 99% of God's will is found in God's Word...so going there is a must. However, there are times when other things should be taken into account like prayer, a Holy Spirit leading, wise counsel, and a reminding oneself of the mission of God (ex: God's will is for us to be on mission to love others and bring them to Christ...so if there is a decision with choices and one of the choices is more on mission with what God wants for the word...that decision could be pointing you to God's will).

Prayer: End your study with a time of prayer where people can share prayer requests and be prayed for before they leave. If possible, please steer some prayer towards what your group talked about during this study.

1. **Note to leader:** It could be a neat idea to use 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 as your prayer tonight. Ask the group to list things worthy of rejoicing in, things they need prayer for, and then things they want to thank God for. This could be a unique way to gather the prayer requests.

Next Steps: The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther.

1. Challenge your group members to memorize 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, and Romans 12:1-2 this week reminding them that knowing God's will often begins with knowing God's word.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

On God's Will

- John Piper breaks down God's will in two unique ways that could be helpful for your preparation. Our study only looks at one of them but his thinking could be a great help to look through before leading. See <https://goo.gl/XW9kncn> for personal study.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

- With regard to the command to "rejoice always" ([nrsv](#); cf. [Phil. 4:4](#)), "the emphasis on joy is not so much on the experience of joy, but the active expression of it." Thus the translation "rejoice" ([nrsv](#), [nasb](#)), which makes it clear that an action or attitude is involved, is preferable to "be joyful" ([niv](#)), which misleadingly suggests more an emotional state. Though the basis for joy is not indicated here, the earlier references in the letter to joy ([1:6](#); [2:19-20](#); [3:9](#)) make it clear that the basis is God's activity and work among his people. (Holmes)
- Giving thanks ([5:18](#)) is another common command or theme (cf. [Rom. 14:6](#); [1 Cor. 14:16](#); [2 Cor. 1:11](#); [4:15](#); [9:11](#); [Eph. 5:4](#), [20](#); [Phil. 4:6](#); [Col. 2:7](#); [3:17](#)). Like the command to rejoice, it is deeply rooted in Paul's theology, that is, his understanding about God. Because he was convinced that in any and all circumstances God was at work on behalf of his people ([Rom. 8:28](#)), he could therefore urge the Thessalonians to "give thanks in all circumstances" ([1 Thess. 5:18](#)). (Holmes)
- In thinking about the application of verses [16-18](#), it is important to keep clearly in mind just what Paul meant by them. In [5:18](#), for example, Paul does not say to give thanks for all circumstances, but in all circumstances. Similarly, [5:16](#) is not a command to individual believers to "be joyful always"; as Stott observes, joy is not something that can be turned on and off like a faucet. Moreover, such a command contradicts what Paul urges in [Romans 12:15](#) ("mourn with those who mourn"). Rather "to rejoice always is to see the hand of God in whatever is happening and to remain certain of God's future salvation." Paul has in mind "a stable and deep-rooted joy which enables him"—but even more so a congregation—"to cope with disappointments and see them in their true perspective." And that true

perspective is rooted in the conviction that in any and all circumstances, God is at work on behalf of his people—reason enough to give thanks and rejoice and thereby fulfill God’s will for us (v. [18](#)). (Holmes)

- The real challenge in verses [16–18](#) comes out, however, not when times or circumstances are good and it is easy to rejoice and give thanks, but when (as in Thessalonica) our material circumstances may not seem so good. Do we truly believe that God’s salvation is of more value than the cost of persecution that comes as a result of accepting the gospel? Then let us demonstrate that conviction by rejoicing in the midst of it. Are we really persuaded that God will indeed deliver his people and bring justice on their behalf? Then let us pray with persistence and patience, waiting and watching expectantly for God to act (cf. [Luke 18:1–8](#), the parable of the persistent widow). Are we genuinely convinced that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” ([Rom. 8:28](#))? Then let us demonstrate that conviction by giving thanks in all circumstances. (Holmes)

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

- According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism sanctification is “the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” It is a continuing change worked by God in us, freeing us from sinful habits and forming in us Christlike affections, dispositions, and virtues. It does not mean that sin is instantly eradicated, but it is also more than a counteraction, in which sin is merely restrained or repressed without being progressively destroyed. Sanctification is a real transformation, not just the appearance of one. The basic meaning of “sanctify” is to set apart to God, for His use. But God works in those whom He claims as His own to conform them “to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). This moral renovation, in which we are increasingly changed from what we once were, flows from the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:13; 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:11, 19, 20; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:22–24; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 13:20, 21). God calls His children to holiness, and graciously gives what He commands (1 Thess. 4:4; 5:23). Regeneration is birth; sanctification is growth. In regeneration, God implants desires that were not there before: desire for God, for holiness, and for glorifying God’s name in the world; desire to pray and worship; desire to love and bring benefit to others. In sanctification, the Holy Spirit “works in you, both to will and to work” according to God’s purpose, enabling His people to fulfill their new, godly desires (Phil. 2:12, 13). Christians become increasingly Christlike, as the moral profile of Jesus (the “fruit of the Spirit”) is progressively formed in them (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; 5:22–25). Regeneration is a momentary act, bringing a person from spiritual death to life. It is exclusively God’s work. Sanctification is an ongoing process, dependent on God’s continuing action in the believer, and consisting of the believer’s continuous struggle against sin. God’s method of sanctification is neither activism (self-reliant activity) nor apathy (God-reliant passivity), but human effort dependent on God (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 3:10–14; Heb. 12:14). Knowing that without Christ’s enabling we cannot do good works, but also that He is ready to strengthen us for all we have to do (Phil. 4:13), we “abide” in Christ, asking for His help constantly— and we receive it (Col. 1:11; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:7; 2:1). (The Reformation Study Bible on Sanctification)
- Paul views the instructions he passed on to the Thessalonians ([4:2](#)) not merely as precepts to be followed but rather as nothing less than an expression of “God’s will” for them ([4:3](#)), which can be summarized in a single word: *hagiasmos*, “sanctification” or “holiness.” Here *hagiasmos* indicates a process leading to a state of holiness (i.e., conformity to God’s character). While the term holiness itself is broad enough to encompass the full range of Christian behavior, Paul focuses on a single aspect of what it entails, namely, sexual morality. This topic would have been of particular significance for anyone recently converted from pagan culture, in view of the wide range of sexual mores and practices that

existed in Greco-Roman society. Sexual fidelity was demanded of wives (in order to guarantee the parentage of legitimate offspring), and in some circles upheld as a virtue in husbands as well. At the same time, however, a wide range of pre-and extramarital activity was tolerated and occasionally even encouraged. Thus it could not be assumed that converts brought with them into the church any common understanding or expectation regarding sexual behavior. This was an area where socialization into the norms of the new community was definitely a necessity. Against such a backdrop Paul counsels the Thessalonians to “avoid sexual immorality” (4:3b; cf. [1 Cor. 6:18](#)), that is, porneia, a general term for nearly any type of sexual sin, including prostitution, adultery, or fornication. (Holmes)

Romans 12:1-2

- John Piper’s unpacking of Romans 12:1-2 → <https://goo.gl/Jx3vpG>
- The command to “offer” ourselves to God reminds us of [Romans 6](#), where Paul used this same verb (paristemi) to express the basic response of believers to God’s grace to us in Christ (see [6:13](#), [16](#), [19](#)). Indeed, all of [Romans 12:1–15:13](#) is an explication of this basic demand in chapter [6](#). As new covenant Christians, we no longer offer animal sacrifices; we now offer ourselves as “living sacrifices.” “Living” perhaps has a theological meaning: We offer ourselves as people who have been brought from death to life (see [6:13](#)).² This may, however, be reading more into the word than we should. Paul probably wants us simply to contrast ourselves with the dead animal sacrifices of the Old Testament (see also [John 6:51](#)).³ But God demands sacrifices that are “holy,” that is, apart from profane matters and dedicated to his service. This offering of ourselves to God constitutes, Paul concludes, our “spiritual act of worship.” “Spiritual” translates a word (logikos) over which there is much debate, as the varied renderings in English translations suggest: “spiritual” ([niv](#); [nrsv](#); [nasb](#)); “reasonable” ([kjv](#)); “true” ([tev](#)); “offered by mind and heart” ([reb](#)); “intelligent” (Phillips). But when the background is considered (see [Bridging Contexts](#)), we think “informed” or “understanding” is the best single equivalent in English. We give ourselves to God as his sacrifices when we understand his grace and its place in our lives. We offer ourselves not ignorantly, like animals brought to slaughter, but intelligently and willingly. This is the worship that pleases God. (Moo)
- Verse [2](#) tells us how we can carry out the sweeping demand to give ourselves as sacrifices to the Lord. Building on his “two-era” concept of salvation history (see [Bridging Contexts](#)), Paul demands that we “not conform” to “this age” (lit. trans.). The [niv](#)’s rendition as “the pattern of this world” captures the general sense well enough. The old age to which we belonged in our pre-Christian past still exerts influence on us, enticing us to follow its “pattern” of sinful and ungodly behavior. Rather than “conforming” our conduct to that age, we must be “transformed” in our behavior. The neat contrast of these two words in English is not found in the Greek, which uses two different verb roots (syschematizo and metamorphoo). But the English rendering is true to the sense of the Greek and certainly makes the verse easy to remember. The means by which we accomplish this transformation in conduct is the “renewing of your mind” (for a close parallel see [Eph. 4:23](#); cf. also [2 Cor. 4:16](#); [Col. 3:10](#); [Titus 3:5](#)). A new orientation in our thinking leads to a new orientation in behavior. Here Paul touches on the heart of New Testament ethics (see [Contemporary Significance](#) section), for the result of this transformation is that we will be able to please God by doing his will. (Moo)
- For Paul, the mind and the body are closely interconnected, and must work as a coherent team. Having one’s mind renewed and offering God one’s body (verse [1](#)) are all part of the same complete event. Here Paul uses a vivid, indeed shocking, idea: one’s whole self (that’s what Paul means by ‘body’) must

be laid on the altar like a [sacrifice](#) in the [Temple](#). The big difference is that, whereas the sacrifice is there to be killed, the Christian's self-offering is actually all about coming alive with the new life that bursts out in unexpected ways once the evil deeds of the self are put to death. (To get the full picture, we need to see the several ways in which this passage stands on the shoulders of others like [6:1–14](#) and [8:12–17](#).) Christian living never begins with a set of rules, though it contains them as it goes forwards. It begins in the glad self-offering of one's whole self to the God whose mercy has come all the way to meet us in our rebellion, sin and death. Within that, it involves the renewal of the mind so that we are enabled both to think straight, instead of the twisted thinking that the world would force upon us, and to act accordingly. (Wright)