

How George Mueller Sought God's Will in a Matter

Adapted from G. Christian Weiss, *The Perfect Will of God* (Chicago: Moody, 1950), 100103.

Leaders constantly must ascertain God's will regarding their endeavors. Consider an effective English evangelist and philanthropist who left us with an effective method to know God's will. George Mueller (1805-1898), of Bristol, England, founder and director of orphanages, which he carried on by simple faith, to the amazement of the whole world, was one of the spiritual giants of the 19th Century. During the course of his lifetime \$7.5 million was entrusted to him and was spent for the care and maintenance of thousands of orphaned children, in response to prayer, without any form of solicitation. He also founded the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad.

The story of Mueller's life and faith and the marvelous answers to prayer which he experienced is an example for all of us. All the money that came into his hands, and all the marvelous and detailed guidance which he received from God came in response to earnest prayer and a simple, childlike faith.

Here is Mueller's simple formula for determining God's will:

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.
2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or single impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.
4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.
5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.
6. Thus, though prayer, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

In his journal Mueller has written that on many occasions, when momentous decisions faced him, he would shut himself up in his room for long sessions before the Lord, examining his own heart in God's Presence and calling on the Heavenly Father for wisdom and light. Then after spending ample time in heart-searching and prayer, he calmly and deliberately took a blank sheet of paper and drew a line down the center. On one side of the line he listed all the factors, he could think of which were in favor of the proposition, which he was facing, and on the other side he listed all the factors which were against it. This he called his "balance sheet." Over this balance sheet he prayerfully meditated for several days, revising the list from day to day as seemed necessary, by adding contributing or opposing factors that occurred to him. Sooner or later the result was that there was borne upon his heart a definite conviction regarding the matter as to what course he should follow. If the conviction thus borne upon him continued and became intensified, after further definite committal to God, he proceeded along the line that he felt to be God's indicated will.

This method will only work for those who live prayerful, devoted, and godly lives. If a carnal Christian, who has never climbed the steps of Romans 12:1-2 seeks to use it, the decision he arrives at will be merely a human and intellectual one, and there can be no genuine certainty that he has found the will of God. This method demands utter surrender, sanctification, and walking in the Spirit, but also absolute honesty with one's self and with God in one's thinking. As Mr. Mueller practiced the balance sheet method, never once did he find the leading he thus received to be in error. And, if we live as godly and faithful a life as Mueller did, it will work the same way with us.