



Embracing God's Will

Sermon Based Curriculum

26th July – 30th August 2026

Prepared by: Bronwyn Delport based on Trevor Hudson's book, 'Discovering God's Will for your life'

Introduction

Over the next six weeks, Embracing God's Will invites us to slow down and rediscover the ancient practice of discernment. Together we'll explore the many ways God speaks and guides—through prayer, Scripture, the movements of our hearts, the circumstances of our lives, and the wisdom we find in faithful decision-making.

Based on Trevor Hudson's book, *'Discovering God's Will for Your Life'*, this series reminds us that discerning God's will is less about finding a hidden answer and more about learning to recognise God's presence in our daily lives.

The Journey

Week 1 — God is speaking.

Week 2 — Can I trust the God who is speaking?

Week 3 — Learning to hear God's voice in Scripture.

Week 4 — Paying attention to the movements of our hearts.

Week 5 — Recognising God's presence in ordinary life.

Week 6 — Making faithful decisions.

Sunday 26th July

Learning the Shepherd's voice

What is God trying to tell me?

Welcome Welcome God into your quiet time or your group.

Worship Psalm 139:13–18

Word John 10:1–18

Many of us have grown up believing God's will is something we need to find—almost like an Easter egg hidden somewhere. We worry that one wrong decision means we've missed God's plan forever.

Rather than asking, "What does God want me to do?", perhaps the better question is, "Who is God inviting me to become?" What if we've been asking the wrong question all along?

In John 10 Jesus says that the sheep know the Shepherd's voice and follow, Jesus doesn't hand the sheep a map or explain every twist and turn ahead because the emphasis is not on certainty about the future, but on relationship with the Shepherd.

That image sits beautifully alongside Elijah's encounter with God in 1 Kings 19. Elijah expected God in the wind, the earthquake and the fire. Instead, God came in the gentle whisper. In a world filled with noise, urgency and constant distraction, perhaps one of the greatest challenges isn't that God has stopped speaking, but that we've forgotten how to pay attention.

Isaiah reminds us, *"I have called you by name; you are mine."* Psalm 139 echoes the same truth: we are known, formed and loved by God long before we begin wondering about God's will for our lives.

Trevor Hudson writes:

"God sends each person into this world with a special song to sing, with a special message to deliver, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can sing my song, deliver my message or offer my act of love."

Perhaps discerning God's will isn't about becoming someone else or finding a hidden plan. Perhaps it begins with discovering that God already knows us, calls us by name and invites each of us to live out the unique calling only we can fulfil.

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. Have you ever worried about "missing" God's will? Where do you think that idea comes from?
2. In John 10, Jesus says the sheep know the Shepherd's voice. What does that tell us about the kind of relationship God desires with us?
3. Elijah encountered God in the gentle whisper rather than the dramatic. What "noise" in your own life makes it difficult to pay attention to God?
4. Isaiah 43 and Psalm 139 remind us that we are already known, loved and called by God. How might that change the way we think about discerning God's will?

Work this week:

Consider – Trevor Hudson writes that each of us has "a special song to sing." What gifts, passions or experiences has God uniquely given you to bless others?

Supporting Readings:

1 Kings 19:11–13

Isaiah 43:1–4

Sunday 2nd August

Learning to trust God's heart

Who is the God I am following?

Welcome Welcome God into your quiet time or your group.

Worship Psalm 40:8

Word Luke 15:11-32

Trust changes everything.

If you trust someone, you'll usually take their advice, even when you don't fully understand it. If you don't trust them, you'll question every suggestion they make.

Perhaps the same is true of our relationship with God.

Most of us spend a lot of time asking God for guidance. Before we ask what God wants us to do, perhaps we first need to ask: Do I trust God's heart?

Before we can talk about surrender, perhaps we need to ask an even deeper question: **What kind of God is inviting us to surrender?**

The Prodigal Son, Luke 15, paints a remarkable picture of God's heart. Before the son can explain himself, before he can earn forgiveness or prove he has changed, the father runs to meet him. If this is who God is, surrender begins to look very different.

And Romans 12 begins with surrender before it speaks about discernment, maybe that's because recognising God's will begins with trusting the One who is leading us. We don't surrender because we know exactly where God is taking us; we surrender because we know something about the character of the One who calls us.

Many of us believe God loves us, but still carry a picture of God as quietly disappointed in us. While planning a recent Seekers Prayer Morning, Sue Edwards suggested an activity that gets right to the heart of this question about our picture of God. Imagine aliens arrived on earth wanting to know about the "Supreme Leader" of the universe. They ask you to describe the God that Christians worship. What would you tell them? Loving? Patient?

Compassionate? Forgiving? Distant? Demanding? It's a surprisingly revealing exercise because the words we choose often say as much about the picture of God we carry as they do about God.

Mary's response in Luke 1 offers a beautiful picture of surrender. She doesn't have all the answers. She doesn't know how everything will unfold. Yet she entrusts herself to God with the words, "Let it be with me according to your word." Her surrender grows out of trust rather than certainty.

Like a healthy marriage, love isn't sustained simply because two people made promises on their wedding day. Healthy marriages grow because, day after day, those two people continue choosing one another. Surrendering to God is much the same, we don't align our hearts with God's heart once; we choose to do so, over and over again, as we continue discovering who God is.

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. Before we ask, "*What does God want me to do?*", we first need to ask, "*Do I trust God's heart?*" Why do you think trust is so central to discerning God's will?
2. If someone who knew nothing about Christianity asked you to describe God, what would you say? Where do you think that picture of God comes from?
3. Read Luke 15:11–32 together. What does this story reveal about God's heart? How does it challenge or affirm the picture of God you carry?
4. Surrender is often misunderstood as weakness or giving up. How would you describe Christian surrender after reflecting on this week's Scriptures?

Work this week:

Consider – Have you ever experienced your desires changing as your relationship with God has grown?

Supporting Readings

Romans 12:1-2

Luke 1:26–38

Sunday 9th August

Listening to God in Scripture

How does God speak through the Bible?

Welcome Welcome God into your quiet time or your group.

Worship Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Word 1 Samuel 3:1–10

Many people who come to church have spent years learning how to read the Bible, but far fewer people have been taught how to listen to it.

Reading asks, "What does this passage say?" Listening also asks, "What might God be saying to me through this today?"

The Hebrew word *Shema*, usually translated simply as "hear," means much more than just hearing words. It carries the idea of really listening—paying attention, taking to heart and responding. In other words, *Shema* isn't simply about hearing God's voice; it's about allowing what we hear to shape the way we live.

Together these passages remind us that God has always been speaking. Deuteronomy invites God's people to *Shema*—to hear with hearts that are ready to respond. Samuel reminds us that recognising God's voice is something we often learn over time. Hebrews begins with the reminder that God has always been speaking; through the prophets, through Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit today. The question isn't whether God still speaks but rather whether we're learning to listen.

Jesus' words in John 5 add an important challenge to the conversation. It's possible to know the Scriptures really well and still miss the One they point us to.

Trevor writes that when we are reading Scripture, "We are not interacting with paper. We are listening to its Living Author." That raises an important question about how we approach Scripture. Are we opening the Bible simply to finish a reading plan or find an answer, or are we expecting to encounter the living God?

Scripture is not simply information to collect or ideas to understand; it also involves listening with hearts that are ready to respond.

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. What's the difference between reading Scripture and listening through Scripture?
2. When reading Scripture, "*We are not interacting with paper. We are listening to its Living Author.*" What do you think this means?
3. The Hebrew word *Shema* describes listening that leads to a response. Why do you think listening and obedience belong together?
4. Samuel didn't recognise God's voice immediately. What does that story teach us about learning to listen?

Work this week:

Consider – When you open the Bible, what are you usually expecting? Knowledge? Comfort? Guidance? An encounter with God?

Supporting Readings:

Hebrews 1:1–3

John 5:39–40

Sunday 16th August

Attending to the movements of our heart

What is happening in my heart?

Welcome Welcome God into your quiet time or your group.

Worship Psalm 139:23–24

Word Luke 24:13–35 (The Road to Emmaus)

As we continue learning to discern God's will, it's important to remember that God doesn't only speak through Scripture or the circumstances around us. God is also at work within us.

Many of us have been taught to be suspicious of our emotions. Others are tempted to let their emotions make every decision for them. Scripture invites us to a wiser path. Rather than ignoring our inner lives—or allowing them to take control—we are invited to pay attention to what is happening in our hearts and ask where the Holy Spirit might be at work.

If you've watched *Inside Out*, you'll remember Headquarters, where Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger and the other emotions are all trying to influence Riley's decisions. It's a helpful picture because our inner lives often feel like that too. We experience joy, fear, disappointment, hope, anxiety and peace, sometimes all in the same day. So, the question isn't whether we have emotions. The question is whether we're paying prayerful attention to them.

The Christian spiritual tradition gives us two helpful words: spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. Spiritual consolation is not simply feeling happy. It describes those moments when we find ourselves being drawn towards God—growing in faith, hope and love, becoming more aware of God's presence, and finding ourselves wanting to follow Christ more closely. Spiritual desolation is the opposite: those seasons or moments where we find ourselves becoming discouraged, restless, fearful or disconnected from God's life-giving presence.

The Road to Emmaus gives us a beautiful picture of this. The disciples only recognised Jesus after he broke the bread, yet afterwards they reflected, *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road?"* Looking back, they realised God had been at work in them long before they recognised it.

Jesus also promises in John 14 that the Holy Spirit will be with us and within us. As we grow in relationship with God, we notice the Spirit's quiet work in our lives. Galatians reminds us what that work looks like: the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These become helpful signposts as we discern God's leading.

Our emotions shouldn't make every decision for us, but neither should we ignore them. They can alert us to something happening beneath the surface that deserves our prayerful attention. Discernment isn't about asking, *"How do I feel?"* It's about asking, *"What might the Holy Spirit be showing me through what I'm experiencing?"*

Questions for Reflection or discussion:

1. When you hear the phrase *"pay attention to your inner life,"* what comes to mind?
2. Have you experienced seasons where you felt especially drawn towards God, or times where you felt distant? Looking back, what helped you recognise what was happening?
3. The disciples on the Road to Emmaus only recognised Jesus afterwards. Have you ever realised, in hindsight, that God was present in a situation where you couldn't see it at the time?
4. Galatians describes the fruit of the Spirit. Which of these qualities do you most long to see growing in your own life at the moment?

Work this week:

This week, what might it look like to pause before reacting to a strong emotion and instead ask, *"What might the Holy Spirit be showing me through this?"*

Supporting Readings:

Galatians 5:22–25

John 14:15–17

Sunday 23rd August

Reflecting on life's circumstances

Where has God already been at work in my life?

Welcome Welcome God into your quiet time or your group.

Worship Psalm 90:12

Word Genesis 28:10–22

Most of us think discerning God's will means asking, "What's next?" But what if your life is already telling a story—and God is inviting you to read it?

Many of us live at such a pace that we move from one thing to the next without ever stopping to ask, 'Where was God in all of that?' Experience alone doesn't necessarily make us wiser – Reflection does.

Mary appears only a handful of times in the Gospels, yet twice Luke tells us she "treasured" or "pondered" what had happened. She didn't rush to explain everything. She held her experiences before God, trusting that understanding would come in time.

Jacob has a similar moment in Genesis 28. After encountering God in a dream, he wakes and says, "*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.*" God hadn't suddenly arrived. God had been there all along—Jacob was only now beginning to recognise it.

Perhaps discernment often works like that.

It isn't always about looking for spectacular signs. More often, it's learning to notice where God has already been present and active in the ordinary moments of our lives.

Looking back is an important part of discernment because reflection helps us recognise God's faithfulness, hidden blessings, repeated patterns and lessons we might otherwise miss. We aren't called to live in the past, but we also shouldn't ignore it. Often it is only in hindsight that we begin to recognise where God has been present all along. This doesn't mean everything that happens is

God's will, rather it reminds us that God is never absent from our circumstances.

As we learn to reflect on our lives, we begin to recognise the ways God has shaped us, the people God has placed around us, and the moments that have quietly formed us.

One helpful question to ask is this:
Where do my gifts and abilities most naturally connect with the needs around me?" because reflection isn't simply about understanding the past, it helps us become more attentive to the ways God has been preparing us for what lies ahead.

Questions for reflection or discussion:

- 1. Why do you think Mary "pondered" these events instead of immediately trying to understand them?
- 2. Have you ever recognised God's hand in something only when you looked back later?
- 3. What does it look like to reflect on your life without becoming stuck in the past?
- 4. Where might God already be at work in your ordinary routines that you've overlooked?

Work this week:

Which part of your life—relationships, work, or serving others—do you sense God inviting you to pay closer attention to this week?

Supporting Readings:

Luke 2:19, 51

1 John 4:20

Sunday 30th August

Living what we've heard

Making faithful decisions

Welcome Welcome God into your quiet time or your group.

Worship Psalm 23

Word James 1:22-25

Over the past five weeks we've been exploring how God guides us. We've spoken about learning to recognise the Shepherd's voice, trusting God's heart, listening through Scripture, paying attention to the movements of our hearts, and reflecting on the circumstances of our lives. All those practices matter, but eventually discernment leads to a moment where we have to make a decision.

We can spend years praying, reflecting and asking God for guidance, but if we never take the next faithful step, we've missed the point. Discernment isn't simply about *knowing* God's will; it's about *living* God's will.

Most of the decisions we wrestle with aren't between right and wrong; they're between two good things. Like when we're choosing between two good opportunities, two ways to serve, or two faithful paths. In those moments, perhaps the question isn't, "*Which option is perfect?*" but rather, "*Which choice will help me grow in faith, hope and love? Which decision will help me become more like Christ?*"

James reminds us that faith was never meant to remain theoretical: "*Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers.*" There comes a point where listening must become living.

That doesn't mean we will always have absolute certainty, Joshua wasn't given a detailed map of everything that lay ahead. Instead, God said, "*Be strong and courageous... for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*" God's greatest promise wasn't certainty—it was God's presence.

As we heard in Week 1, Trevor Hudson writes:

"God sends each person into this world with a special song to sing, with a special message to deliver, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can sing my song, deliver my message or offer my act of love."

Perhaps that's what this series has been about all along.

Not finding a hidden blueprint for our lives. Not making perfect decisions. But learning to walk so closely with Christ that we have the courage to become the unique people God created us to be—offering our own song, our own message and our own acts of love to the world.

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. Looking back over this series, what has most challenged or encouraged you about discerning God's will?
2. James reminds us to be *doers* of the Word, not merely hearers. Why do you think taking the next faithful step can sometimes be harder than knowing what that step is?
3. Think of a decision you're currently facing. Which of the practices we've explored over the past six weeks (prayer, Scripture, reflecting on your circumstances, or seeking wise counsel) might help you approach that decision more faithfully?
4. Joshua was promised God's presence rather than a detailed plan. How does knowing that God goes with us change the way we face uncertainty?

Work this week:

As this series comes to an end, what is one "next faithful step" you sense God inviting you to take this week?

Supporting Readings:

Joshua 1:1-9

Matthew 7:24-27