

**YOUR WAY  
- OR MY WAY?**



# THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be kept holy.  
May your kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need,  
and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven  
those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation,  
but rescue us from the evil-one.

<sup>1</sup>For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.  
Amen.

**Matthew 6:9-13 The New Living Translation**

In the *Lord's Prayer*, we ask that God's *will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. This request tells us a lot about God and his relationship with us. Jesus is pointing out that, while God's will is always done in heaven, it is not always done here on earth.

## God's will in heaven

God is present everywhere, but *heaven* is the name given to that part of his realm that is the centre of his activity in the universe. Whenever Jesus prayed to his Father in heaven, he always looked upwards in the direction of the sky. (See John 17:1) Scripture always refers to heaven as being *up*. What we read is that God created the universe, including heaven, and he holds it all together.

***For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*** Colossians 1:16-17

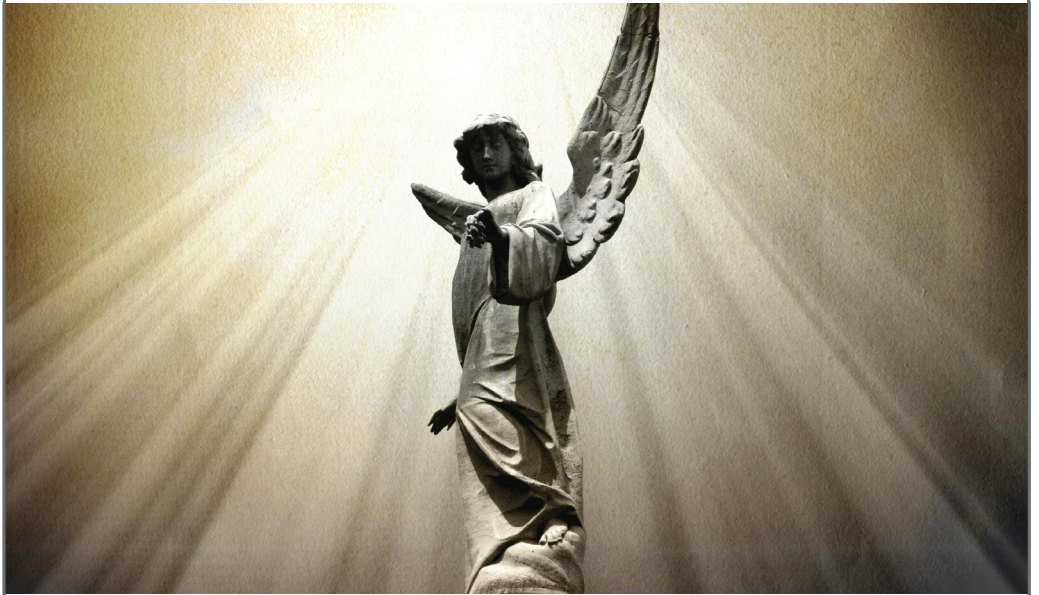
## Get involved =

*What do you imagine heaven to be like?*



The Bible makes it clear that there was a time in the history of the universe when all its inhabitants gladly and voluntarily worshipped their Creator by carrying out his will. Everyone and everything was in perfect harmony. But the unthinkable happened. The original harmony of the universe was disrupted as envy and dissatisfaction mysteriously found its way into the heart of one of God's highest created beings.





The Bible gives enough details for us to know that one of the angels came to the place of wanting the Creator's role and the worship given to him. The angel's jealousy swept other angels along, and ultimately culminated in a full-scale rebellion in heaven. The Bible says -

***And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*** Revelation 12:7-9

## This happened in heaven?

Yes! This is a difficult question to answer. It was never God's desire that such a rebellion should ever have taken place. God says -

***I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*** Ezekiel 33:11

God is certainly powerful enough to have destroyed anyone who chose to rebel against him if he had so decided. God says of himself -

***I am God Almighty.*** Genesis 17:1

This unique name specifically emphasises his infinite power demonstrated in his creation of all things. He demonstrates his power over the physical and natural world by performing miracles. (See Exodus 14:15-31; 2 Kings 6:5-7; Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 14:22-33)

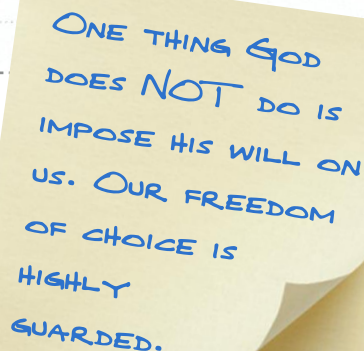
***Our God is in heaven and does whatever he pleases.*** Psalm 115:3

This further highlights that God always accomplishes what he chooses to do. But this doesn't mean that he exercises his will to do absurd things. The integrity of his will and how he uses it is a great source of encouragement for us, because we can always depend on him. Hebrews 6:17-18 states -

***Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we . . . may be greatly encouraged.***

## Get involved -

*What would life be like if God made every decision for you?*



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One thing God does NOT do is impose his will on us. Our freedom of choice is highly guarded. For him to overrule our wills to make us do what he wants would reduce him to something like a lonely engineer and us to mechanically programmed robots. Also, for him to force us to comply with his will would reduce him to a tyrant and us to his slaves. **In his wisdom he foresaw that a love relationship is only possible if we can freely choose to love.** Freedom of choice is a risky thing, as all parents soon learn as children grow up.

He created us knowing that we could choose to reject his intimacy. In one way, it seems an awful risk, because although we could choose to love him in the way he wants, we also have the freedom to reject him.

It is clear that the rebellion in heaven was not something God specifically planned to happen, but something that he permitted in light of his long-term purposes. The way God dealt with Satan's uprising reveals the heart of his will and what continues to motivate him. This is critical for us, because our view of God is determined by our understanding of his will.

Instead of using his almighty power to destroy Satan, he wisely quarantined him and his followers to one small planet in the universe in order that the consequences of his rebellion might become evident to all onlookers. The universe is witnessing the outworking of two powerful but opposing wills in combat with each other. On the one hand, the maliciousness of Satan's will was revealed as he motivated those under his control on earth to put Jesus to death. (See John 8:44-47) But on the other hand, God willed to do something no one could ever have anticipated. He experienced the full consequences of Satan's rebellion on himself, thus revealing his true heart.

***For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not die but have eternal life. John 3:16***



The truly amazing thing about God's will is that even though we may rebel against him he is still able to merge the consequences of our choices into his overall purposes in such a way that his ultimate will is revealed. Romans 8:28 says -

***And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.***

He even uses the intentional rebellion of evil despots to further his will. The King of Egypt, for example, deliberately steered his whole political power against God, but the outcome still brought glory to God. And God knew beforehand how Pharaoh would misuse his will.

*When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: **He and his officials hardened their hearts.***

Exodus 9:34

Compare that with -

*Then the LORD said to Moses, **Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them.*** Exodus 10:1

God says of him -

***I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.***

Romans 9:17

This story highlights how God's will always prevails. The greatest example of God overriding evil is demonstrated in the crucifixion of Jesus. To the unseen spiritual world, this was an overwhelmingly painful event to witness. Yet God turned it into the greatest expression of good the universe has ever seen. In his public confrontation with those who agreed to put Jesus to death, the apostle Peter said -

***You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.*** Acts 3:13-18

## **Get involved -**

*Can you think of three incidents in your life where God has worked things out for good?*





# God's will on earth

Jesus came to earth to reveal God's will for us. Of Jesus it is said -

*I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.* Psalm 40:8

The **revealed will** of God, showing how he wants all of us to live, is summarised in God's moral law – the Ten Commandments. It is also demonstrated in the life of Jesus. Both reveal the great principles of God's character. (Exodus 20:1-17) And God has a **personalised will** for us, just as he also had a **personalised will** for Jesus. It was God's blueprint for what he was to do with his life on earth, and it was to end in apparent tragedy – his death. Just before his death, Jesus tried to find an alternate way through the terrible experience that he knew lay ahead of him. He spent long hours in prayer with his Father, asking for release from the coming ordeal. Such was the emotional struggle, that he sweat great drops of blood. (See Luke 22:44) Despite this, such was his trust in his Father's will that he cried out -

*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.* Luke 22:42

Having clarified the will of God, Jesus committed himself to the events of his death on the following day. Then he said -

*Here I am, I have come to do your will. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*  
Hebrews 10:9-10

His choice to accept God's will on earth under these circumstances is held out to us as a sobering example for God's followers in all situations, even when God's will doesn't seem to make sense. God's will looks beyond the limitations of our human vision.

## What is God's will for my life?

God has given to us freedom of choice, as we have already noted. Freedom of choice is our will power – the power to choose or make a decision. But through our earthly birth we have a will that is naturally self-centred and opposed to God's will. That's why when we look into God's law of Ten Commandments - his **revealed will** for us all - we feel guilty, because we are naturally opposed to it. And what's worse, we cannot do his will for us by trying hard. Many people have become discouraged as Christians and given up on God because they have not been able to do his will no matter how hard they have tried! They have never heard the good news! God takes the first initiative by revealing to us just what Jesus has done in his life, death and resurrection, to make us right with him. The Holy Spirit then brings a sense of certainty into our hearts that we are right with God because of what Jesus has done for us, and prompts us to



receive God and follow him. (See John 16:7-15) At this point, God comes to strengthen our will and turn our awakened desires into reality.

***It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*** Philippians 2:13

***Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer 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.*** Romans 12:1-2

As we pray - ***May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*** - we are choosing to live God's revealed will for us.

## **Get involved =**

*Is there any area of your life in which God's will is not clear to you, or where your will is weak? Write down your request for God to clarify his will - or to strengthen your will.*

And God has a **personalised will** for your life too, just as he had for Jesus. It is different for each one of us. The apostle Paul introduces most of his letters in the Bible like this -

***Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.***  
1 Corinthians 1:1

Being an apostle was God's plan for Paul's life. He has a plan - a will - for your life too. Jesus told the disciple Peter what God's will for his life was to be too. (See John 21:18,19) Then Peter saw the disciple John, and asked -

***Lord, what about him?*** John 21:21

Jesus told Peter very clearly that it was none of his concern - that was between God and John. (John 21:20-22)

So, when we pray - ***May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*** - we are choosing to live God's personalised will for us too. You will need to find this out from God for yourself - it's between you and God. And it is not a hopeless search - God will show you.



## Some practical ways to discern God's will for your life even in difficult situations -

- Search for anything in the Bible that addresses your situation.
- Fast - refrain from eating much food or viewing TV for a period of time - while you pray, especially if it is a really important situation.
- Ask some spiritually mature friends for their thoughts and guidance.
- Watch how God might be intervening in your life, opening a door as it were, or pointing you in a certain direction.
- After considering all these guidelines and praying about your situation over a period of time, wait for peace of mind to settle in your inner spirit, and then act.

God has given us the freewill to make our own choices. Following God's personalised will is always an exercise of faith and trust in God.

There are some good examples in the Bible of God's personalised will for individuals -

- Acts 13:1-3
- Acts 16:6-10
- Jonah - Chapters 1-4

When we pray - *May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* - it is a plea to come closer to God - so that we will not only discern his will in every situation, but we will intentionally and joyfully align our will with his revealed will. Until you find God's personalised will for your life, you'll always feel unfulfilled. But when you do find what God wants you to do and where he wants you to be - there's no greater peace and satisfaction than this!

## Get involved -

*Why not write your own prayer to God right now – asking for his will to be done in your life.*

*My Father in heaven,*

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