



Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Submitting to God's Will

by Bronson Duke

“Father, if You are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want Your will to be done, not mine.”

—Luke 22:42

What is the will of God?

This is a question we have all asked at one time or another, and is loaded. I think if we are all really honest, we would see that at the core of that question is another question: Does what I want line up with what God wants?

A few years ago, I had a big decision to make. I had a vision for a young adults ministry in the Little Rock area. At the time, our church didn't have anything for that age group, and my wife, Callie, and I felt God calling us to start something. I had a big vision. We wanted to start a Sunday Night service with vibrant worship, passionate preaching and lots of space for creative expression. We really believed God was going to do something huge. We had prayed, we had fasted, and we knew this was what God was calling us to do. So we brought it to our leaders and they loved the vision, but with one caveat: we couldn't do a service because it had to be life-group focused.

This may not sound like a big deal, but for us it was a very big deal. This was our vision! Big services with college students and young adults from all around the city gathering together, hearing the Word of God preached, worshiping, and going out to serve their church. It seemed like our pastors were missing it, but we had decided years before that as long as our leadership was not asking us to compromise on the Word or to sin, we would trust them and submit.

Years earlier, one of my pastors, Brandon Shatswell, explained that to me in a way that clicked. He said, “The people who do the best in life have learned to bend their will to the authority God has placed over them. And sadly, many never learn to do that and so don't walk in all God has called them to.” So, we submitted and did what they asked us to do. And guess what? It was so much better than what we had planned. We saw firsthand the power of community. We saw marriages healed, life-long friendships formed, and so many find relationships with Christ. We also eventually did start a

monthly Sunday night service with that vibrant worship, passionate preaching, and lots of space for creative people to use their gifts that we dreamed about, but it existed to celebrate what God was doing in the groups. This was so much better than what we had dreamed up on our own!

So what is the point of all of this and what does it have to do with Christ's prayer in the garden? God will often ask you to do things you don't want to do, but His way is always better. It isn't easy, no no no, but it is better.

This moment in Luke 22 is where Jesus is face to face with the suffering to come. He will be arrested, He will be beaten and flogged. He will be betrayed by the people He came to Earth to save. He will be nailed to a cross, and He will die there in excruciating pain. But that isn't the worst part. The worst part is that He won't just suffer physically, but even more so spiritually. He will not just feel the weight of suffering in His body, but the full weight of God's wrath in His soul. And as that wrath of God comes upon Him, He will be separated for the first time in all of eternity from God the Father.

And He has a choice: He can run into the desert and flee, or walk towards the cross and die. The way into the desert was easier, but the way of the cross was the road to glory. I thank God He chose the cross! Here is what we have to learn: If we want a resurrection, we have to trust Him with a crucifixion.

This could look like apologizing for when you were wrong first, even though you weren't the only one to make a mistake. It could look like giving up the way you want to do a project at work to honor the boss God has given you. It could even look like taking a season to step away from something that has meant a lot to you, and maybe you have even found your identity in, in order for God to do something new in you.

I'll close with this thought, that a friend said to me the other day: "The point of seeking God in prayer is not so that He will learn your will, but that you might learn His." What might God be speaking to you that you don't want to hear or do, but that could well be—as it was for Jesus—the blood-stained road to glory God intends for you?

Question: Are you staying in God's Word every day? Are you choosing to surrender to His will every day? Can you do that today?

Family Chat: Can you name one small moment where you need to be more like Jesus?

Take Action: Make a conscious choice at every moment today to surrender your will to God's will. Talk to your life group about how your day goes because of it.