

# Knowing the Lord's Will for You

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May the Lord bless each of you in your personal quest to know His will for you and to submit your will to His.

To become an instrument in the hands of God is a great privilege and sacred responsibility. Wherever we live, whatever our circumstances, no matter our marital status or age, the Lord needs *each one* of us to fulfill her unique part in building His kingdom in this final dispensation. It is my testimony that we can *know* what the Lord wants us to do—and experience “the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work.”<sup>1</sup> My desire tonight is to share part of my very personal journey of coming to understand how we become such instruments.

I start where my journey ended—in this sublime truth taught by Elder Neal A. Maxwell: “The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we ‘give,’ ... are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the *only* possession which is truly ours to give!”<sup>2</sup>

I bear witness, my beloved sisters, that in order to truly be an instrument in the hands of God, in order to fully have that blessing bestowed upon us in “the day of this life” in which we “perform [our] labors,”<sup>3</sup> we *must*, as Elder Maxwell says, “finally submit ourselves”<sup>4</sup> to the Lord.

The refining process in my life that led to my testimony of this principle began unexpectedly when in my mid-30s, I received my patriarchal blessing. I had fasted and prayed in preparation, wondering in my heart, “What does the Lord want *me* to do?” Full of happy anticipation and with our four young children in tow, my husband and I went to the elderly patriarch’s home. The blessing he gave me emphasized missionary work—over and over again.

I hate to admit it, but I was disappointed and troubled. At that point in my life, I had barely read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover. Without question, I was unprepared to serve a mission. So I put my patriarchal blessing in a drawer. I did, however, begin a serious regimen of scripture study each day as I focused on rearing my growing family.

The years passed, and my husband and I concentrated on preparing our children to serve missions. In sending our sons to many lands, I honestly believed I had fulfilled *my* missionary duty.

Then my husband was called to be a mission president in an unsettled, chaotic country in the developing world. It was 10,000 miles from home and light-years away from the culture and communication I knew. But, in the

instant of my call as a full-time missionary, I felt a little like Alma and the sons of Mosiah—that I was called to be an “[instrument] in the hands of God to bring about this great work.”<sup>5</sup> I also felt something I am not sure they did—overwhelming fear!

Over subsequent days I pulled out my patriarchal blessing and read it again and again, searching for deeper understanding. Even knowing I was going to live out a promise I had received from a patriarch decades earlier did not alleviate my concerns. Could I leave my married and unmarried children and my aging father and mother-in-law behind? Would I know the right things to do and say? What would my husband and I eat? Would I be *safe* in a country that was politically unstable and dangerous? I felt inadequate on every level.

In my quest for peace, I redoubled my efforts to attend the temple. I pondered the meaning of my covenants in a way I had never done before. For me, at this defining crossroads in my life, my temple covenants served as a foundation and catalyst. Yes, I feared, but I realized I had *chosen* to make personal, binding, sacred commitments I meant to keep. When all was said and done, this wasn’t someone else’s service to perform. This was *my* mission call, and I determined to serve.

Joseph Smith’s father pronounced this blessing upon his son’s head: “The Lord thy God has called thee by name out of the heavens. Thou hast been called ... to the great work of the Lord: to do a work in this generation which no other ... would do as thyself, in all things according to the will of the Lord.”<sup>6</sup> The Prophet Joseph was called to his unique part of “the great work of the Lord,” and as overwhelmed and unprepared as I felt, I knew I was called to *my* portion of the work, too. This insight was helpful and gave me courage.

In my constant prayers I continued to ask, “Father, how can I do what Thou hast called me to do?” One morning shortly before leaving for our mission field, two friends brought a gift—a small hymnal to take with me. Later, on that same day, the answer to my months of prayerful pleadings came from that hymnal. As I sought solace in a quiet place, these words came clearly into my mind:

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.  
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*<sup>7</sup>

Realizing in a most personal manner that the Lord would be with me and help me was just the beginning. I had much more to learn about *becoming* an instrument in God’s hands.

Far from home in a strange land, my husband and I embarked on our service, much as pioneers, with faith in every footstep. We were quite literally alone much of the time—finding our way within a culture we didn’t understand—expressed in dozens of languages we could not speak. The sentiment of Sarah Cleveland, one of our early Relief Society leaders in Nauvoo, described our feelings: “We have entered into this work in the name of the Lord. Let us boldly go forward.”<sup>8</sup>

My first lesson in the process of becoming an instrument in God’s hand had been to search the scriptures, fast, pray, attend the temple, and live faithful to the covenants I had made in the house of the Lord. My second lesson was that in order to “boldly go forward,” I needed to rely completely on the Lord and seek earnestly for personal revelation. In order to receive that revelation, I would have to live worthily to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost with me.

My last lesson was precisely what Elder Maxwell explained. In even the smallest details of each day, I submitted my will to the Lord's, for I so needed His help, His guidance, and His protection. As I did, gradually my relationship with my Father in Heaven changed—in profound ways—that continue to bless me and my family.

My life's journey is different from yours. Each of you could teach me much from your experiences of submitting your will to the Lord's as you earnestly seek to know His will for you. We can rejoice together in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, gratefully acknowledging the blessing of having a testimony of the Savior and His Atonement for each of us. This I know—our individual efforts to become instruments in the hands of God have not been easy and have stretched us spiritually, enriching our mortal journeys in the most personal, glorious ways.

Dear sisters, may the Lord bless each of you in your personal quest to know *His* will for you and to submit *your* will to His. I testify that our individual will “is the only possession which is truly *ours* to give.”<sup>9</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Alma 26:3.

2. In Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24; emphasis added.

3. Alma 34:32.

4. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24.

5. Alma 26:3.

6. In Gracia N. Jones, *Emma's Glory and Sacrifice: A Testimony* (1987), 43–44.

7. “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.

8. Relief Society Minutes, Mar. 30, 1842, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 24.

9. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24; emphasis added.

