SERMON STUDY GUIDE | November 8, 2026

EPHESIANS

WHOSE WILL WINS?

Based on the message by Chad Everett

"We have the opportunity to decide which of these wills have the final say in our lives."
— Chad Everett

THE ROADS CHURCH

OVERVIEW

Whose will is winning in your life? God's will, your own will, Satan's will, or the will of others?

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ “by the will of God.” These words reveal something foundational about Paul's calling and challenge every believer to examine whose choices, intentions, and purposes are directing their lives.

Four different wills can influence our lives, but they do not all have to determine our direction. God's will is greater than the will that opposes us, yet we must choose whether to surrender our desires, decisions, and purposes to Him.

The transformation of Saul reveals the extraordinary power of God's will. Saul was determined to destroy the Church, but as he approached Damascus to carry out his intentions, he was also approaching an encounter with Jesus that would change everything. The man who persecuted believers became an apostle called to build the very Church he once sought to destroy.

This same account reveals how God can advance His purposes even through opposition. What appeared to be the destruction of the early Church through persecution became an opportunity for the Gospel to spread as believers were scattered throughout surrounding regions.

This study challenges us to examine where our own will, the influence of others, or the plans of the enemy may be directing our lives. It also encourages us to remain steadfast in faith, recognizing that God is present even in the midst of opposition and that one encounter with Jesus can change everything.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Read → Respond → Reflect

Read each passage carefully before answering the Respond questions. Keep your Bible open and allow Scripture itself to provide the answers.

Then use the Reflect questions to examine whose will is directing your choices, intentions, and purposes. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where you may be pursuing your own desires, allowing the expectations of others to influence your obedience, or responding to opposition without trusting God's purposes.

Use the final section to identify practical steps of surrender and obedience. Consider where God is calling you to trust His will rather than your own understanding and where you need to remain steadfast in faith for His purposes to be fulfilled.

This guide is designed for individual study, family discipleship, and Roads Groups.

Access previous sermon study guides:
https://theroads.church/sermon-study-guide/links-sermon-study-guides/

KEY WORDS & DEFINITIONS

- By — *dia*: Through; the channel of an act or means by which something is possible.
- Will — *thelēma*: Choice, intention, or purpose.
- Consenting — *suneudokeō*: To approve of, agree with, or be pleased with.
- Great — *megas*: Exceedingly large; out of the ordinary in degree or magnitude.
- Persecution — *diōgmos*: To systematically oppress or harass people; to hunt down and inflict pain or death, or force people to renounce their beliefs.
- Havoc: To cause extensive destruction or utterly ruin.
- Dragging — *surō*: To pull or drag away by force against someone's will.
- Committing — *paradidōmi*: To hand or deliver over to someone.
- Scattered — *diaspeirō*: To sow or be dispersed abroad.
- Breathing — *empneō*: To speak strong, firm threats; to become so dedicated to something that it becomes one's life's breath.
- Suddenly — *exaiphnēs*: Instantaneously, without warning, unexpectedly.

SECTION 1 — FOUR WILLS THAT IMPACT OUR LIVES

Focus

Paul's calling as an apostle came through the will of God, not through his own appointment, the approval of others, or the intentions of the enemy. Every will carries choices, intentions, and purposes. Although God's will is greater than every opposing will, we must recognize the influences competing for authority in our lives and choose whose will we will follow.

Read

Ephesians 1:1–2; Galatians 1:10; Matthew 6:9–10

Respond

1. According to Ephesians 1:1, how does Paul identify himself, and by whose will was he appointed as an apostle?
2. What does the phrase “by the will of God” reveal about the source of Paul's calling?
3. According to Galatians 1:10, what two competing desires does Paul identify, and how does he explain their relationship to serving Christ?
4. In Matthew 6:9–10, what does Jesus teach His disciples to pray concerning God's Kingdom and His will?
5. How does Paul's declaration in Galatians 1:10 demonstrate the importance of whose approval we seek?

Reflect

1. **Who is actually making the decisions in my life?** When I look at how I spend my time, manage my finances, pursue opportunities, and make decisions for my family, can I honestly say that I seek God's will first? Or am I building a life around what I want and simply expecting God to approve it? What specific evidence reveals the truth?

2. **Am I more concerned with pleasing people than obeying God?** Where do I compromise, remain silent, avoid confrontation, or neglect something God is calling me to do because I fear someone's disapproval? Whose acceptance do I allow to become more important than obedience to Jesus?
3. **Do I make surrender conditional?** Where am I willing to follow God only if His direction agrees with my preferences, doesn't interfere with my plans, or doesn't cost me something I value? What am I still unwilling to place completely under His authority?

Further Scripture Reading

John 6:38

SECTION 2 — GOD'S WILL IS GREATER THAN THE WILL AGAINST US

Focus

The existence of an opposing will does not mean that it must prevail. Satan desired to sift Peter like wheat, but Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. Our confidence must rest in God's will and purposes rather than in the intentions of those who oppose us.

Read

Luke 22:31–32

Respond

1. According to Luke 22:31, what did Jesus reveal about Satan's intentions toward Peter?
2. What did Jesus tell Peter He had prayed for?
3. What did Jesus instruct Peter to do after he returned to Him?
4. Jesus tells Peter that Satan has asked for him. What does Jesus' response reveal about His involvement in Peter's situation?
5. Jesus tells Peter, “When you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” What does this instruction reveal about the future Jesus sees for Peter despite Satan's intentions?

Reflect

1. **Do I give opposition more authority than God's Word?** When difficulties arise in my marriage, family, finances, health, or relationships, what determines my response: fear, frustration, what I see happening, or what God has spoken? Where do I allow circumstances to dictate what I believe is possible?
2. **Where do I accept defeat instead of remaining faithful?** Are there areas where I am no longer praying, believing, or obeying because the situation isn't changing? Do I allow disappointment or past failure to convince me that God's purposes cannot prevail?
3. **Am I strengthening others or allowing my struggles to consume me?** Jesus told Peter that after he returned, he was to strengthen his brethren. Am I so focused on my own battles that I neglect encouraging, praying for, or strengthening others in their faith? Who needs me to step beyond my circumstances and help strengthen them?

Further Scripture Reading

Matthew 26:39

SECTION 3 — PERSECUTION CANNOT STOP GOD'S PURPOSES

Focus

Saul sought to destroy the Church through persecution, imprisonment, and violence. Yet the believers who were scattered from Jerusalem went everywhere preaching the Word. What appeared to be an effort to destroy the Church became an opportunity for the Gospel to spread. God was advancing His Kingdom even through circumstances that seemed to threaten it.

Read

Acts 7:54–60; Acts 8:1–4; Mark 4:26

Respond

1. According to Acts 7:54–58, how did the crowd respond to Stephen's testimony, and what role did Saul have in these events?
2. What did Stephen pray as he was being stoned, according to Acts 7:59–60?
3. According to Acts 8:1–3, what happened to the Church following Stephen's death, and what actions did Saul take against believers?
4. What did the scattered believers do according to Acts 8:4?
5. In Mark 4:26, what illustration does Jesus use to describe the Kingdom of God, and how does it relate to the description of believers being scattered in Acts 8:4?

Reflect

1. **Am I willing to obey God when obedience becomes uncomfortable?** The scattered believers continued preaching the Word despite persecution. Do I share Jesus only when it's convenient, welcomed, or unlikely to cost me anything? Where do I allow comfort, reputation, or fear of rejection to silence my witness?
2. **Do I allow hardship to become an excuse for spiritual inactivity?** When my plans are interrupted, relationships become difficult, or circumstances don't go my way, do I withdraw from serving, sharing the Gospel, and pursuing God's purposes? Am I waiting for life to become easier before I fully obey Him?
3. **Am I more committed to protecting my plans than advancing God's Kingdom?** The believers were scattered from what was familiar, yet the Gospel continued to spread. If God redirects my circumstances, disrupts my routines, or calls me beyond what is comfortable, am I willing to remain faithful to His assignment? What am I holding onto that limits my willingness to go where He leads?

Further Scripture Reading

Acts 22:20

SECTION 4 — ONE ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING

Focus

Saul was approaching Damascus with the intention of imprisoning followers of Jesus. At the same time, he was approaching an encounter with the risen Christ that would completely transform his life. Two things were true simultaneously: Saul's intentions were advancing, and God's purposes were drawing near. Suddenly, the light of heaven interrupted Saul's plans, and the man determined to destroy the Church surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus.

Read

Acts 9:1–6; John 1:5; Isaiah 48:3

Respond

1. According to Acts 9:1–2, what was Saul seeking permission to do, and whom did he intend to arrest?
2. What happened as Saul approached Damascus, according to Acts 9:3?
3. In Acts 9:4–5, what did Jesus ask Saul, and how did He identify Himself?
4. According to Acts 9:6, what did Saul ask Jesus, and what instructions did Jesus give him?
5. What do John 1:5 and Isaiah 48:3 reveal about God's light and His ability to accomplish what He has declared?

Reflect

1. **Do I believe anyone is beyond God's ability to change?** Is there a family member, spouse, friend, coworker, or even someone who has hurt me whom I no longer believe can change? Do I allow their actions to become more convincing to me than the power of Jesus to transform a life? What does my prayer life reveal about what I truly believe?
2. **Am I judging God's activity only by what I can see?** Saul was moving closer to Damascus with destructive intentions, yet he was also moving closer to an encounter with Jesus. Where do I allow worsening circumstances to convince me that God isn't working? Do I stop expecting Him to move when His timing doesn't match mine?
3. **Am I willing to let an encounter with Jesus change my direction?** Saul's response was, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” When God's Word exposes an attitude, habit, relationship, or decision that doesn't align with His will, do I respond with obedience or find ways to justify remaining unchanged? What is God revealing to me that I am resisting?

Further Scripture Reading

Acts 8:1–3

SECTION 5 — SURRENDER YOUR WILL AND TRUST GOD'S PLAN

Focus

Jesus modeled complete surrender to the Father's will. He did not come to accomplish His own independent purposes but to fulfill the will of the One who sent Him. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Surrender requires more than acknowledging that God's ways are better. It calls us to yield our desires, trust His purposes, and choose obedience even when His direction differs from what we want.

Read

John 6:38; Matthew 26:39; Matthew 6:9–10; Acts 9:6

Respond

1. According to John 6:38, whose will did Jesus come to accomplish?
2. In Matthew 26:39, what did Jesus ask of the Father, and how did He express His willingness to submit to the Father's will?
3. According to Matthew 6:9–10, what did Jesus teach His disciples to pray concerning God's will on earth?
4. In Acts 9:6, what question did Saul ask Jesus, and what was Jesus' response?
5. What do John 6:38 and Matthew 26:39 reveal about Jesus' relationship to the Father's will?

Reflect

1. **Where is God's will not winning in my life?** Don't answer generally. Identify the specific area where I know what God's Word says but continue choosing my own way. Is it unforgiveness, pride, control, compromise, disobedience, misplaced priorities, or something else? What am I allowing to keep me from surrendering it?
2. **Do I want God's will, or do I want God to give me my will?** When I examine my prayers, am I genuinely seeking His purposes, or am I primarily asking Him to change people and circumstances to produce the outcome I desire? If God's answer requires me to change rather than my circumstances, am I willing to say, “Not as I will, but as You will”?
3. **What does surrender require of me this week?** Is God asking me to forgive someone, have a difficult conversation, abandon a compromise, change a priority, step into an assignment, or release control of something I'm holding tightly? What specific act of obedience am I delaying, and when will I take that step?

Further Scripture Reading

Isaiah 48:3

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

“We have the opportunity to decide which of these wills have the final say in our lives.” — Chad Everett

God's will is greater than the will that opposes us. Saul's journey to Damascus reminds us that even when circumstances appear to be moving in the wrong direction, God's purposes may already be at work. One encounter with Jesus can change everything.

As you go into this week, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where God's will is not ruling in your life. Surrender those areas to Him, remain steadfast in His Word, and trust Him with the people and circumstances that seem impossible. Whose will wins? Let your life reflect your answer.