

Seeking God's Purpose, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. (Football Sunday) 11060820
1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14, and Ephesians 5:15-20
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The nation Israel went through a regime change, which is not unlike what the Phoenix Football program is going through. Just as leadership has been passed to the new coach Pete Lembo, so the leadership of Israel was passed from King David to his son, Solomon. As in any great change in leadership, the people of Israel were of a mood to wait and see what the new leadership would bring.

This new coach of the Phoenix has a covenant he would like all of the team members to adhere to. It is a covenant that all of us as followers of Jesus Christ could follow. It involves excellence, humility, and sobriety.

A profound thing took place at Gibeon that night long ago. As he took office, King Solomon, prayed to God. He made a request in that prayer. He prayed not for wealth or power, but He prayed this: "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil."¹ That is a good prayer! God granted the new king his request. As a result, Solomon was known as a wise and discerning king.

Discernment is to perceive with the eyes or intellect, to detect. It is to recognize as being different or distinct; it is to distinguish. The word comes from the Latin *discernere* to separate. Discernment is like shining flashlight at something dim, to brighten up and show our path clearly. A good defender will discern a play unfolding. A good back will discern a seam opening up.

For the Christian, there is something more in the concept. Discernment is to perceive also with the spirit: it is to have a sense about God's view of the world and God's will. How do we know God's will? It's easy to say, "It was God's will," but how do we really know something is God's will? How do I know what God's will is for my life? Am I to marry this person? or take that job?

The business of discerning God's will is a tricky one. There is a process that should be helpful to us. We find the clues in Solomon's approach to God: Worship, Prayer, Humility, and Trust.

Worship: Solomon went to Gibeon to worship God: to affirm the importance of God in his life. If we don't worship God, we cannot discern God's will. We must go to church regularly. If not to Elon Community Church, then go to some other holy place—not simply to get whipped up emotionally, but to experience the presence of the holy.

Prayer: while worshiping, Solomon prayed. He opened himself up to God's spirit. In that prayer, he felt God's presence. If we don't take the time to pray, to think about God, to dream about God, we cannot discern God's will.

Humility: Solomon was the king: rich and powerful, respected by the entire nation of Israel. Yet, Solomon humbled himself before God, calling himself "your servant." He recognized his weaknesses and called himself a child. He said he didn't even know how to go out or come in. I've heard that, and it's okay: "I don't know how to pray to God." If we don't recognize our own weaknesses, our own inclinations, and urges, our own fallibility, we cannot discern God's will. Humility doesn't mean putting yourself down. It means not thinking you are above others.

¹1 Kings 3:9

Humility means knowing you are part of a team. You put the team in front of self.

Trust: Solomon knew how God showed steadfast love to his father David, and he trusted that God would show him steadfast love also. If we don't believe that God is love, and trust in God's guidance, then we cannot discern God's will. Along with trusting God, we trust one another. That's extremely important on a team. You have to be able to trust each other to do the best you can possibly do.

I would add the following factors to the process of discernment. The more we can research, the more facts we can find out, the more we consider the possible results of any course we take, the better we can discern God's will.

Opening ourselves to others' points of view: it is good to get another person's opinion. It is sometimes helpful to get the opinion of the person who often opposes or argues with us, for they offer a different perspective on life. God may be speaking to us through the person who opposes. It doesn't mean we follow the other person's advice, but the more perspectives we can discover, the better we can discern God's will.

Bible study: every day, read a portion of the Bible, reflect and pray about it, and see how God is speaking to you in your life.

Coach Lembo has one more point in his covenant for football players: don't consume alcohol during the week and no drugs anytime. The writer of Ephesians said, "So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery."²

Debauchery comes from a word meaning to lead astray. To be drunk or high, just isn't going to get you where you want to go. Instead, be filled with God's Spirit. That spirit will empower you to do things you never thought you could do.

Phoenix, Elon Community Church wishes you a successful and fun season. Know that we will be rooting for you, and we'll be praying for your success in your new regime.

²Ephesians 5:17-18