

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL

STUDY FIVE

Reading God's Mysterious Lips

Jeremiah 1:4–9

God is not only invisible, but He is also silent. We don't see Him. We don't hear Him, literally. And yet we're commanded to be wise and to understand what the will of the Lord is.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

BETHANY DAWKINS wowed track and field enthusiasts with her rare combination of obvious talent, effortless stride, tenacity, and calm confidence. A three-time high school state champion in the 100-meter sprint competition, she would bolt off the starting block like a flash. There was something compelling about her quick race starts, which routinely separated her from the other runners.

Bethany competed for the Ridgeview School for the Deaf. When asked about her string of first-place finishes, she was modest yet candid about her success:

You see, the *race starter* controls the event. While other athletes are in the starting blocks with their heads down and bodies crouched awaiting the sound of the pistol, my *gaze*, while crouching, is *upward*, fixed on the *starter's lips* as he says, “runners take your mark . . . set” . . . and then fires. Then, after reading his lips, I *rivet on finger movement* as he depresses the trigger, milliseconds before others hear the sound. That gives me the crucial jump, and, at this short distance, distinguishes good from victorious. I have no other choice if I want to fully apply my athletic calling.

The young track star learned to excel in her athletic craft by riveting her eyes on the starter. So also, we can enhance our response to God's will by riveting our eyes on God . . . reading His lips and reacting when He moves.

While God is invisible, He is not absent. While God is silent, His will is not hidden. His will may be mysterious, but we *can* know it. The prophet Jeremiah learned to discern the will of the Lord for his life and respond to it, and as we study his example in this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we can learn how to do the same.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you prepare your heart to engage Christ's Word today, allow Walter Chalmers Smith's hymn to usher you into the Lord's presence.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes.
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious—Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might; . . .

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render—O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.¹



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

On our journey of discovering the mystery of God's will, we have considered His *decretive* will, His *permissive* will, His *declarative* will, and His *revealed* will. Then, we examined the importance of *fleshing out* God's will by stepping out in faith and obeying His plan.

Review [Psalm 32:8–9](#) as a reminder of God's guidance. What promise did God give David? How did God promise to direct David? What simile did God use to warn David, and what message does this simile communicate?

The journey became very personal for Jeremiah as a young man when God spoke to him. Let's take a dive into where it all started with God's first conversation with Jeremiah.

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Jeremiah 1:4–9



Observation: Before You . . . I

Jeremiah is sometimes known as the “Weeping Prophet” because of the spiritual and moral decay of his people and the difficult prophecies he declared against them for about forty years. Use your observation skills to explore the point when Jeremiah heard God’s starter’s pistol fire.²

God’s Call

In *Jeremiah 1:4–9*, God used four verbs to describe His relationship with Jeremiah. What sovereign actions do these verbs portray?

Jeremiah’s Rejoinder

In *Jeremiah 1:6*, how did Jeremiah respond to God’s call and why?

God’s Redirection and Reassurance

What was God’s reply in *Jeremiah 1:7–9*? What reassurance and confirmation did He provide Jeremiah?

The Lord touched Jeremiah’s mouth as a sign of His personal connection with Jeremiah. In *Jeremiah 1:17–19*, what additional reassurances did God provide?

Just as God had been watching over Jeremiah, He is watching over us. And just as God wanted Jeremiah to fix his eyes on God, He wants us to fix our eyes on Him as well.

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Jeremiah 1:4–9

Remember Jeremiah's excuse? "God, do you know how old I am compared to these people?" You're not called into a situation to be compared to someone else. You're called into it as an instrument. And in that role you are, in God's plan, invincible. That's His plan. He's going to take care of you in it.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: A Deeper Look at God's Plan

Interpretation considers what the passage means. Let's dig into the definitions of key words in God's message to Jeremiah. God carefully chose these words to detail His sovereign, personal call on the prophet's life. The call contained three facets.

Research these three terms using your Bible-study resources. Click on each word in the chart below to access the *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* at Bibleportal.com. [Constable's Notes](#) at Netbible.org is also an excellent online resource. Read [Jeremiah 1:5](#) in several translations. Summarize each word's meaning. Then write a theological principle that is true for our day.

Facet	Meaning	Principle
"Knew"		
"Consecrated"		
"Appointed"		

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Jeremiah 1:4–9

We enter a world we didn't create. . . . If we are going to live appropriately, we must be aware that we are living in the middle of a story that was begun and will be concluded by another. And this other is God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Guidelines for Reading God's Lips

God does not audibly speak to Christians today as He did with the prophet Jeremiah. We must be sensitive to “read His lips” as we walk with Him and carry out His will. Let's correlate the principles we gleaned from Jeremiah with other Bible passages to find scriptural guidelines. Think of these guidelines as the ABCs of discerning God's will.

“A”—An Accepting Frame of Mind

Times of quiet and rest help open our minds and hearts to God. What did the Lord invite His disciples to do with Him in [Mark 6:31–32](#)? How might this practice put you in an accepting frame of mind to God's will?

“B”—Biblical Investigation

God's will never contradicts His Word. Read [Psalm 119:97–100, 105](#). The Scriptures contain what we need to know about life's most important issues. What promises did the psalmist specify?

“C”—Clarification and Conviction from the Holy Spirit

As we've learned, Scripture contains both *precepts* (concrete, specific commands) and *principles* (general, broad guidelines). The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to do His commands and apply His principles. Read [Ephesians 5:15–17](#). How does the Holy Spirit provide wisdom?

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Jeremiah 1:4–9

In *Psalms 40:1–3*, David wrote that the Lord heard and helped him in a time of difficulty. What virtue did David exercise?

Record what you observe about the Spirit's direction and enablement in *Romans 8:12–16, 26–27*.

“D”—Determine If Peace Is Occurring

Jesus offers us, through the Holy Spirit, the precious gift of “peace of mind and heart” (John 14:27). Read *Colossians 3:15–16*. How does God use His peace in helping us discern His will?

How does the principle in *Romans 14:5* relate to the occurrence of peace?

In *Philippians 4:6–7*, what is the command, the means, and the promise?

Reading God's Mysterious Lips

Jeremiah 1:4–9

“E”—Expect Struggles and Surprises

Struggles don't necessarily mean we've wandered from God's way. Often, they are signs we're right on track! How does *James 1:2–3* emphasize this truth?

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, meaning let peace serve as an “arbiter” or as an “umpire.” An umpire serves in the game as the bottom line. He solves what would turn into conflict and argumentation. The umpire clarifies matters and is the final voice. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: A Personal “Reading” Plan

Reading God's lips is a deeply personal matter. Jeremiah didn't initially trust God's plan for him, and we may find ourselves feeling inadequate, offering excuses, or needing reassurance. What encouragement do you find in the fact that God knew you before He formed you in the womb?

Of the guidelines we've studied, which most clearly helps you discern His current direction for you?

Which of the guidelines needs your additional focus and discernment at this point in your life?

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When Jeremiah heard God speaking to him, the main issue wasn’t knowing God’s will but trusting God. Could young Jeremiah trust God to accomplish His will through him, weak as Jeremiah was? Perhaps you’re asking a similar question. Will God accomplish His will through me? The answer is yes. Just keep your eyes and heart fixed on Him.



A FINAL PRAYER

Close your study by making Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s prayer your own.

Our Father, we find comfort in knowing that You do all things well. You are so good to us. You are so gentle with us, so full of grace. You are longsuffering, patient beyond our imagination. I pray You will also reward richly and magnificently those who do the hard work of searching and discovering and obeying. And it’s with excitement and joy that we anticipate all which that effort will include—the risks and the releases notwithstanding. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Walter Chalmers Smith, “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise,” *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (n.p.: Word/Integrity, 1997), hymn 33.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 1998, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 5 • Page 8