

Friday — Take This Cup

"Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me..." (Luke 22:42) Do you think that it's easy to follow God's will? Not hardly. It is often difficult to let our own wills go and follow the path that God lays before us. We don't usually get a choice, either. We just have to do it. Do you think Jesus, being God incarnate, had an easy time strolling to His own death? "Take this cup from me," He begged. It wasn't easy, even for Jesus, to walk the path of His Father's will. But what did Jesus say after that? "Yet, not My will, but Yours be done." Jesus knew the road ahead was dangerous. Painful even. It isn't always going to be this dramatic for us. But the pain can be real. The suffering can be real. Our lives aren't easy. It's not because God has it out for us either, but He's got a plan. His will always prevails, just as it did with His own Son, who died on a cross for us. If you find yourself in the middle of some tough times right now, stop and pray. Ask for your Lord's guidance and direction. Pray for His will to be done in this situation, whatever that may look like or however that might be done. And then continue forward, trusting Him to have His way with you and your life – because He loves you!

Saturday – Saturday is All Right for Praying

As we've looked at and thought about it all week long, we know and believe that God's will is supreme. We know that man's will is flawed, often deluded. We know that God's will is, at times, difficult for us to accept and follow. But most of all, we pray that His will be done, despite the potential difficulties. You can never go wrong when you ask for God's will to be done. Our own wills are often wrong, or at the very least, tainted with our own "agendas" with the various interests and needs and decisions we face in our lives. So, whatever you pray for, ask that God's will be done, and not your own. In the long run, we know and trust that it is His will that will be done and how much better would it be to align with His will sooner rather than later! So to close today's devotion and this week of exploring God's will, pray the Lord's Prayer as Jesus taught it to His disciples and to us (as we have it in Matthew 6:9-13), and take your time as you pray, thinking about the various phrases, letting each one truly be prayer!

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This week's *Bring It Home* devotions were written by Immanuel member James Courtney. This publication may be reproduced and shared.



What Now?

1. This week make a commitment to pray regularly, "Lord, let YOUR will be done in my life and in this situation."
2. Consider memorizing (or re-memorizing) the 3rd Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's Explanation of it: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." *What does this mean?* The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. *How is God's will done?* God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which does not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.

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Monday — Madness

Monday is traditionally the start of our work week. We make plans. We have ideas on what needs to be done throughout the week and what we need to accomplish. We often think of deadlines, traffic, and stress. Humans tend to plan everything. Some of us even plan our entire lives. While planning and organization are never bad, sometimes we must remember that our will and God's will aren't always in sync. Take Mary and Joseph, for instance. Did they plan to give birth to Jesus? Certainly not. But it was God's will, not their own that prevailed. In Matthew 1:19-21 we find that Joseph was going to divorce Mary quietly because she was with child that was not his own. But God had different plans. And Joseph and Mary bent their will to God's and we know what happened after that. Not everything that ruins our plans is a bad thing. Sometimes, they are the greatest things of all. It certainly was that way with the birth of Jesus. Can you think of a time in your life when something you really wanted to happen did not happen and it turned out to be far better in the long run? When things like this happen it can serve to remind us that God really does care about us and what happens in our lives. He's not just "out there" but He is part of our lives and our world. God's will is never wrong and, even though we don't always agree, His will always prevails. Pray today for HIS will to be done!

Tuesday — The Ill Will of Man

Read Genesis 3:1-7, or if you have time, take in the entire chapter for the full story. One of the themes in the story of the Fall is that man tries to supersede the will of God. Adam and Eve took and ate the fruit, thus starting the need for the Gospel and Christ in the first place. Good thing for us that God was way smarter than Adam and Eve gave Him credit for. Our own will, while sometimes good intentioned, is always flawed. And other times it is not well intentioned at all. It is often deluded. Another example is Jesus's trial at the Sanhedrin. Read about it in Mark 14:53-65. The temple leaders thought they were acting on and following God's will, but they were deluded and were only interested in preserving their own power and status. Lucky for us all, God was smarter than the Sanhedrin as well. When we pray, do we ask for God's will to be done? Or do we want God to do our will? Can you think of some examples in your own life where you found yourself more deluded than aligned with God's will? How did that turn out for you? The difficulty is that our will is flawed, tainted because of the sin in our lives and there's no getting around that. It can be helpful to keep that in mind and at the same time remember that our Lord's will is not flawed – at all! At every turn, try to seek Him and His will.

Wednesday — What About That Donkey?

Read Luke 19:31-34. If someone came up to you and asked to borrow your car because "the Lord has need of it," you'd probably call the police. No way. There is no way that we'd let some stranger take our car. But the owners of the donkey on that first Palm Sunday did let the disciples take the animal. Why? Maybe he had just finished with his morning prayers and prayed "thy will be done." The next thing he knows someone tells him that the Lord has need of his donkey. What would you do? This isn't to say that we need to give our possessions away to every stray person that comes along. But it is a demonstration of just how difficult it is to allow God to work His will in your life. What happened to that donkey? Do we know? Did the owner ever see it again? Would you be so willing to allow God to work His will in your life? Would you risk giving up property or money or opportunity to submit to the Will of God? It's not really in our nature to do so, is it? But we pray "Thy Will be done" anyway, because God's Will is always good. And we might find ourselves pleasantly surprised at how God can work when we actually do submit to His will and trust Him in the big and small matters of our lives.

Thursday — Getting in Our Own Way

With all our plans and goals in this life, there are always more tasks to do. It's a never-ending process. There is always more to do. More things to occupy our time. More of our will to exert over the world, because we need to do... something. At what point do we stop and listen for God's will in our life? When do we get our heads above water and breath in the air that God made for us? Read Luke 10:38-42. Martha opened her home to Jesus and His friends. She spent all her time preparing. She spent none of her time listening to Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, drank in all that Jesus had to say and more. Who do you think got the better end of that deal? Of course, it was Mary. Do you think God cares that our houses are spotless and our meals extravagant? Do you think God cares that we prepared to enact our own will? Or do you think that God wants us to sit at His feet and soak up all that He is? Like with Martha, walking that line can be a real challenge, because our Lord does want us to take care of the world and the people and the things that He has entrusted to us. He wants us to be good stewards and faithful spouses, friends, children, parents, employees, etc. But how do we figure out how NOT to get in our own way?! It is easy to get in our own way, because our wills are flawed. But God's will is never flawed. End your devotion time once again by praying, "YOUR will be done, Lord!"