

# LIFESAVERS

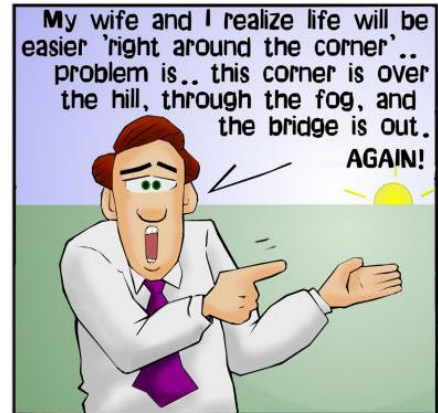
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## “Discerning God’s Will For My Life”

April 22, 2007

- (1) When you grow up what do you want to be?
- (2) At what age did you really start to discover what you wanted to do with your life?

**I Kings 3:5-12**  
**Genesis 37:1-10**  
**Genesis 37:18,24,28,39,40**  
**Genesis 50:20**  
**Romans 8:28**



Does life ever feel this way to you? Remember in these times, **Romans 8:28**

Discernment is more than the work of an individual person. The Spirit acts within the gathered believers (the Church) so they can discern what to do and be. Within that context, specific persons may be given the gift for leading the church as it discerns. Such gifted people are given a 'spiritual eye' for cutting through facades and confusion, for getting to the heart of the matter. They listen closely, notice what's happening in the world around them, and instinctively know what place it has in God's plans. Someone who's gifted in discernment of spirits can find where evil lurks in good things, and where the Spirit is working when things are going wrong.

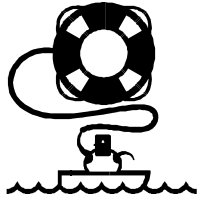
When the church was starting out, there was only one way she could learn the faith: on her feet. The church had to learn while she was doing. The Spirit had to teach the Christians how to love at the same time as moving them to act on that love, teaching them mercy at the same time as empowering them to live merciful lives.

Christians sometimes forget that what we teach and discuss is inevitably our own understanding of Scripture. That's why it's so valuable to have the input from 2000 years of churchgoing Christians (tradition) and the Christians of today (fellowship). Meaning springs out of life; the Spirit's way is lived and experienced. Even more: it is lived and experienced by being a part of those who believe in Jesus and his good news, a Body whose members are formed and shaped in this way, as found in Scripture. That community teaches each other, recalls history, shares their experiences, and affirms each other's value. It (sometimes) has the strength to say no and to get each of us to amend our understandings and change our ways when we are going astray, and to show a more excellent way in all things.

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“If we all did the things we are capable of, we would astound ourselves.” *Thomas Edison*





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When you're being checked by the church, you're being checked by others who have also done patient, prayerful, steady study of Scripture. The Spirit didn't give a sense of God's purposes only to you but also to others, in a slightly different way for each of them. If they didn't study God's ways, they won't have that sense, and thus are a less trustworthy part of the discernment process. (You'll never find out one way or the other unless you listen carefully, and have the guts to put away any defensive reactions you might have.)

Neither we nor the communicated Word nor the Church are the bridge between the biblical events and our putting the Word into living effect. It is the Holy Spirit's doing.

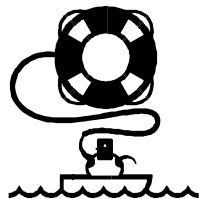
- (3) It is apparent in Genesis that Joseph was different. How important is it to be an independent thinker in order to find God's will for your life? (Genesis 37:1-4)
- (4) How important is it not to let the world squeeze us into its mold, if we want to realize God's will for our lives? (Romans 12:1-2)
- (5) Do you think most people live by the herd instinct (follow the pack) in that they simply do what's popular instead of what they feel they should do deep down in their heart? (Cult of Conformity)
- (6) What was God ultimately trying to do when he made Joseph suffer? (Gen 50:20) How can God take bad things that happen to us and turn them into something good? What are some difficulties you've experienced in trying to reach your dreams, and why does God allow us to have difficulties in our lives?
- (7) Do you have a plan for your life? What is it?

**“The Lord was with him, and he prospered” Genesis 39:1-2**

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From General Douglas MacArthur, who used to live next door and who regularly sat in the pews we occupy today. While fighting in the Pacific during the Second World War, MacArthur found a few minutes of respite to write a prayer to and for his son. Knowing little more than his words, and hoping that they communicated grace and not pressure on the young man, I think we can sense here the possibility that the Lord's model can be articulated in each of our lives and in our own words:

**Build me a son, O Lord,  
who will be strong enough to know when he is weak,  
brave enough to face himself when he is afraid,**

**Build me a son,  
whose wishes will not take the place of deeds . . .**

**Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort,  
but under the stress and spur of difficulties and  
challenges.**

**Let him learn to stand in the storm;  
let him learn compassion for those who fall.**

**Build me a son,  
whose heart is clear, whose goals will be high;  
a son who will master himself before he seeks to master  
others;  
who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.**

**And after all these things are his, add, I pray,  
enough of a sense of humor  
so that he may always be serious  
yet never take himself too seriously."**

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