

## WEEK FOUR | PETITION THREE

***Your will be done... on earth, as it is in heaven.***

This third petition flows naturally out of the second, ***“Your kingdom come”***. When we begin to see what it means for God’s kingdom to come, of course we will want the range and impact of his will to extend further and further throughout the earth?

Lisa Koons, a leader in the 24/7 prayer movement, was asked how Christians could possibly pray together during a divisive political season. “We pray sweeping prayers, prayers we can agree on, while leaving the outcome to God,” Lisa answered. Even if we have very different theories about what God’s will might look like in a given situation, our hearts can be united in our desire for his will to be done. Jesus, here, gives us a concise way of praying that can embrace every need, every longing, every complex issue, even our different ways of seeing the world: ***Your will be done.***

### **HOW DO WE KNOW GOD’S WILL?**

One of the musical artists that I have enjoyed is Rich Mullins. There is something about his music that stirs deep longings. At one concert, a fan asked Rich how to discern the will of God. Rich listened, and then offered this perspective.

“I don’t think finding God’s plan for you has to be complicated. God’s will is that you love him with all your heart and soul and mind, and also that you love your neighbor as yourself. Get busy with that, and then, if God wants you to do something unusual, he’ll take care of it.”

“But what if, for example, he wants you to go to Egypt.”

Rich paused for a moment here, before flashing his trademark grin.

“If that’s the case, he’ll provide eleven jealous brothers and they’ll sell you into slavery.”

When we wrestle with life decisions, think of Rich’s Egypt Principle. It will make you laugh, and then it asks us to get down to the serious business of determining which of my options allows us to best love God and other people. Such an approach and attitude reminds us, that our life with God is personal but never private. It usually rules out certain possibilities, while affirming—even creating—several others.

It’s when we reach those indecision points that we are reminded of the passive, imperative verbs in this prayer that Jesus teaches us. You see, this third petition is not: “Tell me your will so I can do it” but: “Do your will in me.”

This is true when we don’t know what to do. And it’s true when we do know what God is asking of us, but we are unwilling to align our will with his. Someone has said: “Even when you can’t be willing to do what God is asking, you can be willing to be willing.”

This petition invites us to move from a position of willfulness to willingness, giving God an opening to begin to complete his will in me in the way only he can.

### **HOW DO WE LIVE GOD’S WILL?**

Jesus who teaches us to pray this petition is, of course, its perfect model. ***“My food,”*** he once told his disciples, ***“is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work”*** (John 4:34).

It’s worth noting that Jesus’ way of doing his Father’s will often seemed to defy productivity models and confuse his disciples. He seldom took the fastest way anywhere, preferring circuitous routes that gave him more time on the road with his friends. He was highly interruptible, particularly by children and outcasts. And he had a tendency to slip away at seemingly inopportune moments to pray.

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Eugene Peterson used to say, it's a tragedy, when we end up doing "Jesus things" in a way that Jesus would never do them.

We've all seen debates over right doctrine turn ugly.

So as we pray this petition, it's important to remember, we are asking for God's will to be done not only in **what** we do, but also in **how** we do it. We're asking the Holy Spirit to teach us how to do Jesus things in the Jesus way.

### LIVING INSIDE THE THIRD PETITION

Are you aware of an area in which your will is not aligned with God's? If you're finding it difficult to surrender, consider telling God that you are willing to be willing.

You may wish to use the *Palms Down, Palms Up Prayer*<sup>1</sup> in this process.

- Find a comfortable place to sit.
- Take a few minutes (and a few deep breaths) to centre yourself and become aware of God's loving presence.
- Imagine that you are holding the matter of concern in your hands.
- Clench your fists to represent any tension you feel around this issue.
- Then, as a symbol of your willingness (rather than your ability) to surrender this matter, open your hands and place your palms down on your lap.
- Pray as honestly as you can, perhaps something like:  
"Lord, I am not yet able to fully let this go.  
But I am willing to be willing.  
I am relinquishing the idea that I can do this on my own,  
and turning my inability to surrender over to you."
- When you feel ready, turn your palms upward to indicate your willingness to receive from God.
- Again, keep your prayers honest:  
"Only you can give me the grace and growth I need to be able to surrender.  
I am open to receiving what you have for me, in your perfect time."

You may need to pray this *Palms Down, Palms Up Prayer* many times, over many days, but don't lose hope. God is much more patient than we are.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Palms Up, Palms Down Prayer* is described by Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*, 2018, 30-31.