

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

There are a few big questions about God every person has to wrestle with. Non-believers ask if God truly exists and whether Jesus is the only way to salvation. After we are saved, we desire to know God's plans for our life. Obedient Christians want to make decisions that are consistent with His will. There are two categories of God's will. The first type is called general will. It includes God's commands of dos and don'ts in the Bible for everyone to observe. The trickier part is the second kind, which is called personal will. That involves God's particular plans for each person. For example, should you study business or biology, work for UT or St. Jude and marry Bob or Dave? Here are some basic principles to keep in mind. First, God gives us freedom to make choices. A youth counselor said to me many years ago: "Choose whatever you like except sinning." Secondly, obeying God may not be the smoothest path. Many Christians throughout the ages suffered greatly for following God. However, thirdly, God's way is always the best way. It takes faith to accept it. We live by faith every day. David had to learn that too. He knew that God had chosen him to be the next king. He must rely on God until he sat on the throne. Last time, we saw that David and his four hundred men were in the forest of Hereth. King Saul killed the people and animals in the town of Nob, for he blamed Ahimelech the priest for helping David. Ahimelech's son Abiathar was the only person who escaped the massacre. This young priest then joined David's camp. Meanwhile, Saul kept chasing after David. In our story today, we shall see how David made wise decisions based on some key factors. I call them the three E's to discern God's personal will. No, they may not be easy, exciting and enjoyable. Those are the same criteria we should consider as we seek after God's personal will for us.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 屬靈指引| Enlightenment

The first E is Enlightenment. In other words, it is God's divine guidance. Let us begin by reading [verse 1-6](#). The map on the screen shows the approximate locations of the places mentioned in the text. Keilah was in the tribe of Judah. Therefore, the people there were Israelites. David was a fugitive. He had no obligation to save those people. It was the duty of king Saul to protect his countrymen. But his full attention now was to capture David. In comparison, David showed compassion to his peers. Threshing floor was an area where farmers processed and stored their harvests. Obviously, the Philistines wanted to rob food supply. David looked for God's enlightenment through prayer. Verse 6 gives us a hint of how David discerned God's direction. Ephod was part of a priest's uniform. It looks like an apron. There was a pocket at the front that contains two stones called Urim and Thummim (see Exodus 28:30). The Bible does not elaborate how they were used to inquire God's will. It is possible that one pebble was white and the other was black in color. A priest would ask God a yes/no question. Then he randomly drew one stone. If it is white, then he takes it as a yes from God. In this case, David asked God if he should fight against the Philistines. God said yes. Even with God's approval, David's men were still hesitant. Why should they risk their lives? David motivated his followers by asking God again. The Lord assured David that they could win. Things happened just as God promised. David's company

defeated the enemies and rescued his people. News spread to king Saul. He sent his troop to go after David without delay. We see David response in **verse 10-12**. Once again, David sought God's enlightenment. The Lord confirmed that Saul's men would come and the residents of Keilah would turn David in. How quickly did the people of Keilah forget David's kindness! It was likely that they heard about the massacre at Nob. They did not want to end up with the same fate. The passage tells us that David and his followers left immediately. As a result, Saul withdrew his soldiers. David waited for God's enlightenment in every major decision. Today, we do not need to draw straw to understand God's will. All of His general will is in the Bible. You need to spend time to read God's Word daily and allow those instructions to permeate your mind. As you pray to God for direction, certain principles, examples or words will jump out. Any of us has that experience? It is like parents giving guidelines to their kids. They get tired of it when you say it one time, two times and a hundred times. But when they face certain situations, they will recall what you told them. They will not know what to do if you do not teach them. By the same token, if you do not read the Bible, then how can you know God's will? Also, God's personal will for you will never contradicts His general will. For example, lying and stealing are sins. God will definitely not ask you to deceive your boss or rob your company to get a promotion. He will not condone students for cheating in exams to get a better grade either. David used God's enlightenment to encourage his men. They had doubt and fear. When God spoke, they became confident and united. Church leaders should use the same means to strengthen the people they lead. Very often, there can be a number of ways to resolve a matter. The difference can be between a good versus a wise solution. Coworkers should seek God's enlightenment through His Word and prayer. We ask how can God receive the highest glory and people receive the biggest benefit, and how to balance between various opinions and minimize disagreement. Then they come up with a well-rounded plan. Now you know why some meetings are that long! Coworkers are respectful to each other and they are mindful of people's needs. At the end, God gets the glory and members are submissive to the leadership. It is a happy ending.

## 2. 良友鼓勵 Encouragement

Besides getting enlightenment from God, David also received encouragement from a friend. Let us continue to read **verse 14-18**. Do you notice an interesting contrast between verse 14 and 16? Saul had all the manpower and a network of intelligence, but he could not hunt David down. But Jonathan was able to locate David without any problem. Why the difference? Verse 14 tells us that because God did not give David into Saul's hand. We can derive a quick application from this. Just like David, we are in the protection of our loving Father. Nothing will come to us without His permission. What happens in the world can be quite scary. There are robbery and gun-shooting, the unpredictable stock market, and domestic and overseas threats. I always thank the Lord when I drive to my destination safely. You may never know what will occur on the roads! We can get paranoid about many potential dangers. Where can we find peace? Our ultimate peace is in Jesus. He reconciles us with God. His protection is way better than any insurance policy, security alarm, financial advisor and political analyst. With God's presence, we have peace when we go out and when we go to bed. God has a purpose in everything He allows to happen to us. God enabled Jonathan to find David for a reason. David needed encouragement from his best friend. Jonathan encouraged David in four ways. First, he **reinforced** David's faith in God. He told David to keep trusting the Lord despite his current situation. Second, he **removed** David's fear. He assured David that his father would not be able to hurt him. Third, he

**reminded** David God's plan. Jonathan said even his father knew David would be the next king. Fourth, he **recommitted** himself to David. They made a covenant in chapter 20 before David fled away. Jonathan promised to alert David if he knew his father was planning to harm him. In return, David pledged to show kindness to Jonathan and his descendants. David needed to hear those reassuring words at this hour. He was confused about his experience. He was loyal to his country and his king. But he became the most-wanted criminal. David had to deal with fear and uncertainties in every moment. We often need encouragement from a godly friend too. You may be running low in your faith. You are perhaps facing some unknowns. You are not sure which option to choose. You may feel alone and weak. A loyal friend will say to you: "Don't worry, I am here" or "God is always with you." That person shares Bible verses to encourage you and he/she will also pray with you, not just pray for you. Beyond human friends, we have the most trustworthy divine friend. The classic hymn "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" can be a constant reminder. One stanza reads: "Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer." People may not be available all the time, but Jesus is with us 24/7. People's promises may fall short, but Jesus' words stand forever. People may lack expertise and resources, but Jesus has all the authority in the world at His dispense. He is only a prayer away. Sometimes, God may not give us an answer right away. But He gives us His assurance. He is still in control and He will never leave us nor forsake us. Then we will have confidence to step forward. We know that God has yet to finish writing our life story.

### 3. 環境配合 Environment

God gave David spiritual enlightenment to guide him. He also sent Jonathan to give David friendly encouragement. Next, we see that God worked through the environment to show His will for David. We actually saw an example in verse 14 earlier. Saul searched everywhere but he could not track David down. God did not give Saul a success. Saul's men probably went to the wrong place at the wrong time. Perhaps they were interfered by weather conditions or human factors. We see another example in **verse 24-29**. The people at Ziph were Israelites. They sided with Saul. They reported David's whereabouts to the king. Picture the urgent situation David was in. The Ziphites sent spies to locate David and his men. Then they informed Saul about it. Subsequently, Saul sent his soldiers. The two teams were about to zero in to David and his men. Suddenly, someone told the king that the Philistines were attacking in another area. Perhaps the enemy knew that Saul had mobilized most of his force to pursue David. The Philistines took advantage of the weakened defense and launched a strike. Saul could not help but retreat his army. Just like that, David dodged another bullet. Afterward, he and his team went further east to En Gedi. Imagine you are flying a drone and observe the whole plot from the sky. You see the routes of David's men, the Ziphites, Saul's army and the Philistines. You also notice the timing of each event. You wonder why people made certain decisions and went to specific places at particular time. Ultimately, God orchestrates men's thoughts and the environment to fulfill His goals. Saul believed that he had David this time. Even David might think that he would be arrested. Little did both men know that God used the Philistines as a means to deliver David. God proved to be the Lord of Romans 8:28, where Paul says: **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** Those four teams of people were like chess pieces on God's gameboard. They made the next

move. But they could not fully control the outcome. God is the Master over the environment. David would not agree that being chased after by people was a good thing. The attack of the Philistines was not a good thing either. But God wisely put two bad things together to achieve a good result, namely, the rescue of David. We see numerous examples like that in the Bible. The Egyptians, Babylonians, Romans and other gentile nations wanted to get rid of the Israelites. But they all failed. The Jewish religious leaders thought they nailed their eyesore to the cross. But Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Throughout human history, various nations, political regimes and philosophical ideas and religious beliefs try to wipe out Christianity. But they all failed. God protected believers in all ages. God has your back too if you commit yourself to Him. With that confidence, you step out of your door by faith every day. You follow Biblical principles to conduct your life. You plan for the future based on the information you have. At the end, you put your trust in God. He will monitor your environment to direct your path. You have peace in your heart, without any worry of the what-ifs. You do not need to regret about lost opportunities, whether it is house-purchase, career-planning or even your future spouse. You stop comparing yourself with others. You trust that what you have right now is God's best for you. God is laying one piece of jigsaw puzzle after another, until He completes a masterpiece for your life.

## 結論 CONCLUSION

Enlightenment from God, encouragement through godly friends and God's control over our environment. Those are the three factors we can rely on to discern God's will. There is one more thing about the passage we need to pay attention to. The expression "give (someone) into (another person's) hand" is repeated six times. That is significant! If someone is in your hand, that person will be under your control. God gave the Philistines into David's hand, and he was able to subdue them. But God did not give David into Saul's hand. Therefore, Saul could not succeed no matter how hard he tried to hunt David down. When considering God's personal will for us, we need to ask whose hand we want to be in. Do we want everything to be in our hand? In other words, do we want to be our own boss? Do we want to be in the hands of those who attempt to influence us? Perhaps they are relatives who evaluate us based on our bank accounts, our employers who judge us according to our performance or the social media that manipulates information to control our emotions. The safest place we should go to is God's hand. He has our best interests in mind. He knows our strengths and weaknesses. Only He has the power and resources to meet our deepest needs.

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

我們每個人都必須面對幾個關於神的重要問題。非信徒問神是否真的存在，耶穌是否是唯一的得救途徑。得救之後，我們渴望知道神對我們生命的計劃。順服的基督徒希望做出符合神旨意的決定。神的旨意有兩方面。第一類稱為普遍旨意。它包含了神在聖經中該做和不該做的命令，讓每個人遵守。比較棘手的是第二類，叫做個人旨意。這涉及神對每個人的獨特計劃。例如，你應該學商或生物學，替 UT 或 St. Jude 工作並與小張或老陳結婚？有一些基本原則我們可以記住。首先，神給了我們做出選擇的自由。一位青年輔導員多年前對我說：「隨意選擇你喜歡的東西，只要不犯罪。」其次，順服神未必是最平坦的道路。在歷史上，許多基督徒因為跟隨神而受苦。然而，第三，神的道路永遠是最好的道路。我們需要用信心接受。我們每天都憑信心而活。大衛也必須學習這一點。他知道神已經揀選他成為下一任的君王。他必須依靠神，直到他坐上寶座。上一次，我們看到大衛和他的四百名手下在哈列的樹林。掃羅王責備祭司亞希米勒幫助大衛，因此殺了挪伯城的所有人和牲畜。亞希米勒的兒子亞比亞他是唯一逃脫屠殺的人。這位年輕的祭司隨後加入了大衛的陣營。與此同時，掃羅繼續追捕大衛。在今天的故事中，我們將看到大衛如何根據一些關鍵因素做出明智的決定。我稱它們為三個 E，可以幫助我們辨別神的旨意。這三個 E 不是輕鬆、令人興奮和愉快。當我們尋求神對我們的個人旨意時，我們應該考慮同樣的準則。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 屬靈指引| Enlightenment

第一個 E 是屬靈指引。換句話說是尋求神的引導。讓我們先來讀**第 1-6 節**。屏幕上的地圖顯示經文中提到的地方的大概位置。基伊拉屬於猶大支派。因此，那裡的人是以色列人。大衛目前是一個逃犯，他沒有義務救那裡的居民。保護老百姓是掃羅王的責任。但是他現在的注意力只放在抓大衛。相比之下，大衛憐憫他的同胞。禾場是農民處理和收藏農作物的地方。很明顯，非利士人想要搶糧食。大衛藉著禱告尋求神的屬靈指引。第 6 節暗示大衛如何辨別神的吩咐。以弗得是祭司製服的一部分，它看起來像圍裙。前面有一個口袋，裡面放了兩塊石頭，叫做烏陵和土明（見出埃及記 28:30）。聖經沒有說明如何使用它們來尋問神的旨意。有可能一塊石頭是白色的，而另一塊是黑色的。祭師會問

神一個是與否的問題，然後他隨意抽出一塊石頭。如果它是白色的，那麼他就認為神的回答是「是」。在這裡，大衛問神他是否應該與非利士人打仗。神說可以。就算得到神的許可，大衛的手下仍然猶豫不決。他們為什麼要冒著生命危險？因此大衛再次向神祈求，並以神的回應來鼓勵他的跟隨者。神向大衛保證他們會贏。事情正如神所承諾的那樣發生。大衛的隊伍打敗了敵人，拯救了他的子民。消息傳到掃羅王那裡。他立刻派人去追趕大衛。我們在**第 10-12 節**看到大衛的回應。大衛再一次尋求神的指引。神確定掃羅的士兵會來，而基伊拉的居民會把大衛交出來。基伊拉的人那麼快就忘記了大衛的救命之恩！他們很可能知道挪伯的大屠殺。他們不想落得同樣的下場。經文告訴我們，大衛和他的下屬便馬上離開。結果，掃羅撤回了他的軍隊。大衛在每一個重要的決定中都等候神的指引。今天，我們不需要抽籤來明白神的旨意。祂所有的普遍旨意都記在聖經裡。你需要每天花時間讀神的話語，讓這些指示進入你的心中。當你向神祈求指引時，某些原則、例子或話語便會浮現出來。我們中間有人有這樣的經歷嗎？這就像父母教導孩子。當你說一遍、兩遍和一百遍之後，他們會嫌你煩。但是當他們面對某些情況時，他們會想起你的話。如果你不教他們，他們可能不知道該怎麼辦。同樣，如果你不讀聖經，又怎麼能知道神的旨意呢？此外，神對你的個人旨意不會與祂的普遍旨意相抵觸。例如，說謊和偷竊都是罪。神絕對不會叫你去騙老闆，騙公司來升職。祂也不會縱容學生為了取得更好的成績而在考試中作弊。大衛用神的指引來鼓勵他的手下。他們有懷疑和恐懼。當神說話時，他們變得自信和團結。教會領袖應該使用同樣的方法來激勵他們所帶領的人。很多時候，有不同的方法來解決同一個問題。分別可能在於好的方案與有智慧的方案之間。同工們必須透過神的話語和禱告尋求神的指引。我們問神如何得到最高的榮耀，人得到最大的益處。並如何平衡各種意見，減少分歧。然後他們定出一個全面的計劃。現在你知道為什麼有些會議那麼長了吧！同工互相尊重，他們也考慮人們的需要。最後，神得著榮耀，會友順服同工的帶領。這就達致一個圓滿的結果。

## 2. 良友鼓勵 Encouragement

除了得到神的屬靈指引之外，大衛也得到了良友的鼓勵。讓我們繼續看**第 14-18 節**。你注意到第 14 節和第 16 節之間有一個有趣的對比嗎？掃羅擁有人力和情報網絡，但他無法抓到大衛。但約拿單能夠毫無困難地找到大衛。為什麼？14 節告訴我們，因為神沒有將大衛交在掃羅的手裡。我們可以從中帶出一些真理的應用。就像大衛一樣，我們受到慈愛天父的保護。沒有祂的許可，任何事情都不會臨到我們。世界上有很多意想不到的事情。有搶劫和槍擊，有變幻莫測的股市，有國內外的威脅。當我安全地開車到達目的地時，我常常感謝主。你不可能預計馬路上會發生什麼事！許多潛在的危險會使我們害怕。哪裡才能找

到平安？我們終極的平安是在耶穌裡。祂使我們與神和好。祂的保護比任何保險計劃、警報系統、財務顧問和政治分析專家都要好得多。有神的同在，我們出門和睡覺時都會有平安。神允許發生在我們身上的每一件事都有祂的美意。神讓約拿單找到大衛是有原因的。大衛需要好朋友的鼓勵。約拿單從四方面鼓勵大衛。首先，他**堅固**大衛對神的信心。他告訴大衛，不管他目前的處境如何，都要繼續信靠主。其次，他**消除**大衛的恐懼。他向大衛保證，他的父親不能傷害他。第三，他**提醒**大衛神的計劃。約拿單說，連他的父親都知道大衛會成為下一任的王。第四，他重新**委身**於大衛。在第 20 章，大衛逃跑之前與約拿單立約。約拿單承諾，如果他知道父親打算傷害大衛，他一定會通知他。大衛也答應會善待約拿單和他的後代。大衛這時候需要聽到那些安慰的話。他對自己的經歷感到困惑。他對國家和王忠心，但是他卻成了頭號通緝犯。大衛隨時都必須處理恐懼和不確定性。我們也常常需要敬虔朋友的鼓勵。你的信心可能會低落。你可能正在面對一些未知數。你不確定該選擇哪一條路。你可能會感到孤單和軟弱。一位忠誠的朋友會對你說：「別擔心，我在這裡」或是「神永遠與你同在」。他分享一些經文來鼓勵你，他也會和你一起禱告，而不只是為你禱告。除了人間的朋友，我們還有最值得信賴的天上朋友。傳統聖詩「耶穌恩友」可以成為鼓勵我們。其中一節歌詞說：「或遇試煉或遇引誘，或有煩惱壓心頭，切莫灰心切莫喪膽，來到主恩座前求！何處得此忠心朋友，分擔一切苦與憂？耶穌深知我們軟弱，來到主恩座前求！」你的朋友不一定隨時都有空，但耶穌任何時候都與我們同在。人的應許可能會落空，但耶穌的話永遠堅定。人可能缺乏專業知識和資源，但耶穌擁有世上所有的權柄。祂離我們只是一個禱告那麼近。有時，神可能不會馬上給我們答案。但是祂向我們保證，祂仍然在掌權，祂也永遠不會撇下我們，也不會丟棄我們。這樣我們便有信心向前邁進。我們知道神還沒有寫完我們的人生故事。

### 3. 環境配合 Environment

神賜給大衛屬靈的指引來帶領他。祂還派約拿單這位良友來鼓勵大衛。接下來，我們看到神通過環境的配合來表明祂對大衛的旨意。我們實際上在第 14 節已經看到一個例子。掃羅到處尋找，但是卻找到大衛。神並沒有使掃羅成功。掃羅的手下可能在錯誤的時間去了錯誤的地方。或許他們受到天氣條件或人為因素的影響。我們在第 24-29 節看到另一個例子。西弗人是以色列人。他們站在掃羅的那邊。他們向王報告了大衛的行蹤。我們理解一下大衛當時所處的緊急情況。西弗人派探子去尋找大衛和他的下屬，然後他們向掃羅匯報。隨後，掃羅派出自己的士兵。兩支部隊快要把大衛和他的手下包圍。忽然，有人告訴王，非利士人正在攻擊另一個地區。也許敵人知道掃羅調動了大部分兵力追趕大衛。非利士人乘虛而入，發動進攻。掃羅逼不得已撤兵。就這樣，大衛又躲

過了一場危機。然後，他和他的團隊繼續向東前往隱基底。想像一下，你正在遙控一架無人機，從空中觀察整個局面。你看到大衛的手下、西弗人、掃羅的軍隊和非利士人的路線。你注意到每個事件發生的先後順序。你懷疑為何一些人會在某些時間前往特定的地方做特定的事情。最終，是神協調人的意念和環境來成就祂的心意。掃羅相信這一次他一定能抓到大衛。甚至大衛也可能認為他會被捕。兩人都不知道神使用非利士人作為拯救大衛的方式。神證明祂是羅馬書 8 章 28 節的主。保羅說：**我們曉得萬事都互相效力，叫愛神的人得益處，就是按祂旨意被召的人。**那四隊人就像是神的棋盤上的棋子。他們採取下一步行動，但他們無法預料結果。神是環境的主。大衛不會認為被人追殺是好事。非利士人的攻擊也不是一件好事。但是神有智慧地將兩件壞事放在一起，達到一個好的結果，就是拯救大衛。我們在聖經中看到無數這樣的例子。埃及人、巴比倫人、羅馬人和其他外邦人想要消滅以色列人，但他們都失敗了。猶太宗教領袖認為他們把眼中釘掛在十字架上了，但是耶穌基督從死裡復活。縱觀人類歷史，不同的國家、政權、哲學思想和宗教都試圖鏟除基督信仰，但它們都失敗了。神保護不同時代的信徒。如果你將自己交託給神，祂也會看顧你。有了這份確據，你每天都能憑著信心踏出家門。你按照聖經的原則來過生活，你根據所掌握的信息計劃未來。最終，你信靠神。祂會掌管你的環境來引導你的方向。你心中有平安，不用擔心各樣未知的因素。你也不會為失去的機會而難過，無論是買房子、工作，還是你未來的配偶。你不再將自己與別人比較。你相信你目前擁有的是神給你最好的。神正在把一塊又一塊的拼圖放在一起，直到祂為你的生命完成一幅美麗的圖片。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

從神而來的屬靈指引，敬虔良友的鼓勵，以及神對我們環境的控制。這就是我們辨別神旨意的三個因素。關於這段經文，還有一點我們需要注意。「將（某人）交在（另一個人）的手裡」這句話重複了六次。這一點很關鍵！如果某人在你的手裡，他就是受你的控制。神將非利士人交在大衛的手裡，因此大衛能把他們制服。但神並沒有將大衛交在掃羅的手裡。所以，無論掃羅怎麼追殺大衛，他都不能成功。當我們思考神對我們個人的旨意時，我們要問自己希望落在誰的手裡。我們想要一切事情都在我們的手裡嗎？換句話說，我們想當自己的老闆嗎？我們想要落在那些試圖影響我們的人的手裡嗎？也許他們是按照銀行戶頭評估我們的親戚，根據工作表現來衡量我們的老闆，或者是操縱信息來控制我們情緒的社交媒體。最安全的地方應該是在神的手裡。祂關心我們最大的利益。祂知道我們的優點和短處。唯有祂有能力和資源來滿足我們最深層的需要。