

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

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# SERMON SERIES

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Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, Biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series is exactly what you're looking for.

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete sermon outlines and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

## SERIES OVERVIEW FOR THE MAZE

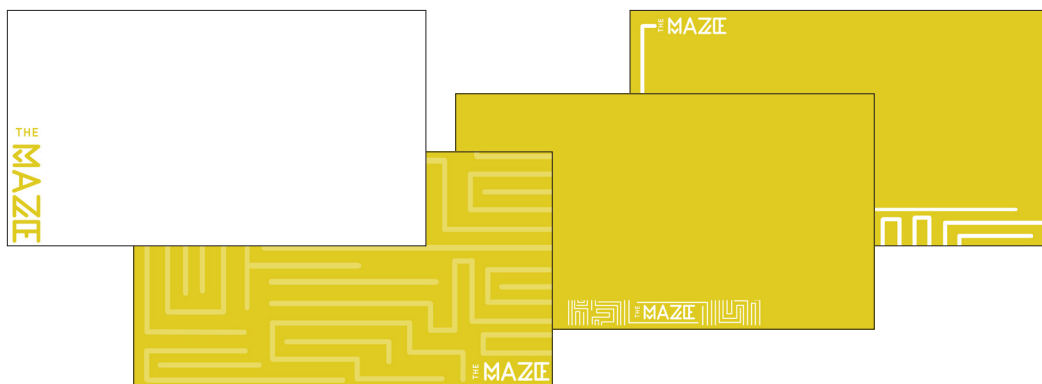
If you've ever walked through a maze, then you can relate to both the fun and the frustration of finding your way out. The best mazes have lots of twists and turns along with several dead ends. Just when you're ready to give up, you find another pathway that could lead you out or lead you further into the maze. Sometimes when we try to follow God's will for our lives, it can seem like a maze. There are many twists and turns, and it's hard to know which way to go. But what if there was a "maze runner" who knew which path to take? And what if there was a map that could show us the next turn? In this series, we'll talk about how we can understand and follow God's will for our lives.

- **SESSION 1:** Proverbs 3:5-6- "Understanding God's Will": In this first session, we'll talk about several misconceptions of God's will and look at two different senses of God's will in the Bible. We'll also talk about how God directs our path when we trust in Him and seek His will.
- **SESSION 2:** Matthew 22:37-40- "Following God's Will": In this session, we'll talk about how God's command to love Him and love others can help us navigate our way through the maze. We'll also talk about a map in the maze which can be found by asking four key questions.
- **SESSION 3:** Jonah 1-2- "Running from God's Will (Part 1)": In this session, we'll introduce the story of Jonah – someone who literally ran in the opposite direction of God's will! We'll learn that God wasn't done with Jonah and that even when we run from His will, God still loves and pursues us.
- **SESSION 4:** Jonah 3-4- "Living in God's Will (Part 2)": In this final session, we'll wrap up the story of Jonah by talking about how we can choose to live in God's will, even when we've gotten off track. We'll learn that as we navigate our way through the maze, God's purpose for our lives is bigger than we can imagine, and the stakes are greater than we may realize.

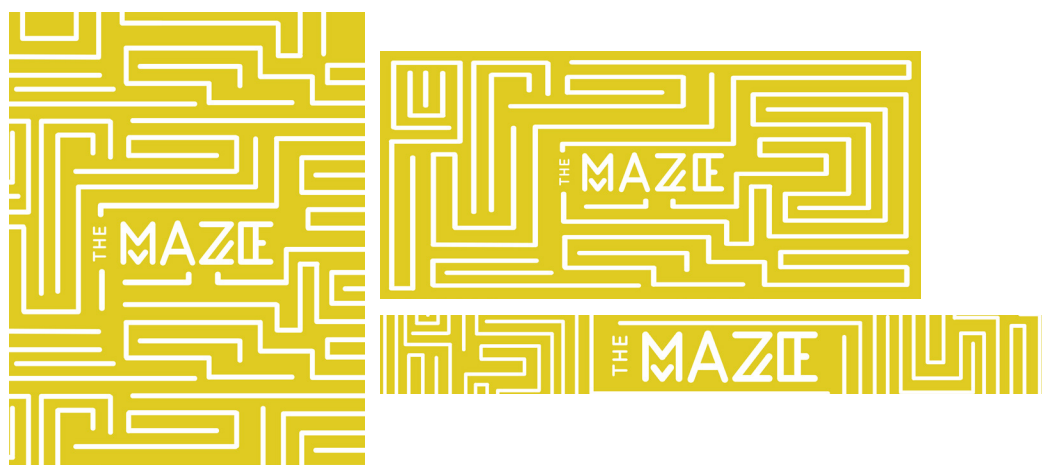
# BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE . . .

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

## BACKGROUND AND TITLE SLIDES



## PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK



## INSTAGRAM IMAGES



## LOGO TREATMENT



NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.

### **Small-Group Discussion Questions**

You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your sermon, or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to help students think critically about the sermon and what it means to them.

1. Have you ever been in a maze before? If so, what was it like? How long did it take you to get out?
2. When you hear the phrase "God's will," what comes to mind? In what ways is God's will like a maze? In what ways is it different?
3. What are the two different senses of God's will that we talked about tonight? What are some examples of each (from what we talked about tonight or others you know)? Why do you think this might be important for us to understand?
4. We talked about several different misconceptions of God's will. Have you heard any of these before or believed any of these before? How do you think Scripture addresses these misconceptions?
5. Look back at Proverbs 3:5-6. What does this passage teach us about God's will? How does God "direct our path as we trust in Him and seek His will"?
6. Look back at Romans 12:1-2. What does this passage teach us about God's will? How have you seen this play out in your life?
7. What is one specific way that you can apply something that you learned from the message tonight to your life this week?

# The Maze Sermon Series Overview

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*The Sermon Series Overview is a one-page glimpse of the stuff you need to know to begin preparing to preach.*

- **Session 1 Purpose:** To understand that authority is a responsibility, not a reward.
- **Scripture Passages:** Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 12:1-2
- **Supporting Passages:** Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 53:10; Matthew 7:21; I Thessalonians 5:18; Eph. 5:17
- **Session 1 Snapshot:** One of the biggest questions people ask is: "what is God's will for my life?" Whether it's the big stuff (college, job, marriage, etc.) or the smaller things (pepperoni vs. cheese pizza, Netflix vs. Disney Plus), most of us want to know what God wants for us to do (or not do). Sometimes when we try to figure all of this out, it can feel like a giant maze, and we're not sure which way to go. But what if God isn't hiding His will from us? What if his will is less of a maze than we realize? In this first session, we'll talk about several misconceptions of God's will and look at two different senses of God's will in the Bible. We'll also talk about how God directs our path when we trust in Him and seek His will.
- **What You Need:**

## Details on *The Maze* Sermon Series Outlines

If you've ever walked through a maze, then you can relate to both the fun and the frustration of finding your way out. The best mazes have lots of twists and turns along with several dead ends. Just when you're ready to give up, you find another pathway that could lead you out or lead you further into the maze. Sometimes when we try to follow God's will for our lives, it can seem like a maze. There are many twists and turns, and it's hard to know which way to go. But what if there was a Maze Runner who knew which path to take? And what if there was a map that could show us the next turn? In this series, we'll talk about how we can understand and follow God's will for our lives.

- **Session 1: Understanding God's Will:** In this first session, we'll talk about several misconceptions of God's will and look at two different senses of God's will in the Bible. We'll also talk about how God directs our path when we trust in Him and seek His will.
- **Session 2: Following God's Will:** In this session, we'll talk about how God's command to love Him and love others can help us navigate our way through the maze. We'll also talk about a map in the maze which can be found by asking four key questions.
- **Session 3: Running from God's Will (Part 1):** In this session, we'll introduce the story of Jonah – someone who literally ran in the opposite direction of God's will! We'll learn that God wasn't done with Jonah and that even when we run from His will, God still loves and pursues us.
- **Session 4: Living in God's Will (Part 2):** In this final session, we'll wrap up the story of Jonah by talking about how we can choose to live in God's will, even when we've gotten off track. We'll learn that as we navigate our way through the maze, God's purpose for our lives is bigger than we can imagine, and the stakes are greater than we may realize.

Imagine the impact we could have if we could know and follow God's will today!

## How To Use *The Maze* Sermon Series

This sermon series outline is designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. It provides the illustrations, pictures, Scriptures, background information, and application points that you will need to prepare

your lesson. It also includes discussion questions that could be used in a small group following the message, a parent page that gets families involved, and artwork for promotion or message support.

These sermons are designed to be useful for all types of groups and churches, and you should feel free to make adjustments that benefit your particular circumstance.

## I. Introduction

- a. Good evening and welcome! I'm so glad you're here as we start a new series tonight! How many of you have ever been in a maze before?
  - i. Maybe it was a little kid maze at a pumpkin patch back in elementary school. Even though it seems easy now, you probably had to hold your mom's hand back then.
  - ii. Maybe it was a cool box maze that you figured out in less than 5 minutes.
  - iii. Maybe it was one of those really hard mazes that you went through with a group of friends, and someone had to help you find your way out.
  - iv. *[TIP: Google some pics of different mazes around the US or World and show a few here as you talk. The more elaborate, the better. I found several great pics of mazes in England, another one in the shape of Coca-Cola and another with a Star Wars design!]*
- b. There are LOTS of different types of mazes, but it's all the same basic idea.
  - i. A maze is just a series of pathways to get you from point A to point B. Most of the time, you don't know exactly where you're going because you can't see the big picture.
  - ii. The best mazes have lots of different twists and turns along the way along with several dead ends. Just when you're ready to give up, you find a new pathway that could either lead you out or further into the maze.
  - iii. Depending on your personality, this can either be lots of fun or super-frustrating.
- c. The reality tonight is that for many of us, a maze is a pretty good picture of our daily life.
  - i. When you think about it, most of our lives boil down to a series of choices.
  - ii. If we choose one path or direction, it could be really good, or it could lead to a different destination that is bad.
  - iii. Sometimes in the middle of the maze, it's hard to know what path to take, so most of us end up just heading in a certain direction and hoping for the best.
  - iv. Some of these choices are pretty mundane
    1. Should I go with Lucky Charms or Frosted Flakes for breakfast?
    2. Should I stream something on Netflix or Disney Plus?
    3. Should I do Mexican or Italian for dinner? Or both?
  - v. Other choices are a bigger deal
    1. Who should I date? Or even: Am I ready to date?
    2. For Seniors: Where should I go to college? What should I major in?
    3. For later: What should I do with my life? Who should I marry?
- d. If you think about it long enough, all of this can be stressful, confusing, and overwhelming!
  - i. Some of us may feel like we're stuck in the maze at times because we struggle to know which way to go, even with the smaller stuff.
  - ii. For those of you who are Christians (already put your trust in Jesus Christ), you're probably asking a little different question instead of "which way should I go?"
  - iii. Your big question is probably something like, "Which way does God want me to go in the maze?" Another way to say it is, "What is God's will for my life?"
  - iv. This is probably one of the biggest questions that Christians ask, so we're going to spend the next few weeks answering this question.
  - v. We'll spend the first two weeks of this series introducing this idea of God's will and talking about how we can know it and follow it. In the last two weeks of this series, we'll look at how all this plays out in the life of a man named Jonah.
  - vi. Let's begin tonight by defining what we mean by the phrase "God's Will."

## II. Two Different Senses of God's Will

- a. If you google "Bible verses about God's will," you'll find lots of options.
  - i. For those of you who are game, google this for yourself sometime.
  - ii. For everyone else, let me sum it up for you by saying that in all these different passages, there are two different senses in which the Bible talks about God's will.
  - iii. As we read the Bible, we must understand the difference between them so we can know how to navigate this maze best.
- b. One sense is known as GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL.
  - i. This is also known as God's will of decree. God's sovereign will refers to His control over all things that happen in life.
  - ii. When it comes to God's sovereign will, it cannot be broken or changed by us or anyone else. God's sovereign will always come to pass, no matter what.
  - iii. [Read **Ephesians 1:11**]. God is sovereignly in control of this world, and what He decrees in this sense of His will always happen, from the smallest details to the biggest events.
  - iv. Another example of God's sovereign will is the reason we celebrate Easter. [Read **Isaiah 53:10**]. This is a hard verse to read but important to understand.
    1. What happened at the cross was not an accident.
    2. It was never outside of God's plan; it was part of His sovereign will.
    3. Even though it involved the actions of sinful people, it was God's will.
    4. The cross/resurrection was part of God's sovereign plan to bring us to Him.
  - v. The reason we need to know that God has a sovereign will is that we need to remember that we serve a big, powerful God.
    1. While we may not always understand why things happen the way they do, we can trust that God has an overarching plan/purpose for everything in life.
    2. This is all part of His sovereign will. God is 100% control, even when life feels out of control. We can rest in this truth!
- c. Another sense of His will is GOD'S COMMANDED WILL
  - i. This is what God commands us to do. When it comes to God's commanded will, this may or may not happen, and a lot of that depends on us.
  - ii. We can either choose to obey it or not, but either way, there are consequences.
  - iii. God's commanded will is described in a lot of different verses in the Bible, but we'll just look at two of them for now.
  - iv. [Read **I Timothy 2:3-4**]. This verse is pretty clear that God wants every single person (including everyone here tonight) to come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
    1. Here's a question. Is everyone in the world a Christian? What about everyone at your school, on your team, or in this community?
    2. The answer is NO, but how is this possible if it's God's will and God is all-powerful? The answer is that it's part of God's commanded will, but not everything in God's commanded will happen.
    3. Since God didn't want to make us into little robots, He gave us some choice in the matter, and not everyone chooses to put their trust in Jesus.
  - v. [Read **I Thessalonians 5:18**]. Here's another passage that talks about God's commanded will. In this verse, God's commanded will is for us to give thanks in all circumstances.
    1. My guess is that not everyone in this room has done this perfectly
    2. Since this is God's will for us, it's probably something we should work on.
    3. In this series, we'll focus a little more on this second sense of God's will.

## III. Three Misconceptions About God's Will

- a. Now that we've defined some terms, we'll spend a few minutes talking about several misconceptions of God's will.
- i. The reality is that "God's will" is a loaded phrase.
  - ii. People have some crazy ideas about what this means.
  - iii. If we're not careful, we'll buy into some of these ideas, but this will only lead to a lot of confusion and disappointment. Here are three misconceptions of God's will:
- b. One misconception is: GOD'S WILL IS FOR US ALL TO BE HAPPY, HEALTHY AND WEALTHY.
- i. I don't know if you have heard this before or not, but this is something people talk about. Some churches preach this as gospel truth, but this is false.
  - ii. Don't hear me wrong if you are currently happy, healthy, and wealthy, good for you. I'm not saying you're living in sin or out of God's will.
  - iii. Instead, I just want to clarify that this is not God's primary goal for everyone. If that were true, Jesus would not have been in God's will. Read all of Isaiah 53 some time.
  - iv. The truth is that God is more concerned with our holiness than our happiness. [Read **I Peter 1:15-16**]. To be clear, this does not mean that God wants us to walk around sad and depressed all the time.
  - v. Rather, He wants us to be holy, which includes both times of joy and sorrow. It's through suffering and hard times that we learn to cling to God and grow in our faith.
- c. Another misconception is: GOD'S WILL IS THE SAFEST PLACE TO BE.
- i. I have heard this one a lot, but is it true?
  - ii. Spend some time reading through the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. Does that sound safe? People were tortured, stoned, and sawed in two for following God's will!
  - iii. Just to be clear, I am not saying that God's will is for you to experience this level of persecution for your faith, but we need to recognize that this happens, even still today.
  - iv. How arrogant would it be for us to claim that these people were not living in God's will because they weren't "safe."
  - v. This doesn't mean we should live reckless, stupid lives and take unnecessary risks, but it does mean that sometimes following God's will can be dangerous.
  - vi. *[Tip: This is a good place to tell a story about someone who followed God's will that led to an unsafe situation. I told the story of Jim Elliot, a missionary to an indigenous tribe in Ecuador who was killed while trying to share the gospel. However, his wife and daughter would later return to this tribe, and many people followed Christ as a result. You can google more details about this story or tell your own].*
- d. The third misconception about God's will is: GOD IS HIDING HIS WILL FROM US.
- i. Sometimes when we're running through this maze of life, it may seem like God is trying to hide His will from us, but nothing could be further from the truth.
  - ii. The reality is that God very much wants us to know His will. [Read **Ephesians 5:17**].
  - iii. In the book *Follow Me*, David Platt says: "What if [God's will] was never hidden from us in the first place? What if God the Father has not sent his children on a cosmic Easter egg hunt to discover his will while he sits back in heaven saying, "You're getting colder...warmer...colder..."? And what if searching for God's will like this misses the entire point of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?"
  - iv. While we may be confused by God's will at times, it doesn't mean He is hiding it from us. Sometimes the answer is right in front of us!

#### IV. What the Bible Says About God's Will

- a. The question we need to wrestle with tonight is: how do we know which path to take? In the middle of the maze, should we go left or right, should we slow down, speed up or backtrack?



- i. Those are great questions, and that is really what this series is all about.
- ii. So tonight we're going to look at just two more passages that give us some direction about how we can know God's will.
- iii. Then over the next several weeks, we'll continue this conversation both here and in small groups.

b. [Read **Proverbs 3:5-6**]. We began tonight by saying that our lives can feel sort of like a maze at times. Lots of options, lots of pathways, and if we choose path A over path B, there will be consequences (for good or for bad).

- i. How do we know which path to take? This passage in Proverbs (a book all about God's wisdom) says, "he will show you which path to take." *[Tip: Use whatever translation you want, but this is from the NLT which is pretty clear and easy for teens to understand].*
- ii. How does God do this? The verse gives us two specific things we need to do:
  1. First, we are to trust God with all our heart. This means full, complete trust of God. It's the kind of trust that a child has when he's learning how to swim, and he jumps into his dad's arms in the pool for the first time. What would it look like for us to trust God like that? Jumping into the deep end, right into God's arms, knowing that He's got you! Do you trust God at that level?
  2. Next, we are to seek His will in all we do. This means seeking God in every part of life. It means that we don't separate our life into compartments: our church life, home life, school life, sports life, etc. Rather, it's our life in Christ and seeking His will in everything: family, school, friends, dating, job, sports, etc.

c. Here's the BIG IDEA that I want us to grab onto tonight: GOD DIRECTS OUR PATH AS WE TRUST IN HIM AND SEEK HIS WILL.

- i. While I'm sure we would prefer for God to send us a post, text, tweet or snap, He chose to reveal His will to us in the context of a relationship!
- ii. The more we get to know God, the better we will understand His will.
- iii. *[Tip: Share a story here of someone you have been in a relationship with for a long time, possibly a spouse. I talked about my marriage with my wife and how I know what she really likes (romantic comedies, healthy foods, some occasional alone time) and really dislikes with a passion (horror movies, fried food, and being the center of attention). After many years of marriage, I don't have to ask her about these things. I already know her will because I know her well. It works the same way with God as we get to know Him].*
- iv. God directs our path as we trust in Him and seek His will.

d. [Read **Romans 12:1-2**]. This is another great passage that can help us understand God's will for our lives. It's saying that our whole lives ought to be lived as a sacrifice to God.

- i. Instead of just worshipping God on a Sunday or Wednesday (or whenever we go to church), we should worship God as we live our lives day by day (at school, at home, with our friends and wherever we are).
- ii. This doesn't mean that we walk around singing the latest worship songs, but that our daily life reflects the worth and value of God in our lives.
- iii. This verse is also saying that we shouldn't try to copy the culture around us, the "behavior and customs of the world."
- iv. Instead, we should allow God to transform us into a "new person" by changing the way we think. This means that God is at work in us to help us think and see things in a different way. Some of you have already experienced this; others are in process.
- v. As God transforms us to be more like Him, we will learn His will for us, both in the bigger decisions and in the smaller stuff.

- vi. I love how God's will is described in the NLT translation of this verse: "good, pleasing and perfect."
- vii. *[Tip: As we near the conclusion of this message, this would be another good spot for a story to illustrate this truth. Think through a specific story in your life about when you had to trust someone else to direct you or come through for you, even when you couldn't see how things were going to work out. I shared a story about rock climbing and getting stuck halfway up the cliff. The person at the top (who had already gone before me and could see the big picture) was able to look down and see exactly where I needed to put my feet and hands, and he shouted down directions. As I followed these directions step by step, I was able to work my way to the top].*

## V. Conclusion

- a. When it comes to following God's will, I want you to know that God sees the big picture. He knows what is best, and He knows exactly what path we need to take.
  - i. God does have a will for your life. He is not trying to hide it from you.
  - ii. Rather, He communicates it to us through His Word and in the context of relationship.
  - iii. God directs our path as we trust in Him and seek His will.
- b. For some of you tonight, I know that you may feel a little bit stuck in the maze right now.
  - i. You may have taken some wrong turns in life or headed down some pathways that didn't end up where you hoped or thought.
  - ii. You may have even come across some dead ends and had to backtrack your steps a bit.
  - iii. If that's you, I want you to know it's OK. God loves you more than you know. He is not done with you. He has not written you off. Instead, He wants you to trust Him and seek Him. As you do that, He will reveal His will to you. Whatever that is, know that it's "good, pleasing and perfect."
- c. As we continue in this series, we'll talk a lot more about this maze of life and how we can know God's will. While I don't know exactly what His will is for everyone here, I can say with confidence that God's will for you begins with knowing God in a personal way.
  - i. God's will begins with you putting your faith in Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord.
  - ii. If there has never been a time when you have taken that step, we would love to chat with you more about that tonight. As we had to small groups in just a minute, be sure to talk with your leader about this.
  - iii. If you have already taken this step and put your trust in Jesus, how do you think God wants you to respond to Him tonight? Let's pray.