

Seeking And Receiving Guidance From God

(by Bill Turner & Alister Hamilton)

David was amazed that an insignificant person like himself could experience such tender thoughtful guidance, and amazing providential foresight and planning from God. Psalm 8v3,4, 139v5,6,9-16. God has not overruled our wills, but He has, in His great wisdom, planned for His children before the foundation of the world, and has taken into account everything about us, our failures as well as our successes. Rom 8v28-30, Rev 13v8, Titus 1v1,2. The guidance we receive now was conceived and foreknown before creation, no emergency can take our heavenly Father by surprise. Divine guidance is an accepted fact in Scripture, the God who has led us to Calvary, will lead us on. John 16v13, Rom 8v14. It is this Divine guidance and Divine presence that marks us out from the world. Exodus 33v12-16. God's glory cloud uplifts, protects and guides His people. Exodus 13v21,22, 14v19,20,24, Psalm 78v14, 99v7, 105v39, Neh 9v19. The Lord is our Shepherd, and He will lead us, if we will be meek and teachable. Psalm 23v1,2,5, 25v5,9, 32v8, John 10v3,4. God will guide us continually and eternally. Isaiah 58v11, Psalm 48v14, Rev 7v15-17, 21v1-4. The Holy Spirit comes to guide us into truth, John 16v13, into a life of prayer, worship, and communion, John 4v23,24, 15v1-11; and into a life of holiness and service. John 17v17-19. To miss God's plan and guidance for our life is a tragedy, but to see, follow, and experience God's guidance and plans, transforms the life and fills it with joy. Psalm 16v11, Eph 3v9. Human guidance is not enough; we need the guidance of God. Prov 14v12, 16v25, Jer 10v23, Matt 7v13-29.

God's gives guidance to seekers for guidance; this means we MUST be diligent in prayer. Heb 11v6. If Jesus needed to spend a night in prayer when seeking guidance; we certainly cannot expect guidance from God without earnestly seeking Him. Luke 6v12-16. This means that we will have to be meek and teachable, Greek, "praotes." Matt 5v5, 11v29, James 1v21, 2Cor 10v1, Psalm 25v9. Our aim in seeking guidance must be to glorify God, not ourselves, our church, or our denomination. We must seek God intelligently; we must not be like the horse or the mule; that is, lacking in wisdom and discernment. Psalm 32v8-10. We must be wise and spiritual enough, and big enough in God to take the responsibility that the guidance brings. **God's guidance does not lead to the armchair, but rather to sacrifice and service.** Matt 19v27-30.

1) God Will Guide Us By His Word

a) Through definite commands and instructions, and clear and definite warnings

Failure to observe God's will revealed in His Word, will frustrate God's will for us; the Almighty cannot fulfil His wonderful plans for us if we are wilfully disobedient. Rom 10v21. If we surrender to the Lordship of Jesus, we will obey the commands He has given in His Word. Prov 3v5,6, John 15v13-17, Rom 12v1,2. Much of God's will for us is revealed in God's Word, it gives us His directions for daily living; failure to realise this will produce a feeling of frustration. God's Word clearly shows us the way to revival, and revivals have been produced by people listening to the reading of the Scriptures. 2Chron 34v14-33, Neh 8v1-18, Acts.2v1-47. We should read the Scriptures prayerfully and unhurriedly, and meditate upon them. Psalm 1v1-6. When we do this, a text may suddenly light up and jump off the page at us, and give us the spiritual help and guidance we need. However, **we should never use the Bible like a book of magic, do not open it and pick out a text at random, or you may get some very erroneous guidance, use the Scriptures that specifically apply to your situation just like Jesus did.**

We must not seek guidance for things where God has already given definite directions in His Word, or said a definite "No" or "Yes" in His Word, for we already have the answer. For example. We are not to marry an unbeliever. 2Cor 6v14, 1Cor 7v39. The need for regular fellowship, prayer and service. Heb 10v25, Matt 28v18-20, Acts 8v1-4. The need for moral purity and sanctified living. Matt 7v15-27, 1Cor 6v1-20. **God's guidance will never be contrary to God's Word**, and any guidance that contradicts God's Word must be rejected. Isaiah 8v19,20. Scripture must be interpreted within its context, and within the general tenor of Scripture and not twisted. 2Pet 3v15-18. We will be spiritually safe as we follow the revealed will of God His Word.

b) Through general principles on doubtful matters

There are some situations which the Bible does not cover, but it does give us some relevant principles to guide us, they are:-

1. The principle of profitability and edification. 1Cor 6v12, 10v23,24, Heb 12v1-17.
2. The principle of abstinence from appearance of evil. 1Thess 5v22.
3. The principle of consideration of others; perhaps weaker Christians. Rom 14v1-23, N.B. v13.
4. The principle of doing all things to God's glory. 1Cor 10v31-33.
5. The earnest love of others will save us from mistakes in doubtful matters. Rom 14v14.

2) God Will Guide Us By His Spirit

a) Sometimes only direct guidance from God can meet our needs

In many circumstances of life, there are no specific commands or general principles of Scripture to cover our situation; on such occasions we need the direct guidance of God. God can give us a 'word of wisdom' to direct our way, there are many cases in the Scriptures where God has done this. (i.e. Acts 22v17-21, 1Cor 12v7-11). God will guide us with His eye. Psalm 32v8. God can enlighten our judgement, or give a deep conviction on certain lines, as well as direct us by voice, vision, dream, sign and token. Guidance nearly always comes by personal revelation by word of wisdom, and not by tongues and interpretation, or prophecy. In really important matters I have found the Lord has sometimes warned and given guidance before the circumstances, that demand Divine guidance, have arisen. It is quite wrong to speak in tongues and expect God to give us specific guidance in the interpretation. Divine guidance is certainly not as simple as this. **We cannot force God to speak how or when we want**, we should wait until He inspires.

b) Sometimes we need to search our hearts before God can guide us

God often allows difficult circumstances, and delays in receiving His guidance, to search and purify our hearts and motives. God searches our hearts and allows circumstances and trials to expose them. 2Chron 16v9, 32v31, Rev 2v23, Luke 22v61,62, Job 1 and 2, N.B. Job 1v22, 2v10. This is one of the main reasons why we do not usually receive "instant guidance." We read in Jer 42v1-7, that Jeremiah earnestly sought God for ten days before he received the guidance that he required.

Delays in receiving guidance can be a great blessing, because the earnest seeking of God's guidance and blessing, changes us and prepares us for the service that the guidance brings. In really important matters, or major difficulties, I have found the Lord has warned, or given guidance even before major events have happened; this has been by a thought to my spirit accompanied by an anointing. I have never experienced direct guidance by prophecy, or by tongues and interpretation from others; these have sometimes contained general assurances of guidance, but they seldom contain specific details of guidance. The Lord likes to give us guidance that we will have no doubts over, and so **generally, in the church, God will only confirm what He has already revealed to us**. This confirmation is particularly blessed, when the Christian who is giving the prophesy or interpretation, knows nothing of our circumstances, or the desires of our heart.

c) The New Testament privileges and responsibilities in seeking guidance

In the Old Testament, people went to proven prophetic ministries like Samuel, Huldah, and Jeremiah, to enquire of God for personal guidance. 1Sam 9v9, etc. However, in this New Covenant Age of Grace, this aspect of prophetic ministry has been greatly modified and changed. The Old Testament prophet foretold, led and directed people; the New Testament prophet foretells, warns in emergency, and may confirm God's guidance to a Christian, but do not give orders and direct the lives and acts of Christians. **Under the New Covenant, we have a personal responsibility to seek God for ourselves. The Scripture tells us that under the New Covenant we are more privileged than the greatest Old Testament prophet, every Christian who abides in Christ, walks with God, and lives in the Spirit, can experience God's guidance, and be personally led by the Holy Spirit.** Matt 11v11, 13v16,17, John 14v16-26, 16v7-15, Rom 8v14. The new relationship of sonship, brings a new experience of personal guidance. 1John 3v1-3, 1v5-7, Rom 8v12-17. We are told in Heb 8v8-13, that the new covenant does away with one person

directing another in the will of God, for "they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'know the Lord,' for all shall know me from the least unto the greatest." We are also told in Heb 10v19-22, that the veil is gone, and that the blood of Christ has made it possible for every child of God to come right into the presence of God. Indeed, all Christians are personally invited to come directly to the Father and Son for grace and mercy and everything else that we need, and this includes Divine guidance. Heb 4v14-16.

d) Beware of dominating directive guidance

To direct others by prophecy in such things as marriage, or their work for God is quite unscriptural in this dispensation: these things are between a Christian and their Saviour, as Peter found out in John 21v20-22, when he tried, with genuine concern and love, to find out Christ's plans for John. God can use the members of the body of Christ, to reveal and meet a person's crushing need or to confirm guidance. God can warn of great dangers ahead, and so deliver Christians from danger in an emergency, but to direct them in life's everyday affairs, or Christian work by supposed prophecy, is quite another matter, and **is definitely wrong! Each Christian has the privilege and responsibility to seek God for themselves for Divine guidance.** We can all experience personal direction from God, but great care should be taken when we are making important decisions, and guidance from others should be treated with the greatest caution and **NEVER** swallowed without question.

e) God's peace will witness to God's guidance

The peace of God is a simple yet profound method of guidance, and test of guidance. **God's will is ALWAYS confirmed by God's peace.** Phil 4v6,7, Col 3v15. We can have God's peace even when circumstances are trying and dark and there is bitter persecution. Be sure that the peace of God is with you in your decisions; **if there is no peace; stop what you are doing, or the way you are going. God's way is confirmed by God's peace.** This is the simplest way of receiving a word of wisdom from God, and it is a valuable way of confirming Divine guidance. However, remember that the Devil is the accuser of the brethren, and he tries to spoil our peace. Rev 12v10. **The voice of Satan is harsh and jarring even when we are right, the voice of God is gentle and firm, even when we are wrong.** By losing God's peace, I do not mean that we get into a fretful state; we have the gentle but firm voice of God speaking to our hearts and informing us that we have done wrong, or are going on the wrong way, and need to retrace our steps. **On important matters, God will not just guide us by giving us His peace, He will speak to us in several ways and several times, so avoid hasty decisions, the more important a decision is, the less hasty it should be.**

3) God Will Guide Us Through Providential Circumstances. Rom 8v28

a) Watch for the divinely directed providence of God

Some things that happen to us are anything but coincidences; they are the very definite providence of God. When circumstances, the Spirit, and the Word of God agree, we can be sure that God is guiding us, if they do not agree, then we should doubt our guidance. Watch for openings, an open door, a need put to us; if we are listening to the whispers of Jesus, we may hear Him say, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Isaiah 30v21. Watch for even the small and trivial happenings on certain occasions, a chance meeting, or word, has on some occasions led to great things and proved to be God's guidance. On these occasions, there will be a very powerful and obvious presence of God, and we will realise that it is God's providential intervention and guidance.

b) God's stops are often just as important as His directions to go

Be prepared to let God stop you by circumstances, He will do this if we are sincere and desire His guidance, and do not insist on our own way. In Acts 16v6,7, God stopped Paul and his helpers from going in a certain direction, and we should be prepared for God's checks and stops through circumstances and the Spirit, Jesus will not let us go astray, if we are sincere, teachable, and want to do His will. "The stops, as well as the steps, of a good man are ordered by the Lord," and if we do not realise it at the time, we do later. Acts 16v6-10.

c) The perfect timing of our Father's Divine purposes

When God guides us things can be carefully timed, which makes it possible for us to miss something great if we do not know or realise the time. If we live close to God, we will hear the voice of Jesus directing us, and how and when to act. Everything was perfectly planned and timed in the life of Christ, He spoke of "mine hour," and "my time," John 2v4, 7v6,8, 12v23-27, He "fulfilled," and "filled out the full," God's plans and prophetic Word. Matt 1v22, 2v15,17,23, 8v17, 12v15-21, 13v34,35, 21v4,5, 26v54-56, 27v6-10, Luke 4v21, John 12v37-41, 13v18, 15v25, 19v24,34-37. See John 4v4, "must needs," and John 5v19,20,30. We can receive unconscious guidance from God without even realising it. Indeed, sometimes it is only as we look back that we realise that we have enjoyed the providential guidance of God.

4) God Will Guide Through His People. Prov 11v14

a) God often gives us guidance when in Christian fellowship

Fellowship is not only a rich way of living on a higher Christian plane; it can be a definite channel of Divine guidance. We should seek and consider the wise counsel of mature Christians, when we feel that it is necessary; for they can give us advice and counsel that will indicate God's path. However, it must be counsel on their part and not decision. Be very careful of interested parties, or strong personalities with an axe to grind; do not let them counsel you to their decision; the decision should be your decision and not the decision of other people.

b) Godly Christians can often give us Divine counsel and guidance

Wise counsel from others can preserve us from great danger, and, fellowship with other Christians is a good cure for spiritual blind spots. We may hear God's voice speaking to us through others, when we have been deaf to it ourselves, for example, a man who indulged his children was told by two good friends, "You are an Eli," 1Sam.3v13., It made him realise his mistake. **Young Christians especially need the safeguard of mature spiritual guidance to preserve them from error and fanaticism.** Acts 14v23, 1Pet 5v1-11. Under the New Covenant, we have a personal responsibility to seek God for ourselves, and so it is wrong to rely on other people directing us by prophecy or revelation. A person may sometimes have a revelation for us, particularly in an emergency, but the decisions are ours. John 21v20,21, Acts.11v27-30, 21v10-13, Rom 8v14-17, Heb 8v10,11. However, it is sometimes necessary to go to a wise and spiritual person and ask them to weigh up a situation for you and give their advice, but beware of strong personalities, and don't let them counsel you to their decision.

5) God Will Guide Us Through A Sanctified Common Sense. Rom 12v1-3, 15v22-33

a) Don't be like a horse or a mule, whose every movement needs guidance

Though it is not in man to guide his footsteps, without the help of God, Jer 10v23, many problems of guidance can be solved by a sanctified common-sense. God says we should not be like the horse or the mule that need to be guided in every movement. Psalm 32v8,9. We do not need God's guidance for everything; we will get that when we need it, we must use our common sense and make an intelligent choice. "Where can I do the most good?" will answer the vast majority of problems of guidance. Wesley said that he would, "Lay my reasonings at Thy feet," and as we think things over prayerfully in God's presence, we will find our thoughts will be clarified and the best thing to do will become obvious.

b) Divine guidance does not rule out discussion

The fact that there is such a thing as Divine guidance, does not mean that there is no place for discussion and common sense in the Christian life, there will always be a need for them. Acts 15v1,2,7,28. Note: Acts 15v28, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." See also Acts 6v3, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, who we may appoint over this business." God can guide us by the gifts of the Spirit, but we must use our common sense and keep

things in proportion. If we do not get a definite word from the Lord in a certain circumstance, let us prayerfully do the thing that we think is best.

5) God Will Guide Us By Our Talents, Personality, And Spiritual Ministry

a) Our Lord's yoke for us is a perfect fit. Matt 11v28-30

We should realise that God will never guide us into a work that we are not spiritually equipped to do; the work that God gives us to do will fit us perfectly. We need to be honest with ourselves and recognise the limits of our ministry, and give place to the ministries of others. Rom 12v10. Those who fight for a position and work in Christ's Church they cannot fulfil, are in for heavy judgement when they meet our Saviour. James 3v1. God will always prepare us for any work He desires us to perform. We should ask ourselves, "What ministry has God called me to?" Have I responded to that call, and prepared myself, so that God can give me a ministry?" "Has the ministry that God has given to me matured enough for God to give me a higher ministry?" Acts 13v1-4. **We must not only have a call to do a work for God, we must have received the spiritual equipment to perform that work.** The desire to do a work for God is not enough, good as it is, we must ask ourselves what ministry we possess from God. Is it a local ministry, or is it a wider ministry? 1Cor 12v28, Rom 12v3-8.

b) Our talents, gifts and ministries make a way for us

We are told in Prov 18v16 that, "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men." The gifts and ministries that God has given us will obviously point to God's way and will for us. We will sometimes find God's call coming to us through the invitations and pleas for help from others who need the ministry that God has given to us. What we are and what God has given to us, will decide what God will do with us. The call and guidance of God take into account all that we have and are, our talents, temperament, character, responsibilities, environment, and spiritual qualities and ministry. God considers all that we are and plans accordingly, He does not do violence to our personality, He finds the best use for it. 2Tim 2v20-26. **Very often the things that we would like to do for God, because of our abilities and compassionate feelings, are the very things that God wants us to do for Him.**

c) Most of our service for God, is in our home and work situations

The calling of God varies very greatly, and our ministries in churches are but part of our Christian call. Paul makes it clear in Col 3v16-25, that family responsibilities and secular work carried out as a sacred service to the Lord, will result in us receiving Christ's "Well done," and our heavenly inheritance. It is wonderfully encouraging to realise that our dear Lord Jesus looks upon loving concern and care in family life and work life as sacred service for Him. Indeed, most of our work for God is in our home and work situations. The sooner we grasp the fact that God has given us a task that is uniquely ours, the better it will be for us. When we realise that God has given us, in our homes, and secular and church work, a task for Him, an opportunity of witness by life and lip, which no one else can do quite like us; we will eagerly say, "Lord send me." Isaiah 6v8. Let us serve God in our daily lives, and be open to what He wants to do through us, and let us fulfil it to the best of our ability.

6) What To Do When Guidance From God Is Not Apparent

a) Do what God last told you to do, until He tells you otherwise

On the occasions when we pray for guidance and none is forthcoming, we should commit the whole matter to God in prayer, and obey the golden rule for guidance, **"Do what God last told you to do, until He directs you otherwise."** We should keep our ears open to the whispers of Jesus, but we should not be continually looking for signs and impressions in everything; there are great areas in the routines of life that don't need guidance, they need common-sense and good judgement Psalm 32v8,9. If God desires us to meet a need, He can break into our routines, as He did with Moses, Ananias and Peter, so don't be anxious about missing God's way. Exodus 3v1-12, Acts 9v10-19, 10v9-19. We need to make sure that the guidance we seek is not escapism, God's guidance often led into trouble, not out of it. Acts.16v6-11,22-25. We also see that guidance was given to people who were in real need, or in the path of duty and actively serving

God, "Get going to get guidance," is a good maxim, if we are on the stretch for God, we will find guidance from God will come much more easily than if we are resting on our laurels.

b) Our Good Shepherd will always protect and guide us

The Lord is our Shepherd and He has promised to be our guide forever, and even when we are not conscious of His guidance, He is always with us to protect us. In the dark valleys of life, we can always say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for THOU art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." God guarantees His Presence even when His guidance is not manifest. Joseph did not murmur against God when everything went wrong, he still loved God, and had His Presence in his dark trials, God used them to develop his prophetic ministry. Gen 40v1-22, 41v14-44, Gen 39v2-4,21-23. The Lord is our Shepherd, and will never fail or forsake us, He will bring us through. Psalm 23, 48v14, Heb 11v6, 13v5-8. He can and will overrule in all our decisions and circumstances. God is still on the throne. Rev 4v2-11.

There is a saying that goes like this: 'A Church can only go forward on its knees,' this is also true for any Christian.

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