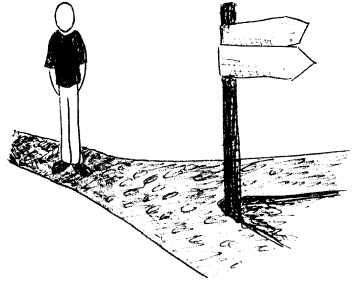


guidance

We all make decisions every day. Some of these are of little importance, others have far reaching consequences for us and other people. As Christians we wish to make wise decisions in line with God's will.



● Why we need guidance

* Proverbs 14:12

What about our own ideas? _____

Human beings are fallible. Our judgment is flawed and we often make mistakes. We need God to guide us.

● God promises to guide us

Many times God says that he wishes to lead, guide and help us. Consider these promises:

* Psalm 23:1-3, 32:8, 48:14

* Isaiah 30:21, 42:16, 58:9-11

● Receiving guidance

* Proverbs 3:5-6 What three things do we need to do?

• _____

• _____

• _____

What else is required?

* Psalm 25:9 _____

* Isaiah 48:17-18 _____

Heartsearch

Do you really believe that God has your best interests at heart and that he can be fully trusted? _____

Are you prepared to consult your Father in all things and allow him to guide you - even if the answer might not be what you want? _____

* Matt 26:39 Your will be done!



● General guidance — the Bible

* Psalm 119:105 What is the word of God? _____

There are many matters of guidance which can be easily resolved by reading the Bible. In it you will find guidelines for living and examples from people's lives. You will also learn more about the personality, character and will of God. Other methods of guidance can be checked against the written word of God.

● Conscience and wisdom

* Jeremiah 31:33-34

Where is the law of God under the new covenant? _____

* Romans 12:2

What can we do when our minds are renewed? _____

For the believer filled with the Holy Spirit, it should be possible to discover the will of God because of our relationship with him. This is often a clear but unspectacular knowledge of the right course of action.

● God speaks directly

* Acts 8:26-13:3 This passage is packed with guidance. Write the names of people guided in these ways (some in more than one way).

A voice _____ ☐

A vision _____ ☐

An angel _____ ☐

The (Holy) Spirit _____ ☐



Tick the boxes if you have experienced any of these.

Throughout the Bible it is normal for people to be guided supernaturally by dreams, visions, angels, signs and the voice of God.

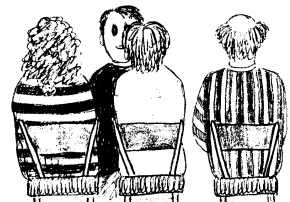
Do you expect God to speak to you in these ways?

● Advice and counsel

* Proverbs 15:22

When do plans fail? _____

When do plans succeed? _____



* Proverbs 12:15

What kind of person listens to advice? _____

It is human nature to be independent and think that we know best. God has given us many people who are able to advise us — our parents, relatives, church leaders, friends, people at work, older people etc. It is important to take advice *before we make our decision and while the options are still open*. Include the advice of others in *your* decision making.

How good are you at taking advice?

☐ very good ☐ good ☐ poor ☐ very poor

Who are your main advisors in the big decisions of life?

Do you only ask advice from those whom you think will agree with you?



Heartsearch

● The prophetic word

A special kind of advice is the prophetic word. In the Bible we find kings and other people going to prophets to seek the word of the Lord for particular situations.

* 1 Samuel 9:1-20

Why did Saul go to Samuel? _____

What other guidance did Samuel give? _____



If you seek guidance from a prophet you might get a surprise like Saul did! It is always important to test prophetic advice against other ways of guidance. Prophets can be wrong like anybody else.

Have you ever been guided by a prophetic word? If so, when and how?

* 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 Four things we should do.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

● Circumstances

* 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 * 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 * 1 Thess 2:18

God can guide us through events and through “open doors”. We should be careful, however, with this kind of guidance or we may be pushed to and fro by circumstances. Sometimes the devil can hinder us and we may need to take a course of action in spite of the circumstances. We need wisdom and to include the many ways in which God guides.

How much do you seek God's guidance in your life?
Are you seeking guidance at the moment and can you put the ideas from this study into action?

guidance

extra thought and discussion

• Asking God for guidance

Don't be afraid to ask God for guidance. You will find many such requests in the Bible (Ps 25:4-5, 27:11, 43:3, 61:2, 143:7-10, 119:133, Jer 6:16).

• Conscience

Our conscience is our internal indicator of right and wrong (Rom 2:14-15). If we do right we have a clear conscience (Acts 24:16, 1 Peter 3:16) and if we do wrong we have a guilty conscience (Ps 51).

Unfortunately as sinful human beings our consciences can be weak (1 Cor 8:7), seared (1 Tim 4:2) or corrupted (Titus 1:15) and so they are not perfect indicators of right and wrong (Eph 4:17-19). Jesus came both to cleanse our guilty consciences by his death on the cross (Heb 10:19-22) and to correct our faulty consciences by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

• Guidance by events

• **Circumstances** — These are the normal events of life happening around us which direct our lives (Josh 2:23-24, Ruth 2:2-3, Acts 6:1-4, 20:3).

• **Signs** — Signs are unusual, unlikely or supernatural events which convince us that God is directing us in a particular way (Ex 13:21-22, Judg 7:9-15).

• **Fleece** — This is named after Gideon's fleece (Judg 6:36-40). Guidance is sought by asking for a specific sign (Gen 24:10-27).

• **Vow** — A vow is a solemn promise made to God that if certain events take place then you will pursue a course of action (Gen 28:20-22). Vows should not be taken lightly (Deut 23:21-23, Judg 11:29-40, Jer 42:1-43:4).

• **Chance** — This is drawing lots, tossing a coin or using some other chance method to make a decision (1 Sam 14:36-42, Prov 16:33, Jonah 1:7, Acts 1:26) — not recommended! It is possible that the Urim and Thummim used by the priests in the Old Testament relied on this method (Ex 28:30, Num 27:21).

• Forbidden methods of guidance

Some methods of guidance are clearly forbidden (Lev 19:31, Deut 18:10-12, Is 8:19-20).

• Fortune telling, divination, omens

- Mediums, spiritists and consulting the dead
- Occult practices, witchcraft and sorcery

• Free choice and God's control

The Bible clearly teaches that God is in overall charge of the universe, yet within that we have our own free choice. This is hard for us to understand! God calls, rules and guides — we can choose to align our lives with his purposes or we can disobey and step outside God's will. We are responsible for our decisions and our choices.

• **God's control** — Ps 135:6, Rom 8:28-30, Eph 1:3-14, Gal 1:15, James 4:13-15

• **Our choice** — Josh 24:15, Deut 30:19

• **Both** — Prov 16:9, Acts 2:23

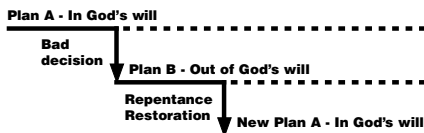
• Back on track - redemption

We make bad decisions for different reasons.

• In all good faith we sought guidance, believing at the time that the decision was right, but we were mistaken — we have a good God and can be sure that he will help us through our difficulties.

• Or it may be that we did not seek guidance from God or were rebellious in our decision — we need to repent of our actions and our lack of seeking God, then he will help us through our difficulties.

We may feel that we have made serious mistakes and have lost God's plan for our lives. But God is a God of redemption and restoration and is capable of transforming a dreadful error into something good. Reflect on David's sin with Bathsheba, how he repented, and the birth of Solomon (2 Sam 11-12). Plan A becomes plan B but it can be converted by God into another glorious plan A.



There is nothing that God cannot do!

• Other guidance verses

• **Inquiring of the Lord** — 1 Sam 23:1-6, 28:5-7, 30:7-8, 2 Sam 2:1-2, 5:17-25

• **The word of God** — Ps 19:7-11, Ps 119:97-104, 129-136, 2 Tim 3:16-17

• **The Holy Spirit** — John 16:13, Rom 8:14

• **Wisdom** — Prov 2:1-11, 1 Kings 3:4-15, James 1:5-6