



Guidance

Psalm 119: 133 NIV

Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

How Much Do You Want God To Guide You?

It is not universally accepted that God actually guides people. Many in fact think otherwise, that the Lord pretty much has nothing to do with our everyday lives. He puts us together and then lets us fend for ourselves until we die. Even devoted Christians have doubts about how much God actually affects the course of our day. The big things perhaps He directs but they question the claims of those who believe the Lord cares about the details of our mundane activities. What does God care about whether we eat noodles or rice or mow the lawn or pay the bills? The assumption is that the world mostly operates on auto pilot and God just checks in when something important is about to happen.

The Bible indicates though that God is not a distant observer of our lives but intimately involved in the details. The prayer of the psalmist certainly indicates this is so. **“Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me”** is a plea for God to micromanage life, to guide even the smallest parts of the day. The last part of the verse makes it clear that if God doesn’t lead us through the details of the moment, we can be trapped by sin. The question constantly asked in scripture in various forms is the impossibility of really knowing what to do at any given moment if God is not helping you with your decisions. You don’t have enough data, enough information to make informed decisions without the Lord giving you input. Add to that the influence of Satan and the demonic realm to put you in the wrong direction, or to be more blunt, in poisonous and self-destructive ways and we are in a terrible fix if we don’t have God guiding us.

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Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory...

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Here are two examples that illustrate the way God works with us. In Acts 5 is the noteworthy account of Peter confronting one of the members of the church at Jerusalem. Ananias and Sapphira sold a field and donated part of the selling price to the ministry of the church. This of course was fine except that they lied to everyone about the selling price. The couple sold it for more than what they gave to the church but made a show of saying they gave all they received to the church. Peter confronted first Ananias about the lie. Now here is the question. How did Peter know Ananias lied? The assumption is that the Holy Spirit told him somehow. But let's suppose Peter found out in some other way...some more natural and normal way. As soon as Ananias was confronted, he fell down and died. Three hours later his wife Sapphira walked in the room and Peter then confronted her. This time though he added the terrifying pronouncement. **The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.** (Acts 5:9b) Now we can perhaps see how Peter might have known Ananias and Sapphira lied about how much they received for selling their field but how would he have known instantly that Sapphira would die on the spot? Unless there was foul play which I think we are in agreement there wasn't, Peter somehow knew Sapphira would die instantly when she was confronted. How did he know that?

In Acts 16:6 is the offhand comment that Paul and his companions were kept from preaching in Asia by the Holy Spirit. **Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.** (Acts 16: 6 NIV) How the Holy Spirit communicated this to them we don't know but clearly they were certain He had. Asia is what we would call Turkey today and Galatia and Phrygia were right next to it. There were thousands of places where Paul and the others could have traveled to share the Gospel but God declared Asia off limits. Now it isn't as if Paul didn't ever go to Asia. It became one of the most fruitful mission fields in the entire Mediterranean region. But at that time and with that group of people, God told them they were not to go into Asia. The Holy Spirit communicated a clear and definitive instruction and the group reacted to that instruction obediently.

The assumption in the Church was, at least in the early church, that God speaks to people directly in ways that they can understand. This was not a theory or a hope, it was a decided acknowledgement of facts they had already observed. God had spoken to them, if not all, then many of them and it was widely accepted that God speaks directly to Christians about matters they face. There are three verses we need to look at collectively if we are to make a proper judgment, at least as determined by the Bible, about the Holy Spirit personally directing Christians in their everyday lives. The first is Jeremiah 10: 23. **I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.** (NIV) The second verse is in John 16: 13. **But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.** (NIV) The third verse is Romans 8:14. **...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** (NIV)

There are three principles that flow from out of these three verses. The first is: God expects you to seek guidance from Him. Because our lives are not our own and they belong to God, we are supposed to find out what God wants us to do. It is expected of

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every person that an honest attempt be made to know God's directions as we go about our routines. That is what we are to do. To not do this is idolatry. It is the misplacement of God. We are not God. He is and because we belong to Him, the Lord expects us to depend on Him to direct our steps.

The second principle is simple. God promises to give you guidance. This is pretty black and white. God will give you guidance. He will inform you of dangers, problems and risks before they happen. The Lord assures you He will do this and if He doesn't, then He is not being truthful. Take the smallest concern you have. Should I go to the store or stay home and work on my child's homework? Should I take a bike ride or read a book? Should I watch this football game or go jogging at the park? All of these matters are if they are important to us they are important to God to give us guidance. There is no caveat to this. If we have enough faith to ask the Lord for guidance, He will give it to us.

The third principle is perhaps a bit disconcerting to some. Guidance by God is a sign that you are a child of God's. He doesn't guide non-Christians but He does guide Christians. If you aren't being led by the Spirit, then you are not born again but if you are, then it tells you that you belong to God. We have this promise that the Holy Spirit will direct you in anything and at any time but you must ask Him to show you the way. It would seem that many Christians are being led by the Holy Spirit but are either oblivious to His help or too proud to respond to it. This may be one of the biggest weaknesses in the Christian community. Too many believers are not paying attention to what the Lord is saying to them and they are suffering the consequences of going through life blind to God's help.

God wants to reveal to you things hidden from the world and not knowable to those who aren't Christian but you must look for what He is trying to get through to you. You must rid yourself of unbelief and stop thinking that God has nothing to say to you about what is to come and what you should do moment by moment. The Holy Spirit has something to say to you at any given point in time but as long as you are oblivious or resistant to Him guiding you, you won't hear a thing. **The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.** (1 Corinthians 2:14-16 NIV)

The Lord does not give us signs and what the world would call miracles to point out what we should do. The Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit and with nothing audible, He guides us. But this is not something we are used to doing and most Christians never master it because they lack the faith to keep at it. You have the mind of Christ and so you can hear the Spirit speak to you. The question is not "can you" but "will you". Just as learning a new language takes practice and many stumbles, learning to hear the Spirit guide you is a slow deliberate process. At first you will be mostly wrong and get frustrated by the process. But if you continue believing the Holy Spirit will guide you, then look for His guidance. Accept you have been guided when you ask Him because He promised He will and act upon what you think He said. The Bible and the Holy

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Spirit's guidance will never contradict each other so do not violate the Scriptures when you act.

Here is an experiment for you. Do not do this if you are unwilling to let God lead you when He does. If you know you are not going to do some things He might tell you to do, then just don't go any further on this. Try this experiment this week. Ask the Lord to show you someone that you need to share the Gospel; someone you could give the Gospel. Ask the Lord to guide you on who this is. You may refuse to follow Him once He shows you this person but He will show you someone if you ask. This is just an experiment to see if the Holy Spirit really is showing you what will come to pass and what He wants you to do. The Lord will speak to your spirit and you will know when you have come across that person and you will then also know the Holy Spirit has spoken directly to you. Try this experiment this week. God expects you to seek guidance. God promises to guide you. Guidance from God is a sign that you are His child. It could open a whole new world to you; the world of the Holy Spirit. What might happen to you and to those who need you if you too like Paul and Peter and the people of God who walk with Him, if you were filled and really filled with the Holy Spirit?

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