

DISCOVER

the Joy of Christ



How Does God Guide Us?

Have you ever found yourself saying, “If only God would tell me what to do?” We know He wants what’s best for us—both now and in the “long run”. And we also know, He **wants** to guide us. The following points are helps to receiving and understanding God’s guidance.

Practice the Presence of God (See *Hebrews 10:19-23, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 51:11, Psalm 140:13*)

We become better able to distinguish God’s guidance by making a practice of being aware of His continual presence. We will want to spend some set-apart, quiet time (no matter how short) on a daily basis to converse with Jesus, to build your relationship with Him as you would with a friend. As you share your thoughts and feelings with Him, you will begin to sense the reality of His caring Presence in the everyday moments of your life. Then, ‘on purpose’ decide to turn your thoughts or attention to God as you go about your day, and offer “thought prayers” of thanksgiving, requests for help etc.

Know the Word (See *John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17*)

A great deal of God’s guidance is given to us in the Scriptures. Therefore, it is necessary to spend time reading His Word—especially the four Gospels. Very often, as you are reading, the Lord will “quicken” or “highlight” a verse or passage in your heart. It will speak to you personally and help you to know your next step in His way for you.

Have “no mind of your own in the matter” (See *Proverbs 3:5-8; Philippians 2:5*)

When praying about a specific decision, pray for the grace to come to the Lord for guidance without already having “made up your mind” as to what you want the answer to be. Be honest; if you already have a strong leaning as to what you want, tell Him. Then, remember that He really does want what is best and is good for you, what you really do want in the end! He is always for life, truth, and love.

Do not discount the desires of your heart. These are different from things we simply want out of selfishness. God has placed desires deep in our hearts that He wants to fulfill. Remember that His direction will come to us after we express our willingness to follow Him in any given area.

As we seek Him first, everything else will be added. (See Matthew 6:33)

Realize that Sin “blinds” (See *1 John 2:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; 2 Peter 1:3-9*)

None of us is perfect. We will always be dealing with some areas of sinfulness until we get to Heaven, but we need to make sure that we are not continuing in conscious, willful sin. Doing so compromises (“dulls”) our discernment and ability to make sound judgments in all areas of life—in the natural order, as well as the spiritual. There is “pleasure in sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25), but it eventually corrodes all that is good in relationships, material blessings, mental outlook etc.

We can’t “free ourselves” from sin but Jesus has obtained this power for us on the Cross. We must acknowledge our sin (disordered choices) to Him and follow His direction to freedom. It’s important to remember that we do this one step at a time.

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God's Peace—Our Special Guidance (See *Philippians 4:6-7; John 14:27; John 16:33 1Corinthians 14:33; 2Thessalonians 3:16*)

As we follow the Lord's direction as best we understand it, we will experience a deep, settled peace in our heart. It is "bigger", or deeper, than any difficult circumstances we may be experiencing. There is no "counterfeit" for this peace—when we experience it, we **know** it...and only God can give it! This peace is accompanied by **joy**, not "happiness" (though that may come, too). Happiness is more superficial and based on the "happenings" or circumstances we are experiencing. This peace and eventual joy is the most significant hallmark of God's direction to us. It's important to remember that this peace/joy will always be accompanied by other "signposts, as well (see below).

"Two or More Witnesses" (See *2 Corinthians 13:1*)

God can speak to us in many ways. As we seek God's guidance in specific areas, it is important that we take the proper amount of **time** (He normally takes longer than we would like!) to allow His "guidances" to come to us. We can't force or hurry up the process. Like the lights that mark out the course of a runway at night for an airplane pilot, the Lord will give us "lights" (notice the plural) that will map out His course for us. Some of these "lights" or "signposts" we have already mentioned:

- The peace given in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
- Specific "words" that come to us from Scripture.
- Our sense ("gut" level) about what we know is right or wrong.
- Dreams...remember Joseph in the Old Testament, and Joseph in the New Testament.
- The counsel of godly and wise, experienced persons—parents, pastors, teachers, and friends whom we respect for their integrity.
- Sometimes without knowing of our discernment process, a friend will come and voice some words that speak directly to our situation—our heart will "lift" and we **know** it is a piece of guidance, or...we'll be reading or listening and the Lord will highlight a word or phrase that helps give us clarity.

These different "witnesses" from the Lord, especially the first two listed above, will come together and begin to "light up" and confirm the Lord's path for us.

Big Decisions Require Big Guidance

Keep in mind that in big decisions i.e. a lifetime vocational commitment, God will provide His answer in "*bigger*" ways. He will always provide guidance and clarity *proportionate* to the importance of the decision. We are constantly making decisions throughout our life, some so small they are almost laughable, others more important such as career choices and some extremely important such as "Is this the person I should marry?" God cares about everything in our life and as we practice listening and following His voice in small matters we become more attuned at understanding His guidance for us in the really important things in life. We can be sure that when it comes to "big decisions", He will give "big guidance": a multitude of "witnesses" as described above and of sufficient *strength* to confirm His direction.

Remember, too, that understanding God's guidance is a learning process and we will make mistakes along the way. God will take even these "missteps", using them to teach us, making them "work together for good," as we seek above all things to follow Him and grow in our relationship with Him.

Let us be thankful for God's desire to guide us in every decision!

These "Helps to Receiving and Understanding God's Guidance" were partially compiled/partially adapted from a series of tapes entitled "12 Principles of God's Guidance" given by M.G. Robertson.