

# *DIVINE GUIDANCE*

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# 1- Introduction.

What is divine guidance? There are actually two sides to divine guidance: the divine directing and the human response. Divine guidance can be defined as the activity of God in guiding the believer in the pre-designed plan of God and the response of man in ascertaining and walking in that plan. Divine guidance then refers to the determining of God's specific and unique plan for your life.

One of the most fascinating and encouraging truths about divine guidance is that God is guiding each and every person all of the time. God never stops in His attempts to guide man regardless of any other factor. God never stops guiding man. This is true of the unbeliever (1 Tim 2:4), the spiritual believer (Psalm 23; 1 Cor 2:9-10), as well as the carnal believer (Eph 5:17).

Since God is always guiding us, the remaining question is if we are going to be guided the easy way or the hard way. The easy way comes through listening, assimilating, and applying God's Word. The hard way is to reject God's Word and be mulish, Psa 32:8-9. God would much rather guide you with His Word than with bit and bridle. God is either guiding the believer through the ministry of the Holy Spirit or through the unbearable pain of divine discipline.

Divine guidance assumes that man has freewill. If man does not have freewill then the acts of seeking, discovering, and enjoying divine guidance are nonsense. If God capriciously decreed all that would take place and man has no freewill then man need not concern himself with divine guidance. Although there is not even one passage in all of the Bible that says that God has predestined all things that would come about, there have been elaborate systems of theology which so caricatures the sovereignty of God that all free-will is excluded. The truth of the matter is that God in His sovereignty has given man freewill even though that may mean that man will use it to reject the will of God (Luke 7:30). The fact that God earnestly seeks true worshippers (Jn 4:23) demonstrates freewill. Why would God seek that which He has sovereignly predestined?

## 2 - Man cannot guide himself.

Jeremiah 10:23, *O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*

Evidence that man is incapable of adequately guiding his own life abounds all around us. There are broken and unfulfilled dreams on every street corner and disappoint can be seen in the eyes of countless people. In spite of the fact that Christians are spiritual billionaires according to the riches of God's own glory (Eph 1:7; 3:16) so many feel as if life has lost its luster. The abundant life promised by none other than Jesus Christ seems to fall on deaf ears. Why does man have so much trouble finding and advancing in God's will of blessedness? There are at least three reasons man cannot guide himself.

First, man is not the author of the Plan of God. The plan of God for every person was written by God. God determined many things about your life in which you had no input. He decided both the time and the place in which you were born (Acts 17:26-27). You had no say so about your birth or those circumstances in which you were born into this world. Apart from God you would not exist.

He also determined the length of your life and the manner in which you are to leave this world (Jn 21:18-19). The verb in Jer 10:23 behind "direct" (יָצַח, kûn ) means to establish. It is not within man to establish his own steps. God has established a unique plan for every person. Just as there was a unique plan for Noah, Moses, and Isaiah, so there is one that has been established uniquely for you. This plan is very specific and all you need is positive volition.

A second reason that man has so much trouble discovering and entering into God's perfect plan has to do with the corruption in man's own heart, *The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it* (Jer 17:9). Every person is born with corruption and disease with respect to true spirituality. Each person is born with a heart that is filled with deception with regard to God and spiritual realities. Though society tries to cleanup man, deep down man is inherently corrupt with reference to God and really does not care about the will or the plan of God. One of the most deceitful things the heart of man does is to baptize its own plans under the name of God. Not only does man not really desire the plan of God, he inherently distrusts God's will and plan. Man's old sin nature resists and opposes the workings and promptings of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:17). Man inherently distrusts the nature and will of God. Man in his wickedness seeks his own glory (empty/vain glory, Gal 5:26). Apart from grace transformation of the heart, man goes on his own corrupt path: living how he wants to live instead of how God wants him to live; marrying the one he wants instead of God's choice; working where he wants instead of where God wants; living where he wants instead of where God wants; and lives out the desires of his life in the petri dish of the old sin nature instead of in the blessedness of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16-23). Instead of growing in blessedness, such a man grows in corruption daily with mental attitude sins (bitterness, frustration, hopelessness). Instead of growing in the mind of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 2:16; Rom 12:2), he is molded into the age in which he lives and moves about (Rom 12:2). The life lived in the confines of the deceitful and sick heart is a life of putrefaction of the heart.

A third reason man cannot guide himself is found in his flawed human viewpoint of life. There is a great difference between the way that God thinks and man thinks, Isa 55:6-11. There are many things that seem right, pleasant, and good to man, but the end is death, Prov 14:12; 16:25. Before we can really advance in the plan of God, we must think like God thinks in His viewpoint of life. This includes our attitude toward God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well as our viewpoint with regard to the purpose of life, the function of our own spiritual lives, how we handle problems, and our ministry to our spouses, families, jobs, fellow believers, and in the local church. When the believer grows in divine viewpoint his life becomes more Christ-centered and less self-centered. As the mind of Christ is developed in the believer he is able to fulfill God's objective and reflect God's glory in the unique church age. Failure to grow in divine viewpoint keeps the believer on the ground living a mundane *earthly* life governed by human viewpoint without divine perspective or capacity.

# 3 - The Plan of God

Experts in every field tell us that we must have a plan to achieve success. They tell us we need to set goals for ourselves of where we want to be in five, ten, or even twenty years from now. They tell us if we ever want to accomplish those plans we must write down the goals in order of priority and work on them daily. They tell us to plan our work and work our plan. This is all fine and good from a human perspective, but it is possible for a person to do all of this and achieve all that they planned and still fail miserably by missing the plan of God for their lives (cf. Mt 16:26; 2 Tim 4:10). A man can achieve human success in life and win the respect and admiration of friends and still experience a sickening emptiness in his soul (cf. Ecc.) all because he missed *God's plan* for his life.

God has a plan of divine success according to His perspective for every person (cf. Jer 29:11). This plan is very specific and unique for every believer. For some reason it is hard for many today to believe that God has a very specific, unique, and detailed daily plan for their lives. This is unfortunate because a careful study of all great believers reveals that each one had a strong sense of a unique and individual divine plan and mission for their lives (cf. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, Jesus Christ). Unless you are convinced that God has a specific plan for your life, you will do your own thing. You will make your own plans in life.

God's plan for your life is perfect, Rom 12:2. Man's innate arrogance is revealed every time he believes he can actually devise a plan that is better than God's. God's perfect plan is tailor-made by God for each individual. It is the best plan that could ever be devised. It is far better than anything that you could ever devise. If you want a full and satisfying *life* you must live in God's plan. The plan for your life is unique and takes into account your own uniqueness even as God was forming in your mother's womb (Psa 139:16). Before you were even born God established this unique daily plan for your life. Each *day* of that plan was placed in His roadmap for your life. God has sketched out provisions to live out the spiritual life for each and every day of your life. God's Word contains the game plan for life. There is no reason for any believer to fail in this plan. God's plan and provisions are perfect.

God's plan includes every future contingency. It does not matter if you are five or ninety years old. God has a plan for every single day for your life. He knows the future. Only God knows all the consequences of our decisions. Every decision we make has the potential of ruining our life. We live in a very dark world and it is nothing short of madness to go running off into the darkness without the roadmap or the Guide, who not only knows the way but ultimately controls all consequences and events. Consider the fact that no other human "guide" claims to be able to control the future.

The plan of God for your life is fixed and settled, Psalm 37:23, *The steps of a man are established by the LORD; And He delights in his way.* The course or the race that is set before you (Heb 12:1) has already been established. The path you are to take has already been mapped out for the rest of your life. The book has already been written down to the last "step" in life. No man knows all that awaits him in the future. Your lives is like a book which has a beginning and an end and can only be turned one page each day. Each day God has established a way for

us to handle the various blessings and testings of life. When we live by God the ministry of the Holy Spirit, then we keep in step with God (Gal 5:25) and walk in His plan and this *delights* God. It is sin that grieves God (Eph 4:30) because it destroys fellowship with Him and what He is accomplishing in our lives. It grieves God because God must now discipline His child so he will confess and turn from his sin and get back to the plan of God (Psalm 32; Prov 28:13; Heb 12:5-10). There is no escaping the truth that God has a specific plan for your life from birth to death and everything in between.

The plan of God for the believer has a beginning and an end and revolves around Jesus Christ and Bible doctrine (Acts 22:14-15; 2 Tim 4:7). Advancement and fulfillment in the plan is always about keeping the faith. Consider the apostle Paul who is at the end of his life sitting in a cold dungeon speaking about accomplishing God's plan for his life. He had enormous satisfaction in knowing he fulfilled his course in the plan of God. He completed the path God laid out for him. He completed God's will for his life and the reason for his existence on earth. Paul did fail from time to time but he always turned it around and gained more spiritual momentum than he had lost. From a human perspective he looked like a failure. However, from God's perspective Paul finished the course God laid out for him. Paul made it to the *pleroma* of God, Eph 3:19.

God has a pre-designed plan for our lives for specific works of divine production, Jn 15:1-2; Eph 2:10. The pre-designed plan of God includes many things that God wants us to accomplish and fulfill before we leave this earth. Failure in this area results in loss of many blessing both in time and in eternity. The fact that we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus indicates that He has equipped us uniquely to fulfill all that He has planned for us. God makes the person for the works and the works for the person.

God has a great desire to reveal to you His plan for your life. The amazing truth of the Bible is that God is interested in the daily details of life. Our lives are filled with decisions each and every day from the decision of when to get up, what to wear, eat, ministry to our spouses, attitude to work, dinner, family, to when to go to bed. There are hundreds of decisions we make daily. Whether we realize it or not we are also making hundreds of decisions with reference to the Lord, the Word, and the spiritual life. Either we make decisions for the Lord and His plan or ignore Him, His plan, and His Word on a daily basis. What is fantastic is that God's Word says He is interested in all of the details of our lives and wants to guide us wherever we go. He cares about all of the minutia of everyday life (Psa 32:8-9; 121:8; 139:1-5; Prov 3:5-6; Isa 58:11; Mt 10:29-31; Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11; Philip 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7).

## 4-God's peace in God's Plan

One of first things that we experience when we orient to God's plan is a sense of peace. Regardless of what is happening around us there is always peace from knowing you are in God's plan, safe and secure. There is peace with God because of Christ's work on the cross (Rom 5:1). There is peace because we can cast *all* of our anxieties upon the Lord (1 Pt 5:7). In His plan we can give all of our worries and anxieties to the Lord and He will grant us a supernatural powerful peace (Philip 4:6). In the plan of God we trust and acknowledge God in *all* of our ways and receive peace from knowing that He is in control and He will never forsake us (Heb 13:5). God's plan of peace is far greater than anything we could devise. There is no true peace in the greatest of man's plans.

## 5- Where do I begin?

Now that we have established that God has a specific unique plan for your life that brings great peace, a plan that He wants to reveal to you, you might ask, how do I find it? Where do I begin?

The best place to begin is in a passage that gives us the general mechanics along with a most specific promise for guidance: Prov 3:5-6, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.*

The two main ideas or conditions for God's personal guidance is *trust* and *acknowledge*. The first thing we must do is *trust* God. Apart from faith the believer leans on his own understandings and devises his own plans. Faith is means of entering into the family of God and the means of appropriating God's power and solutions. *Acknowledge* is the Hebrew word *yadah* (יָדָה) which means to *know*. So the place to begin is to trust God rather than lean on human viewpoint and then to know God in *all* your ways. This is only possible through the Word of God. You not only have to trust Him, you have to take notice of His presence in all of the details of life. This means you have to know that He is with you and that He will guide you. The more you grow in Bible doctrine the more you have the capacity to both trust Him and to know Him in all details of life. In maturity the believer lives a life of acknowledging God in all his ways. The more you trust and acknowledge Him in all of your ways, the more God will guide you. All divine guidance revolves around trusting & knowing God. What God wants most is for you to know Him and trust Him.

# 6 - Claiming God's Promises

The key to trusting God and knowing God is the Word of God (Jer. 6:10; Rom. 10:17; Heb 4:1-12). Apart from the Word of God we really do not know *how* to trust Him or exactly *what* it is that we are to trust about God. Apart from the Word of God we create God in our own image, and live in uncertainty about what He will or will not do to, in, or for us. Apart from the Word of God, we do not know the provisions of God. Promises in the Word of God regarding divine guidance are fantastic. By claiming these promises the believer claims divine guidance for his life. Consider the following promises of divine guidance.

God promises to guide us into a successful life. God promises to lead us in His way of success ( Isa 48:17; Jer 29:11). There is a way in which He wants you to go that is filled with success. He is fully able to lead you out of any failure.

God promises to guide us all of our lives right through death and then into His very presence, Psa 48:14; 73:24.

God promises to guide us for His own name sake. He is the Rock and Fortress who will lead and guide us for His own name sake, Psalm 31:3. His very reputation is on the line as far as guiding us in life. He is very interested in guiding His own.

God promises to guide those in the dark and make darkness into light before them and make all crooked things straight, Isa 42:16. No matter how far out of the will of God someone has drifted, God is there to bring him back. God is fully able to guide you out of any darkness or any set of bad decisions. God is ready right now at this moment to guide you. He is the Shepherd.

God promises to guide his sheep through the four basic spiritual stages of life, Psa 23. First, God leads us into nourishment and rest to feed and restore our souls with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Second, God leads us on the journey of divine production of walking in His Word. Third, He leads us into conflict (with provisions). Fourth, He leads us into His presence.

# 7 - One Step at a Time.

God's wonderful promises to guide us through the four stages of life, to bring us out of every dark or bad situation, to teach us success, and to bring us into the glory of His presence is all accomplished one step at a time. One of the biggest mistakes that we make in divine guidance is looking too far in the distant future instead of looking for divine guidance in the everyday issues of life.

Divine guidance is all about God guiding us step by step, Psa 121:8; Prov 16:9; Isa 58:11. He never fully reveals the distant future. God's light is placed right in front of our feet so that we can see how to walk *now*, Psalm 119:105. God does not shine a light miles ahead of us - that would be too distracting. He shines His headlights on the road that is right before us. Consider what would happen if you were driving down the road at night and kept looking a mile ahead in the dark instead of looking at the road that is lighted up right before you. There is enough evil in each day in which to battle (Mt 6:34). We simply do not have time to let down our guard by being obsessed with the future. If we become obsessed with the future then we will miss out on really living our present lives. If we move ahead of the Light, we will move into darkness.

I am convinced that one of the reasons God does not reveal the distant future is because we are not strong enough to handle some of the tougher tests and issues of life which demand more maturity. Consider Abraham. God never told Abraham that he would have to sacrifice his son until Abraham became a very mature believer. As I consider God's plan for my life as a pastor-teacher, I may not have gone to Tulsa Seminary of Biblical Languages, if at the time I went I knew I would become a preacher. I may not have accepted the pastorate in a church in Washington State, if I had known about a future very painful church split. However, as I have matured, I look back and see that out of both of those situations came the greatest blessings academically, spiritually, and personally. The greatest lessons I have ever learned in life have been born in times of great sorrow and trouble. As I look back I can see exactly how God has guided me. One of the most exciting things to do is to look back and connect the dots of divine guidance.

Walking one step at a time keeps you from getting ahead of the Lord. When the Israelites were in the desert, God instilled in them the need to follow Him as He revealed Himself in the Shekinah glory cloud above the tabernacle (Ex 40:36-38). They never knew when the cloud would move, but when it moved they followed it with precision. This cloud led them step by step right to the promised land. God too will lead you step by step into the promised life. Although they were exactly where God needed for them to be geographically, they failed to enter the promised land because they lacked capacity. They lacked capacity for the blessings of God because they failed to enter into a personal fellowship with God along the way. Instead of trusting God along the path, they griped and grumbled along the way, and therefore were unfit for the blessings of God. God warns every believer about the dangers of developing a complaining attitude along the paths of life (1 Cor 10:10-11). It is possible to be exactly *where* God wants you to be and yet fail miserably because of *how* you traversed His path. The plan of

one step at a time is designed to keep us very close to God. God wants us to completely trust Him.

## 8 - Positive Volition

One of the most exciting things about divine guidance is that all you need to find God's will is positive volition (Jer 29:13). If you really want God's will, you can have it. All it takes is non-meritorious positive volition. You see when you have positive volition then you seek God's will because you seek God (instead of using God as a means to further your own plans). To the person who seeks God's will, God will reveal not only His plan but the means of finding, walking, and growing in that will with all of the grace His plan requires.

If you have gotten ahead of the Lord or have taken the wrong fork in the road but are still seeking the Lord, He will let you know, Isa 30:21. He has a multitude of ways of getting your attention and getting you back on His path - if you are pursuing the Lord. He has a way of making His plan very clear when you stray.

The only way you can miss God's will is by insisting on our own will - by being mulish (Psa 32:8-9). When you insist on your own will and live the self-centered life then you miss out on the greatest plan ever devised for your life. In negative volition you miss the very purpose for your life which is to bring glory to God. When we face difficulties and turn to the Lord and reflect His goodness and strength, we glorify Him. God is never glorified through the murmuring of believers. If you are not a living witness to the grace and power of Jesus Christ then you are missing God's purpose for your life. All believers are designed to be a living epistles of Jesus Christ - to be read by all men (2 Cor 3:2-3).

There are many examples in the Bible of the positive volition of believers who decided to live for the will of God even at great sacrifice. Moses decided to live with an ungrateful generation of Israelites rather than live in the Egyptian palaces of pleasure (cf. Heb 11:24-26). From the moment of conversion Paul was focused on doing God's will (Acts 22:10). This does not mean there was never any failure in the life of Moses and Paul. They in fact failed miserably but were able to recover and turn the cursing into blessing. Moses and Paul were the happiest when they were in God's will. God's guidance extends to sinners (Psa 25:8). God will teach all who go astray - as long as they are interested in His will.

The greatest illustration of true positive volition is the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 4:4; Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; Rom 15:3; Heb 10:7-9). He clearly illustrated that the issue in life was moment by moment life in the will of God. God's will was Christ's highest goal.

God's will for Christ's life included not only a detailed plan for specific accomplishments, but the means to accomplish God's will. It was not fellowship alone, it was not the Holy Spirit alone, it was not even the Word of God alone that gave Him power to walk in the will of God. To find God's will is one thing, to fulfill it is quite another. To fulfill the will of God or to advance in divine guidance requires three elements as illustrated by Jesus Christ:

fellowship with God, the power of the Holy Spirit; and the Word of God. We were called to walk like Jesus Christ (1 Jn 2:6). This requires the same attitude and resources for guidance

## 9 - Knowing the Guide

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;" (John 10:27).*

We really are like sheep (Psa 100:3). Like dumb sheep, we really do not know what is best for us. Left to ourselves, we will always get ourselves into dangerous predicaments. We need a shepherd to guide us. We need to know the Shepherd and know what He wants. Divine guidance is really a matter of following the divine Shepherd. Failure to follow Him is just plain stupid.

Two inescapable facts of life are that God has a pre-designed plan for your life and you must know the Guide to be guided into that plan. Apart from knowing the Guide it is impossible to walk in the center of God's will. Everything revolves around knowing God in divine guidance. Failure always leads to confusion.

A believer can know all of the mechanics of divine guidance but apart from a personal relationship with God based on true fellowship, *personal* divine guidance is impossible. You can even know a lot of Bible facts and know what you should or should not do, but fail in divine guidance because you do not really know God.

There is a sense in which every Christian knows God (John 17:3). You cannot be saved apart from knowing something about God revealed in the Gospel. However, there are degrees of knowing God. A standard question on many personal and professional referrals is 'how well do you know the person?' If the question was posed to you about God and the choices were: intimately, casually, hardly at all - what would your choice be? What if you were asked about your pursuit of really knowing God? How does it compare with Scripture (Jer 9:23-24; Hos 6:6; Philip 3:3:7-10)? The best thing in life, bringing great joy, delight, and contentment is a real personal knowledge of God (Psa 34:8).

If we do not know God intimately, it is not His fault. God is unceasing in His efforts to make Himself known to every believer. He is constantly making overtures to reveal Himself and His character in our lives. What He desires is for us to respond to His grace and mercy. Consider how well He has taken care of you and the mercy He has shown you (Psa 36:5; 57:10; 103:11; 108:4). In spite of His great desire to have a fellowship with believers, many have never really *taken the time* to really get to know God in a very personal way. The result is tragic: a loss of blessed fellowship and a loss of confidence with regard to divine guidance.

God primarily reveals Himself in His Word. However, He is also actively revealing Himself through the various tests of life. Consider how God tried to reveal Himself to the Israelites (Exodus 14:10-13) and their tragic failure to get to know Him in the various tests of life (Num 14:1-11). They lived out their lives in misery for forty years of testing in the desert, simply because they did not take time to know the Lord. God is trying to reveal Himself to us through the various tests of life in the same way as He did with the Israelites. The reason God allows suffering, sickness, sorrow, and loneliness is so that He can reveal Himself to us *intimately*. Right in the middle of all of the problems of life, God is there revealing Himself. He is constantly reaching out and making overtures to us. He is constantly telling us something about Himself. Time after time we are tested like the Israelites. We are to stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord; we are to be still and know that He is God. God is not only teaching us about Himself but about our own weak and sinful natures. The person who rejects God's revelation will always lose when it comes to divine guidance.

Knowing the Guide is essential for really trusting Him. You cannot trust whom you really do not know. It is God's responsibility to reveal the plan and it is our responsibility to know Him and trust Him in all of our ways. Faith is never blind. Faith demands knowledge. It is believing what we know - but cannot see. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). You must have faith that God has a plan, will reveal and guide you in that plan one step at a time, and will provide in all difficulties along the way.

## 10-Present yourselves to God

Rom 12:1-2, *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God...so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

This passage shows us the only tried and proven way to know, test, and approve (δοκιμάζω) the will of God with absolute confidence. The term *present* needs further examination.

The term *present* is an aorist active infinitive of *paristemi* (παρίστημι) which is a compound word made up of *para* meaning *alongside* and *istemi* which means to stand or lay aside. This Greek term was used in two different ways in the New Testament era. First, it was used technically of a worshiper who laid his sacrifice on the altar as a act of consecration to God. The idea here is of complete surrender of the sacrifice by giving it to God. Note in the above passage that believers are challenged to present their own bodies as a living sacrifice to God. The bodies refers to everything that is enclosed in the body - mind, plans, desires, and activities. God will not invade our bodies and force His will upon us.

Second, the term *present* (*paristemi*) was used of a slave who stands alongside his master available to do his bidding. The slave was at his owner's disposal. Paul is urging believers to make themselves available with a willing compliant spirit. The aorist tense of the verb shows that this is to be a decisive decision - which lasts for the rest of your life. There is only one act of

consecration (followed by acts of repentance). The infinitive shows this is God's purpose for our lives. God wants you. He wants you to be willing to be told what to do. He wants you to stop playing games with Him. He wants you to be committed to what He wants you to be committed to. God pleads with you to offer yourself to God. The attitude on the part of the believer is to be 'here I am Lord do what You want with me.'

Surrender to God's will is the key to know for certain about God's will. We must be willing servants. The only way to really know if certain teachings are true is to live them (Jn 7:17).

If you are willing to follow Him no matter the costs, He will lead you. Continual guidance will only come to those who really present themselves to the Lord. Apart from presentation of life to the Lord, the best you can hope for is sporadic, isolated guidance - a life lived in the permissive will of God rather than the perfect will.

Consider the hypocrisy, blasphemy, and sinfulness of man in this whole area of surrender to God. There are countless ways man tries to do an end-run around the presentation of his life to the Lord. How many do not really care about God's will, until there is a decision which could impact their temporal life? How many say they want God's will, only to forget all about it after they get what they want? How many promise to give self to God, if He would sign on the dotted line of their own plan? How many gimmicks have been tried on God? How many make their own plans, then tell God what they will do with His blessings? How many conditions have been given to God before one *promises* to give their life to the Lord (Gen 28:21)? God's will is not for bribe or barter.

God is not interested in conditions and exception clauses or playing 'Let's make a Deal.' He wants full and complete obedience. He wants absolute unreserved willingness. There is no more important decision in divine guidance or in the spiritual life than a willingness to do the will of God. Why should He guide a believer who really does not care about the will of God?

If you want to live right in the center of God's will and advance in His plan to a life beyond dreams (Eph 3:20), you must have an unreserved willing spirit. You must be available for whatever God wants you to think, believe, say, do, or go. This is the kind of person God will lead (Psa 25:9). We need to be more concerned with the condition of our hearts than temporal life issues.

We never lose with God. He is a such a good God (Js 1:17). When we give of ourselves to the Lord, He always gives more back. If we first delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts, Psa 37:4. What He wants is for us to subordinate all wishes to Him. Walking in the will of God is never a drag, it is never boring. It is the most exciting thing in life. Life in the center of God's will makes everyday a fresh new day with the Lord.

# 11- Renew the Mind

Rom 12:2, *stop being conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

After the believer decides to commit himself to God and His plan wholeheartedly (i.e., positive volition), the next step is transformation. All attempts at commitment to Christ breakdown apart from the transformation of the mind. The believer must go from presentation to transformation. We go from giving ourselves to the Lord to letting Him renew our minds.

The term *conformed* in the above passage (*suschematidzo*, συσχηματίζω) means to shape one thing by another thing; to fashion; to squeeze something into its mold. The present middle imperative shows that the subject is participating in the action and that the action is ongoing and needs to be stopped. The Romans are participating with Satan in this activity. Satan and his hordes are constantly attempting to capture the mind. If they can control or fashion our minds then they can control much of our lives, wills, desires, motivations, and perspectives. Consider the garbage he dumps in people's minds: prejudice, hatred, conflict, pride, sexual perversion, family abuse, hangups, frantic search for happiness, childish thinking, secularism, unresolved conflicts, lack of forgiveness, bitterness, etc. Satan is always trying to fill our minds with his garbage, knowing that if it is not removed the sewage will eventually leak into the basement of our souls (unconscious area).

Satan has done a masterful job in screwing up billions and billions of minds. How can a believer begin to know God's will if he has a bent mind which is stuffed with the devil's philosophy (Prov 16:2)? Satan has an endless array of ways to lure man away from the will of God (i.e., approbation lust, money, sex). Satan has done a real job on the human race (1 John 5:19) as he implants his thoughts in man through radio, television, magazines, unsaved loved ones, carnal believers, and even human emotional "love." Consider the messages that are recorded on minds today. Consider how Satan programs minds with a Christ-dishonoring channels.

Next we have the positive plea: *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* *But* is the strongest conjunction in the Greek. *Transformed* (μεταμορφόω) is where we get our word *metamorphosis*. This transformation is a complete or total change of the "inner" nature. The present tense shows that this should be continuous; day after day we should be experiencing transfiguration into the image of Jesus Christ. God's ideal is that this transfiguration would never slow down. The passive shows that we receive this action; we cannot transform ourselves. The imperative is one of command. The imperative in the Greek is the furthest removed from certainty. Obedience to this is key. Why should God reveal His plan to anyone who rejects God's own thinking?

Bible doctrine learned, assimilated and applied is the agency of renewing the mind. The Bible must be understood from the original by the teacher to insure accuracy. It has been said that trying to study the Bible through translations is like the groom kissing the bride through a

veil. The teacher must understand the nuances, catch glitches in the English translations, and be able to break these things down into principles for the listeners. The SEE or ICE method is the only way to really understand Scripture. Each part is absolutely critical for edification into the image of Jesus Christ. Apart from the HS the Bible cannot be discerned; apart from exegesis there is no accuracy; apart from dispensationalism there is no execution of the Christian way of life (consider Mt 5:39-42; Num 15:32-35). Bible was never designed to be a Ouija board.

The Word of God truly is living, powerful, and transforming (Heb 4:12; Psa 119:105, 130). It is more than adequate to clean out our minds and rebuild them with God's viewpoint. All you have to do is take in the doctrine and apply it in life. An honest look at God's Word followed by the necessary adjustments is the key to healing the mind. The Word of God can fix us. Our minds must be renewed with the Word of God if we ever hope to walk in the center of God's will. The Word of God must become inscribed on our souls before we can have the divine readouts for decisions of life.

The Word of God is more than sufficient train us in the realm of righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We need to be more concerned about the status of our hearts than the decisions that will affect temporal life issues. We need to be more concerned with pleasing God than how the decision will impact the comfort of our lives (Eph 5:8-10). This training in the realm of righteousness will not solve "brain problems" overnight. It takes one truth at a time assimilated and applied one step at a time. Our minds are like giant computers that need to be reformatted and reprogrammed. We cannot know the will of God if we are not regularly filling our minds with God's truth. When God programs the mind with His Word then we get His readouts on everything in life. We must make Bible doctrine central to our lives to find God's will. Trying to figure out divine guidance apart from the Word of God is like trying to solve an algebraic problem with no constants. The more of the Word of God we have in our souls, the more we will think like God, and as you develop divine viewpoint, our values and ideas will become more like Christ's (1 Cor 2:15-16). This is the path to the life beyond dreams (1 Cor 2:9-10; Eph 3:20).

# 12 - This is the Will of God.

God has given six direct statements with regard to His will. Most decisions that we make in life will be affected by these six clear statements. When you are trying to decide God's will for your life, you should consider the six things God clearly desires.

First is salvation (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). God's first priority is salvation, ours and others. It is God's will for you as an ambassador to introduce those around you to Jesus Christ. This must be done with a respect for the freewill of man, Mat 23:37.

Second, He wants you to be spirit-filled (Eph 5:17-18). The Spirit-filled life is the key to spiritual wisdom. There needs to be more focus on your life's adjustment to the Holy Spirit than the actual decision. He will not only lead you but give you the capacity to enjoy God's blessings on the path.

Third, God wants your sanctification, (1 Thess 4:3-5). Terms like sanctification and holiness may seem sanctimonious but they are crucial to living the Spirit-filled life with a renewed mind. We are to be set apart to God. There is to be no illicit sexual activity. This is not limited to the very young. You never have to worry about God's will in this area. Flee! (1 Cor 6:18; 2 Tim 2:22).

Fourth, it is God's will for you to give thanks in everything, 1 Thess 5:18. Believers know that they are to thank God for good things, but it seems that under certain circumstances some feel as if they have the right to complain. This thanksgiving is not phony. Even in great tragedy God wants us to be thankful for the lessons that we can learn from God's grace (2 Cor 12:9-10). To have a bitter and negative spirit destroys capacity for life.

Fifth, God wants us to be submissive (1 Pet 2:13-15). He wants us to obey the laws of divine establishment. Unbelievers are always looking for our faults in this area. We are not to toy with circumventing the law. This submission certainly includes being submissive to the pastor-teacher as leader of the local church (Heb 13:17). He is responsible for the doctrinal integrity and spiritual direction of the church. He is to follow the Lord - not the congregation. Believers are also to have a submissive attitude to each other, Eph 5:21. Consider how so many believers want their way, are always standing up for their rights, and seem to be always arguing for their opinion.

Sixth, there are times God wants us to suffer for divine good, Philip 1:29; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 3:17; 4:19. Many today are totally disoriented to God's will because of a superficial understanding of God's will, supposing that it is always God's will for you to always be "happy" (healthy, wealthy, and wise). God's plan is far too great to be limited to our pleasure. There are times when God is ready to accelerate your spiritual momentum, or wake you to the true source of strength and the true priorities of life. When making decisions, the criterion should never be merely to relieve suffering (i.e., like running away from your problems).

When faced with a decision or choice it is always important to orient to these six declared wills of God. If a choice will result in the violation of any of these clearly expressed wills of God, you can rest assured that it is not God's will for you to go that way.

## 13 - Divine Directives

God not only gives us six direct statements on His will, He has placed several road signs along the way to keep us on His path to a life beyond dreams (Eph 3:20). These road signs are in the form of commands, directives, and principles.

Every command and directive is a revelation of the will of God for your life. There are literally hundreds of imperatives in the Bible that have major impacts on our lives. These commands enable us to chart God's plan for our lives. These commands should never be used in a legalistic manner. The proper way of viewing the commands of God is to see them as expressions of God's will for your life. Love for Jesus Christ naturally translates to a desire to keep His commandments (Jn 14:15).

The commands and principles in the Word of God are extremely relevant in finding and walking in the will of God. There are some things that we simply do not even need to pray about. As a matter of fact if we are living in disobedience, the Lord will not even hear our prayers (Psa 66:18). The more we study God's Word the more principles we have in which to navigate.

Consider just how many commands and principles God has given to guide us in life. Let's start with the spiritual life. God has commanded that we put away sin and consistently feed on His Word so we can grow spiritually (1 Pet 2:1-3) and enter into His blessings for our lives (James 1:21-25). He commands us to live, walk, and keep in step with the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25). We are to live our lives as unto the Lord (2 Cor 5:9), follow in His footsteps (1 Pet 2:21), and live the Spirit-filled life like Christ (1 John 2:6). We are to focus on Jesus Christ (Heb 12:1-2) instead of the circumstances of life. We are to cast our cares on the Lord because He cares for us (1 Pet 5:7). We are to be very diligent about our spiritual lives especially with reference to the Word of God (Heb 4). We are to put more importance on our spiritual lives than temporal life issues like physical exercise, (1 Tim 4:8). We are to redeem the time (Eph 5:16). We are to keep on growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, 2 Pet 3:18. We are pray about everything and stop worrying about anything, Philip 4:6. We are to live contented lives free from mammonism and covetousness (Mat 6:24; Col 3:5; Heb 13:5).

God has given us a great deal of divine guidance with respect to the local church and fellow believers. We are to love one another (Jn 13:34), be compassionate, patient and forgiving toward one another (Col 3:12-13), minister to each other with our spiritual gifts (1 Pet 4:10), strive to keep unity and peace in the local church (Eph 4:3), handle problems with believers privately when possible (Mt 18:15; Js 4:11), and support the pastor-teacher (Mt 10:10; Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:11-14; Gal 6:6; 1 Thess 5:18; Heb 13:17). You never have to wonder if God wants you to be part of a local church (Heb 10:25). In choosing the right local church the

guiding issue is in its being the pillar and ground of truth (1Tim 3:15) - not because of family, friends, programs, or social activity.

God has given us a great deal of guidance with respect to our families. Every husband is to love His wife as Christ loves the church with a love that is sacrificial, sanctifying, purifying, nourishing, cherishing, unifying, and glorifying (Eph 5:25-33). Every wife is to submit to her husband as a helpmate (Gen 2:18), a trusted partner (Prov 31), lover (SOS, 1 Cor 7:3-5), homemaker (1 Tim 5:14), with great respect (Eph 5:33) and inner beauty (1 Pt 3:1-5). Children are to be obedient to their parents and honor them (Eph 6:1-2). The Father is to raise children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord without provoking them (Eph 6:4). A man should not go on welfare if he can work and there is a job available, even if that job makes less than welfare payments (2 Thess 3:10-12). It is not God's will for any man to be a freeloader.

God has given a great deal of guidance with respect to the workplace. The employee is to be submissive even when boss is unreasonable (1 Pet 2:18). He is to do his job as unto the Lord - as if he was working for the Lord Jesus Christ (Col 3:23). The boss is to act with fairness and justice with regard to employees (Col 4:1). In business extreme caution must be exercised to prevent from one becoming unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Cor 6:14).

The above commands and principles related to our spiritual lives, the local church, fellow believers, our families and work are but a sampling of God's directives for our lives. There are millions of principles in God's Word to guide us in every single issue of life. As we study God's Word it enlightens the conscience to a point where it too acts as a guide for us (Rom 14:23).

## 14-Leading of the Spirit

The Scriptures teach that there is a personal leading by God the Holy Spirit. In Acts, during the transitional period of the church age, the Holy Spirit was very active in leading Christians in a very personal and even audible way (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2; 16:7; 20:23).

There are indications today that the Holy Spirit continues to lead believers although not as directly as in Acts - since the Bible is now complete. His primary leading is through the Word of God. Every time the Word of God is taught the Holy Spirit is attempting to guide believers into the truths of God's word and the Christ-centered life (John 16:12-15). The Holy Spirit is always leading the believer into the righteous life and a personal experiential relationship with God (Rom 8:13-14).

The Holy Spirit also places desires in us (Philip 2:13; Gal 5:22-23) and applies gentle motivational pressures on our souls. He helps us want what God wants. He gives us strong desires in our spiritual gifts and often will use those gifts to minister to others apart from us even knowing the time and the way we are being used. He often gives us just the right words to say (Lk 12:12). The more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the more we can be lead by the Spirit (Luke 4:1).

This leading of the Holy Spirit is the most subjective area. While the Holy Spirit does impress upon us certain things, there are a lot of false and foolish impressions we can receive. Those desires may be our desires or impressions from cosmos-diabolicus. These can be very powerful. Satan comes as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14) and can even "fill" the heart of the believer (Acts 5:3).

The believer is commanded to test all things 1 Jn 4:1, 1 Thess 5:21. The only true standard to test the spirits, impulses and even our own motives is the Word of God, Isa 8:20; Heb 4:12. Every impression from God is in perfect alignment with His Word.

## 15 - PRAYER

Prayer is critical in divine guidance. God stands ready to give wisdom on a liberal basis without reproach (James 1:5). James is dealing with conflict and persecution. James says go to God for wisdom in dealing with difficult situations. The present imperative of "let him ask" shows that this action is commanded and it is to be continuous (Mat 7:7). If you want to know what to do there is no better person to go to than God Himself.

Prayer must be offered in faith, James 1:6. You must believe what God says. He must believe He has a plan, He will direct your paths, and He will answer your prayer. Many do not have because they have never asked or asked with the wrong motivations (James 4:2-3). Prayer is an admission of need of God and His guidance.

Consider the prayer of Jesus in picking the disciples (Luke 6:12-13). He knew that God had twelve men in mind. Ever wonder where He got the list? Consider the fact that it took all night in prayer for divine guidance in this area.

We cannot afford to move along without God's counsel in divine guidance (Josh 9:14). We cannot afford the mistake of not asking God about decisions in life. Some of the most confused people in the world spend less than five minutes asking God.

Consider the prayer life of David who recognized the dangers of barging ahead without asking God (Psa 25:4-5; 27:11; 31:3; 43:3; 143:10). If you are seeking God's will, you must spend time talking to God about it. He is there and He is not silent. He has promised to lead you every step of the way.

# 16 - Circumstances

Circumstances may be the single greatest factor used by Christians to determine what God is trying to tell them. Countless Christians use circumstances to determine what God is trying to tell them. But is this legitimate? What light does the Word of God shine on the use of circumstances in divine guidance?

The first thing that needs to be established is that God is sovereign and is actively working out "the" all things (τὰ πάντα, *all these [grace] things*) in His grace plan, Eph 1:10-11; Rom 8:28. While the Bible nowhere says that God has decreed every single act in human history, the fact remains is that God is sovereign and this means that He is superior in position, supreme in power, and independent of and unlimited by any other outside of Himself. Simply stated God does as He pleases and is always in control of the situation even though man continues to operate with freewill. God foreknows all future events and has made arrangements for every circumstance. Even when God permits man to use his freewill for evil, God is behind the scenes actively working out His plan - though it may seem that He is not (Gen 45:5).

What about the issue of open and closed doors? The Bible teaches us that when Jesus Christ opens doors for faithful local churches, no one can close them (Rev 3:7-8). Likewise when He closes a door, He often opens a wider door of opportunity (Acts 16:7-9). Christ is the divine Doorkeeper and holds the key that unlocks doors of opportunity. Regarding doors of opportunity, Paul challenged believers to pray that God would open doors for him to get out more Bible doctrine related to the church age mystery doctrines (Col 4:3). God still opens and closes doors of opportunities in many areas - from college applications to job opportunities in and out of the ministry. God does use circumstances to guide us in life.

While God does guide through circumstances, there are several reasons that guidance through circumstances alone is an uncertain guide at best. While God is in control of circumstances, the same set of circumstances can be interpreted in different ways. Different things can be read into the same circumstances due to personal desires. As a matter of fact circumstances can be used to prove just about anything you want them to.

Another problem with being led by circumstances is that Satan can also manipulate circumstances. With the latitude that God gives him, Satan is able to manage or influence circumstances to the point of hindering opportunities for even the greatest of believers (1 Thess 2:18). At first it may not be evident if the closed door was closed by the Lord or by Satan. If it is a Satanic hindrance, God will ultimately remove all obstacles and open the door. God will clear the way in such a situation. We will not need to break them down. Perhaps God will allow Satan to shut a door to motivate us to ask, seek, and knock (Mt 7:7; Col 4:3). He may be waiting for you to trust Him in the matter. That door that Satan closed may be God's will for your life. Still another problem with guidance by doors is that often there are many open doors. There could be many opportunities at the same time. Every open door is not God's will for your life. Christians who live by an *open door policy* of divine guidance can never live in confidence and often seek guidance by asking God to close all doors but one.

What about the issue of divine guidance and disagreeable circumstances? There are occasions when an open door actually leads to reaching fewer people for the Lord (Acts 8). Philip actually left a very successful ministry to deal with one person. The Lord's open doors do not always bring more opportunities (in numbers). Consider disagreeable circumstances like persecution in Jerusalem and how Christians were scattered except for the apostles, Acts 8:1. It was God's will for the apostles to stay in dangerous Jerusalem.

Divine guidance primarily by circumstances simply does not work. There are too many variables. God does not expect for us to understand all that He is doing around us, Prov 20:24. Divine guidance by circumstances alone can never be conclusive. While there is a place for the evaluation of circumstances in the confirmation of God's will, circumstances should not be used for the determination of God's will. God may use circumstances to give a general direction or even to cause one to make a major turn in life, but as far as divine guidance, every circumstance must be considered in light of the Word of God with an attitude of prayer and full commitment to the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:2). One thing that we can be sure that God is trying to tell us in all circumstances is that He expects us to trust and obey Him in everything - not to understand everything.

## 17 - Supernatural Signs

Another issue in divine guidance is supernatural signs. While God did use supernatural signs in certain situations like the guidance of Shekinah glory cloud for the Israelites in the desert and the Urim and Thummim to guide with certain decisions, there is no record of believers ever seeking signs after the day of Pentecost.

The most often Biblical example used to justify the seeking of signs is Gideon in Judges 6. However, this passage is really a strong rebuke against the seeking of signs. What Gideon did was sin. Gideon even admitted twice that he knew what God's will was (Judges 6:36-37). God told Gideon that he would be delivered but he simply did not believe God. Gideon's fleece came about because Gideon would not trust God's Word on the matter.

Consider our Lord's evaluation of sign seekers: *an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign* (Mat 16:4). The Lord wants us to live by faith and not by sight. Seeking signs is in the realm of sight and not faith. God is not looking for a mechanical relationship with believers based on signs. God is looking for a relationship of faith. He wants us to trust and obey Him.

One of the worst practices in sign seeking is when Christians tell God what to do or not to do. Instead of living by faith, some people actually tell God what He has to do - instead of letting Him show them what to do. Never lay conditions on God. Some Christians actually use signs as a cover for lack of positive volition to the Word of God, the spiritual life, and plan of God. Instead of fulfilling the various commands of growing in spiritual discernment, many used signs to cover their spiritual indolence. Signs become an easy excuse for not truly seeking and developing the spiritual skills necessary for discernment. There are many believers who are negative to the Word of God who try to use signs as a way out. Sign seeking often became an excuse for negative volition - as with the Jews who rejected Jesus Christ.

There is no justification for pleading for special signs. We have the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the completed Word of God to guide us through life. We have so much more to guide us than those in the Old Testament who at times needed special guidance. Why look for signs when we can open our Bibles and look into the very mind of Christ? 1 Cor 2:16

## 18 - Dreams and Visions.

There can be no doubt that God did reveal and guide individuals through dreams and visions in the Old and New Testaments (Gen 37:6-10; Acts 10:10). Dreams occurred during sleep, while visions occurred while the person was awake.

Dreams and visions are very unreliable. In the Old Testament God gave strong warning about putting dreams ahead of God's Word (Jer 23:28). It is the Word of God that must always be the focus of our lives, not our subjective dreams.

In Hebrews 1:1-3 we are told that in many portions and in *many ways* (like dreams) God spoke to the fathers, but in these last days He has spoken to us in His Son. This full revelation in the Son is recorded in the gospels, epistles, and in Revelation.

Many wonder about the source of their dreams. Dreams are expressions from our subconscious minds. They reflect our wishes and our fears. They often ventilate the anxieties and stress we experience during our waking hours. Dreams also serve as a tool for the subconscious to keep us asleep when we are drifting toward consciousness (which is why our dreams are most active right before we wake up).

## 19 - Use your Head

While Prov 3:5-6 instructs us not to "lean" on our own understanding, God expects us to use our heads in divine guidance. God expects us to develop and use sound minds (Tit 1:8; 2:12; 2 Tim 1:7; 1 Pt 4:7). We are to be balanced and use common sense about many things. He has given us the equipment and expects for us to use it; He does not want it to remain idle. Certain decisions are right because they make good sense. God supernaturally guides us at times and then expects for us to use our heads, Acts 12. On the other hand, common sense can be fallible. There are certain things that God may want us to do that do not *seem* to make sense.

God has also given us conscience to help in guidance (Rom 2:15; Js 4:17). However, the conscience cannot be trusted because it can be seared (1 Tim 4:2). It needs transformation by the Word. God does guide by our consciences as we fulfill our responsibilities.

## 20 - Peace like a River

*If only you had paid attention to My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea (Isa 48:18).*

What wonderful news it is to know that if we live according to the Word of God we will have peace like a river and righteousness like the waves of the sea. When we follow His direction we will have an inner quietness and assurance that has all of the abundance, freshness, and persistence of a deep flowing river.

One of the markers of living in the center of God's will is peace (שְׁלוֹמִים). It is life outside of the will of God that brings so much aggravation and stress. God never gives peace to a person who is living in contradiction to His Word and plan. We can never know the peace of God when we go our own way. There is no peace for the wicked or in any wicked act (Isa 48:22). Only when we go God's way is there a beautiful, deep, and ever-flowing calm.

When we take the path of God's own choosing there will be a inner serenity and quiet contentment. When we are walking in the will of God, we have a sense of confidence and spiritual self-esteem about the direction of our lives. God will not give peace about a bad decision because He knows where the road leads.

If there are disquieting or disturbing thoughts it may be God's signal to go back and rethink our decision. If you are really disturbed about it, it is time to go back and recheck the Word of God, get on our knees in prayer, seek the counsel of others, check our true motives, examine commitment to presentation and transformation, and reflect on our own spiritual status and growth. Evidence of bickering in a relationship is a sign that something is wrong. To ignore these conflicts will only lead to greater problems down the road and perhaps years of bitterness and distance. Deep restlessness and agitation cannot be overlooked. God is trying to tell you something. In a marriage relationship it is time to go back and recheck the will of God for you and do it - now!

This peace does not mean absence of stormy seas and contrary winds. You can be right in the center of God's will and have storms of anxieties crashing down on you. That very storm you are facing could be the very will of God to advance you to maturity (Ex 14; Psa 34:19; Mt 14:22-33; Mk 15:19; Acts 16). The issue in each and every situation is trust (Prov 3:5-6). Trust is the key to life. It is trust that brings the peace of God that passes understanding (Philip 4:4-6). You can have difficulties and be in God's will, but the difference is that you have an inner peace and tranquility as you trust the Lord through His Word.

Peace should only be used as a final marker in determining God's will. As we live the spirit-filled life the Holy Spirit shines His light on the Word of God, our own desires, and providence. Only after examining these three road signs, can we use peace as a further indicator. The apostle Paul speaks of "peace" as an umpire (βραβεύετω) or final decider in life (Col 3:15).

Paul is saying that an umpire named peace will make the final decision. God has provided us with the umpire of peace to settle any uncertainties that we have with respect to God's will. There is no need to live in confusion. If you are living the Spirit-filled life and following the road signs of the Word of God, God-given desires, and providence and have a peace about it all, then you can be sure that it is God's will. There is no need to fear.

## 21 - Wait on the Lord.

Perhaps the hardest thing for us to do is to wait on the Lord. There may be times when it feels like we continue to make our 911 calls but no one is answering the phone. We may even find ourselves begging and begging for an answer - *please God just tell me*. If you ever felt this way, you are not alone (Psa 10:1; 28:1). It is during these difficult times that we must go back to the Word of God and wait on the Lord.

Failure to wait on the Lord has ruined countless lives. Barging ahead without the Lord is sure to bring disaster (Num 14:39-45). Life is filled with tragedies in almost every area of life simply because people would not wait on God with regard to chastity, marriage, work, finances and even the local church. When we get in a hurry we are bound to make mistakes some of which will last a lifetime. Many believers probably make their biggest mistakes because of unwillingness to wait for God's timing. Stay cool! Wait on the Lord!

Why does God delay? One reason is clearly expressed in Isaiah 30:18 (KJV). Sometimes God waits until the situation gets even more desperate because the more desperate it gets the more amazing will be His deliverance and the more glorious will He be exalted. This will also increase your faith and bring more glory to Him. Often long delays are often followed by spectacular deliverance. Periods of waiting can also be times of great spiritual growth. He wants our faith stretched and strengthened. We are forced to trust Him and so get to know Him more intimately. In delays God gives us something far better than the things for which we ask. Be alert for what God is trying to teach you. God's delays are always purposeful. Although we may not know what the purpose is, He asks to trust Him and to await. Our impatience is usually due to unbelief. When you really trust God you will not "make haste" (Isa 28:16). Trust truly is our best defense. Don't get ahead of the Lord, He really does know better. Stay cool! Wait on the Lord! Again, God really does know better. Remember Satan may be hurrying you to do something really stupid. Remember it is the nature of the flesh (old sin nature) to take over.

Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He will strengthen you and deliver you (Psa 27:14; 40:1-3). It is often lack of trust that causes us to move ahead without Him.

## 22- The 5 Lights of Divine Guidance.

The Holy Spirit is the Agent of Guidance. He is always motivating us or stirring us up in the ways of God. The Holy Spirit shines 5 headlights on God's will as we live, walk, and keep in step with the Holy Spirit, Gal 5:16, 25.

The 1st light is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit shines His light on the Word of God. The Word of God is a treasure trough of information on God's will for your life. We have direct statements regarding God's will regarding salvation, the Spirit-filled life, sexual purity, your attitude, submission, and suffering. There are also myriads of commands, prohibitions, and doctrinal principles to guide us in life. We are told how to live with respect to marriage, the family, the local church, fellow believers, and the workplace. The Bible tells us to pray to God for wisdom and He will give it to us. The Bible tells us to wait on the Lord and His timing. The Bible tells us to trust and know Him in all of our ways. The Bible tells us to commit ourselves to Him and renew our minds with the Word precisely so we can determine the will of God (Rom 12:2).

The 2nd light is on desires. God gives us certain desires related to the plan of God. The best illustration is in the area of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gives us very strong desires and motivations with respect to our spiritual gifts. He is a real Person who guides. However, this is a very subjective area and we can also receive false impressions by our old sin natures or by the kingdom of darkness.

The 3rd light is on providence or the circumstances of life. The Holy Spirit shines His light on divine opportunities. However, this is also a very subjective area because Satan also opens doors.

The 4<sup>th</sup> light is one of peace. If the decision does not violate the letter or the spirit of God's Word, if you have a strong desire to do it, if God has provided an open door, and you still have this peace then you are can rest assured that it is God's will for your life.

The 5<sup>th</sup> light is on the outcome of the decision. It is always God's will for us to gain more spiritual momentum.

## 23 - Missed God's will?

God created us with volition which can be used to go contrary to His wishes. We can go our own way and reject God's will for our lives, Luke 7:30. Consider the consequences of negative volition in the lives of such people as Adam and Eve, Abraham, David, Jonah, and Peter. Consider how far David went off of the path of God and how it started with simply not fulfilling his responsibilities in the military. Consider how Jonah ran in the opposite direction of God's will for his life. They all fell due to weakness of the flesh with its propensity to sin and human viewpoint. Other reasons people miss God's will include procrastination (Lk 14:18), ignorance, sin, and the self-centered life.

We need to note is that there are certain (and sometimes irrevocable) consequences from missing God's will (Gal 6:7). These consequences are not usually immediate, but they are certain. Even in the very violation of God's will there may be pleasures for a season (cf., Abraham, David, Jonah) - but remember it is only for a season. The game is not yet over. We do reap what we sow. When we violate God's principles we live to regret it. Consider Abraham, David, and Peter. Consider how God tells us how to love our families and raise our children and the long term effects of ignoring those principles. Consider how God tells us how to live in each area of life and the effects of ignoring Him in those areas. Consider the lonely people who are so alone, simply because they have not developed friendships among fellow believers. Consider the discipline the Lord uses to train us (Heb 12:11).

## 24 - God's plan is greater than our failures.

Our waywardness and self-will never catches God by surprise. He knows everything and He plans for our failures as well. Before He even created Adam He arranged a plan to redeem and reclaim him for Himself. He made an alternate plan for them. God takes our very sins and uses them to display His grace and bring Him praise (Psa 76:10). Before we were ever born He anticipated our failures and improvised an alternative plan that even uses our disobedience to serve a useful purpose. That is how powerful God is. The Lord Jesus can take our shattered lives and remake them absolutely wonderful. Maybe some of the mistakes and failures were necessary to convince us of how sinful, weak and stupid we really are. Only when we recognize our weakness can we know God's power. God takes all the messes we make and weaves them into a plan that glorifies Himself. It really does not matter where you have been. God is in the business of salvaging lives.

The plan of God starts for you right now. At this point right now you need to realize that God has a plan and it is the best plan possible for your life. Regardless of where you are the plan of God starts right now. It is still the best plan around. God is perfect and His plan is perfect. His plan starts with lining up with the Word of God (Jonah). There comes a time when we simply have to "forget" the past and get in sync with the plan now (Philip 3:13). Confess it and move on. Don't let preoccupation of the past rob of you of present and future blessedness in God's "present" perfect plan.