

Guidance – listening to God

Over the years many people have come to me seeking wisdom about guidance. Sometimes it is straight forward as God often wants us to use our own initiative, but at other times we need to know God's mind on a certain matter which takes time and effort. For example, when I was in love with Pam and was wanting to marry her, I spent three days in prayer and fasting, not of course every person needs to do that. Most times, I know it is fine to have regular meals every day and I don't need to pray about that. There are three main principles I use for knowing the will of God in important matters as mentioned below.

Bible Perspective

'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you' Psalm 32:8 and 'in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight' Prov 3:6. The most common question I am asked over the years by young and old alike is, 'How do I know what God is saying in this situation?' This question is based around guidance.

Observations

1. Hudson Taylor a famous pioneer missionary to China once said, "*The older I get the harder I find guidance*" (reference unknown). However in times like this it's not that God is distant, but that He wants us to learn to grow in faith. For example, parents normally take good care of a baby, but as it matures through stumbling and falling over, it learns to walk. It's like that with us. It is by faith that we learn to walk with God. 'By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. Hebrews 11:8
2. One of my favourite expressions when it comes to guidance is '*God is seldom early, but never late*'.
I'm normally in much more of a hurry to see action than God. Unfortunately, Saul got it wrong when he tried to hasten God's plan through fear by going into battle early 1 Samuel 13:13. He lost His kingdom.
3. Three aspects of guidance have proven to be most helpful to me over the years:
 - Let God speak through His word the **Bible**. Ps119:105 'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path'. I don't advise that you simply open the Bible and look for a word for your situation. But through consecutive reading of Scripture with an attitude of prayer allow God to speak to you.
 - There should be a **witness of His Spirit** in your spirit. God often calls us to adventures bigger than ourselves, which may produce some fear, yet there should be a measure of peace. Sometimes it is good to share your thoughts with a trusted spiritual advisor. Accept change can be frightening! '*Give our Lord the benefit of believing that His hand is leading you. And accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete*', (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin *).

- **Circumstances.** Acts 16:6-16 Paul wanted to go to Bithynia but the Holy Spirit blocked him. However at night he had a vision to go to Macedonia. That instead was God's will. At the right time circumstances will pave the way.
4. It is particularly important that married couples have a sense of agreement in any big issues even if
it takes time for you to both reach an agreement.
 5. Be prepared for God to say 'no' even when you are keen to do something. It may in fact be right, but
the timing wrong. Fervent impulsive excitement usually proves not to be God's direction.
 6. Finally if you really don't know what to do, God may want you to use your initiative.
- Ben Carson the famous surgeon suggests 4 questions worth asking:
- What is the BEST thing that can happen if I DO this?
 - What is the WORST thing that can happen if I DO this?
 - What is the BEST thing that can happen if I DON'T do this?
 - What is the WORST thing that can happen if I DON'T do this?

Resources

'Take the risk' by Ben Carson

'Take another look at guidance' by Bob Mumford

'Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day' by Peter Scazzero p78*