

Psalm 143

Additional Bible reading: Acts 6:1-7

Teach me to do your will (part 2)

Introduction

We have noted the longing for guidance in a number of the Psalms. This desire is always centred on God, belonging to Him, and wanting to find out His plan for our lives. It is not about asking God to make our plans succeed, or helping us to achieve the things we would like. Guidance is real, but on His conditions, not ours. Today we consider four more points in answer to the question, "How does God guide me?" We have already seen that the heart must be assured, and the will must be surrendered.

(3) Our knees must be bent

If you want guidance – ask God. **If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God** (James 1:5). Do you want guidance? Ask! Do you want Him to speak through His Word? Ask! Do you want a door to be opened or shut? Ask! Do you want wise advice? Ask!

If we are used to being in touch with Him every day about every thing, and not just in big crises, we will find it easy and natural when big decisions have to be made. There will be no great panic.

My hope is in you all day long (Psalm 25:5). **Wait for the Lord** (Psalm 27:14).

(4) Our Bibles must be opened

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105). God guides so often through His Word. Here we find the basic principles of conduct and behaviour. We have no right to expect special guidance about matters He has already spoken about. We do not need a vision in the night or an angelic visitation to tell us to tell the truth, to be honest in business, to love our enemies, or to be baptised and to join the church, or to observe the Lord's Supper. If we use the excuse "God has not told me yet" about things He has already spoken in His Word, we shall wait on.

Furthermore, He will never guide contrary to His Word. He will never guide us to marry an unbeliever, or to lie about others, or to commit murder.

The Bible also helps us in particular problems. Consistent reading and obedience to the Word will mould our values so that we come to the right estimate and assessment of a particular situation facing us. It helps us look at everything through Christian eyes. The Bible speaks about right attitude to time and money, gifts, health, responsibility to parents. These things have to be applied when we have to make particular decisions.

Never put a pin in the Bible to seek guidance. It is not a “lucky dip” barrel. We all know the story of the man who tried three times to get guidance by this method, and the verses that he stuck the pin in were “Judas went out and hung himself”, “Go thou and do likewise”, and finally, “Whatever thou doest, do quickly”. Nor is it helpful to seize on a random word as being the answer we are looking for. All decisions should be made in the light of Bible teaching about our gifts, finances, duties to home, work in the church.

Often we do find that as we read a verse about Christian conduct and duty, it will particularly impress itself on us, e.g. many missionaries have been spoken to personally by the reading of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20). We should never move until we are constrained to move. Someone once advised would-be ministers, “Never go into the ministry or mission field if you can avoid it.”

Incidentally, we should expect God to speak to us every time we read the Word. We should always be on the look out for something to thank Him for, warning of a sin to avoid, an awareness of a weakness in our lives, or a command to obey.

(5) Our minds must be informed

When you have to make a decision, find out all the facts. There was a crisis in the early church over the neglect of widows. The Apostles had their hands full with the ministry of the Word and prayer, therefore they chose seven men and insisted they had the right spiritual qualifications. They had to be **full of faith and of the Holy Spirit... full of God’s grace and power** (Acts 6:5,8). These men could devote themselves to the situation, and take responsibly.

A decision regarding a job opportunity, for example, requires all the facts to be considered. Do we have the right qualifications, and requirements for the post? Could we do it and enjoy it? How would it affect home and church life? Is the salary fair? Is it a permanent position? Would it involve things that might compromise our witness as a Christian? Trust God to supply the necessary information, and withhold what is unnecessary. In practical terms it often requires taking a piece of paper and drawing up two columns – one for the case for going, and one for the case for staying. Fully informed and rationally considered, the decision will be easier.

(6) Our common sense must be sanctified

God guides through our gifts, and one of these is common sense. Not worldly, but sanctified common sense. Worldly common sense would never cause us to give up a comfortable well-paid job to live in uncomfortable primitive conditions of the mission field, living on a pittance. But sanctified common sense might well send you there – in light of God’s call, the need, and your gifts.

Peter was rescued by an angel from prison (Acts 12). This miracle was done by God. He did for Peter what Peter could not have done for himself. But then God expected Peter to use his common sense. **When this had dawned on him** (NIV), or **He**

considered the thing (AV) (Acts 12:12). συνιδων indicates he made his decision in the light of his escape, and at once went to a friendly house for food and support. Then because of the danger, **he left for another place** (Acts 12:17). Sanctified common sense is a very important aspect. “Nine tenths of guidance is sanctified common sense” [author of this quotation unclear].

Conclusion

Our hearts must be assured. Our wills must be surrendered. Our knees must be bent. Our Bibles must be opened. Our minds must be informed. Our common sense must be sanctified.