

Guidance

knowing what God wants you to do

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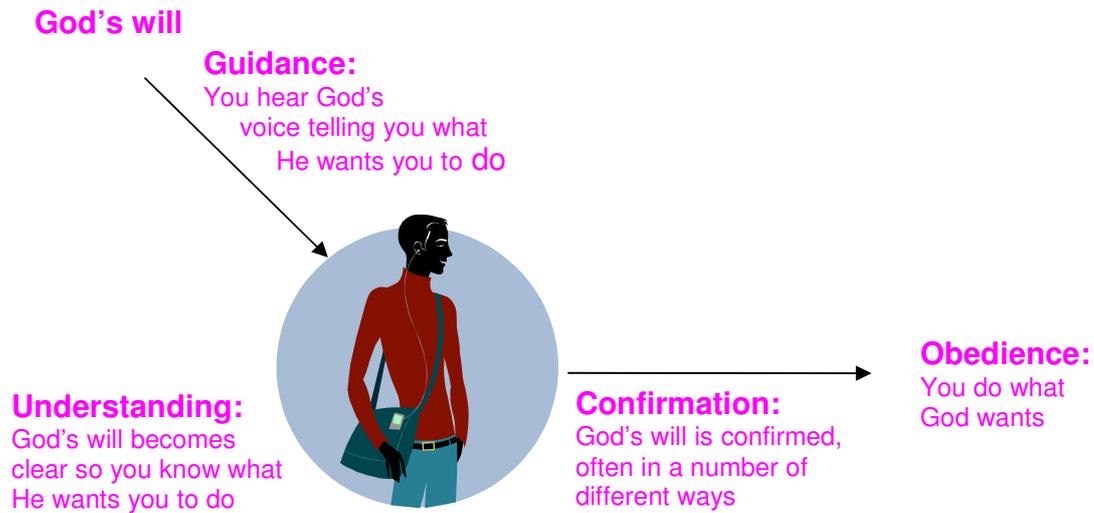
God loves you and wants the best for you!

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

For you to experience God's best for your life:

- God must speak to you.
- You must hear God's voice.
- You must know that it is God speaking.
- You must understand what it is that He wants you to do.
- God's will must be confirmed so you know what it is that He wants you to do.
- You must do what God says.

In other words, God must guide you!



Doing what God wants is an essential part of having Him as your God; of having 'Jesus as Lord', and of living in the Kingdom of God.

For Christians who really want to be in the centre of God's will this is vitally important, but unfortunately, it's not always clear cut. As with other areas of the Christian, life, though, there are principles in God's Word that we can follow so that we know with assurance what God wants us to do.

1. Hearing God's voice

If you are to be guided by God, He must speak to you and you must hear His voice.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Psalm 32:8

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Isaiah 30:21

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. John 10:27

How does God speak to you?

It's likely that He speaks in many ways, but you may not always be able to recognise that He is speaking.

- **God speaks in many different ways**

Possible ways that God could speak

- a sensing in your spirit "I just feel God is saying".
- a Bible verse comes alive (Hebrews 4:12)
- a revelation, teaching (1 Corinthians 14:26)
- a dream, vision (Numbers 12:6)
- a prophecy, an interpretation of a message in tongues, a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)
- a circumstance eg. something 'just happens' to catch your eye.
- an angel (Hebrews 1:14)
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(Not by putting out a fleece. God was angry when Gideon did this. Judges 6).

- **When God speaks you 'hear' His voice in your spirit.**

The Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will sense His anointing (eg. by a lift in your spirit, a sense of peace, a feeling of assurance, a raising of your heartbeat, warmth, tingling, etc).

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. The anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit - just as it has taught you, remain in him. 1 John 2:20, 27

Along with the anointing you have a sense of what God is saying. More often than not it is just an understanding rather than specific sentences. The meaning becomes clear in your mind and you can say 'The Lord said'. or 'I believe that the Lord is saying to me ...'.

You will then 'know' that it is God who is speaking.

You might say "God spoke to me..." or "I just know it was the Lord..."



See Romans 8: 5-17

This is the main passage that explains how you can hear God's voice and be "led by the Spirit".

- You will gradually learn to recognise God's voice so that you know it really is Him who is speaking. (This comes particularly from spending time in the Bible. The voice that speaks to you from the Bible is the same voice that will guide you through life).
- You will also have to believe what God says! Sometimes what He wants you to do can be mind-blowing! *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.* Isaiah 55:8
- You will need to be open to God speaking and sensitive at all times to hear His voice. Don't be closed to any possible way that God could speak to you!

(But recognise that it is not easy to be sure it is God speaking; and that it is easy to mis-interpret what He might be saying, or even manipulate situations to your advantage eg. *'God spoke to me and said you should give me some money'!!!!!!*).

- Whenever you sense God is speaking make sure it is confirmed in other ways.

Every matter is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.
2 Corinthians 13:1

For more details see <http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com> and open up the studies on 'Hearing God's voice' and 'The work of the Holy Spirit'.

2. Understanding and confirming God's will

We are to be led by the Spirit in all areas of our lives. There are times, though, when we have to make big decisions affecting our futures, families, life directions etc. In these situations we desperately need to find God's will, know that it is Him, and have His will confirmed in some way.

This is not needed for the ordinary things of life. You don't need to hear God's voice and have it confirmed when:

- it is clearly taught in the Bible
- it is part of your responsibilities
- it is morally wrong
- it is common sense

eg. you don't need God's guidance to do the dishes, mow the lawns, do your homework, do the shopping, register the car etc. Just do it!

When we are facing major decisions and must know God's will the big question is:

How can I know it is God speaking, and not just my own thoughts, feelings and ideas?

The honest answer is "You can't"!!! There's no little signpost that says 'This is God' or 'That's just your own idea'. (We are always to *"walk by faith and not by sight"*. 2 Corinthians 5:7). Unfortunately, there's no formula for guidance and for hearing God's voice.

There are however, principles you can follow so the guidance you receive can be tested or confirmed, and so you can be confident that it really is from God.

Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. 1 John 4:1
Every matter is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. 2 Corinthians 13:1

There are many different ways you can test whether a word is from God, and/or by which God confirms His word, so you can know He is the One who is speaking to you. As a result you can have lots of confidence that it is God speaking and not just your own good ideas, thoughts, or feelings.

Hindrances to God's guidance

As you consider what God is saying it is wise to check that there is nothing hindering your hearing of God's voice, or knowing His will. eg.

- Do you have some personal sin that may be making you deaf to God's voice?
- Is your motive pure? Do you really want to do God's will, or do you have some ulterior motive?
- Are you fully committed to God, and to doing His will?
- Are you trusting in yourself or others, rather than trusting in God?
- Is your mind already made up about what you want to do?
- Do you have prejudice or bias towards what you want to do?
- Are you trying to bargain with God?
- Is your conscience warning you about it?
- Are you rushing into it? Do you know God's timing?
- Are you looking for some spectacular or unusual form of guidance, and ignoring what God is saying to you on a daily basis?
- Are you too dependent on the advice, counsel or demands of others? Is God really in first place?
- Are you willing to trust God in the situation?
- Are you being overly influenced by your emotions?
- Are you tired, confused, worn out, stressed?
- Are you reacting to get out of some other situation?
- Is this different from other times that God has spoken to you?

If any of these are relevant deal with them!

Then you can ask the following questions:

Do you feel it is God who is speaking?

You will have an impression, a sensing, a feeling that God wants you to go in a particular direction. This happens as the Holy Spirit reveals God's will to you. (We call this 'a witness of the Spirit').

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8:14

If it is the Holy Spirit it will 'feel like it is God who is speaking'. It will have His nature about it: eg. warm, healthy, strong, loving, insistent, righteous, powerful, focused on building the Kingdom of God, for your good, loving, etc. If it doesn't 'feel like it is God' it probably isn't!



Does it line up with the Word of God?

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105

If it comes from God it will always be in harmony with His Word, the Bible. Most of our life situations are not specifically addressed in the Bible, but there are likely to be principles there that are relevant. God will never tell you to do something that is contrary to His Word.



- Sometimes God will 'quicken' a particular verse so it comes alive to you and applies directly to your situation. (As with the other forms of guidance make sure it is confirmed in a number of ways).
- It is possible to manipulate Scripture so you find something that agrees with what you want! eg. opening up the Bible and randomly finger-pointing. Beware!

Do you have peace in your heart about it?

Satan can't counterfeit peace. Only God can give peace. If it is of God you will have a deep sense of peace in your heart about it. (*The peace of God that passes all understanding.* Philipians 4:7).



God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. 1 Corinthians 14:33

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace. Isaiah 55:12

- As you consider two options, (and maybe try them out), in one will have a sense of peace, but in the other your spirit will be disturbed. Go with the option in which you have peace.
- Don't confuse peace with your normal emotions, though. You may still be nervous, scared, worried but underneath there can be a deep sense of peace.

Is your conscience clear about it?

God uses your conscience to warn you of troubles ahead. If there are any alarm bells going off in your conscience it probably isn't God's will. If you have a sense that it is right, with no alarm bells this can be a strong confirmation that you are in God's will.



The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 1 Timothy 1:5

Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. 2 Corinthians 1:12

Do circumstances fall into place?

God loves you and wants the best for you. If you are in the centre of His will you can expect circumstances to be ordered by God so that everything falls into place at the right place and the right time.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

Circumstances alone, though, don't show that something is God's will. eg. Acts 15:36-41 The circumstances were interpreted in two different ways by Paul and Barnabas. God still worked it out in the end, though, as it resulted in two missionary teams, not one!



Is it confirmed by others?

"Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." 2 Corinthians 13:1

A number of different factors will come together to confirm that what you are considering is truly God's will.

One of these can be a confirmation from your spiritual leaders, or those who you respect in the Lord. (On important matters it is wise to ask these people if they will wait on God and see if they feel it is right before God. God can easily speak to others just as He speaks to you).

But don't let others get guidance from God for you! God is the One who is to tell you what He wants, not other people.

Be particularly careful when people come up to you and say 'I have a word from God for you'. Prophecies or 'words' may be from God, or they may be from the person with some ulterior motive behind them. Don't accept them without testing them first. (Prophecy is not primarily for guidance. *But those who prophesy speak to people for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.* 1 Corinthians 14:3). Similarly for dreams, angels, visions etc.

Any guidance from others should only be a confirmation of what God is already speaking to you about, and should be carefully tested.

So if:

- you feel God is speaking to you and you know what He wants you to do
- it lines up with the Word of God
- you have peace in your heart about it
- your conscience is clear about it
- circumstances fall into place
- it is confirmed by others



There's one more aspect to check out:

Are you willing to do it?

God has given you a free will and won't force you to do anything against your will. But He really does want you to do what He wants!

If the answers to most (or all) of the above questions are 'Yes' you can go forward in obedience to God. He has spoken; you believe that you are in the centre of His will, and you act accordingly. You know that God wants the best for you, and you trust Him to bring it to pass.

(This is not 'stepping out in faith' to find God's will. Like Peter, it is stepping out in faith and obedience, once God has revealed His will to you. See Matthew 14: 28-33).

This requires a certain heart attitude:

- **trust**

You are unlikely to obey God if you can't trust Him.

Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of the light. John 12:36

As you trust God the light you have for your future will become clearer. You will '*walk in the light as He is in the light*' 1 John 1:7

- **obedience**

You will use your will to do what God has told to you do. Your attitude will be as in Psalm 40:8

I delight to do your will, O Lord.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

**So, there are many ways that God uses to guide you and to confirm His will for your life.
When you hear God's voice, understand what He is wanting you to do, and have it confirmed, you can go forward in obedience, confident that you are in God's will.**

**That's when 'Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' is fulfilled in you.
And that's when life is really meaningful!**

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever. Isaiah 55:12,13

Knowing God's will

Check that there is nothing hindering your hearing of God's voice, or knowing His will.

- Do you have some personal sin that may be making you deaf to God's voice?
- Is your motive pure? Do you really want to do God's will, or do you have some ulterior motive?
- Are you fully committed to God, and to doing His will?
- Are you trusting in yourself or others, rather than trusting in God?
- Is your mind already made up about what you want to do?
- Do you have prejudice or bias towards what you want to do?
- Are you trying to bargain with God?
- Is your conscience warning you about it?
- Are you rushing into it? Do you know God's timing?
- Are you looking for some spectacular or unusual form of guidance, and ignoring what God is saying to you on a daily basis?
- Are you too dependent on the advice, counsel or demands of others? Is God really in first place?
- Are you willing to trust God in the situation?
- Are you being overly influenced by your emotions?
- Are you tired, confused, worn out, stressed?
- Are you reacting to get out of some other situation?
- Does it feel like other times that God has spoken to you?

If any of these are relevant deal with them!

Then ask the following questions:

- Do you feel it is God who is speaking? Romans 8:14
- Does it line up with the Word of God? Psalm 119:105
- Do you have peace in your heart about it? 1 Corinthians 14:33
- Is your conscience clear about it? 2 Corinthians 1:12
- Do circumstances fall into place? Romans 8:28
- Is it confirmed by others? 2 Corinthians 13:1
- Are you willing to do it? Psalm 40:8

If the answer to all (or most) of these questions is 'Yes' you can go forward

- believing that it is God's will
- in obedience to the Lord
- trusting in the Lord.

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.
Psalm 32:8*

Discussion questions

There are principles we can follow to know God's will, but ultimately we have to "walk by faith and not by sight". Why is this? Why doesn't God always make His will absolutely crystal clear?

Give examples of situations when you have been able to find God's will clearly. Which of the principles above were helpful in these situations? Were there other principles you followed that were helpful? How did you know for sure what God's will was in each situation?

What is God's voice like? How does He speak to you? How do you know it is Him?

What are the ways that God uses to confirm that He is speaking in a given situation?

Many people put out fleeces to find God's will. Is this a valid way of finding God's will? Illustrate your answers from Scripture.

You want to know God's will and a set of circumstances fall into place indicating you should move in a certain direction. Is this enough to be sure that it is God's will? What else could you do?

Why is it so important to seek, find and obey God's will?

What have you learned from your study of how God guides? How will you apply this in future situations when you need to know God's will?