

## Guidance From God

**Sterling UMC**  
**January 24, 2010**  
**Psalm 23:3b**

Life is a series of choices, of decisions. Success is basically a matter of making wise decisions. You make dumb decisions you fail in life. We make our decisions and then our decisions make us. Because every decision has a consequence, because we're human beings (which means we're prone to make mistakes) decision making can be very stressful because you don't know what's going to happen. Have you ever been afraid of making the wrong decision? Some of you right now are facing the stress of indecision. Just this week you've been facing a major issue. Should I hold on or should I let go? Should I get in or should I get out? Should I get married? Should I get a new job? Move? The stress of indecision begins to get to you.

The Bible says in James 1 that a double minded man is unstable in all of his ways. The Greek word for unstable literally means "stagger like a drunk." When you can't make up your mind in life you're going to stagger through life, bouncing off walls like a pinball in a pinball machine. Sometimes even after we make a decision we start second guessing ourselves -- "Did I do the right thing?" We waver back and forth and that causes stress.

Where do we find the guidance we need? Is there an answer to the stress that comes from decision making? Yes. In the fourth phrase of Psalm 23:3b: "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The answer to the stress of decision making is to let God guide you. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." The good Shepherd not only feeds us, He leads us. He not only provides, He also guides. The good Shepherd not only protects, He also directs.

God has said "I will guide you through this life if you trust Me."

He says I will guide you on the paths of righteousness. This just means the right path. Literally. Today, David would say, He keeps me on track. It's easy to get off track in life. It's easy to become preoccupied with trivia, majoring on the minors. God is the one who can keep you on track in life.

Some of you say you've tried this. You've asked God to guide you, to lead and direct you. But it's more confusing than before. You can't figure it out. Why is knowing God's will so difficult? Is God playing games with us? Is He playing hide and go seek? No. Does He get some kind of perverse pleasure watching me struggle through the maze of life wondering what I'm supposed to do? Of course not. God wants to guide you. He wants to guide you more than you want to be guided. God wants you to know His will more than you want to know it.

**One problem is we often look for the wrong thing when we're trying to find God's will.**

Some people go for the mystical approach. They are looking for a feeling. They want to be swept off their feet by some emotion. They are looking for some emotional release so they can say, "That's how I know what God's will is!"

Others of you are more logical. You want a methodical approach to God's will, a mechanical approach. You want somebody to give you a recipe, a formula -- nine ways to always know God's will for your life. Apply the recipe. God's will is not a recipe. Some people take a magical approach to God's will. They're looking for God to do some fantastic sign, He'll write it in the sky, call them on the phone, send them a telegram. All of these ways lead to frustration and cause us to miss God's will. God's will is not a feeling, or a formula, or something He wants you to be frustrated or fearful about.

### **So how do I know it? How do I let God guide me in the right path?**

I would like to share with you four things that the Bible teaches us about finding guidance from God.

#### **1. I NEED TO ADMIT I NEED A GUIDE**

This is tough. We're stubborn. The fact is that most of the time we don't want to follow God or anybody else whether we're a Christian or not. We want to go our own way. We don't want to admit we need direction, a guide. So we stumble and get confused.

Sheep, by nature, tend to wander, to get off the path. They need a good Shepherd and so do we. Isaiah 53:6 (LB) says it like this, "Everyone of us have strayed away like sheep! We have left God's paths to follow our own."

Sheep have poor vision. They can't see very far. That's why, on a path, they don't know if that path is going to go off a cliff, lead them into a fire. They need a shepherd, someone to guide them. Likewise, you're like a sheep. You can't see the future. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, much less next year or ten years from now. You don't even know what's going to happen this afternoon. God made you so that you don't see into the future no matter how much you try. Why did God do this? So that you would depend on Him. So He could be your guide.

The problem is because sheep don't see very well into the future and we don't either, we tend to stumble. Proverbs 14:12 (NIV), "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." We've all made a decision that at the time seemed right but later on turned out to be wrong. Some paths lead to dead ends. They lead nowhere.

That's why we need the Good Shepherd who promises to lead us and guide us. But the first step is to just admit, "God, I need help."

Psalm 25:9 (NIV), "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way." Humble means I admit I need a guide.

## 2. ASK IN FAITH FOR DIRECTIONS

Jesus said in Matthew 7:7 (NIV), "Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and the door will be opened." God wants you to learn to ask.

James 1:5-6 (LB) tells us how to get wisdom, "If you want to know what God really wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; *but ...* if you don't ask in faith, don't expect the Lord to give you any solid answer."

God is willing to give wisdom, He's anxious to give wisdom, He's waiting to give you wisdom, He wants to direct you in life, but you've got to have two things lined up: You've got to ask the right person -- God. You ask with the right attitude -- in faith, expecting an answer.

So many times we say, "God, please guide me!" and we walk away not even waiting for guidance. We just immediately start to work. We say, "God, I want you to give me wisdom, help me make the right decision." But we don't really expect Him to do that. We think it all depends on us.

God has promised wisdom. He says if we trust Him and listen to Him, He will guide us. But we must ask in faith.

## 3. LISTEN FOR GOD'S RESPONSE

Right now, in this room, radio waves, television waves and cell phone signals bounce around in the air. There are messages going across this room right now. You can't see them but if you had the proper reception you could tune in and hear it. A radio can pick up the reception. Why? Because it was created by its creator to pick up radio waves. God designed you to hear His voice. There is a receiver in you to get guidance from God. He wouldn't have made you without it.

Out of all the creatures God created and put on the earth, only human beings have the ability to tune in to God to hear what He says.

If you don't hear God then, one of three things is true:

- a) You have the receptor turned off -- you've never established a relationship with God.
- b) You're away from it all the time; you're not listening to it.
- c) You're on the wrong channel -- if God's on channel 13 and you're on channel 4 you're not going to pick it up.

God speaks all the time; we're just not tuned in. Job 33:14 (NCV), "God does speak -- sometimes one way and sometimes another -- even though people may not understand it." Why wouldn't we understand it? Because we're not tuned in.

What channels does God use? There are many that He uses to speak to us. He doesn't always speak the same way.

The primary way that God speaks is through the Bible. A lot of the direction you need for life is already right here. God says life is a journey and He's given us a road map. The Bible is God's guide book, a road map, and if you don't read it you're going to get lost. It will help you negotiate the mazes and the directions you need in life. You need to read this book everyday. If you don't, it's like having the phone off the hook. God can't get through to you.

God also speaks to us through prayer. Prayer is our connection to God. We need to stay in daily contact with God. It's real easy to get off track. If you're out of fellowship with God for a day, two days, three days or longer you can really get your trajectory off. You're going to end up in a whole different place than God intended for you to end up in life. You need to stay in touch so He can make constant corrections to our course.

God speaks through teachers, Godly Bible teachers. Have you ever been in a crowd like at church and you feel the teacher is speaking directly to you? In that moment God is speaking directly to you. He's speaking through teachers. Am I saying that God speaks through me? Yes, I have no doubt that sometimes God uses words I say to speak to other people. But God does that through every Christian. God speaks through you. If you'll stay in tune with Him and learn His word, sometimes God will use you to say things to people that He wants to say to them.

God uses circumstances to speak. He uses pain. God whispers to us in our pleasure, but He shouts to us in our pain. God gets your attention when you're in pain. Proverbs 20:30 (GN), "Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."

God is speaking all the time. Do you have your ears on? Are you listening? If you listen, tune in, He will lead you on the right path. If you don't get in tune with God on a regular daily, moment by moment basis, you're going to miss God's path for your life -- the right path, the path He made you for.

#### **4. TRUST GOD WHEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND**

In the Old Testament when the children of Israel were finally set free from Egypt after 400 years of slavery. Moses had gone to Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go" and Pharaoh said he'd had enough, get out. They leave. The whole nation starts marching out to freedom and the first thing they come to is the Red Sea. On one side of them is a mountain range that is uncrossable. On the other side is another mountain range that is uncrossable. In front of them is the Red Sea. Behind them, in hot pursuit, is the Egyptian army that has changed its mind and decided to come and slaughter them all. What is God going to do now? The path looks like a dead end. But God knew exactly what He wanted to do. He was preparing them for a miracle.

He was preparing them for deliverance. He had not made a mistake because He could see what they could not see. He opened the Red Sea and they walked through. Years later the Israelites looked back and in Psalm 77:19 (LB) they said, "Your road led by a pathway through the sea – a pathway no one knew was there!"

Some of you are facing some dead ends right now -- financial, emotional, relational -- but it's not really a wall; it's a door. God can see a path that you don't know about. The path you're on right now may be one that is dark, despairing, discouraging, and you feel depressed about it and you think there is no way it will work out. Impossible. If you will keep on moving in faith, trust God even when you don't see a way, He can make a way. When you think it's not going to happen, if you'll keep on walking on that path God has put you on, it will become clearer and clearer, brighter and brighter, and more understandable the longer you go, the longer you grow, the more you mature and the more you learn to be like Christ.

Life's a journey. Proverbs 4:18 (NIV), "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining brighter till the full light of day." When dawn comes up, is it fully light? No. But as you go on in your life it will become clearer and clearer. One day you will stand in the full light of eternity and see why God chose that path particularly for you.

What do I do in the meantime? You do what Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV) says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

Friends God knows what He's doing. God knows what's best for you. You cannot see what He sees. He sees the future. He can see the end result. You can't. All those problems, heartaches, difficulties and delays, thorns in the flesh, physical ailments, all the things you ask "why" about, one day it's going to be clear. In the light of God's love. But in the meantime, lean not on your own understanding. Trust God.

Psalm 37:23 (NLT), "The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives."

The ultimate question is this: Who's path are you going to follow in life? Your career track or God's plan for your life. I want to warn you and be honest with you. If you say, "God, I want to get back on the path that You plan for me and I want to live the way You want me to live" the path of righteousness is not necessarily the convenient path.

It is not necessarily the easy path. It is not necessarily the most popular path. It won't be. God will want you to go differently from the crowd. It is not necessarily the path in life that is going to make you the most money. It is not the path that is going to be the least risky.

So why should you follow God's path?

"In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality." Proverbs 12:28 (NIV) God says, you go My way, you get the good life on earth and eternal life in heaven. You go your way, the way that seems right unto man, but it ends in death.

Some of you have sensed God speaking to you today. What does God have to say to you today? Hebrews 3:15 (NIV) *"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart." The good news is that no matter how long you've ignored God and His voice, He still loves you, he still wants to guide you and He still wants to have a relationship with you. It's your choice.*