

Guidance

In what ways does being a Christian help you when you make decisions?

Why are some decisions still very hard to make?

Let's begin by looking at some things we know about God. The question for each passage is 'What is the principle on view here?' (As you read these passages questions will probably arise, feel free to jot them down but save them for later)

| Passage | Principle on view |
|--|--|
| <p>Proverbs 20:24 A man's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand his own ways?</p> <p>Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD: he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.</p> | God is ultimately in control |
| <p>Isaiah 45:7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I the LORD do all these things.</p> <p>Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your father.</p> | God is in control of both good and bad things that happen. |
| <p>Proverbs 3:5-6 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 ways straight.</p> <p>Psalm 32:8-9 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule which have no understanding.</p> <p>Psalm 23:1-3 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.</p> | God guides those who love him. |

Sometimes it is easy to forget that God's plans are bigger than we think. What do we learn about God's plans for us from these passages?

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Ephesians 1:4</p> <p>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.</p> | |
| <p>Ephesians 2:10</p> <p>For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.</p> | |
| <p>2 Corinthians 3:8</p> <p>And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.</p> | |
| <p>Colossians 3:1-3</p> <p>Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.</p> | |
| <p>Romans 8:28-29</p> <p>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. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.</p> | |
| <p>Philippians 1:6</p> <p>Being confident in this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.</p> | |

Sometimes we want God to just tell us what to do, check out some of the ways God has guided in the past. (just chose a few)

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Exodus 3:4 | Burning bush |
| Exodus 13:20-22 | Pillar of cloud, pillar of fire |
| 2 Samuel 7 | |
| Daniel 5:5 | Writing on the wall |
| Numbers 22:30f | |
| Luke 1:28 | Angel |
| Acts 1: 23-26 | |
| Acts 16:6-10 | visions |

God is clearly able to guide in any way he chooses. The more important question is, 'How has he promised to guide?' Look at these verses carefully, What are they saying to us?

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Hebrews 1:1-2</p> <p>In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at various times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, ...</p> | God speaks to us in his son, Jesus. |
| <p>Hebrews 4:12</p> <p>For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.</p> | God speaks and guides through his powerful word. |
| <p>Psalms 119:1</p> <p>Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.</p> | |
| <p>Psalms 119:9</p> <p>How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.</p> | |
| <p>Psalms 119:104-5</p> <p>I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.</p> | |

| | |
|--|--|
| 2 Timothy 3:16-17 | |
| All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. | |

How can you reject God's guidance?

| | |
|----------------|--|
| James 4:13-17 | Take no account of God in our plans. |
| 1 Timothy 6:17 | Put our hope in things other than God. |

A wise person has suggested that most decisions we face can be divided into 3 categories (which sometimes overlap)¹

1. Matters of righteousness⁻²

There are some things the Bible tells us explicitly to do and not to do, as Christians obedience is a privilege that God enables us to do, it is also the best way to live.

On occasions that we know we have deliberately or unintentionally disobeyed we need to repent and accept God's forgiveness.

2. Matters of good judgement

Sometimes two or three options seem good and none of them are unrighteous, but we still have to choose. Having listened to God in the Scriptures, viewing the world from his perspective and praying we use our observation, good judgement and experience to work out what we should do. We don't need to worry that we will make a choice outside of God's plans, different decisions will lead to different outcomes but God's plans cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2), God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength (1 Cor 10:13) and he will use everything to bring us good, even if it may involve suffering along the way (Rom 8:28-29)

3. Matters of triviality

Some decisions are of little consequence, they are not a matter of righteousness nor of good judgement, wisdom would suggest that we shouldn't agonise too long about whether to wear the grey or the steel pants.

¹ This section summarises chapter 8 of 'Guidance and the Voice of God' by Phillip Jenson and Tony Payne, Matthias Media 1997.

² Sometimes it is not the act itself which is wrong, the context or our motivation may determine whether something is righteous or unrighteous.

It has been said that God's guidance is more like a compass than a map, true north is always towards righteousness, holiness and becoming more like Christ. God's word will not tell us every step we should take but it will tell us what matters matter and always point to the way God wants us to live.

Share and pray together about decisions you are currently facing.