

139 Guidance on Guidance - Part 4

Seeking, finding and following the Lord's guidance is a central part of our Christian discipleship, but as we all experience at times, this can be easier said than done! This time we continue and complete this series on guidance.

10 WE SEEK THE LORD'S GUIDANCE PERHAPS THROUGH "TIPPING HIM OFF": Assume for example you are facing a significant choice involving one or more decisions; this might be over a job, or a relationship, or a moral or ethical dilemma, or a large financial commitment. As you seek the Lord's will for you in this matter, which may well take time, gradually things become clearer, you begin to "see the wood from the trees", and you start moving towards Decision Time.

It can be very helpful as this process unfolds for you to "tip the Lord off" as to which way you are thinking - even though He knows already! This gives Him warning, and time. Trying to see things from the Lord's point of view in all this can also be useful. If He sees one of His children going steadily towards the wrong decision, what can He do, what might He do, to head off the mistake? Or if possible, even try to imagine that you yourself were the Lord! What could or would you do to stop a wrong decision being taken? Then if, being back as yourself once again, none of those possible interventions from the Lord occurs, then you know that He has had every chance to say "I don't think so! ..." - but has chosen not to make use of that chance.

11 WE SEEK THE LORD'S GUIDANCE THROUGH ANY OBSTACLES: The previous point about our giving the Lord time to steer us away from mistaken decisions brings us on to how we should react to any obstacles that may crop up in the path when we are seeking the Lord's guidance.

Imagine you have become convinced the Lord is calling you to go to serve in His name amongst a remote tribe in South America for three years; things are falling into place, and your Signing-Up Decision Day is drawing close. But then you hear that your visa application has been turned down! Is this the Lord kindly "heading you off" from a bad mistake? Or is this the devil messing about, trying to block the Lord's will and work and your part in it? Or is it just a silly mix-up in the visas office? It can be very hard to tell - and becomes a new matter for the Lord's guidance demanding on your part patience, thoroughness, and faith! If the visa remains refused, there is your answer, and presumably from the Lord; if it is granted after some delays, then you must check things through again under the

Lord - "Lord are you happy with this decision I am about to take?" - and then decide, acting in faith.

12 WE SEEK THE LORD'S GUIDANCE THROUGH INNER PEACE: The final stage in the task of seeking and finding the Lord's guidance is the presence, or absence, of "inner peace". This is a calmness, a settledness, which, in the face of all the "ifs and buts" surrounding a decision, remains quietly present within your being, as a comfort and reassurance. Equally its absence is significant - calling for a thorough re-think while there is still time.

So finally, with a deep breath and a prayer, we take our decisions, acting in faith and committing all things to the Lord. If it turns out with hindsight we have made a mistake in spite of all our careful efforts to get things right, the Lord can cope! - for "we know that to the ones loving God all things work together for good, to those being called according to His purpose" (Romans 8.28, Literal). We return to God our Father in penitence and with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving His fresh forgiveness and a new start.

The Lord wants us to get things right, and in His mercy He has provided many ways in which we can seek and find what He wants us to do. So for His sake, for our sake, for everyone's sake, may our desire always be, "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness make thy way straight before my face!" (Psalm 5.8).

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