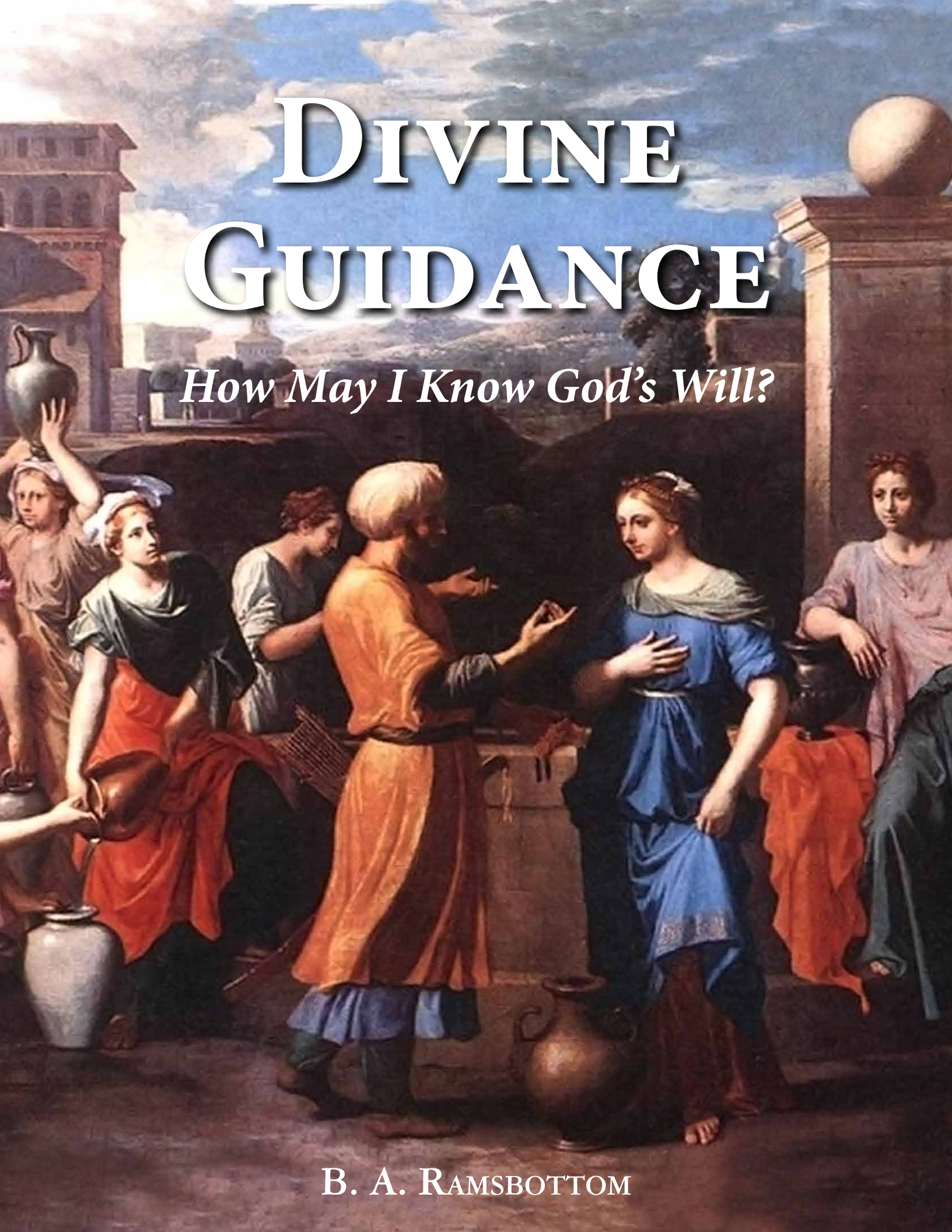


# DIVINE GUIDANCE

*How May I Know God's Will?*



B. A. RAMSBOTTOM

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## Contents

1. The Problem .....	3
2. God's Promise .....	3
A. Guidance in the Old Testament .....	4
B. Some of God's promises to guide His people .....	5
C. Some prayers for guidance .....	5
3. Pitfalls and Mistakes .....	6
A. Opening the Bible randomly .....	6
B. Acting on a sudden impression of a text .....	6
C. Acting on a sudden impression .....	7
D. Acting on whether we feel liberty in prayer .....	7
E. Casting lots .....	7
F. Choosing the thing you like least .....	8
G. Asking for the fleece wet and dry .....	8
4. How May I Know God's Will? .....	9
A. The Word of God .....	9
B. Personal exercise before God .....	10
C. Openings in providence .....	12
5. Conclusion .....	13
Questions for personal reflection and group discussion .....	15

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Originally published ISBN 0 903556 88 X, by  
Gospel Standard Publications  
12(b) Roundwood Lane  
Harpenden  
Herts AL5 3DD  
United Kingdom

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# DIVINE GUIDANCE

*“The meek will he guide in judgment:  
and the meek will he teach his way.”*

—Psalm 25:9

## 1. The Problem

How often there are times in our lives when we do not know what to do! A decision has to be taken; a choice has to be made.

It is not always easy to know what is right. Here is a girl. A boy has written to ask her to go out with him. She feels happy, she likes him; but she does want to know whether it is God's will for her.

Here is a boy. He is looking for a job. Perhaps there are two different jobs that are both offered to him. Which one is he to take? How can he know? He does want to be sure.

It is not always easy to discern God's will for us—in a great matter or a small. And then there are times in our lives when everything seems so clear, and other times when nothing at all seems clear.

If there were either a clear command or a clear prohibition, we should know. For instance, if it is an ungodly boy who asks the girl out, she knows immediately (or should know) that the answer cannot be “Yes.” God has clearly said, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2Co 6:14). Or if one of the jobs the boy is offered involves unnecessary Sunday work, the boy knows (or should know) that he cannot say “Yes.” God has clearly said, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” (Exo 20:8).

But the problem lies in those matters where neither the one way nor the other is specially right or wrong. There seems to be no moral principle involved. There is not a clear command nor a clear prohibition.

Perhaps the matter is very important. So much hangs upon it. And perhaps it cannot be left; an answer is required soon.

What shall I do?

## 2. God's Promise

God has promised to guide His people. He has promised to lead them by the right way among all the uncertainties of life.

It is vital that we should understand this. God has a plan for the lives of all His people, and it is not His will that they should go the way of their own choice. Most certainly it is not His will that their decisions shall be guided by such things as “How much money shall I get?” or “Will I be really happy?”

#### ***A. Guidance in the Old Testament***

In the Old Testament God clearly guided His people. In the wilderness the children of Israel were led by the pillar of cloud and fire (Exo 13:21). In the day time they could see a dark cloud in the sky. At night they could see the same cloud, but now fiery and bright. If it moved, they were to move. If it did not move, they were to stay where they were. If it stayed motionless for several months or even a year, they must not move. But if they had only just pitched camp in the wilderness the day before and now they saw the cloud moving again, they must immediately pack their belongings and follow.

For forty years in the wilderness, God’s people were to have no will of their own. They were God’s people—a chosen, redeemed people. Every decision, when to move and when to stay, was God’s, not theirs. They were to be completely dependent.

Are we to think that God would so clearly lead His people in Old Testament times and leave them to their own devices now?

Also, we read of the Urim and the Thummim (Exo 28:30; Num 27:21; 1Sa 28:6). It is made clear that an Israelite, in doubt as to what he should do, could appeal to the Urim and the Thummim for an answer. So we find David inquiring of the Urim and the Thummim and receiving his answer. Solemnly, we find the opposite with Saul when God rejected him. He inquired of the Urim and the Thummim, but God gave him no answer.

What were the Urim and the Thummim? This is an interesting subject, and there does seem to be some obscurity. The actual words mean “light and perfection.” The Urim and Thummim were closely connected with the high priest’s breastplate, either part of it or attached to it. If inquiry was made, answer was given. How?—we are not told. Some have thought that God spoke with an audible voice from heaven. Others have thought that God so controlled the high priest’s thoughts that he infallibly gave the right answer. Yet others have thought that the letters on the high priest’s breastplate lit up, spelling out an answer. But we do not know. All we know is that God promised to guide by the Urim and Thummim.

Again, are we to think that God would so clearly lead His people in Old Testament times and leave them to their own decisions now?

It is very interesting that one of the longest chapters in the Bible is devoted to the subject of divine guidance. This is Genesis chapter 24 (67 verses). It tells us how Abraham’s servant went to seek a bride for his master Isaac—how he had to pray his way along and how he was most clearly led. There are more verses in Scripture concerning God’s guidance in the matter of choosing a wife for Isaac than there are about the creation of the world!

Right at the beginning of the New Testament, we find the wise men led by a star. Seeing a beautiful star in the sky, its purpose was revealed to them—and, following the star, they were led to “where the young child was” (Mat 2:9).

God does not now guide His people by a pillar of cloud and fire, or by Urim and Thummim, or by a star; but He has promised to guide them by His Word and Spirit.

***B. Some of God's promises to guide His people***

“The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa 25:9).

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa 32:8).

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually” (Isa 58:11).

“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them” (Isa 42:16).

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa 30:21).

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young,” i.e., those with an inward burden (Isa 40:11).

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6).

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa 119:105).

“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (Joh 16:13).

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14).

***C. Some prayers for guidance***

“Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths”  
(Psa 25:4).

“Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day” (Psa 25:5).

“Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies” (Psa 27:11).

“Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee” (Psa 143:8).

“Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2Ch 20:12).

### **3. Pitfalls and Mistakes**

Though God has so kindly promised to guide His people, many of them (at least at times in their lives) find it difficult to discern God's will. No doubt this is due to the darkness and blindness of our minds. Sometimes, also, we fall under the condemnation: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa 66:18). Undoubtedly, too, there are times when our faith needs to be tried (Jam 1:3).

Yet it is a fact that a person who at one time has clearly discerned God's will for him, at another time seems to be in the dark; and also that a person spiritually may be enjoying God's blessing in his soul, and yet cannot feel clear concerning God's will for him in some decision he has to take.

It is now necessary to warn concerning pitfalls into which some have fallen [especially at times such as those just described].

#### ***A. Opening the Bible randomly***

Opening the Bible and believing that the first word the eye falls on is the word of guidance is a grave error. We need to be very careful, as God is sovereign and has at times condescended to lead in this way. But it was never God's intention that His holy Word should be treated thus. Some of us remember the "promise boxes"—tiny rolls of paper neatly contained in a beautiful box, each one with a text on it, and a pair of tweezers to help one's self to a promise!

But many seriously-minded people do seek guidance in this way. After much earnest prayer for guidance, the Bible is taken down, opened at random, and the finger placed on the page without looking. But God has given no authority for this. The heathen in ancient days used their sacred books like this.

The story is told of a person, following this method, who opened on: Judas "went out and hanged himself" (Mat 27:5). Feeling that this would not do, he tried again, only to be met with: "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luk 10:37)! We have even seen it stated that a third attempt produced: "What thou doest, do quickly" (Joh 13:27). Obviously this is *not* the way to discern God's will!

#### ***B. Acting on a sudden impression of a text***

Acting on a sudden impression of a text on the mind is also a serious error. Again we have to be careful, however, for God does speak by applying His Word to His people's hearts. How many have been grateful for this, not only in seeking guidance, but also when some sweet promise comforts the heart in the day of trouble.

But how careful we need to be! For instance, if we are praying about something (especially if it is something we should specially like to do), it is not unlikely that a text like, "This is the way: walk ye in it," will flash into our minds (Isa 30:21).

Solemnly, so often people have spoken of having a clear word from the Lord to do a certain thing, and have lived to prove that the sudden word never came from God. *We*



*need grace to discern* whether a word is from God, or from our own imagination, or even from Satan.

A boy was once praying about a friendship with a girl named Mary—and in his heart of hearts he wondered if it was not right. But very suddenly and unexpectedly the word came: “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife.” Mercifully, he realized immediately that that word never came from God.

Also, many have acted on the word, “Do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee,” forgetting that when that word was spoken in Scripture (by Nathan, 2Sa 7:3), it was a mistake, and he had to go back and tell David *not* to do all that was in his heart!

### ***C. Acting on a sudden impression***

Acting on a sudden impression, but not a text of Scripture, is another serious error. This is even more dangerous than the former. “Lord, deliver us from false exercises,” prayed an old preacher.

We do have sudden impressions, sometimes very powerfully. Sometimes they are right, but often they are wrong. How many a godly man has had the impression that he should preach, and yet has lived to prove how mistaken he was!

“Beware of impressions!” said J. K. Popham.

The subject of dreams fits in here. What about dreams? It is clear in Scripture that God did guide His people through dreams. However, it seems equally clear that this was usually in special circumstances (e.g. Joseph, Mary’s husband, and the Apostle Paul—in times of crisis) and is not the standard for today.

There are records of remarkable leading through dreams (we think of *Sovereign Grace O’er Sin Abounding*, the life of Alfred Dye, 1901)—but we need to be very, very careful. “A dream cometh through the multitude of business” (Ecc 5:3).

### ***D. Acting on whether we feel liberty in prayer***

Some godly people have judged a matter according to the degree of liberty they have felt in laying it before the Lord. Again, this is dangerous.

If we are truly blessed with liberty in prayer, then it is a good sign that God will answer. But we are not good judges of ourselves and our feelings. “The heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9). Carnal liberty can often be mistaken for gracious liberty. And if there is something we badly want, on which our hearts are set, it is not unlikely that somehow or other we shall find a wonderful amount of liberty in asking for it.

### ***E. Casting lots***

Today we hear little about casting lots, but in former days it was quite common. The matter was not treated lightly, but only after solemn prayer and exercise (and perhaps fasting) was the lot cast. In this matter, appeal was made to the casting of lots in Scripture as the authority for it.

But God has given no commandment. True it is that in the Bible there were occasions when lots were cast, but these were occasions of peculiar solemnity (e.g. the scapegoat



on the day of atonement, Lev 16:8; the choosing of an apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot, Act 1:26). We have no warrant for following this practice in seeking to know God's will.

Perhaps the person most renowned for casting lots to discern God's will was John Wesley.<sup>1</sup> He even had an apparatus to use, which he carried round with him. But what a sorry position it brought him into! When George Whitefield<sup>2</sup> nobly stood forth in defense of the doctrines of grace, and especially election, John Wesley cast lots whether to take up his pen and oppose him.<sup>3</sup> And the lot said, "Yes."

#### ***F. Choosing the thing you like least***

Some years ago there was a popular belief which ran something like this: If you have to make an important choice between two things, always choose the one you like least, the one most painful to the flesh.

This belief for a time was very popular. But there are grave defects in it. True it is that God often leads His people in painful paths, that He overturns their longings and desires and leads in a way the flesh hates. But it is most dangerous for us to make this the ground of our choices.

Permit a personal word here. When I first came to preach in Bedfordshire, I was confronted by this teaching and asked what my opinion of it was. My reply was that I could not receive it. Why?—for a simple reason. If a boy were offered two jobs, is it right to say "Yes" to the one with no prospects and uncongenial surroundings and hours? And to say "No" to the one he had been training for? That would be the result of choosing the most painful way—obviously a foolish choice.

#### ***G. Asking for the fleece wet and dry***

There is scriptural justification for setting out a fleece, but O how careful we need to be! Gideon was given faith to make this his request, and God honored him in it. And the author personally remembers feeling clearly led on one occasion to ask for the fleece wet and dry, and was honored by the Lord in it. But what care is needed!

You remember that Gideon, in a time of great need, requested a sign that God would be with him. He prayed that a fleece of wool he placed outside would be wet with dew next morning, but all the ground around it dry—and then the next day the opposite: that the ground would be wet but this time the fleece dry. And God honored his faith (Jdg 6:39).

Sometimes people ask for a sign. "Let such-and-such a thing happen and I will know it is right." For instance, "If I am right, let it stop raining immediately." Dangerous ground!

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<sup>1</sup> **John Wesley** (1703-1791) – Anglican minister and theologian; largely credited, with his brother Charles, in founding the English Methodist movement and open-air preaching.

<sup>2</sup> **George Whitefield** (1714-1770) – well known evangelist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and an itinerant preacher whom God greatly used in England and the American colonies during the "Great Awakening."

<sup>3</sup> See *Whitefield's Letter to Wesley*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Have you noticed that Abraham's servant asked for a special sign in Genesis 24? But what did he request? If the girl he spoke to welcomed him, offered him a drink of water, and for his camels also, may she be the appointed wife for Isaac. But it was not a foolish sign, a silly token requested. If it came to pass, she would be a hard-working girl, one who served her parents well, one who was courteous and kind.

What would be the equivalent to such a request concerning a girl today? Not something foolish like, "If she is wearing blue, let her be the one," but rather, "If I speak to her about the things of God, and she answers me graciously, then let this be a sign that I may continue to seek her friendship."

Beware of the pitfalls!

#### **4. How May I Know God's Will?**

Having given a few warnings, we must now come to the vital question: how may I know God's will?

First of all, whatever else, I need to pray: to ask God to teach me His way, to keep me from my own way, to guide me aright.

There are some most beautiful prayers in Scripture where God's people have asked the Lord to lead them. Like Abraham's servant in Genesis 24, seeking God's guidance, we need to pray our way along—all the way. "I being in the way, the Lord led me..." (Gen 24:27).

Some years ago, on a very dark night, a ship's captain was steering his ship into the harbor. It was well known that the entry to this harbor was very dangerous, especially because of hidden rocks. Knowing this, one of the passengers went up on deck and asked the captain a simple question: "How do you manage again and again to steer the ship safely into the harbor?"

The captain's answer was equally simple. "You see those three red lights?" he said. "I have to maneuver the position of the ship until all three lights are in line. Then I can sail straight forward. But not till then! If I tried to go forward before I have the lights in line, it would be disaster."

There is a lesson here for us. God has given us three red lights. We must wait upon God till the three lights are in line. Then, and only then, can we go forward with safety.

The three red lights are: the Word of God, personal exercise before God, and openings in providence.

##### **A. *The Word of God***

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa 119:105). What does it teach us? What has it to say on the matter that concerns us?

### *1). Direct command*

If a thing is clearly commanded, then there is no need to ask for further guidance. Likewise if a thing is clearly forbidden, then we must not ask the Lord if we have permission to do it or not.

As a young man, J. C. Philpot<sup>4</sup> was a minister in the Church of England. After a time he became convinced that, in his position, he was being compelled to do things which were forbidden in Scripture. He was burying people of whom he had no hope, yet was saying “in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.” He was administering the Lord’s supper and saying, “The blood of Christ, shed for you,” all the time knowing that some of the partakers were openly ungodly and one even was suspected of murder.

So he began to pray. His prayer was that God would show him what he had to do. But though he prayed, God was silent.

After many months of this prayer for leading, it was as if God said to him, “My Word is very clear. It tells you what you have to do. There will be no further light.”

As a boy or girl grows in the knowledge of the truth, so will they realize, on so many occasions and in so many situations, that God has already spoken in His Word.

### *2). Waiting on God*

But here the “three lights” come in. There are some matters in which there is no definite teaching in Scripture, and there are other things that are neither right nor wrong in themselves—for instance, the choice between two jobs, or which house to buy, or whether to stay on at school or not, or whether to go to university or begin work.

Then pray that God will in a special way impress His Word upon your conscience—both when you read it in secret and when you listen to the preaching of the Word. God *does* speak through the preaching of His Word.

Sometimes it is wise to try to think of all the things for and all the things against. They may be equal in number. Pray over them, and seek grace to bring them to the light of God’s Word. After a time you will find that God, speaking through His Word, will one by one cancel some of the things on the one side and confirm some of the things on the other.

It is a very profitable and humbling experience to wait on God in this way, and to see the light and power of God’s Word scattering the reasons for one course of action and sweetly confirming the reasons for the opposite. But remember! sometimes it will be the very opposite of what you are expecting (or perhaps what secretly you would have liked).

### ***B. Personal exercise before God***

This, of course, is closely linked with what has gone before.

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<sup>4</sup> **Joseph Charles Philpot** (1802-1869) – born at Ripple, England as a pastor’s son, educated at Oxford. He served in the Church of England, but became a Baptist in mid-life. He was editor of the *Gospel Standard* digest from 1849.

1). *Distrust self*

The vital thing is to exercise the greatest *distrust of self*. How deceitful are our carnal hearts if there is something we should really like!

Be sure that you really do *want to do God's will*. Sometimes we pray for God to show us His will, and our carnal hearts think, "If I do not like it, I have no need to do it!"

2). *Ask counsel*

Sometimes it is wise to *ask counsel* from an older, godly friend. So much is said about not leaning on an "arm of flesh" (2Ch 32:8)—and, of course, we never must. But sometimes there is pride: we are too proud to ask another's opinion. Sometimes someone else can throw light on our pathway, sometimes quote an apt Scripture, sometimes speak from personal experience in a similar situation (Pro 11:14). Also, sometimes talking to a friend helps to make things clearer in our own minds.

3). *Follow Christ's example*

A most important point in personal exercise is seeking to follow the example of the Lord Jesus. Never forget that Christ has left you an "example, that ye should follow his steps" (1Pe 2:21).

4). *Will it help or hinder spiritually?*

When there is no clear direction in Scripture, a good question to ask is: will this help me spiritually or will it hinder? Does it honour the Lord? A hobby or interest: does it have a good effect, or does it draw me from the Lord? A move in providence (for instance, a change of jobs): will it make it easier for me to attend the services of God's house? or harder?

The story of William Romaine<sup>5</sup> has often been told. In his day he was perhaps the most popular preacher in London. Even worldly people visited London to see Garrick<sup>6</sup> act and to hear Romaine preach! On one occasion Romaine was with a group of people and they suggested a game of cards. He appeared to be in agreement; at least he said nothing, and the cards were dealt. Just before the game began, however, he said, "Let us first seek God's blessing on the game." His companions were amazed. At length one of them said, "You can't ask God's blessing on a game of cards!" "Well," was the reply, "if I cannot ask God's blessing first, then I cannot take part!"

There is a vital principle here: *can I ask God's blessing upon it* (1Co 10:31)?

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<sup>5</sup> **William Romaine** (1714-1795) – educated at Oxford. He served many parish churches in the Church of England and rose to serve in prominent churches in London. He preached evangelical doctrine to large crowds despite the opposition of church hierarchy.

<sup>6</sup> **David Garrick** (1717-1779) – English actor, playwright, and producer who influenced nearly all aspects of theatrical practice throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5). *A tender conscience*

One of the best things ever written on the subject of divine guidance is John Newton's<sup>7</sup> beautiful letter, written to a friend who had consulted him on the subject.<sup>8</sup> One point he emphasizes: the importance of a tender conscience. In fact, he lays more stress on this than anything else. If my conscience is kept tender in the fear of God, then I will not walk contrary to God's will. John Newton felt that this had more value than any amount of imaginary words or visionary experiences.

Take a skillful musician; his ear is very sensitive. If he hears a discord, he immediately knows something is wrong; it jars upon his spirit. Even so, if my conscience is very tender in the fear of the Lord, if I begin to walk in a wrong way, my conscience will jar; I will know something is not just right. When I turn back into a right way, there is a sense of divine approbation.<sup>9</sup>

So we have the interesting case of Apollos (Act 18:27). How did God lead him to Corinth, where it was His purpose he should be abundantly blessed. No clear word, no vision, nothing remarkable. "He was disposed" to go—and it proved right.

May we seek to walk tenderly in the fear of God. "Not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph 5:17). This is vital in the personal experience of divine leading. It is the very opposite of what we sometimes hear, often glibly spoken: "I *felt led* to do..."

## C. *Openings in providence*

### 1). *False openings*

Always watch the hand of God in providence. "He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Isa 22:22). But do be careful of one thing: an opening in providence is not in itself God's leading.

Take, for instance, Moses. If ever a man had "a wonderful opening in providence," it was Moses. He never sought his position at the court of Pharaoh. God in a most amazing way ordained that he should be found in the bulrushes by Pharaoh's daughter, brought to court, and be "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Act 7:22).

What a case could be made out! "Moses, what a wonderful opportunity for good you have! What influence! How you will be able to help your brethren! An Israelite, and yet a prince at Pharaoh's court! You did not seek the position. God gave it to you!"

But, no! This was not God's will for Moses. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction

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<sup>7</sup> **John Newton** (1725-1807) – Evangelical Anglican minister, author, and hymn writer; began his life as a profligate slave trader and then dramatically converted to Christ. His hymns include *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds* and *Amazing Grace*.

<sup>8</sup> John Newton, *The Works of John Newton* (The Banner of Truth Trust; Edinburgh, Scotland) Vol. 1, 324-331. This also appears on pages 368-372 in *Gospel Standard*, 1989. Available as *How to Know the Will of God* from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

<sup>9</sup> **approbation** – official approval.

tion with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb 11:26).

So we issue this word of warning: a wonderful opening is not always God’s leading.

## 2). *Closings*

But then, on the other hand, if we feel we are being led in a certain path, and God finally shuts the door, then this cannot be God’s will for us. Of course, sometimes there is the trial of faith; sometimes God keeps us waiting. But how often we have heard people speak of being clearly led in a certain matter—and yet it has never come to pass, proving their exercises were wrong! We do need to be delivered from false exercises. A finally closed door proves it was not God’s will.

## 3). *Positive leading*

But also God sometimes leads positively by opening and closing doors. Acts chapter 16, verses 6 to 10, are a beautiful example of this: closing doors, and then opening the right door. Paul and his companions “were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia”—a closed door. “They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not”—another closed door. Then in a most remarkable way the Lord opened a door (it would seem to be one that Paul was not expecting): “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them” (16:9).

What leading Paul received from open and closed doors—and, of course, point B, “personal exercise,” also comes in. In his spirit he “assuredly gathered” what was God’s will for them. (We cannot separate point C from point B, or B from A.) But sometimes it is a good prayer for us: *Lord, close wrong doors!* Practically, a boy may be applying for a job. There are three possibilities. He prays about them. From no point of view does one seem preferable to the others; he can gain no light. So he commits the matter to the Lord. And what happens? He is offered one post, and refused the others—this is God’s will for him. Or, it may be, all three are closed. Then his exercise must begin again.

# 5. Conclusion

Years ago, when in deep concern as to what was God’s will, I ventured to ask a very godly old man how he would discern God’s will. Somewhat in amazement he looked at me and said, “Why, I’d ask Him, and He’d tell me!”

The dear old man meant it. He was not being presumptuous. He lived very close to the Lord and always seemed to have the mind of the Spirit. However, with most of us it is not as simple or straightforward! That is why we have tried to give the few hints in the preceding pages on how to discern the will of God.

But what if after much prayer, much waiting on the Lord, we still cannot see our way. What have we to do? Well, sometimes our darkness is our light. That may seem a strange thing to say. What do we mean? We mean this: Sometimes a person just cannot see what he has to do. And that is God's voice to him, telling him to do nothing. Because he cannot see which way to move, God is saying to him that he must not move. So his darkness is his light.

But sometimes a decision has to be taken. Perhaps today or tomorrow. It must be either yes or no. But we are still undecided, still not sure. Has God failed us? No. But sometimes His dealings are very mysterious. What, then, must we do? Cast ourselves completely on the Lord and plead with Him that whatever we do will be right.<sup>10</sup>

Often it is in looking back that we see God's hand—leading, guiding, opening, closing, restraining, constraining. But at the time all seemed dark. Now all seems so clear: everything in its place, everything right. Then,

*"We bless the hand that guided  
We bless the heart that planned."*

In conclusion, we firmly believe that when anyone in honesty and sincerity, in the fear of God, wants to do what is right, God will not let him do wrong.



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<sup>10</sup> The editor further suggests that, in this case, we specifically ask God to prevent us in a mistake. We lay out to Him what we are thinking to do in our lack of certainty, and ask Him to prevent it if it is not His will.



## Questions

### for personal reflection and group discussion

*The following questions are designed to reinforce understanding and application.*

*A separate study guide with complete questions covering all aspects of the text also is available, for correspondent, independent, or group study. Contact Mount Zion Bible Institute at the same address or [school@mountzion.org](mailto:school@mountzion.org).*

1. Would God lead His people in Old Testament times and leave them to their own devices now? Why or why not?
2. How does a shepherd guide his sheep?
3. When you are seeking guidance and a particular text of Scripture comes into your mind, what are some possible sources for it?
4. What is the first thing to do when seeking God's guidance for a decision?
5. How is "direct command" to be used for guidance?
6. What does the author mean by "waiting on God" in order to receive guidance?
7. Why is distrust of self so vital?
8. What benefits derive from seeking wise counsel?
9. Explain 1 Peter 2:21 as it applies to knowing God's will.
10. Describe the importance and meaning of asking "Will it help or hinder spiritually?"
11. What is "a good prayer" to use in decision making? Why?
12. What is the meaning of "Sometimes our darkness is our light"?
13. Describe how "three red lights" must be aligned before we can go forward with safety to know God's will.