

Weekend

1. Anyone who sincerely tries to be guided by God will from time to time experience problems. Arm yourself for this by reading the chapter called 'Guidance' in John White's *The Fight* (IVP).
2. Look up the words relating to guidance in a Bible concordance, for instance 'lead', 'guide', 'instruct', 'direct'. You could copy some of these verses on to cards. Then in times of doubt or anxiety you could refer to them to remind you of God's care for you.
3. 'Words of prophecy' are increasingly common in church life today, and are used for guidance by many. How do this week's Bible passages suggest that such prophecies are different in authority from the written Word of God?

Notes



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 39: Guidance (A topic study)

Guidance is never a simple matter for a Christian, because it cannot be reduced to a formula applicable to all individuals or circumstances. The heart of guidance is a personal relationship. It lies in knowing God, loving him and speaking with him yourself.

This week's studies concentrate on how we can know God better, his goals for us and the attitude we should have towards him. We are probably all good at asking God for guidance but it is also a question of trusting and listening. A number of books are referred to during this week. You could check at the outset to see if you have access to any of them.

Day 1. God's goals

Romans 8:28-39

God has an overall plan for our lives. God's concern is not simply a matter of telling us to do A or B (as we often wish it was) but of changing and maturing us. Let's look at some of the things God wants to do for us.

1. List what God has already done for us in Christ. What are God's goals for us now and in the future?
2. Can anything prevent God's will taking effect?
3. Try to put verse 29 in your own words and then meditate on its truth during the day. You could memorize the previous verse.

Thank God that Christ's sacrifice is complete and will bring us so many good things. Praise God that *nothing* can separate us from the love of Christ.

Read the chapter entitled '*Fear of the Future*' in D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Pickering and Inglis and STL).

Day 2. The God who guides

Psalm 25

God is intimately concerned with the whole of our lives because Christ lives in us. This is the basis of our confidence that we can hand over control of our lives to him. Supremely, God is a person who wants our fellowship, trust and love. Guidance is almost a by-product of that relationship. Today's Psalm, or song, reads like a prayer for guidance. Read it meditatively several times before you tackle the questions.

1. What sort of person receives God's guidance? Make a list of those things God requires from us before he guides.

Note: Verse 12. 'Fear' in this context suggests awe and reverence.

2. The word 'guidance' does not occur in the song as such, although it is entirely concerned with being directed by God. (In the NIV 'guide' comes in verses 5 and 9.) Make a list of those various expressions used to describe guidance.

Use verses 4 and 5 as the basis of your own prayer.

Day 3. Knowing God

Psalm 19

It may be surprising to know that as you ask God for help in making a decision he is as much interested in the manner in which you make your choice as the choice itself. He wants us to be people who are learning to know him and his mind. We need to know how to share his outlook and values.

1. Jot down the two ways in which God has revealed himself.
2. From verses 1-6 make a list of what you can learn about God's character from the world around you.
3. From the rest of the song make a list of what reading the written Word of God will do for you. Notice how much more you can learn about God from his specific revelation, the Bible.

Note: Theologians speak of God's 'general' and 'special' revelation to show the difference between this revelation of himself in the universe, and in the written form of the Bible.

4. Note down all the different words used to describe God's written revelation. Then make a second list of the words used to describe their value. Is this your experience of Bible study? If not, ask God to speak to you through his Word.

Pray that God will mould you through Bible study to share his outlook and mind.

Day 4. A loving Father

Psalm 139

As we learn to accept that God is able to direct us, so we must learn to accept that he is also best equipped to give us that direction. He leads us out of love, knowing what we need, even if we don't know ourselves.

1. From your reading of the song make a brief list of some of the different things God knows about you.
2. Which aspects of God's character highlighted in this song do you need to remember when seeking guidance?
3. Why did the song writer pray the words of verses 23-24? Do you ever experience this feeling? God can still guide even when you are confused and unclear about your own feelings.

Pray that you will learn to accept God's direction, even if it conflicts with your own ideas.

Read the chapter entitled 'Thou our guide' from J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Hodder).

More generally Oliver Barclay's booklet on *Guidance* (IVP) has been widely helpful and may be borrowed from the Church office.

Day 5. God's voice

John 10:1-10, 25-30

How can I know that it is God speaking to me? It is easy to confuse the voice of your own emotions with what God is saying. That's where Bible study is so useful. You can test your feelings against the constant, impartial, revealed Word of God. Scripture reassures us that we can learn to distinguish God's voice from others.

1. Can you find reasons in the passage why Jesus describes himself as the door (RSV) or gate (NIV)?
2. Starting with these verses, and adding to them from other passages you have studied this week, write out some reasons why the sheep will recognize the shepherd's voice.
3. Jot down a list of privileges enjoyed by the sheep. Pray that God will help you to trust and listen to him, as well as ask things of him.