

Knowing God's Will

by Peter Maiden

God's guidance is available to all believers, but it requires obedience, humility, and trust in His word.

Duration: 53:01

Scripture: 1 Kings 3:7, Psalm 25:9, Psalm 32:8, Psalm 48:14, Matthew 27:5, Luke 10:37, Acts 15:36-41

Topics: "Will Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the certainty of God's guidance for His children. He highlights that God is revealed as a shepherd and a father in the Bible, guiding His people to fulfill specific purposes. The preacher also discusses the importance of discerning the gifts and abilities given by the Holy Spirit. He encourages believers to be busy and active in their faith, as God often guides those who are actively serving Him. The sermon concludes with a promise to provide seven particular principles for discerning God's guidance.

Transcript

A few of you have come to the end of your OM time. You've maybe been with us a year, two years. I've been speaking to a lot of people like that this week.

And you're looking for God's next step. And I'm sure that you realise, as a movement, this week and especially this coming weekend, we are seeking God's will for us as a fellowship. The time I have not spent talking to individuals, I have spent in meetings.

Meetings with field leaders, meetings with all kinds of groups of people. It might seem a bit strange for some of you, but we've been looking at things like proposals and counter-proposals and agendas and all the rest of it. Maybe you thought that OM never dealt with such things.

We just go on and try and evangelise the world. In fact, there's a lot of that kind of work goes on behind the scenes. And of course, this next weekend will be the General Council of Operation Mobilisation, commencing at half past eight in the morning.

If you're not going to be with us, we really do hope you'll be with us in prayer, because we are seeking to know God's will for us as a movement on some extremely vital issues. So I think we're going to find this subject highly relevant, both for OM as a whole and for many of us as individuals. And I hope you've got your Bible handy, because it's very much a Bible study that we're going to do tonight.

1 Kings chapter 3, we read from verse 7. Now, O Lord my God, this is Solomon speaking, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.

So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies, but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked.

I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for, both riches and honour, so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands, as David your father did, I will give you a long life.

Then Solomon woke and he realised that it had been a dream. Let's pray that God will help us to understand that and a number of other passages we're going to look at tonight. People all over the world are crying out for personal guidance.

Millions of people every day of their lives turn nervously to their morning newspaper. And what's the first page? Well, for many the sports page, but for many more it's the horoscope page. And they urgently want to find out what they can expect for the day ahead.

Many Christians are led, at least, to the border of superstition by their anxiety about the future. I've been reading John White's book, *The Fight*, a book I highly recommend to you. And in this book he recalls a childhood experience which concerned promise boxes.

How many of you know what a promise box is? I see quite a few of you do. Well, inside these boxes are tiny rolls of paper that can be extracted with a little pair of tweezers. And in the White home, the box every morning was passed around the family.

And you pulled out your scroll, much like the ones in Christmas crackers, and you unrolled it, and you read the Bible verse for the day. And often there was a religious rhyme which went along with it. This is John White's comment.

That's just for me, someone would cry, as the box was passed from hand to hand. That's the very message I needed for today. And John White continues.

Though few Christians are so naive in their attempts to find guidance, many are uneasy, uncertain, longing not only for guidance itself, but for a clear understanding of how God gives direction. A clear understanding of how God gives direction. That's what we're going to look at tonight.

Three very simple things. Number one, does God guide His children? Can we be absolutely certain of the guidance of God for our lives? Number two, how does God do it? What methods does God use to direct His people in accordance with His will? And thirdly, how can we discern? How can we discern the guidance of God? Number one then, does God guide? And of course, the moment you open your Bible and you begin to read it, you're left in absolutely no doubt. The Bible reveals God to us, for example, as a shepherd.

A shepherd who goes in front of His people, urging them to follow Him to the green pastures and the still waters and so on. So God is revealed as a shepherd. Secondly, of course, God is revealed as a father.

And over and over and over again in the Bible, the fatherhood of God is compared with human fatherhood. And human fatherhood may be very loving, it may be very devoted, but the highest devotion of human fatherhood is nothing like the fatherhood of God for His children. The Bible says He takes care as a father, pities His children, so the Lord pities those whom He has compassion for.

So the biblical pictures of God lead us to believe that God will guide us. But then secondly, the Bible quite clearly and unequivocally says, God will most certainly guide you. Listen to some of these tremendous scriptures.

Psalms chapter 48 and verse 14. For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even to the end.

I wonder if there is someone tonight feeling a little uncertain about the future. A little fearful. And really deep down you wish you had a promise box and you could pull out a scroll and it would just be God's word for you.

Or you wish that old fashioned method would work, that you could just let the Bible open and the first word which came to your eyes, if only you could be sure that was God's word for you. Wouldn't that make life so much easier? You've all heard about the man who tried to do that, haven't you? Some of you have. He opened the Bible and there was the verse.

This was going to be God's word for him. Judas went out and hanged himself. And he said, well that can't be quite right.

I must have got it slightly wrong. I'll have another bash. Opened it again.

Go thou and do likewise. Getting a bit worried, opened it for the third time. Whatsoever thou doest, do it quickly.

And he gave in. He gave in with that method. And I quite agree with giving in with such a method.

Here's something much, much better than promise boxes, much, much better than such methods. Here is the word of God for us tonight. However uncertain we might feel, however uncertain the future might be, here is the word of God.

This God is our God forever and ever. And he will be our guide even to the end. Do you believe that? Do you? I hope you do tonight.

And then listen to Psalm chapter 25 and verse 9. It's equally encouraging. God leads the humble in what is right. And he teaches the humble his way.

Or Psalm 32 and verse 8. I will instruct you. I will teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you.

I will watch over you. I love the New English Bible translation of that verse. I will keep you under my arm.

As some of you walk out of OM tomorrow, at least out of the immediate fellowship of OM, or the fellowship of ex-OMers, you'll never walk out of, I hope you've got that assurance. God is saying to you tonight, I will

keep you right under my eye. And just before the Lord Jesus left this earth, he made a great promise to his disciples.

He said it's better for me to go because I'm going to send the Holy Spirit. And one of the tasks of the Holy Spirit will be to be your guide, your comforter, your paraclete, your leader, the one who will guide you into the truth of God and will guide you according to the way of God. So we can be absolutely certain on the authority of the word of God that God will guide us.

And that is an enormous comfort to me as I think of leading these general council meetings over the next three days. That's an enormous comfort to me. God will guide this movement if we stay humble and broken before him.

God will guide you as an individual if you stay obedient and humble to his word. He is guiding you even when you don't realise it. Even when you are confused, God is guiding.

And that's so often the case, isn't it? At the time it's so confusing. You just don't know where to turn. And yet that time of confusion passes and later you can look back and you can see, yes, God was there.

He was being true to his holy word. He was guiding me even when I didn't know it. Even when I never realised it.

God was guiding me, his child. However, to be true to the Bible we have to say that there are certain conditions if you want to know the guidance of God. Now I'm not going to go through them all.

If you take a concordance and go through words like guide and lead you'll come up with a number of conditions for guidance. For example, sincere obedience to God is an absolute condition of guidance. Psalm 66 and verse 18.

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart the Lord would not have listened to me. So if there's sin in your life and you know about it and you're not doing anything about it it's a pointless task to move into the presence of God and ask for his guidance. Because the Bible is equally authoritative on this issue.

If you are cherishing, if you're regarding, if you know of sin, unconfessed in your life then there's no point going to God for any purpose and especially for the purpose of guidance. If there's deliberate disobedience in our lives or in our attitudes then we cannot expect the fatherly and gracious leading of God. We can only expect his correction and his chastising.

I've had the experience on a number of occasions now of spending quite a long time with a person who apparently has an insoluble problem of guidance. But after discussion, the problem turns out to be known sin in their lives. It's not a guidance problem.

The problem is sin. And the question of guidance has been merely a distraction to enable the mind to forget the real issue. So if there's known sin in our lives then the promise of guidance we cannot accept so readily.

And it's not only known sin. The 25th Psalm and other similar passages lay their stress not so much on deliberate sin, deliberate acts of sin, but on a wrong attitude. These biblical passages insist on the need for an attitude of meekness, teachableness, humility.

God, we are warned in the Bible, opposes the proud whilst giving grace to the humble. So guidance is certainly promised for the Christian whose humble desire is not to harbour sin in his or her life, but is to obey whatever God might say to him. Secondly, how does God guide? We have his promise, we can be assured of that, but how does it actually happen? How does God guide his children? Well, if you've got a concordance you'll know that the Bible never ever uses the word guidance.

It's never used in the Bible. The Bible does talk about a guide, however. And I think that's very important.

Tonight you might be seeking guidance, but God's desire is to give you something much better, himself. You are looking for guidance that God wants to give you, himself. Let me put it like this.

I wonder which you would prefer. You're driving around in heavy traffic through a strange city. Would you prefer, in that situation, a complicated set of instructions, or would you prefer someone on the pavement saying, look, I'm on my way to that very place.

I'll jump in beside you, and I'll show you the way. What would you prefer? One of the great problems with horoscopes is not only that they're vague and inaccurate and evil, but they're also so impersonal. The person looks at the horoscope, and he's got no one to discuss the matter with.

He's got no one to take his hand and lead him through that day. But for us as Christians, guidance is meant to be an aspect of our ongoing relationship with God. God wants us to know Him, and being guided is part of that wonderful process.

So this is the promise of God. Not just to give you instructions for guidance, but actually to be your guide. Actually to go with you through life.

And because of that, there's absolutely no need for fear, for trepidation when it comes to guidance. Some Christians get so desperate, don't they? So desperate, so fearful when they're seeking the guidance of God. I think that's wrong.

Earnest, sincere inquiry, that's quite normal. But desperation and fear, something's wrong if that's your situation. God is saying, I am with you.

I'm not just going to give you a page of instructions. I'm going to give you myself. And I'm going to walk with you through this life.

And I'm going to take you where I want you to go. Now if you were to do a study on guidance, if you were to open your Bible and begin a study, I think two things would immediately become clear to you. Number one, God is calling all men in one direction.

That's the first foundation truth of guidance. God is calling all people in one direction. And that direction is to share in the redemption of Jesus Christ.

You can see that if you turn to 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 8. Now I want you to turn to a few scriptures in the next few moments. 2 Timothy 1 and verse 8. Don't be ashamed, Timothy, to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me, his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God who has saved us and called us to a holy life.

That's guidance. God has saved you. And He is calling you to a holy life.

And as we saw this morning in our Bible reading, this guidance, this call of God, goes right back to Genesis chapter 12. Where God says to Abraham, He's going to take him and He's going to make from him a great nation. And through him all nations upon earth will be blessed.

Through Abraham there's going to be a called out people, eventually from every tribe, every tongue and every nation. So that's the first aspect of guidance. Number one, God is calling you to Christ.

God is calling you to himself. Now there's a second aspect of guidance, which is normative for all God's children. We're not only called to salvation, but we are all called to a holy life.

To a holy life. If you turn to 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 14, you'll see that. As obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do. For it is written, be holy because I am holy. So every one of us tonight is called to salvation.

Every one of us is called to holiness. As underlined in Ephesians 1 and verse 4, God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and to be blameless in his sight. Now you may think I'm laboring this very simple point.

But let me tell you why I'm doing it. I think personally it's an absolutely vital principle. I would describe it as the first things first principle.

The first things first principle. Tonight my concern should not be only what is my career to be. That shouldn't be my primary concern.

Tonight my concern should not be who am I going to marry. I'm already married so it's a good job that isn't my concern. My chief concern should not be where am I going to live in the next month or in the next year.

My chief concern should not be am I going to stay another year on OM or am I going to leave. That should not be my chief concern. That shouldn't be the concern which is filling and flooding my mind every moment of every day.

First things first. God's guidance is quite clear. He wants me to be holy.

He wants you to be holy. Other things are secondary to that. And then there's a great second principle in the Bible.

God calls us all to salvation. He calls us all to holiness. But it's quite clear that he also calls individuals to participate in particular functions and situations.

He calls us all to holiness but he sets some of us apart in certain situations here and others there and so on. Now let me just show you that from the Bible. Look at Matthew's Gospel chapter 4 and verse 18.

Matthew 4 verse 18. Jesus is walking beside the Sea of Galilee. He sees two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew.

They're casting a net into the lake. They're fishermen. And Jesus says, Come, follow me.

I'm going to make you a fisher of men. So the Lord Jesus calls Peter to salvation. There's no question about that.

He also calls him to holiness. There's no question about that. But he says to Peter, I have a special task for you in my kingdom.

I want you to become one of my disciples. I want you to become a fisher of men. Then just turn across to Galatians chapter 1 and verse 15.

Galatians 1 verse 15. The Apostle Paul is giving his testimony to the churches in Galatia. And he speaks of God who set him apart from birth and called him by his grace and was then pleased to reveal his Son in him so that he might preach him among the Gentiles.

That's so clear, isn't it? Paul is saying, God has called me to salvation. He set me apart from my mother's womb for salvation. But he's gone a step further than that.

He's actually chosen me for a particular function in his kingdom. He wants me to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Now have a look at Hebrews chapter 5. Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 4. The writer to the Hebrews is talking about the position of the high priest.

He says in verse 4, No one takes this honor upon himself. He must be called by God just as Aaron was. Finally look at 1 Corinthians 7 because this concerns a subject over which many of us spend a lot of time looking for guidance.

And that's the subject of marriage. What has the Apostle Paul got to say about that? Well look at verse 20 of 1 Corinthians 7. Each one should remain in the situation he was in when God called him. Brothers, verse 24.

Each man as responsible to God should remain in the situation God has called him to. Then look at verse 17. Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him.

So when it comes to marriage, Paul is saying over and over again, God is concerned about this. God is going to guide us in this area. God is going to call us to a particular state.

Some to the married state, some to the single state. So that's how God guides us, very briefly. He guides us, He calls us to salvation.

He calls us to a holy life. But He also guides His children into particular situations to fulfill particular functions. Thirdly, let's ask the crucial question.

How can I, how can you discern the guidance of God? I want to give you one general principle and then if we've got time, and I promise not to keep you any later than 9 o'clock tonight, if we've got time, I'm going to give you seven particular principles. Number one, a general principle. And that is that God guides busy people.

I am convinced about that reality. God guides busy people. I get quite concerned when people say to me, I ask them a question, what are you doing brother? And they say, well, not very much actually.

And I haven't been doing very much over the last few months, I'm just waiting on the Lord. I get a bit concerned about that. Because it's my conviction that God guides busy people.

You look at Acts chapter 13, you don't need to look at it now, but you see a busy church at Antioch. They're appointing teachers, they're appointing prophets, they're worshipping, they're fasting, they're involved in the life and work of God. And it's to that busy community of people that God the Spirit comes and says, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Then have a look sometime, again don't turn to it now, in Acts chapter 16 verses 2 and 3. At the end of chapter 15, Paul and Barnabas have had their disagreement. They've gone off in opposite directions in hot temper. And Paul eventually gets to Lystra and God's call comes to young Timothy for a great section of his life to unite with the Apostle Paul and move in that great effective missionary team.

What do you think Timothy was doing in Lystra? Was he just waiting for a flash of guidance to come? No he wasn't, we're quite clear about that. Because the people in Lystra, they spoke well of this young man. They commended him to Paul.

They'd watched his life, they'd watched his work. This man was busily engaged in the service of his God. And I'm convinced that God guides busy people.

Now I'm not saying it's not right to take a week off to seek the will of God. I'm not saying it's not right to take a month off. But I think that's an important principle, general principle.

God guides busy people. Now let me give you seven particular necessities if you're going to discern the will of God. Seven necessities.

Number one, a right attitude. A right attitude. You saw that, didn't you, in 1 Kings chapter 3. Solomon is absolutely aware of his utter inadequacy.

Israel is a great nation. Solomon is wondering how he can cope. And so he comes to God and he says, Lord, I need you.

I need your wisdom. I can't think this through myself. I haven't got the power, I haven't got the ability to lead this massive nation.

And he casts himself on God. That's the attitude God is looking for, for those who are seeking to know his will. And I just want you to notice, before I move on from that, what God does when Solomon throws himself before God and says, God, I need you.

What does he do? Does God give to Solomon a piece of paper through angelic mediation, I'm sure? Does God say to Solomon, now look here, Solomon, when all the problems arise over the next few generations, I want you to follow this formula of guidance. Now here's step 1, here's step 2, here's step 3. Is that what God does? No, he doesn't. Doesn't give him any page, doesn't give him any sheet of instruction.

He just says to Solomon, I'm going to give you a wise, a discerning heart. We'll come back to that in a moment, but I want you to notice Solomon's attitude. That attitude of brokenness, of humility, is essential if we're to know the will of God.

The second vital principle is that human judgment, human judgment is an essential part of the process of guidance. Now I'll repeat that for those taking notes. Human judgment is an essential part of the process of guidance.

In Acts chapter 15, you have the great committee, the first great committee in the early church. Some people think the church has never quite recovered from Acts chapter 15, but it's the first great committee meeting of the Christian church. And what happens in Acts 15? Well, God is doing a new thing.

Gentiles are getting converted and some people aren't happy about new things. And so they bring their complaints. And the apostles and the church leaders get together to find out the mind of God on this issue.

Now what do they do? Do they just bow low in God's presence and wait? No, they don't. I'm sure they bowed low in God's presence. I'm sure they had an attitude of brokenness and inquiry.

What is your will on this matter, Father? I'm sure that attitude was there. But there was much more than that. The apostles and the church leaders discussed this issue amongst themselves.

They gave pros, they gave cons to the situation. Some spoke for, some spoke against. You remember the word of James in verse 19.

It's a very human word. My judgment is. James says, I'm listening to God, I'm listening to the discussion and my considered judgment about the matter is as follows.

I want to show you three scriptures just to confirm the need for human judgment when it comes to discerning the will of God. Look first at 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 1. So, when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. Paul has been talking about his longing to see the Thessalonians.

And he uses this very interesting phrase. We thought it best. This was our considered judgment as human beings to whom God had given a mind.

We thought it best to do the following. Then look at Philippians chapter 2. Philippians chapter 2 and verse 25. Paul says to the church at Philippi, I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus my brother.

And then finally look at Titus chapter 3 and verse 12. As soon as I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis because I have decided to winter there. Now I want you to get the attitude going through those verses.

Paul wants to know the will of God on these matters. I'm sure he's bowed low before God waiting for God to reveal his will to him. But that does not and must not ever rule out the use of the mind.

Human judgment is essential in finding out the will of God for our lives. Thirdly, third great principle. Although that is true, the second principle, guidance must come through a renewed mind.

Guidance must come through a renewed mind. Many of us come from backgrounds where we've imbibed non-Christian values, non-Christian principles. So our minds, unless they're being constantly renewed by the will of God, they can't be trusted.

So our minds have to be constantly renewed by being constantly immersed in the word of God. Look at Hebrews chapter 5. Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 14. Solid food is for the mature who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

That's such an important verse on this subject of guidance. You want to know the will of God every day of your life? Then you become a man, a woman of this book. Man or woman who constantly is immersing his

mind in the scriptures because this is how we come to discern what is right and what is wrong.

We must use the mind, but it's a mind which is being renewed and is being renewed through the solid food of scripture. James in chapter 3 of his epistle points out that there is an earthly wisdom and there is a heavenly wisdom. And these two are often contrary.

Now in chapter 1 of James, he says that God will give wisdom to those who ask. And the meaning there is that God will give the grace to look at things in a Christian way. That's what wisdom is.

Heavenly wisdom is the grace to look at things, to look at the world, to look at our circumstances in a Christian way. As John Stott always is saying these days, our minds need to be Christianized. They're so affected by the world in which we've been brought up, by the world in which we are living.

They constantly need to be Christianized. They constantly need to be renewed through time in God's Word. So that's the third great principle.

Number one, we need the right attitude. Number two, we must use the mind. Number three, the mind we use must be the mind which is constantly being renewed through the scriptures.

Fourthly, guidance comes through an honest appraisal of ourselves. You know, it's not wrong, it's not wrong, it's dead right to sit back and in all humility to say, God, what gifts have you given me? You know, I don't think you're going to get far in your Christian life until you start asking that question. At this point I've got to be very, very careful not to go off into a completely different sermon because I would love to preach to you tonight on how to discern the gifts which the Holy Spirit has given to you as a Christian.

If you want my notes on the subject, they're written on the back page of my Bible. It's so important. Important to discern the natural abilities and the spiritual gifts that you've been given and to have a realistic idea of what those gifts are.

Now look at 1 Peter. I want you all to turn to this because it's a very important verse. 1 Peter 4 and verse 7. The end of all things is near, therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

And you'll notice that in verses 8 to 10, Peter goes on to speak about spiritual gifts. I want you to notice those words, be clear-minded. Think clearly.

Think rationally about this area of spiritual gifts. Now just before I comment on that, look at one other scripture, Romans 12 and verse 3. Romans 12 and verse 3. You'll remember that Romans 12 is another chapter on the subject of spiritual gifts. By the grace given me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given to you.

Sober judgment about yourself. You see there's two problems when it comes to guidance, when it comes to discerning spiritual gifts. There are those people who think they have everything.

They're Billy Graham. They are the greatest church administrator the world has ever met. They're gifted in children's evangelism.

Their counseling techniques and skills are undeniable. They think too highly of themselves. Now the opposite to that is just as bad.

The person who says, well, you know, I really shouldn't even consider that. I could never do that, and I could never do the other, and I could never do that. You know, really, when the Lord Jesus Christ gave out the gift, somebody, somehow, he passed me by, you know.

The Bible says every one of us has spiritual gifts, but somehow you believe that you missed out. Sober judgment about ourselves is so vital when you're seeking the will of God for your lives. And the second great thing is to go to someone who knows you, a mature Christian who knows you, and to talk about yourself to that person, how you see yourself, how you see your spiritual gifts, and ask that person to comment on what you are saying.

So there's the fourth great principle, sober judgment, an honest appraisal about yourself. The fifth principle I've already mentioned, guidance comes through a willingness to seek the counsel of others. Never forget Proverbs 12 and verse 15.

The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. Often God reveals his will in a group, doesn't he? Rather than to an individual, he reveals his will as a group of people come together. That's why we have these meetings, these field leaders' meetings, these general council meetings.

We believe there is value, we believe there is wisdom in the group whom God has called into leadership of this work to discuss the matters concerning the work together. And through this process, we believe as we remain humble and broken before him, we will come to know the mind of God for this work. That's true individually as well.

The way of a fool seems wise in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. Sixthly, guidance comes through an understanding of the times, an understanding of the age, the days in which we're living. Let me just read one Chronicles chapter 12 and verse 32.

We're told there of the men of Issachar who understood the times and knew what Israel should do. One of the great problems for me about OM conferences is the lack of newspapers. When I'm at home, I read my Bible and I follow my Bible pretty quick with the newspaper because I believe it's important to know what is going on in this world.

It's important to know what is going on in our society. We're thinking about the progress of OM over the next few days. Now wouldn't it be very, very stupid for us to come to these discussions and not to know anything about the political situation, for example, in the Middle East.

Wouldn't it be totally foolish to be making plans for that part of the world without at least some knowledge of the political situation, without some knowledge, some understanding of the time. Don't become some kind of Christian recluse. You never listen to the radio, you never read the newspapers.

It's very, very possible in an OM team as you've probably experienced during this conference. You get on teams and you never get any news, any time magazine, any newspapers, you should complain and complain vocally. If it's at all possible, there are some areas where it's incredibly difficult.

If it's at all possible to get news to you, we want to do that because we believe an understanding of the times is vital to our Christian lives. Then finally, discernment of God's will comes through a prayerful spirit and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Just turn finally to Acts chapter 15.

I'll show you something very, very interesting. Acts chapter 15. Sometimes you get the idea, don't you, that in the Acts of the Apostles and in the days of the early church, there was just one triumph after another.

Don't you get that idea? Here were men of God who knew where they were going and they went on triumphantly. That's the picture some people have of the Acts of the Apostles. Let's look at reality for a moment.

Acts chapter 15 verses 36 to 41 describe the problem that Paul and Barnabas had. You can see that the desire of Paul and Barnabas in verse 36 is to go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where they preached the word of the Lord. That's where Paul and Barnabas want to go.

If they were talking to you tonight about this, they would have said they feel led. They feel led. So go back and visit all the towns.

Is that where they went? Well, the next thing that happened was that these two great men of God had a complete bust up. Let's not underplay it. It's a very, very strong word in the Greek, the word disagreement in verse 39.

That's a very, very polite translation. Go to Phrygia and Galatia. But they're kept, in the end of verse 6, they're kept from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

Kept from doing it. What does that mean? Well, if you read the epistle to the Galatians, you'll find why they didn't get their second desire. Paul became sick.

And he couldn't go where he wanted to go. So his first desire, he can't go because he has a bust up with Barnabas. His second desire, he can't go because he falls sick.

Verse 7, his next desire. They come to the border of Mycenae and they try to enter Bithynia. But the spirit of Jesus won't allow them to go there either.

Now you probably know exactly what Paul means by that statement. You want to go, and yet there's just no peace in your heart. The spirit of Jesus does not allow you.

So, verse 8, they pass by Mycenae and they come to Troas. And they're just unpacking their cases and getting the book bag set up for the next day. And during the night, Paul has a vision.

A man of Macedonia standing over him and begging him, come over to Macedonia and help us. With everything back in the case, hardly unpacked, everything back in the case, and off he goes to Macedonia at the Acts of the Apostles. So don't get any great starry-eyed picture, will you? Men of God knowing exactly every minute where they should be.

It wasn't like that at all. Some of you have been struggling this week to know the mind of God for your lives. That's nothing new.

The early church struggled. The Apostle Paul struggled. This is part of the process of sanctification in our lives.

It's part of the process of coming to know God more and more. This constant desire to know His will for our lives every day. So when you've done everything, when you've followed all the principles that I've given you tonight, the great essential still remains that prayerful spirit, that open heart to God to be

redirected and directed many, many times in accordance with His will.

So tonight, however we might feel, we can be absolutely confident. This God is our God forever and ever. And He will be our guide even to the end.

No need for fear. No need for trepidation. He's not going to give you a set of instructions and say, follow that.

He's holding out His hand and He's saying, come with me. I want to walk with you. He's guiding us all, calling us all to holiness.

That's the first principle. Don't spend all your time struggling with secondary issues. The first principle is holiness.

There's no difficulty about guidance in that area. However, God does put people in specific places. And we want to know what God's place is for us.

What's the process of coming to know? First of all, let's have a right attitude. Secondly, let's use the mind. But let's have that mind constantly immersed in Scripture.

Let's stand back and have an honest appraisal of ourselves and then maybe fellowship with others and ask their counsel in the matters we're considering. Keep your eyes open to what's going on around you and to what's happening in this world. Understand the times.

When we've said everything, that prayerful spirit, ready to hear the voice of God, ready to hear surprises, is so essential in discerning and following the will of God. Let's sing a hymn together. Number 18.

Living under the shadow of His wing. 18 in the chorus sheets. We find security.

18. Father, we really want to thank You for our security tonight. We thank You that that security is not based on our service.

It's based on our sonship. We thank You that we are Your children and You are... We thank You, Lord, that You have committed Yourself unreservedly to be with us and to guide us to the end. And Lord, we just want to say that we trust Your Word.

Some of us don't really know what we're going to be doing tomorrow, certainly next month. But we believe that You have Your eye over us and You are going to teach us Your path. And part of that very process of learning Your path will be to be drawn closer to You and to come to know You more.

Teach us, Lord, not to be fearful. Take away all trepidation. Help us to see Your fatherly love and concern.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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