

Principles of Divine Guidance

“He shall direct thy paths”

by Jason Peebles

From the time you were a child you started developing a **“sense of direction.”** You played in your neighborhood and learned to retrace your steps back home. Later, you ventured a little further. Perhaps you can remember riding your bicycle to a friend’s house a few blocks away. Doing so required you to recognize certain landmarks. Then, when the teenage years came, you had the adventure of learning to drive. Driving forced you to develop an even greater sense of direction. We’ve all had the “adventure” of getting lost! But, because we know how to ask questions and read signs, we learn to find our way.

In a similar way, Christians can learn to develop a “sense of direction” regarding God’s guidance. Will you make mistakes along the way? Absolutely! I wish that I could say “no” but that’s unrealistic. All of us make mistakes. Yet, with training and practice, you CAN learn to follow God’s path and make right choices. And, should you ever get off track, you can learn how to recover and get back on track.

Instrument Rated

As we consider divine guidance, another example is how instrument rated pilots fly airplanes. There are “sport pilots” who fly on clear days, and then there are instrument pilots. I’ve been an instrument rated pilot for many years and I know the importance of good navigation. Without it, you will never make it to your destination.

Through the years, I've flown many types of aircraft. I've flown great distances across mountains, rivers, and oceans in all kinds of conditions. I've flown at night, in rain, in snow, and in stormy weather. I know how to navigate safely from point "A" to point "B." To fly like that, you must learn certain navigation skills. You don't just "head out" based on "feelings." No, you learn to prepare a flight plan and rely on instruments. You learn how to deviate around storms along your path. You are taught NOT to depend on feelings, but instead, trust your instruments. Many pilots have crashed because they trusted their feelings and ignored the instrument panel.

As believers, we must learn to "fly" our lives by the instrument panel of God's Word and Spirit. You absolutely cannot "fly" by feelings. Your feelings are like the waves of the sea, up one minute and down the next. But Proverbs 3:5,6 says, *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall DIRECT THY PATHS."* The Bible is filled with verses on divine guidance. John 16:13 says that the Holy Spirit will **GUIDE YOU, speak to you, and "show you things to come."** God is calling you to a deeper dimension of walking in His Spirit.

Overcoming Fear

When you start considering divine guidance and following God's will, the first thing that you may have to deal with is **FEAR**. Why? I think it's because many people are initially afraid of God's plan. Perhaps deep inside we wonder if God is truly good. You may be tempted to think that God wants to "take" from you. But the opposite is true! Jeremiah 29:11 says, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."* God loves you and wants to guide you. If He does ask you to give up something, it will only be because he loves you and wants to protect you. You can be confident that God is GOOD and wants to "add" to your life.

One of the companions of fear is condemnation. Some may think their life is so "messed up" that God either can't help them or doesn't want to. Yet, the story of the Prodigal Son tells us otherwise (Lk 15:11-32). It's never too late to "return home!" The Father is GOOD and wants

to embrace you and empower you to fulfill His plan for your life. Don't let fear and condemnation stop you.

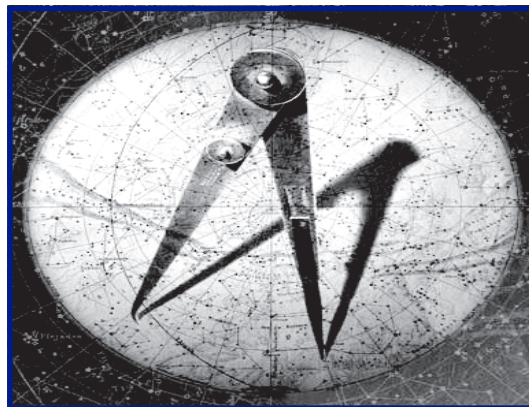
I remember the first time I sat in a small airplane for flight training. Even a small airplane seemed big and intimidating. When the motor roared to life, it was frightening! I had to say to myself, *"OK Jason, you can do this. The instructor is right here beside you, so trust him and try to relax."* I had to have faith. Only then could I learn to fly. Later, when I was training for "instruments" I became so frustrated one day that I almost quit. Thank God I pressed on and learned how to fly by instruments. Because I did, people were reached and medical supplies were delivered throughout the years.

Right Mental Attitude

Before we examine some of the major points for divine guidance, I want you to start with the right mental attitude. Read these aloud:

1. *"I believe that God is a GOOD God and has a wonderful plan for the rest of my life. Therefore, I will NOT let fear rob me!"*
2. *"I receive God's acceptance, love, and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. My past mistakes, disappointments, and sins will NOT dictate my future. I will NOT let condemnation rob me!"*
3. *"I realize this takes time and practice. I will learn about God's guidance system."*

As you study these principles, mark the references in your own Bible --



Principles of Guidance

1. Surrender to God. This is definitely the first step in divine guidance. It's like walking into a flight school and saying, "*Here I am! I submit to your training.*" Does this sound too simple? Romans 12:1,2 says, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" Can you see the connection between "surrender" and "the will of God?" It says "*present your body*" and "*renew your mind.*" If you are serious about getting on the right path (and making right choices), then start by whispering prayers of surrender. Surrender yourself entirely to God. Give Him your body and mind. Surrender the types of things you allow from TV, radio, and the internet. Give Him your relationships. Enrolling in God's "flight" school is what allows Him to begin molding your life and revealing His plan. If you remain self-willed and insistent on your own way, then your pride will block God's ability. 1 Peter 5:5,6 says, "*God resists the proud, but gives grace (His ability and enabling power) to the humble.*" It goes on to say, "*Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.*" As Christians, we are called to YIELD our lives day by day, moment by moment. When we do, we position ourselves for God's influence and guidance. Yet, do not fear that you are on your own in this! **God will help you do it!** *Philippians 1:13 says, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."* So, dear friend, enroll in God's flight school by whispering a prayer of surrender.

2. Reading and studying God's Word. In an airplane panel, the artificial horizon is always placed in the "center." There are no exceptions. *Likewise, God's Word should be at the "center" of your instrument panel.* Your Bible is a very unique book. God has a way of making it come alive by the Holy Spirit. If you're feeling discouraged, start reading Psalms (Psalm 69 is a good one). If you're facing a challenge, read about Joshua's aggressive faith. Joshua 1:8 says that God's Word will prosper you in every way.

If you're not sure where to begin, then start reading in John chapter 1. I can confidently say that God's guidance system is built around the Word of God. Like the artificial horizon in an airplane, the Bible will keep you flying "straight and level" even when you can't "see" with your natural eyes. Get in the habit of underlining key verses that seem to apply to you. Allow the Holy Spirit to relate the stories that you read to YOUR situation. As you face each day, be sensitive to verses that the Holy Spirit reminds you of. In John 14:26, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will "*bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said to you.*" Whenever I need to "hear God" about something, I always start by reviewing what I've read. More often than not, a verse or story that I've read becomes the answer that I need. God guides by His Word.

3. The voice of the Holy Spirit. This need not be a strange or bizarre area. We've already indicated that the first tool of the Holy Spirit is God's Word. He will "*bring all things to your remembrance.*" Thus, the Holy Spirit will never lead you, speak to you, or direct you in a way that is contrary to God's Word. The Word and the Spirit will always agree. Romans 8:14 says, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.*" If you are a Christian, you already have the Holy Spirit living in you (Eph 1:13). Ask God to help you become increasingly sensitive to His still small voice. The inner witness, intuition, something you "hear" or "see," strong impressions, the gifts of the Spirit – all these can be tools that God uses. When faced with a decision, pause to "listen." Ask God at that very moment for His input in your mind and heart. Psalm 32:8 says, "*I will instruct thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*" As you develop this habit, you will be amazed at how natural the Holy Spirit's guidance can become. You will come to depend on it. Step by step, you will be "flying" by instruments. But again, I stress that the Holy Spirit will never lead you in a way that opposes God's Word.

4. Inner peace. This is another important part of your instrument panel. Colossians 3:15 says, "*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*" The original word for "rule" means "*umpire.*" An umpire calls the plays. An umpire is close to the action and can see what's happening. God's peace

should act like an umpire in your heart. When faced with a decision, check your peace or the lack of it. If you “sense peace” then it may be an indication to move forward. If you sense a “lack of peace” then it’s possible that you should wait or not proceed at all. Train yourself to be sensitive to God’s peace.

Now, at this point in our study, let me bring out a very important concept (again, I’ll draw from my instrument training as a pilot). Try to avoid making decisions, especially big ones, based on only one principle of guidance. In other words, don’t just go by “peace” and don’t just go by “an impression.” ***Pilots are trained to do what’s called “an instrument scan.” In other words, the instruments in your panel should operate together to “paint a picture” of what’s taking place.*** If one instrument is malfunctioning, it will become obvious when the other instruments don’t line up. A pilot depends on more than just one instrument. ***Let these principles “work together” as a guidance system, and try to avoid basing decisions on just one thing.***

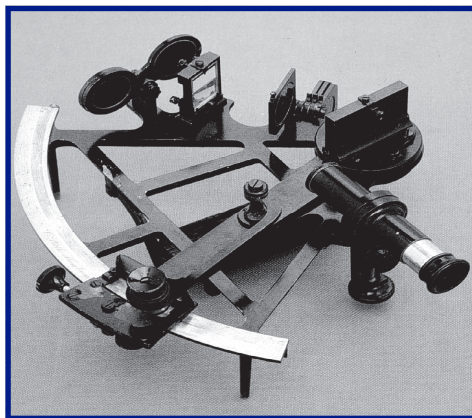
5. Circumstances. As mentioned above, don’t base your guidance just on this one point – yet, circumstances are important. In a court of law, they refer to “*circumstantial evidence.*” It’s not the strongest proof, yet it can be very telling. The same is true in the realm of divine guidance. Some refer to this as “open doors” and “closed doors.” At times God will use circumstances to guide you. There are times where things “just line up.” Then, there are times where all the doors seem closed. God may be saying “no” or He may be saying “not now.” We see this played out in the life of Paul in Acts 16:6-10. Obviously he was called to spread God’s Word, but he was frustrated. He tried to go this way and that way, but to no avail. I’m sure he and his team wondered, “*What is God trying to say?*” Finally God spoke to Paul through a dream to go to Macedonia, and he experienced great results. But think about it. What if Paul had “insisted” on his own plan? What if he had been stubborn and pressed on? No doubt he would have experienced a setback. Likewise, you must learn to “*read the circumstances*” and compare it to the other instruments in your panel. There are times where things may be very difficult, and it is perfectly in the plan of God to “fight” and press on.

Yet, there are other times, as in Paul’s case, where God would have you wait. Thus, you must learn to pray over your circumstances and ask God for His wisdom and insight.

6. Prayer. If you want to grow in God’s guidance system, prayer must become as natural as breathing. A pilot trusts his instruments but he also wears a headset. The headset allows him to stay in constant communication with air traffic control. With the headset he talks AND listens. Do you see the analogy? Take time to pray over your affairs and then “listen.” Pray about your business. Pray about school. Pray about family and friends. Pray about everything! Philippians 4:6 says, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*”

7. Godly counsel. God’s guidance often comes through other people. “*Why reinvent the wheel?*” is a powerful principle. If you’re in business, talk to successful business people. If you’re in ministry, talk to others with more experience. Proverbs 24:6 says, “*For by wise counsel thou shalt make war; and in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*” Though counsel can never replace your personal walk with Christ, there is wisdom and safety in seeking the input of others. The “*University of Other People’s Experience*” has the lowest tuition of any school.

Dear friend, I pray that you will grow in your daily fellowship with Christ and learn to follow His guidance in your life. ■ -- **Jason Peebles**



Key Memory Verse:

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

Proverbs 3:5,6

Prayer for Guidance

"Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. I want to walk in the dreams and plans that you have for me. Pick me up right now, mistakes and all, and lead me by your Spirit. I choose to surrender. Teach me to follow your guidance. Thank you for your great love in my life. In Jesus Name - Amen."

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P.O. Box B

Marietta, GA 30061

(designate for Home office)