

Learning to Hear God's Voice

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A God Who Guides

The issue of guidance – hearing God's guiding voice and discovering his personal will for your life – is undoubtedly a popular subject. No other subject (save possibly for “end time prophecy”) attracts more interest from Christians. Russ Johnston describes this phenomenon in his book, *How to Know the Will of God*:

“A certain church I know has elective Sunday School classes. Every three months they choose a new topic to study. The pastor tells me if they can have someone teach on knowing God's will, they can run that class over and over, and still people sign up for it in droves. I've spoken at many conferences where part of the afternoons are set aside for workshops on various topics. If you make one of the workshops ‘Knowing the Will of God,’ half the people sign up for it even if there are twenty other choices.”¹

A God Who Guides

A People of the Way

The Voice of the Shepherd

Principles of Guidance

Toward Maturity

This in itself reveals something about the nature of a significant majority of Christians:

- ➔ Most Christians have an admirable desire to know and obey God's personal will for their lives.
- ➔ Most Christians are insecure in their understanding of God's will and uncertain of their ability to hear God's voice.

J. I. Packer makes this keen observation:

“To many Christians, guidance is a chronic problem. Why? Not because they doubt that divine guidance is a fact, but because they are sure it is. They know that God can guide, and has promised to guide, every Christian believer. Books, and friends, and public speakers, tell them how guidance has worked in the lives of others. Their fear, therefore, is that they may miss the guidance which God provides through some fault of their own...”²

In this module, we will be investigating this vital subject. We will be exploring such questions as:

- How does God guide?
- How can I learn to hear God's voice?
- How can I know that it is really God speaking?
- What happens if God doesn't seem to be speaking?
- What happens if I "miss it" and act presumptuously?

But in this, our first lesson, we will first focus on a foundational truth of guidance – the fact that God is indeed a God who guides.

The Nature of God

As we established early in the Biblical Studies Course, everything in the Christian life begins with a revelation of God. This applies as much to guidance as to anything else. For if God does not guide, then the quest for divine guidance is a fruitless pursuit.

So before any other question can be asked, one question comes to the fore. Is God an aloof God, disinterested and distant? Or is he close by – not just in presence but in the most intimate of interactions, his guiding hand? As we saw in **Module 108**, these two very different concepts of God have names:

- **Deism** – The belief that God exists but is uninvolved and uninterested in human affairs. The *Holman Bible Dictionary* defines deism as “the idea that God created the world but then withdrew from its day-to-day governance, leaving it to run by itself as a machine.”³
- **Theism** – The belief that God exists and has personally involved himself in human affairs. Theism also takes this one step further by saying that God can actually be known, because he has chosen to reveal himself to mankind. That revelation of God's nature is the Bible.

So, as a prelude to our lessons on guidance, let's first explore God's Word and discover what God is indeed like.

The Record of Scripture

As you look through the pages of God's Word, you will quickly be astounded by the frequency of God's communication to man. In fact, each generation rediscovers for itself that God is a God who guides.

But in reading the biblical accounts, it is important for us to identify with the characters in each story. Dallas Willard makes this point:

“...if we are really to understand the Bible record, we must enter into our study of it on the assumption that the experiences recorded there are basically of the same type as ours would have been if we had been there. Those who lived through them felt them very much as we would have done if we had been in their place. Unless this comes home to us, the things which hap-

pened to people in the Bible will remain unreal to us, we will not genuinely be able to believe the Bible, or find its contents to be real, because it will have no experiential substance for us..."⁴

He goes on to say:

"We must prayerfully but boldly use our God-given imaginations to fill out the reality of...what it would be like if *we* were Moses standing by the bush...little Samuel lying in his darkened room...Elisha under inspiration from the minstrel....Ananias receiving his vision about Paul...or Peter on his rooftop...We must pray for the faith and for the experiences which would enable us to believe that *such things could happen to us*."⁵

Elijah is described as "a man subject to like passions as we are" (**James 5:17**). Paul was human and knew what it meant to feel confused (**2 Corinthians 4:8**) and frightened (**2 Corinthians 7:5**) just like we do. This makes their lives immediately relevant to our personal experience. There was nothing "super-human" about any of these men that would make us say, "Yes, well that was fine for Elijah or Moses or Samuel, but not for me." Despite cultural and historical differences, the road they walked is substantially similar to our own. We face similar hardships, conflicting signals, and discouraging circumstances, yet in the midst of these they experienced the guiding hand of God. So let's turn now to Scripture and draw from the experience of real people in order to establish the basis of our understanding of divine guidance.

A Survey of the Old Testament

The 39 books of the Old Testament clearly reveal a God who has involved himself in human history, a God who is passionately interested not only in the affairs of the human race as a whole, but also in the life of each individual person. So let's start at the beginning, and what better place to start than the "Book of Beginnings" and the man who started everything off.

Adam

Read Genesis 3:8

This is the first hint of God's original intention in his relationship with mankind. The indication in this verse is that God "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" was not an unusual or unique event. It appears that God had set a special time of daily fellowship with Adam and Eve.

The Hebrew phrase "in the cool of the day" literally means "in the evening breeze." As Adam Clarke explains:

"It is very likely that God used to converse with them in the garden, and that the usual time was the decline of the day...in the evening breeze; and probably this was the time that our first parents employed in the more solemn acts of their religious worship, at which God was ever present. The time for this solemn worship is again come, and God is in his place; but Adam and Eve

have sinned, and therefore, instead of being found in the place of worship, are hidden among the trees! Reader, how often has this been thy case!”⁶

Even at the very beginning, at the point of man’s first sin, we do not find God booming in a vindictive, thunderous voice, but rather a God who is “walking in the garden in the cool of the day,” seeking fellowship with his human creation. And so, in this one verse, we discover two important things:

- ☞ **Man hid** – and this has been the instinctive reaction of man ever since. As Warren Wiersbe explains, **Genesis 3:8** reveals “a loss of desire for fellowship with God. When they heard God approaching, they hid! Guilt, fear, and shame broke the fellowship with God that they had enjoyed before their disobedience.”⁷
- ☞ **God searched** – and this has been what God has been doing ever since. This ongoing search for mankind resulted in the sending of Jesus, whose express mission was “to seek and to save that which was lost” (**Luke 19:20**). And today God continues to seek out those who will be “worshippers” (**John 4:23**) – people immersed in intimate communion with God.

Key Point: **God’s Initiative** – God seeks out a personal relationship with you.

Enoch

Read Genesis 5:21-24

Enoch is the first man in human history singled out as one who “walked with God” (see **Hebrews 11:5**). Notice that the Bible does say that “God walked with Enoch,” but rather that “Enoch walked with God.” In other words, it was the Lord who was leading the way. Bear this in mind, for this one simple statement has great bearing on our understanding of how God guides.

Remember that Enoch lived in a time when there was no Bible for him to read, no church for him to attend, no books on “How to Know God’s Will.” All he had was what was passed down to him from his father, yet something happened when Methuselah was born that catapulted him into a daily walk with God.

The Bible is very specific about the starting point of Enoch’s walk with God. It began from the time Methuselah, his son, was born. The name Methuselah could be interpreted to mean “when he dies it shall be sent forth.”* If you count the genealogies of **Genesis**, you will discover that Methuselah died in the year that God sent the Flood. It seems that God had revealed to Enoch that his son was the “time-clock” for God’s judgment. Methuselah became the oldest man to ever live (969 years). Enoch apparently named his son according to a revelation he had received of the coming judgment.

Read Jude 14-15

* According to *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament* (Genesis 5:32), *methu* means “he dies” and *shalach*, “he sends forth.” See **ES109-31**, page 5, for further details on the meaning of Methuselah’s name.

What Enoch understood of the future affected his whole walk on earth (**Hebrews 11:5**). Each step of guidance for him was in line with the ultimate revelation of the coming of the Lord. So it is with us.

Key Point: **Perspective** – The revelation you have of God’s eternal purpose sets the direction and pace of your walk with God.

Noah

Read Genesis 6-9

In the midst of a corrupt generation, God found Noah to be righteous and blameless. Like Enoch, he walked with God. Responding to a revelation of the coming judgment, he too aligned his life accordingly and lived in obedience to God’s directions. Out of this relationship came guidance. In **Genesis 6:13** and **7:1**, we read that “God said to Noah...” And the guidance was specific, since “Noah did everything just as God commanded him” (**Genesis 6:22; 7:5**). So it is with us.

Key Point: **Obedience** – God’s guidance requires a step-by-step obedience.

Abraham

Abraham is not only our great example of faith, but also our great example of guidance. At the command of God, Abraham left everything that was familiar to him and stepped out in faith, solely on a word from God. According to **Genesis 12:1-4**, the guidance he received was specific:

“Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you...so Abram left, as the Lord had told him...”

There is so much that can be learned from Abraham’s walk with God. But the *New King James Version’s* translation of **Hebrews 11:8** hits upon the key point in Abraham’s walk with God:

“And he went out, *not knowing where he was going.*”

So it is with us. The Lord rarely reveals every step in the path ahead. All he reveals is two things: the end-goal and the first step. From there, it’s a step-by-step walk with God. We too go out “not knowing where [we are] going,” but trusting God completely that “he will be our guide even to the end” (**Psalm 48:12**). Like Abraham, we too “walk by faith, not by sight” (**2 Corinthians 5:7**, KJV).

Key Point: **Faith** – God rarely reveals the entire path before us. We are required to take the first step in full faith that God will lead us the rest of the way.

Moses

Read Exodus 3:1-4:18

Read Exodus 33:12-18

As you read the story of Moses, you quickly discover that he, like other men and women in the Bible who received guidance from the Lord, was not perfect. He was an ordinary man, subject to common human frailties. He experienced times of disillusionment, discouragement, self-pity and low self-esteem. But Moses, like all the others, had something that attracted the Lord's favor – a heart after God.

There is one dominant characteristic that stands out in the life of Moses. **Numbers 12:3** hits on it when it states:

“Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.”

Hebrews 3:5 tells us that “Moses was faithful *as a servant* in all God's house...” It is incredible to realize that one of the greatest leaders in Israel's history humbled himself as a servant to the purposes of God. Like the Messiah whom he foresaw (**Deuteronomy 18:15; Hebrews 11:26**), he “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” (**Philippians 2:7**). So it is with us. The secret to the Christian life is also the secret to guidance. For according to **1 Peter 5:5**, “God opposes the proud but *gives grace to the humble*.”

God's guidance in our lives is but one of the many expressions of God's grace. If we enter our walk with God with a sense of self-importance and selfish ambition, we will inevitably end up requiring God to walk with us, rather than other way around. We will seek to “whistle” God down to bless our plans, rather than seek to submit to his guiding direction. In doing so, we forfeit the daily grace that belongs to us in Christ. Like Moses, we must desire with all our heart to know God's ways (**Psalms 103:7**) and align ourselves to those ways. And like Moses, we will then discover that God gives grace – expressed in daily guidance – to the humble.

Key Point: **Humility** – We submit ourselves to the will of God, rather than expecting God to submit himself to our will.

Joshua

Read Joshua 1:1-11

The secret to Joshua's success in the upcoming conquest of Canaan can be sourced to two commands:

- ➡ He was to meditate on God's Word day and night (**Joshua 1:8**)
- ➡ He was to be strong and courageous (**Joshua 1:6-7,9**)

The same encouragement comes to us today. In **2 Timothy 2:1**, Paul instructed Timothy, “You then, my son, *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*.” Ear-

lier, in **1:7**, he had promised Timothy: “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

But where does this courage come from? How are we to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”? Joshua’s lesson is also our lesson. Courage flows from a daily meditation in the Word of God. This was also Paul’s emphasis when he wrote in **2 Timothy 3:14-15**:

“But as for you, *continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of*, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have *known the holy Scriptures*, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, *so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

Key Point: **Meditation in God’s Word** – As we soak in God’s Word, guidance comes from the Lord, and with it the courage to obey God’s directions.

Gideon

Read Judges 6

Gideon is a great example of the grace of God coming upon a person, enabling him to do what God calls him to do. Our first impression of Gideon is not an impressive one. He seem an unlikely candidate for what God wants him to do. He is *hiding in fear* (**6:11**). He is *discouraged* (**6:13**). He has very *low self-esteem* (**6:15**) and he is full of *doubt* (**6:17,36-40**). Yet God, in his grace, meets Gideon at his point of need and enables him to fulfill the task. Gideon, in turn, is transformed into the “mighty warrior” the Lord declared him to be when he first spoke to him (**6:12**).

So it is with us. Whatever God guides us to do or wherever God guides us to go, his all-sufficient grace is available (**2 Corinthians 9:8; 12:9-10**). But there is also something else that can be learned from the experience of Gideon. God sometimes calls us to do something contrary to what human wisdom would dictate.*

Read Judges 7:1-22

Once Gideon’s confidence in God’s guidance had been strengthened, God then gave directions that overturned normal military wisdom. He whittled down an army of 32,000 men to just 300 – less than one-hundredth of the original number! Yet as we quickly learn from the story, that force of 300 proved far more effective than the 32,000 would have been, and God’s glory was revealed in a dramatic way in the vanquishing of an enemy that was “impossible to count” and that “came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts.” Yet God’s wisdom was clear. **7:2** tells us that God reduce Gideon’s forces “[i]n order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her.”

* As we will discover later in **Lesson 110-05**, we must learn to apply normal human wisdom and common sense to everyday decisions. But we must never let human wisdom become a prison, since God’s wisdom is higher than our own, and sometimes runs contrary to common wisdom.

Key Point: **God's Wisdom** – We must seek and apply God's specific wisdom to the major decisions we make in life.

Samuel

Read 1 Samuel 3

Even though the young boy Samuel had been “dedicated to the Lord” before his birth (**1:11,21,24-28**, NASB) and “grew up in the presence of the Lord” (**2:11,21,26; 3:18**), he “did not yet know the Lord” (**3:7**). What was the key to him hearing the voice of the Lord? Why did God speak to him and not to Eli, the priest, or to his sons who were also priests? There were no barriers between Samuel and the Lord – nothing blocking his ears from hearing the Lord. Eli's son's were “wicked men” who had “no regard for the Lord” (**2:12-17,22**). Eli “failed to restrain them” (**3:13**). Sin was the blockade between them and the Lord. Samuel's response to the voice of the Lord was a true response: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (**3:8-10**). Samuel had *an open ear*!

Many times, Jesus set forth this challenge: “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear” (**Mark 4:23; Revelation 2:29**). Like Jesus himself, pre-quoted in **Isaiah 50:4-5**, we can say:

“...He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.”

Key Point: **An Open Ear** – As we come with an open ear to hear God's Word, he will speak into our lives and bring his guidance.

David

Read 2 Samuel 5:17-25

As we read of the exploits of David, we witness a great sensitivity to the voice of God's Spirit. As a man skilled in war, he could easily have relied on his own military experience and wisdom. Yet he never moved in presumption. As **5:19** states:

“...David inquired of the Lord...”

How easy it is for us to move in presumption. We assume that because God has moved in a certain way yesterday that he will move in the same way today. We assume that because God has provided specific directions to follow in times past that these same directions automatically apply to all future decisions.

A quick comparison of **5:18** and **5:22** shows that the two situations faced by David were essentially identical. In each instance, the Philistine army had moved into the Valley of Rephaim. On the first occasion, David sought the Lord's guidance,

and the Lord's answer was: "Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you." How easy it would have been, however, for David to act presumptuously on the second occasion. After all, if God had given the victory the first time, then he would surely do the same thing the second time, wouldn't he?

It is possible that David had learned his lesson from Israel's history. In **Joshua 7:2-5**, we read of Israel's first defeat in the conquest of Canaan, principally because of presumption. Joshua had no word from the Lord regarding Ai, as he had with Jericho. He presumed that God was with them in the decisions they made (when in fact he had withdrawn his favor due to sin in the camp), and the result was a shocking defeat. Likewise, in **1 Samuel 4:1-11**, the Israelites act presumptuously, thinking that taking the Ark of the Covenant into battle would assure their victory. The result was again a resounding defeat.

Maybe with these lessons in mind, David did not presume that God would do precisely as he had done before, even though the circumstances were identical. Instead, he again sought God's specific guidance. And sure enough, this time God's direction was different. In **2 Samuel 5:23-24**, we find the Lord's second answer:

"Do *not* go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, *because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you* to strike the Philistine army."

In each case, the glory went to the Lord. As David exclaimed in **5:20** (NLT):

"The *Lord* has done it!...He burst through my enemies like a raging flood!"

Key Point: **Seeking the Lord** – We should never presume that God will do things in a certain way. We must seek his guidance each step of the way.

Elijah

Read 1 Kings 19:1-8

We have already seen that Scripture describes Elijah as "a man just like us," or, as *The Living Bible* puts it, "as completely human as we are" (**James 5:17**). And this Old Testament account shows us just how human Elijah was. After what might be called the highlight of his prophetic career – calling down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel – Elijah now hears of Jezebel's plans to kill him and his response is one of fear. **19:3** tells us that "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life."

As we trace Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb we find a man consumed with self-pity and the classic symptoms of depression. He arrives at Mount Horeb with a well-rehearsed complaint to bring before the Lord. But in the process of answering Elijah's complaint, God teaches him a very important lesson.

Read 1 Kings 19:9-14

We must remember that Elijah's ministry had been marked by the supernatural. God had intervened miraculously, confirming Elijah's word time and again. But at Mount Horeb, Elijah discovers that it is not in the outward, supernatural demonstrations of God's power that he guides, but rather with a "small still voice" (KJV), a "gentle whisper" (NIV) and "a quiet, gentle sound" (NCV).

Fear can so easily motivate our decisions. We *react* to our circumstances rather than *act* according God's directions. But when distressing circumstances arise, our first response must be to quiet our souls in order to hear the "still small voice" of the Holy Spirit's promptings.

Elijah was not only one who learned this lesson. David penned these words in **Psalm 130:2**:

"But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me."

Let's take a quick look at a time when David put this principle into practice.

Read 1 Samuel 30:1-8

While David and his men were away from their home base, the enemy had swept in and taken all their families captive. At a time of great distress, when everyone blamed him for the tragedy that had taken place and had turned against him, David "found strength in the Lord his God" and asked the Lord what he should do. Guidance came clearly and with it the promise of success. The result was that "David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken...nothing was missing" and he also took much spoil from the enemy (**1 Samuel 30:18-20**).

Key Point: **A Quiet Soul** – In times of great distress, it is important to first quiet our hearts before the Lord and find strength in him. Then the "still, small voice" of God's Spirit can be heard clearly in the midst of the situation.

In **Psalm 86:11**, we find what could be the cry of each Old Testament saint:

"Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name."

To this cry, God answers in **Isaiah 58:11**:

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."

The amazing thing about everything we have looked at so far is that all of these people's experiences happened *in the Old Testament!* They either lived in a pre-Sinai age or under the Sinai Covenant. Now comes the next important question. What happens when we enter the New Covenant? Does the God of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David and Elijah continue to guide?

A Survey of the New Testament

2 Corinthians 3:10-11 sums up the revolutionary nature of the New Covenant by comparing the Old with the New. The *New Living Translation* phrases it thus:

“Shouldn’t we expect far greater glory when the Holy Spirit is giving life?...In fact, that first glory [of the old covenant] was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new covenant. So if the old covenant, which has been set aside, was full of glory, then the new covenant, which remains forever, has far greater glory.”

In every dimension of our lives, the glory of the New Covenant eclipses that of the Old Covenant. And guidance is no exception. Rather than taking a backward step, we have been thrust into the inner circle of fellowship with God and into a status that could never be enjoyed under the Old Covenant. We are not just *subjects* of God’s kingdom; we are now *sons* of the Most High God! We are not just *servants* of the Lord; we are now *heirs* of his Throne!

For this reason, **Romans 8:14** encapsulates the very meaning of guidance under the New Covenant:

“...because those who are *led* by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

Do you notice the link between guidance and relationship? In fact this one statement revolutionizes our concept of guidance. No longer should it be seen as just something we seek when we are in need of wisdom or when important decision looms. For many Christians, their prayer life suddenly spikes at times of crisis and important decisions. But **Romans 8:14** indicates that guidance flows out of relationship with God. Simply put, guidance is a function of relationship.

And because the New Testament is clear that every believer in Christ is now a son of God (**John 1:12-13; Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 3:26; 4:5; Ephesians 1:5**), this means that the experience of being “led by the Spirit of God” is not exclusive for the select few, but is all-inclusive. It is meant to be the common Christian experience! As the *New Living Translation* phrases **James 1:5**:

“If you need wisdom – if you want to know what God wants you to do – ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.”

Even a quick scan of the book of Acts reveals how commonplace and expected the guidance of God was for the first century Christians:

- **5:19-20** – An angel releases the apostles from prison and tells them to preach openly in the temple courts.
- **8:26-28** – An angel tells Philip to head down toward Gaza, where he met up with the Ethiopian eunuch.
- **8:29** – The Spirit of God tells Philip to join himself to the chariot and speak to the eunuch.

- **9:3-6** – The Lord appears to Saul in a blinding light as he is traveling to Damascus, and speaks audibly to him.
- **9:10-16** – The Lord appears to Ananias in a vision and speaks to him, telling him to go and baptize the newly converted Saul (and Saul himself had also seen a vision of Ananias laying hands on him).
- **10:3-6** – An angel appears to Cornelius and tells him to send messengers to Peter in Joppa.
- **10:9-16** – While praying on the roof of a house, Peter falls into a trance and sees a vision, with the Lord instructing him: “Do not call anything impure that God has called clean.”
- **10:19-20** – The Holy Spirit then tells Peter that three men are looking for him, and that he is to accompany them to Caesarea.
- **11:27-30** – The Lord speaks through the prophet Agabus, foretelling of a coming great famine that would sweep the Roman world. This gave the Christians in Antioch time to prepare gifts for the believers in Judea.
- **13:2-4** – During a time of worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit instructs the leaders of the Antioch church to separate Paul and Barnabas and send them to the Gentiles. They are “sent on their way by the Holy Spirit.”
- **16:6** – Paul and his companions are “kept by the Holy Spirit” from preaching the Gospel in the province of Asia.
- **16:9-10** – Paul sees a vision of a man from Macedonia calling him to come and help. He then concludes that God is leading him into the province of Macedonia, which was a totally redirection in his travel plans.
- **18:9-10** – In a vision, the Lord encourages Paul to continue preaching fearlessly in his Name.
- **20:22-23** – Paul feels “compelled by the Spirit” to go to Jerusalem, yet the same Holy Spirit also “warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.”
- **21:3-4** – The Holy Spirit, through the disciples at Tyre, warns Paul again of the hardships he would face in Jerusalem.
- **21:10-11** – The prophet Agabus foretells of Paul’s imprisonment in Jerusalem, using Paul’s own belt as an allegory. His words are specific. “The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’”
- **23:11** – After Paul’s imprisonment, the Lord stands before Paul. “Take courage!” he says. “As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”
- **27:23-26** – A storm is threatening to sink the ship that is carrying Paul as prisoner to Rome. But an angel appears to Paul in the night and tells him that all will be safe, although the ship will be lost.

Putting It All In Perspective

As we close this lesson, we need to reemphasize that the subject of divine guidance is really an investigation into the nature of God. According to Scripture, God is indeed a God who guides, and the fact that God guides means two things for you:

- God has a plan for your life
- God desires to communicate that plan to you

These are the two facts upon which divine guidance is based. If these two facts are sure, then so is the reality of God's guidance. And these two facts have not just been confirmed by Scripture, they have also been tested and retested down through the centuries. Each generation has borne witness to the immutable reality that God is indeed a God who guides.

The God who led the people of Israel through the wilderness with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night is the same God who speaks to our hearts today. The God who called out to Samuel in the depth of the night also calls out to us. And the God who came to Elijah as a "still small voice" still continues to whisper to us.

Through the Holy Spirit, sent by the Lord into our lives, we now have a continuous access of communication with God, unparalleled even in Old Testament times. The quality of this relationship of guidance is perhaps best summed up in that delightful old hymn:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known*

¹ Russ Johnston, *How to Know the Will of God*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1971), p5.

² J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), p.258.

³ *Holman Bible Dictionary*, "Providence: Deism," excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0.

⁴ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God* (London, Harper Collins, 1999), p. 22.

⁵ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God* (London, Harper Collins, 1999), p. 22.

⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Genesis 3:8, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0.

⁷ Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, Genesis 3:8, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0.

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