Divine Guidance As An Experiential Blessing
Steven R. Cook, D.Min., M.Div.

Guidance is an experiential blessing that belongs to the Christian who is walking according to divine truth. Knowing God's will is closely connected with spiritual transformation. Paul calls believers to "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice" and "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2). Warren Wiersbe states:

> Understanding suggests using our minds to discover and do the will of God. Too many Christians have the idea that discovering God's will is a mystical experience that rules out clear thinking. But this idea is wrong—and dangerous. We discover the will of God as He transforms the mind (Rom. 12:1-2); and this transformation is the result of the Word of God … If God gave you a mind, then He expects you to use it.[1]

God has already revealed His moral will in Scripture, but the believer must think deductively, applying general biblical principles to the particular circumstances and decisions of daily life.[2] A mind saturated with divine viewpoint is increasingly able to evaluate circumstances, priorities, relationships, and decisions from God's perspective. A mind dominated by the world will naturally interpret those same circumstances through human viewpoint. Guidance, therefore, is closely connected to spiritual growth and the renewal of the mind. According to John Walvoord:

> Guidance is a most important element in Christian experience, and it is essential to a life in the will of God. Guidance while similar to the teaching work of the Spirit has a distinct character. While the teaching ministry of the Spirit in this age is directed to making clear the content

[1] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 47.

[2] Deductive guidance means taking what God has already revealed in Scripture and reasoning from that truth to the particular decision before you. For example, Scripture commands believers to "not be bound together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14). That is the general principle. Scripture will not tell a particular Christian, "Do not enter this specific business partnership with John Smith." Rather, the believer knows the biblical principle and, through wisdom and the Spirit's ministry, applies it to the particular circumstance. Likewise, Proverbs 13:20 teaches that "he who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm," providing a general principle the believer can apply when choosing close friendships and associations.

> of the Word of God, guidance is the application of the truths thus known to the individual problems of life. Guidance is always deductive, that is, the application of general Biblical principles to the particular problem at hand.[3]

Guidance is conditional because the believer can resist the very truth necessary for sound judgment. God's revealed will remains available in Scripture, and His providential sovereignty continues even when the believer acts foolishly (Prov. 16:9). What is conditional is the believer's experiential capacity to recognize, understand, and wisely apply God's revealed truth. Christians are commanded to "be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise" and to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:15-17). According to Radmacher, "Discerning the will of the Lord is not a matter of feeling or emotion, but of mental understanding, applying our minds to Scripture."[4] Wisdom requires both knowledge and application. The Christian who neglects Scripture, lives carnally, or repeatedly rejects known truth should not expect clear spiritual judgment. His problem is not that God has hidden His will, but that his own thinking has become clouded. Spiritual discernment weakens whenever divine viewpoint is displaced by worldly values, emotional reasoning, personal ambition, fear, pride, or self-interest.

Trust is another condition related to divine guidance. The believer is commanded, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6). According to Allen Ross, "When obedient faith is present, the Lord will guide the believer along life's paths in spite of difficulties and hindrances. The idea of 'straight' (v. 6) contrasts to the crooked and perverse ways of the wicked."[5] The believer must consciously reject autonomous thinking and place confidence in God's written revelation. To "acknowledge" God means to recognize Him throughout the whole course of life rather than compartmentalizing one's decisions. When the believer insists on leaning upon his own understanding, he places limited human reasoning above divine wisdom. But when he trusts the Lord and orders his thinking according to Scripture, God directs his path toward what is wise and pleasing to Him. John Kitchen states:

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[3] John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Galaxie Software, 2008), 221.

[4] Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), 1538.

[5] Allen P. Ross, "Proverbs," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 917.

> The straight paths of the wise contrast with the crooked or perverse ways of the wicked (Prov. 2:13, 15; 3:17; 10:9). The reward is more than the promise of simple guidance. It includes the removal of obstacles (Isa. 40:3; 45:13) from the path of the wise and the surety of arriving at one's destination. When you abandon yourself to God in trusting obedience, finding your entire support in Him and striving in every avenue of your life to know Him more intimately, He guarantees that the path before you will be clearer and smoother than otherwise it would have been, and that He will keep you in His will.[6]

The Spirit of God leads the child of God into the will of God by means of the word of God. According to Wiersbe, "The will of God is revealed in the Word of God (Col. 1:9–10), and the only way to know His will is to study His Word and obey it."[7] As biblical knowledge increases and spiritual discernment develops, the believer becomes better equipped to distinguish between what is sinful or righteous, foolish or wise, permissible or profitable. Mature guidance frequently appears not as a dramatic sign from heaven, but as sound judgment formed through years of learning and applying God's word.

The Holy Spirit is essential to this process because He teaches and empowers the believer to understand and apply spiritual truth. Believers have received "the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12). Jesus also promised that the Spirit would guide His apostles "into all the truth," a promise connected directly with the revelation of New Testament truth (John 16:13). Today the Holy Spirit works through the written word He inspired, using biblical truth to reshape the believer's thinking. His guidance should therefore not be reduced to subjective impressions, inner voices, or unexplained feelings. The Spirit leads through the objective truth of Scripture, producing wisdom, discernment, and spiritual stability as truth is learned, believed, and applied. F. Duane Lindsey states:

> The Holy Spirit is the transforming Agent as He employs the Word of God to change the believer inwardly into the image of the incarnate Son of God. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the dynamic power and transforming Agent of the beautiful Christian life. However, this is not an automatic process for it is the

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[6] John A. Kitchen, *Proverbs: A Mentor Commentary*, Mentor Commentaries (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2006), 77.

[7] Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Skillful*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 38.

> Word of God which is used by the Spirit to produce such a life. This involves obedience to God's Word on the part of the believer. Obedience to the Word of God, in dependence upon the Spirit of God, is essential both to the development of a beautiful Christian life style and also to the formation of a beautiful Christian personality pattern.[8]

It is helpful to distinguish several aspects of God's will, all of which are illustrated in Genesis 1-3. God's ***sovereign will*** is seen in His creation of the heavens, the earth, and everything in them according to His purpose (Gen. 1:1-31). His ***directive will*** is seen when He commanded Adam concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, clearly stating what Adam was and was not to do (Gen. 2:16-17). His ***permissive will*** is seen when God allowed Adam and Eve to exercise their volition and disobey His command, though He neither caused nor approved their sin (Gen. 3:1-7). His ***overruling will*** is seen after the fall when He drove them from the garden and stationed the cherubim and flaming sword to prevent their return to the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24). His ***providential will*** is seen throughout the account as God continued to govern their circumstances after the fall, providing garments for Adam and Eve and preserving their lives while His purposes continued to unfold (Gen. 3:15, 21). These distinctions help explain divine guidance: the believer is responsible to obey God's directive will, exercise responsible volition where God permits freedom, and trust His sovereign, overruling, and providential activity in the circumstances of life.

Not every decision is specifically addressed in Scripture. The Bible does not identify which job to accept, where to live, whom to marry, whom to hire, or which legitimate opportunity to pursue. In such matters, guidance comes through the application of biblical principles, prayer for wisdom, careful evaluation of circumstances, and confidence in God's providential oversight. Scripture states, "The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps" (Prov. 16:9). The mature believer is therefore free to think, plan, investigate, seek wise counsel, and make responsible decisions within the boundaries of God's revealed will. He does not need to manufacture certainty where Scripture has given liberty. He makes the wisest decision available from the information he possesses and then rests in the sovereignty and providence of God.

Divine guidance, then, is an experiential blessing connected to positive volition toward God and His word. The believer must present himself to God and renew his

[8] F. Duane Lindsey, "Essays toward a Theology of Beauty Part III: The Beautiful Christian Life," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131 (1974): 317.

thinking (Rom. 12:1-2), walk carefully and seek wisdom (Eph. 5:15-17; Jam. 1:5), trust the Lord rather than himself (Prov. 3:5-6), and develop discernment through increasing biblical knowledge (Phil. 1:9-10). Under these conditions, the Christian becomes increasingly capable of navigating life from divine viewpoint. The mature Christian knows Scripture, trusts God's character, evaluates circumstances wisely, makes responsible choices, and rests in divine providence. Guidance is not a substitute for spiritual maturity; it is one of its practical expressions.