

Principles of God's Guidance

Discerning God's Will—part 6

July 9, 2017

DAY 1: Supernatural guidance, the exception, not the rule.

1. One of the questions that comes up is, “What about supernatural guidance? I had a dream about my decision. How much stock should I have in that?” Or, “I think God spoke (silently) to me in a strong impression. How much stock should I have in that?”

2. This week we'll look at an example of “supernatural” guidance, but several things are certain:

- a. God leads on His timetable, not ours.
- b. God leads us in the manner of His choosing, not ours.
- c. God can certainly lead through what we consider “supernatural” guidance, but in the bible, it is comparatively rare, though obviously “exciting.”

3 Why doesn't God lead us using more “supernatural” guidance? Consider the biblical values God is instilling in us, as highest priorities:

- a. Walk with Him in faith,
- b. Deepen our trust in Him,
- c. Deepen humility in us,
- d. Call us to continuous prayer,
- e. Humble us enough to seek counsel.
- f. Help us to step out in faith.

Acts 15:36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, ³⁸ but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

4. There was no “supernatural” guidance in this passage. But Paul and Barnabas are pursuing what God has already led them to do, proceed in the mission!

5. When the big difference of opinion strikes, there is no “supernatural” guidance. They both use wisdom and prudence in determining whether or not to take Mark along.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Supernatural guidance: “closed doors”

1. There are times where God “closes a door” in your life. You are suddenly stopped in your tracks. Everything comes to a screeching halt. Paul and his mission team had just this kind of experience!

Acts 16:6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

2. Paul’s team was pursuing God’s will. They were involved in the God’s mission. Suddenly, it all came to a halt.

3. What thoughts would you have had if you:

a. Had been Paul, the leader of the team?

b. Had been on Pauls’ team?

4. Have you had this experience, where you were suddenly hit with God’s “red light,” coming out of “nowhere?”

a. What did you think at the time?

b. What do you think, now, as you look back on that time?

Acts 16:8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

5. Notice what Paul and his team did: they continued to pursue the mission but in a different city!

6. They were stopped from going into the region of Bithynia—a red light. There was a “green light” to lead them in another direction. What did they do? They moved out in faith, in a different direction, headed toward the mission.

7. Was God protecting them from danger in Bithynia? Was God teaching them something? What was God up to with regard to red lights and green lights? We’ll see some more later this week!

DAY 3: Supernatural guidance

1. Occasionally, God gives us what we call “supernatural” guidance. It is God-initiated, and it is of such a nature that “no one could tell us otherwise.”

Acts 16:9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

2. God gave Paul a very powerful and specific dream.

3. Paul and his team were in the far west end of modern day Turkey. Macedonia was a province in Europe, modern day Greece.

4. This was one of the most significant moments in human history! The gospel was about to make the leap from the middle east into Europe!

5. When guidance like this happens, it is “mind-blowing.” But a few important observations are in order:

a. This kind of guidance is rare in the bible.

b. As Christians, it is easy to believe that this kind of guidance is normative, or is the “only” kind of legitimate (or “spiritual”) guidance God gives.

c. What we must remember, is that our hearts are deceitful. We can trick ourselves. It’s so easy to find some event that rationalizes what we want to do, anyway. And then this kind of story “cements” the justification.

6. Can you think of a time when you justified a decision, based on some kind of “supernatural” guidance that was really more driven by your own desires?

7. If so, what do you wish someone had said to you or done that would have protected you from your own desires?

DAY 4: The mixture of “supernatural” guidance and guidance through leadership

Acts 16:10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

1. One of the most normative ways God gives us guidance is through authority, or leadership. Examples abound:

a. Moses leading the Hebrew people across the Sinai Desert to the promised land,

b. David leading the Israelites against the Philistines,

c. The prophets giving guidance to the people and the nation,

d. Pastors, elders, shepherds giving guidance to the people of the church.

e. Governmental authorities.

2. Of course, authority can be abused.

3. But why does God so often use authority / leaders to guide us?

a. We can deceive ourselves, oh so easily,

b. God places a premium on building humility in us, as opposed to the natural independent spirit that can cause us so much harm.

4. Look back at our verse for today. **Underline** each of the **persons** and **pronouns** in Acts 16:10.

5. To whom did God give this supernatural guidance?

6. How did Paul’s team determine God’s guidance in this situation?

7. Are you willing to follow authority? Are you willing to follow godly leaders within scriptural limits?

8. What most strikes you from Acts 16:10?

DAY 5: Some concluding principles...

1. The tendency is to either expect supernatural guidance as normative or to limit supernatural guidance to biblical times, only.

2. It is easy to assume that “supernatural” guidance is the “best” and that the “wisdom way” is second-rate. This is a great mistake.

3. When there is not “clear” indication of what to do, God is likely using one or more of the following to guide you:
 - a. Concerted prayer,
 - b. Working in you to yield the final decision to Him,
 - c. Having enough humility to ask for counsel,
 - d. Working in you to trust Him,
 - e. Working in you to step out in faith.
 - f. The process of competing values. When we are confused there are often values that “compete” with each other, each leading us in a different direction. God uses this time of confusion to help us recognize the most important values and adopt them as ours.

4. More often than not, the greatest problem in discerning God’s will is NOT God’s inability to communicate it.

5. The problem is usually our determination to do what we want to do, anyway. There are times when God withholds direction until we settle the matter of being willing to do what He wants us to do, no matter our desires, or the cost.

6. As we wrap up the week, what is one or two things that have stuck with you regarding discerning God’s will?