

## GOD'S CHOICE FOR YOU

### Psalm 25

Dr. John Crocker. Crossroads Church, Albert Lea, MN. February 6, 2011

Making an important decision can be a daunting proposition, especially if the wrong choice could hurt you or others.

You can handle most routine decisions without getting your knickers in a knot. But sometimes there are decisions that get you uptight, and you wish someone else could make them for you.

Throughout history the fear of wrong choices has provided a lucrative business for psychics and soothsayers and wacky prognosticators.

God told his people Israel to have nothing to do with fortunetellers and astrologers. The same is always true for all God's people.

How can we put our trust in God and at the same time open ourselves up to a whole constellation of spiritual influences that are inherently deceptive and evil?

- We know what God's will is for all mankind in general. God doesn't want anyone to perish but everyone to repent (2 Peter 3:9); he wants all people to be saved and to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

But we would also like to know God's specific, unique guidance for each of us as individuals.

What if we miss out on particular God's guidance for us because we're not sure how to find it out? God might speak and we might not hear, God might point and we might not see.

- So we cling to some key Scriptures about divine guidance: *'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight* ("direct your paths").' (Proverbs 3:5-6) *'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.'* (Psalm 32:8)

Those Scriptures fortify our souls. I've relied on them many times.

- There's a whole section on guidance in most church hymnals—if you remember what hymnals are. Great hymns like, *Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah; O God our help in ages past . . . be thou our guide while life shall last; Lead on, O King Eternal; All the Way My Savior Leads Me; Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me.*
- But some people don't think they need God's guidance.

They take the advice of Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, *'God helps them that help themselves.'* They're partly right. God has supplied us with enough common sense to be able to make 98.2 percent of our decisions on our own. Do you know where I got that number? I made it up, but I think it's pretty close to the truth.

If we didn't use our common sense and reason to make most decisions we'd never do anything.

But what happens in those less-than-two-percent situations when you have to make a decision and it's one of the real "biggies"?

- The Psalmist David can help us. He often landed in perilous circumstances in which he desperately sought the Lord's guidance.

Let's take a look at how he did it in the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm. This is David's prayer to God for guidance.

<sup>1</sup> *To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;*

<sup>2</sup> *in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.*

<sup>3</sup> *No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse.*

<sup>4</sup> *Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths;*

<sup>5</sup> *guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior and my hope is in you all day long.*

<sup>6</sup> *Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.*

<sup>7</sup> *Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.*

<sup>8</sup> *Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.*

<sup>9</sup> *He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.*

<sup>10</sup> *All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.*

<sup>11</sup> *For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.*

<sup>12</sup> *Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.*

<sup>13</sup> *He will spend his days in prosperity and his descendants will inherit the land.*

<sup>14</sup> *The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.*

<sup>15</sup> *My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.*

<sup>16</sup> *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.*

- <sup>17</sup> *The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.*  
<sup>18</sup> *Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.*  
<sup>19</sup> *See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me.*  
<sup>20</sup> *Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.*  
<sup>21</sup> *May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.*  
<sup>22</sup> *Redeem Israel, O god, from all their troubles.*

In Psalm 25 David shows us some indispensable aspects of discerning God's will for our lives. I believe that if we ignore these aspects, our efforts to know God's guidance will all be futile. There is no quick microwave recipe for divine guidance. Nor is it "everything you always wanted to know about God's guidance" in a neat little package. These aspects of seeking God's guidance in Psalm 25 will give you more help than you'll find anywhere else.

### **I. CONVICTION. Psalm 25:1-2, 5-6, 8-10**

A conviction is a firmly held belief.

If you want to know God's will for your life, you must believe that God cares about you and that God is able to guide you.

That's where you start. That's how David began.

<sup>1</sup> *To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;*

<sup>2</sup> *in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.*

David opens his prayer by declaring his conviction that God is able to take care of him.

- If you read the life of David in the Bible, you know it was punctuated by crises.

But he doesn't tell us which predicament prompted this prayer. It probably had something to do with King Saul and his henchmen hunting him to kill him.

In 1963 I was aboard an ocean liner, the Empress of England, approaching Quebec City on the St. Lawrence Seaway on our journey from Liverpool, England. I was on deck in the predawn and I watched as a motor launch came out and delivered someone to the ship through a door close to the water line. I asked one of the crew who that person was. He said *'That's the pilot of the Port of Quebec City. He'll take us into the harbor.'* The pilot knew how to avoid the shoals and dangerous rocks. The captain on the bridge needed his guidance.

Much of the time you may feel that you can captain your own ship. But there are situations that arise that give you pause, because you know that the wrong choice could get you wrecked on the rocks.

That's when you need to be convinced that you are important to God and that he wants you to choose the right way.

<sup>5</sup> *guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.*

<sup>6</sup> *Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.*

It's God's nature to give guidance. It's part of his mercy and kindness toward us.

<sup>8</sup> *Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.*

<sup>9</sup> *He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.*

<sup>10</sup> *All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.*

The covenant that God made with his people in the Old Testament includes the Ten Commandments. It's the revelation of God will for his people.

If you want to know God's will for your life, you must know God.

In his Word, the Bible, God has revealed to us who he is and what his will is for his people.

Listen to what Jeremiah wrote about knowing God, *'But let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for in these I delight.'* (Jeremiah 9:24)

If you want God's guidance, you must have a settled conviction that God is always prepared to guide his people, if they are humble and want to do his will.

### **II. CONFESSION. Psalm 25:7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 18**

By confession you humble yourself before God in prayer and admit that you have been corrupted by the power of evil.

You confess that only God can save you and set your life on the right course.

This is exactly what David did in verses 11, 18, and verse 7.

<sup>11</sup> *For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.*

<sup>18</sup> *Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.*

<sup>7</sup> *Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.*

What do we need to confess to God? David used three expressions for it: *iniquity*, *sin*, and *rebellious ways* or, lit. *transgressions*.

One of the definitions the prophet Isaiah gives for sin is ‘*going our own way*.’ “*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*” (Isaiah 53:6).

When we confess our sins to God, we confess that we have gone our own way, instead of God’s way.

Let me tell you one of the things that bugs women about men. If women are driving somewhere and can’t find the place, they stop and ask for directions. Men will burn a tank of gas before they think of asking.

They’re too proud to admit they’re lost. (But now having a GPS in the car lets us save face, because gadgets are okay to rely on).

The most sobering truth about life is that people are spiritually lost. If they don’t admit it, they stay lost.

Jesus said he came to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10)

- Did you see what David said in verse 9?

<sup>9</sup> *He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.*

God will show you his way if you’re not too proud to confess, ‘*Lord I’m lost without you. I need your way for my life.*’

How often have you heard a politician or a high-profile corporate executive or a sports celebrity who has been caught in an act of wrongdoing, publicly admit, ‘*What I did was wrong. It was bad. I’m ashamed, and I’m very sorry*’? No. If they admit anything, they couple it with an attempt to justify their actions. More than likely, what you heard was ‘*I made a mistake. It was poor judgment on my part*’—or some lame face-saving excuse.

Maybe that describes you as well. Heaven and earth will pass away before you’ll admit that you were wrong.

- If you feel trapped because of wrong choices, go to God in prayer, and be honest. No excuses

<sup>15</sup> *My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.*

<sup>16</sup> *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.*

When nobody can help you, confess that you feel all alone and only God can show you the way.

- Sincere, humble confession to God is absolutely essential if you want God’s will for your life.

### **III. PETITION. Psalm 25:4-5, 17-18, 20-21**

Now we get to the actual asking for God’s guidance.

<sup>4</sup> *Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths;*

<sup>5</sup> *guide me in your truth and teach me,*

David prayed, ‘*Show me your ways; teach me your paths; guide me in your truth.*’ That’s what we ask for—God’s will, not our own.

- God’s way is always the right way. That does not mean it’s an easy way.

In Gethsemane Jesus prayed to the Father, ‘*Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*’ (Mark 14:36)

- If you pray to God, remember he is the Almighty, Infinite, Eternal, Holy God. Be real; be sincere.

<sup>17</sup> *The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.*

<sup>18</sup> *Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.*

David cried out to God, ‘*Lord, please help me out of this mess I’m in. Show me the way you want me to take.*’

There’s a misconception that if you’ve rejected God’s will and now you’re trapped, stuck—like David (his feet were caught in a snare v.15)—that you’re hopelessly trapped forever.

As if God says, ‘*That’ll teach you to turn from my way! You made your bed, now you must lie in it. It’s not going to get any better for you.*’

That’s a lie. God is merciful.

God mends lives that are broken. God rescues those who are trapped and sets them free to live a full life in his will.

There are no “second-class Christians” who must forever live with shame and be unfulfilled because at some time they turned away from God’s will.

- God our Father doesn’t ignore the suffering of his children.

Fathers, if you tell your little son to stay on the sidewalk, but he disobeys you, and a car hits him; and you get a call from the emergency ward, what do you do? Do you say, “Serves the little blighter right! That’ll teach him to obey!”? Of course you wouldn’t!

We, as Christians, are the children of God, and his love is infinitely greater than ours. So don’t hesitate to ask God our Father his help, even if you caused the mess you’re in.

<sup>20</sup> *Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.*

<sup>21</sup> *May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.*

- Please notice that David doesn’t ask to feel some sensation in order to know God’s will.

Following his feelings had landed him in trouble on several occasions.

David asked God to teach him: *‘Show me your ways; teach me your paths;’* (4).

Our feelings are a precious gift from God, but our feelings are not the indicators of God’s guidance.

Often I’ve heard people say *‘I felt led by God to (do such and such).’* Maybe they’re right. But maybe they want something so badly that the feelings come from themselves and not from God.

Be cautious about following your feelings and attributing them to God’s promptings. But you can expect a deep settled peace when you know that your choice is consistent with God’s revealed will in the Bible.

#### **IV. SUBMISSION. Psalm 25: 3, 5, 10, 12, 14, 21**

You submit to God’s *how* and *when*.

David said he waited for God’s timing.

For some reason, the translators of the NIV chose the word “hope” instead of “wait” in verses 3, 5, 21.

Literally, verse 3 reads, *‘. . . none of those who wait for you will be ashamed.’* Also in verse 5, *‘. . . For you I wait all the day.’* And verse 21, *‘. . . For I wait for you.’*

This word in the Hebrew text means “to look eagerly for.”

It means you’re eager for God’s guidance. But you want God’s way in God’s time.

- That’s not easy for us. We want it now!

It’s like a little boy named Lewis who wrote a letter to God. *‘Dear God. I wrote you before. Do you remember? I did what I promised. But you didn’t send me the horse yet. What about it?’*

- Submission to God means willing obedience.

Don’t expect God to show you his will for your life if you are deliberately doing something he forbids in his word.

<sup>10</sup> *All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.*

The Bible is indispensable in knowing God’s will.

The apostle Paul wrote this to Timothy, *‘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.’* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- Submission to God also means having a respectful attitude, or reverence. In the Bible it’s called “fearing the Lord.”

<sup>12</sup> *Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.*

<sup>14</sup> *The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.*

Submitting to God’s will is not making a slight course correction while you speed on your chosen way. It may mean a complete about-turn.

God our Father wants us to know his will for our lives.

If you sincerely want God’s will, you don’t have to be afraid that you will make a choice that will lead to disaster.

Remember these essential aspects of seeking God’s will:

Conviction: You must be convinced that God cares for you and you can trust him.

Confession: Humble yourself and confess your sins and frailties to him.

Petition: Ask God to lead you in his way—not to help you in your way.

Submission: Be reverent; tell God you will obey him. And be willing to wait.