

Training For Guys

How do you know when it is time to move on/change jobs? ... how does God call and guide us?

So many of us struggle with this question. We want to serve God and obey Him, but we aren't sure what He wants us to do. To be honest, we make too big a deal out of it (I know I do!) - worrying that we might get it wrong and end up doing something God does not want us to, or not doing something He did want us to.

But God isn't like that, and He does not lead us like that. He's not a SaintNav guiding us with perpetual directions "In 300 seconds go right and preach to the first person you meet" - although that sometimes might happen for some people occasionally it's not the norm.

It's a little more like the start of Mission:Impossible "Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to rescue the lost from hell". The agent then goes off and sorts out his own resources and devises his own plan to accomplish the mission.

A little more like that, but actually we're not left alone to that extent. He makes several promises to us about guidance starting with the closing words of Matthew's gospel: Go, and I will be with you.

"Go" is not a geographic command necessarily but an attitudinal one. Go to the people you meet and make disciples. Yes, it says "Go to all the world" but that isn't to be taken literally by an individual because then it becomes impossible. It's a

command to the whole church, we each have a small part to play in it.

But the amazing thing about those verses is that He says - God says - Jesus says - "I will be with you". As we go, He is with us. Where we go, He is with us.

The first point to consider, then, is: are you going? Is your attitude one of serving Him, one of reaching out to others? If yes, He is with you. If He is with you, you're in the right place!

But does that mean I stay in this place forever and never move somewhere else?

No, not necessarily. But the point is, you cannot in the *wrong* place at the moment if Jesus is with you, because Jesus is never in the wrong place!

The 23rd Psalm says "*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.*"

Does a sheep spend it's time worrying about where it is going? Is it the sheep's responsibility to ask questions about whether or not it is in the right place? Of course not. It's the shepherd's job to always make sure his sheep are in the best green pastures, by the best water and being refreshed.

God tells us many times in the Bible that it is His responsibility to guide us (Psalms 48:14, 73:24; Isaiah 42:16, 57:18 and 58:11; John 16:13).

How does a shepherd guide the sheep? With prods and tugs (and

barking dogs). God is the same, His 'rod and staff' guide us. He chooses not to make things crystal clear, but to let us bump our way along either side of the path as we seek to walk with Him.

In a Driving Test (at least it was like this when I took mine) you stayed on the road you were on in the direction you were going unless and until the examiner told you to turn. Sometimes if we don't think God has spoken to us for ages we think we must be on the wrong path...when actually He wants us to carry on as we are because He has not issued further instructions.

So how do I hear these instructions?

Actually, only you can know that. God speaks to each of us differently. Occasionally we might hear a voice, but many of us never do.

How does God speak to you about other things? His guiding will probably be in the same sort of way. But what it will never be is inconsistent with scripture. Among other things that means:

- it will not be out of guilt or a sense of condemnation or inadequacy...for guilt does not come from God (Romans 8:1). If you're feeling condemnation about what you are not doing it is more likely to be a distraction from the devil to stop you doing what you *are* doing!
- it will not be out of a sense of pride (eg "I am worth so much more than what I am doing, should be up front doing...." etc)

Possibly He will speak out of a sense of being unsettled. You don't feel you belong in the place you are anymore, or the work you have been doing seems to be coming to a natural end. **BUT** be careful, for the enemy's opposition to you may make you feel this as well. You need to spend time (weeks, months?) praying into this and not just take the first feeling of being unsettled as a sign to move on.

It may come through what other people say "Have you considered becoming an archbishop...?", "You should be a +++++ because you have such a gift in that area". If several people, unknown to each other, say things like this and you are already sensing God might be prodding you to move on then it is likely to be His leading.

And then - and lots of people have hang ups about this one - He leads us through *the things we want to do ourselves!* We so often think that if we want to do

something - or stop doing something - that that can't be God's will because we're supposed to make sacrifices.

But the Bible says the opposite, actually. The sacrifice we make is to be dead to sin, to cut sin out. And to be prepared, if necessary, for persecution and even martyrdom...to be prepared for what others do to us because we serve Him. But Jesus promised that He came to give us life, in all its fulness (John 10:10). And joy, peace, and to be fulfilled in our lives.

You see, He made you. And that means if the only thing that excites you (other than Him!) is playing the guitar and being very good at it He ain't gonna call you to be a footballer. He gifted you with talents you enjoy to use for His glory. So the things you want to be doing are the things He is calling you to do!

In other words, if life is not being lived in all its fulness... unless there is very clear and unmistakable leading to the contrary... you're in the wrong place. If life is not full of green field and quiet water sustenance at the moment, unless there is very clear and unmistakable then you should be ready to move on.

Of course, that's somewhat simplistic. There may be bad patches in a good place and you just have to weather them - but who you are and what you were made for are part and parcel of the same thing.

So pray about the things you want to do, they may well be God's plan too.

So, if I know I should be changing jobs (for instance) how do I find the one God wants me to have?

Many people will say push at all the doors and see which one God opens. But I am uneasy with that because it seems to me it's closer to how someone plays the lottery than how someone follows God. If you read the story of Abram and Sarai in Genesis 15 and 16 you will read that they knew God had called them to have a son. They tried the 'normal method' for a long time and nothing happened. So they pushed at another door to see if that was what God meant. It wasn't what God meant, but the door did not remain closed. Sarai's servant Hagar bore a son for Abram. It wasn't what God wanted but it still happened.

About three years ago I knew God was saying I was coming to the end of my present job. Yet as I prayed about what to do He said wait. Three years later, I am still waiting. But in the meantime things have happened. If I had just left, the school fellowship group I run (Christian Union) would just have ended. Over the past year or so other people have begun to help to lead it and to learn what makes it special. This year, they are leading and I am back seating. If I leave now it will continue. God is now making clear some of the things I should be doing with my time (this stuff for a start!). Perhaps the waiting is nearly over... (I'd value your prayers re that).

When Elizabeth saw Mary, the baby in her leapt. If God is calling you to something new, it is often the case that the Spirit leaps inside us and you just know.

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*Thank you SO much for sending the
Ephesians CD through. I'm on
chapter 4 and enjoying it very much.
Really grateful. LH, London SW*



Patience!
There used to be a slogan for Murray Mints that they were the 'too good to hurry mints'. They needed time.

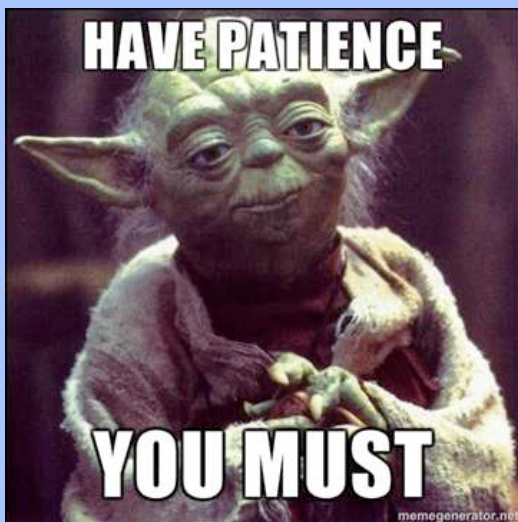
Namesake Andy Murray has taken his time too. For several years he has been

slowly improving, yet always ultimately failing. And doing so in front of crowds and cameras.



Yet he carried on trying, he did not give up. And now this summer he has won a gold medal in the Olympics and his first Grand Slam final.

Persistence and tenacity are the two qualities (apart from his talent!) that have marked him



out through all this time...as it does so many sportsmen and women. We need the same qualities as Christians. I remember when I was a teenager and into my twenties we believed we would see 'revival in our land' and God would change things. Yet now Britain is even less Christian than it was then.

However, the sense that God is going to do something in this land is still there, and it drives us on as Christians to continue to pray and to believe.

It may still take years, or decades, or longer.

But we must not get disappointed. God has His time, and we must just keep on believing and praying.

Whilst the big picture is to see the nation turn back to God, the euphoria comes when we lead just one person to Jesus.



Don't give up!

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