

Guidance

As Christians we seek to follow God's Plan for our lives. But how do we know what that is?

The Bible promises that God does guide us (Psalms 25.9; 32.8; 48.14 etc). It indicates 3 main Helpers for us: Jesus (Luke 1.79)
The Holy Spirit (John 16.13)
and Scripture itself (2 Tim 3.16, 17).

It is easy to see how Scripture can be used to guide us on 'general' issues like 'how to live', but how are we guided on personal and specific issues like, for instance, which college to go to, which job to do, who to marry, where to live, which subjects to choose, etc.

There are several things to remember first:

- 1) God made you and so He knows what interests you and what you can do. He is not going to lead you into situations which are impossible for you. So what you want to do is one factor to consider. Providing what you want is not against God's Word in Scripture (eg Robbing Banks!) there is no reason to suppose that it is wrong to do it.
- 2) As you grow closer to God you will find that your desires, aspirations and wants change and grow closer to His. Do not assume that because God leads you into one situation now that that is always the right thing for you. He has a Plan for your complete life and the experiences you gain now could well be used for something else later.

In Scripture we read of several different ways in which God guided His People:

1) Through Scripture itself. eg Acts 8. 31-33.

The Early Church were all well versed in Scripture. God would bring verses to mind when needed, and guide them - even on specific matters - From His Word. The more Scripture you know (both 'by heart' and by 'just reading') the more He can use it.

God will never guide you contrary to Scripture - so it is good to make a habit of testing everything God has said to you - or you believe He has - in the light of Scripture? If I do this will I be able to live in obedience to God?

2) Through Other Christians. eg 2 Samuel 12.1
Jeremiah 1.7
Acts 8. 27-38.

What God has revealed to you so far He may not have revealed to someone else, and vice versa. Make a habit of chatting to Christian friends about what you've learnt. Ask their advice on things you're not sure about. It is a good idea to develop a deep relationship of brotherly trust and love with at least one other Christian so that you can freely share personal matters. God often uses others to straighten us out and guide us. All the Old Testament Prophets were specifically given this job!

And if you are seeking guidance over something specific ask your close friend - and others if you can - to pray for you.

3) Through the Spirit's Leading eg Acts 8. 39
Luke 4.1

Prayer is two-way conversation with God. It is not just you talking. We need to learn to listen to what He is saying (Psalm 46.10). A good way to start doing this is to spend time thinking about Who God is. Perhaps one day you think about what it means for Him to be Creator, the next Saviour, and so on. As you 'tune in' to God in this way, you will begin to start listening to what He is saying. Spend time with God, not just talking at Him.

4) Through Direct Revelation (Voice of God, Visions, Dreams, Angels)

eg Acts 8.26, Genesis 6.14, Exodus 3.2, (Samuel 3.10)
and many more!

God does directly reveal things. Sometimes you just know what He wants! This comes when we have developed a close relationship with Him. As we start to actively include God in all parts of our day so He can start to guide us at all times.

You can talk to God on the way to school, in the bath, in the park, doing your homework, in a boring lesson or sermon, even in an exam! As you do so, He will start to talk to you (or rather, you will start to hear Him).

If you do believe that you have heard God tell you something directly it is good to pray about it, asking Him for peace in your heart and mind over it. If you are at peace it is from God, if not it probably isn't! And remember, God will not guide you to do something against scripture. Don't believe the people who say "God told me to kill that man"!

Sometimes God will use more than one method (eg Acts 8).

If you have been praying for guidance and have no peace about something, it is sometimes useful to make a decision and then pray about it asking God to confirm the decision, rather than to show you which decision to make.

Above all, don't get frustrated (Philippians 4.6,7) and remember God's promise:

"...the Spirit of truth... will guide you into all the truth" John 16.13.