

Doctrine of Divine Guidance

1. The Christian should live life believing in the sovereign God who rules in the affairs of His creation. Throughout Scripture God declares that He will perform specific acts in the affairs of men.
 - *Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*
 - *Genesis 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.*
 - *Genesis 7:4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.*
 - *Genesis 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.*
 - *2 Kings 21:4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.*

2. Hundreds of time the phrase “I will” is found in the Bible.
3. Since the will of God is supreme a person is wise to seek the Lord even though His will is not always easy to discern.
4. The search for the divine will is encouraged and commanded in *Scripture*.

Psalms 27:8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

5. In order to seek the Lord in an acceptable manner the right preparation is needed.
 - First, a person must be properly related to God in order to know His will for the prayers that are most acceptable to God are the prayers that are according to His will. On this point not everyone agrees. Dr. John R. Rice taught that God hears and answers the prayers of the heathen. In contrast former President Jimmy Carter created a national fervor when he answered “No” to a question as to whether or not God would hear the prayers of a Jewish person who denied Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. While the debate rages the voice of God has been heard saying of Christ, “*This*

is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him.” Jesus told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” To know the will of God one must be properly related to Him.

- Second, a person must not have any unconfessed sin in the heart. *Psalms 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*
- Third, prayer is to be offered in the name of the Son to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Matthew 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*
- Fourth, faith is to be present when the will of the Father is sought.
 - There must be faith that God exists.
 - There must be faith that God is listening.
 - There must be faith that God will answer prayer.

Preparation to meet with God is important. Why would the Lord agree to meet with someone who is not properly related to Him, hostile to His Son and in doubt of the Lord's very existence?

6. Once the will of the Lord is sought in an appropriate manner the next issue is how to recognize the divine response. One simple way is the correlation between what is asked for and what comes to pass. *“I asked, He answered”* is a good way to know the God who is there.
7. It should be recognized that God does use a variety of different methods to manifest His will. In Acts 11 the story is told of how Peter came to know the will of God concerning treatment of the Gentiles. Peter recorded how he found divine guidance in a variety of ways.
 - **Divine guidance comes through prayer.** *Acts 11:5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:*
 - **Divine guidance comes through meditation.** *Acts 11:6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.*
 - **Divine guidance comes through the word of God.** *Acts 11:7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.*
 - **Divine guidance comes through providential circumstances.** *Acts 11:11-14 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. 12 And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*

- **Divine guidance comes through Scripture memorization.** *Acts 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.*
 - **Divine guidance comes through the prompting of the Holy Spirit.** *Acts 11:12 And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:*
 - **Divine guidance comes through the testimony of others.** *Acts 11:13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*
 - **Divine guidance comes through visual confirmation.** *Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.*
8. God the Father is as anxious to make His will known as believers are to know His will and to follow it. However, once known the will of the Lord must be obeyed lest the Holy Spirit be grieved, hardened and quenched.
9. In many matters the will of the Lord has been clearly revealed.
- **It is the will of God to save souls.** *2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* To pray for the salvation of souls is pleasing to the Lord.
 - **It is the will of God that the saints be holy.** *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*
 - **It is the will of God that Christians be a thankful people.** *1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*
 - **It is the will of God that some believers bear witness to a lost world through pain and suffering.** *1 Peter 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*
 - **It is the will of God that sins be confessed and repented of.** *Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

10. At the end of time it will be discovered that those who seek and do the will of the Lord shall live forever and ever. *1 John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*

Doctrine of Divine Guidance

J. I. Packard

1. To many Christians guidance from God is a chronic problem. Why? Because they are sure God does guide His people. This fact is reflected in the songs the saints sing.

*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.*

*Bread of heaven
Feed me now and ever more.*

2. Belief of God's guidance rests upon two firm foundations.
 - The reality of God's plan for us.
 - The ability of God to communicate to and with us.
3. God has an eternal purpose or a plan of the ages in which He accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will.
 - *Ephesians 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*
 - *Ephesians 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*
4. God communicates His plan to each of us who are open to Divine guidance.
 - Philip was sent to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch.
 - *Acts 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*
 - *Acts 8:29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*
 - Peter was told to accept the Gentiles
 - *Acts 10:19ff While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.*

- Paul and Barnabas was to be sent out by the church as missionaries.
 - *Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*
- Paul and Silas were called to Europe.
 - *Acts 16:6-10 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.*
- Paul was instructed to stay in Europe.
 - *Acts 18:9ff Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:*

5. The guidance of God comes according to divine promise.

- *Psalms 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*
- *Isaiah 58:11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*
- *Psalms 25:8 Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. 12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*
- *Proverbs 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*
- *Colossians 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*
- *Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

- *James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*
 - *Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
6. The guidance of God comes because God has our own best interest in His heart.
- *Matthew 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*
7. The guidance of God comes because of the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- *1 John 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*
 - *1 John 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*
- cf.
- *Acts 8:29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*
 - *Acts 10:19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.*
 - *Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*
 - *Acts 16:6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,*
 - *Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;*
8. The guidance of God comes because the Lord is glorified when His will is obeyed—for his name's sake!
- *Psalms 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*
9. Divine guidance is not an inward prompting by the Holy Spirit apart from the Word.

10. Many problems arise when people believe that an inward prompt is Divine guidance because of the pressure of the present moment.

11. All in all most concerns involving a desire to receive divine guidance can be resolved by direct application of biblical principles.

12. The biblical principles may be stated in general.

- ❑ Be the kind of person Jesus was, submissive to the Father's will and obedient in all matters.
- ❑ Seek biblical virtues and practice them.
- ❑ Honor all commitments to family.
- ❑ Honor all obligations.
- ❑ Depart from evil and do good.

- *Psalms 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

- *Psalms 37:27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.*

13. The essence of divine guidance is to mortify known sin in order to be led by the Spirit.

- *Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

14. By following the general principles of Scripture specific issues are settled.

- ❑ Do not marry an unbeliever.

1 Corinthians 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

- ❑ Do not forsake the assembly.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

15. Why is it so difficult to receive divine guidance?

- ❑ An unwillingness to think.

Deuteronomy 32:29 O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

- ❑ An unwillingness to take advice.

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

- ❑ An unwillingness to suspect ones-self and distrust one's own point of view.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

- ❑ An unwillingness to wait on the Lord.

Psalms 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

16. Even when we miss the best of God's guidance, we can still be put back on course.

Joel 2:25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

17. For the heart that wants the guidance of God, wisdom must be sought.

- *Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*
- *Proverbs 3:13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*
- *Proverbs 8:34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*
- *James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

18. Where does wisdom come from?

- ❑ A respect for God.

- *Psalms 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth forever.*

- ❑ Doing good.

- *Ecclesiastes 3:12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.*

- ❑ Remembering the day of ultimate accountability.

- *Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

□ Living soberly.

- *Ecclesiastes 7:4-6 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.*

□ Working hard.

- *Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

19. The fruit of wisdom.

- *James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

20. The root of wisdom is faith in Christ.

- *John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*
- *1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:*
- *1 Corinthians 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*
- *1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

21. A life characterized by divine guidance glorifies God.

- *2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*