

Guidance

#0858

Study given by W. D. Frazee—May 5, 1961

Recently two lessons began to be impressed upon my mind as being fundamental to our preparation for the closing scenes. As we think of the great crisis through which we must yet pass, and the great work that we must accomplish during that crisis, it becomes of great importance that we have these two lessons well learned.

The first lesson is the lesson of obedience. The second is the lesson of guidance. We have spent some time learning the lesson of obedience, and I refer to it as being the first lesson to learn. Tonight we want to enter into the lesson of guidance.

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

Jesus is the light of the world. If we follow Him we will have light. We will not walk in darkness.

In other words, we will not have the sad experience of not knowing what to do. It is dangerous to walk in the dark. We are liable to fall into a ditch, or fall over a precipice or step on a rattlesnake. All kinds of things can happen to people who walk in the dark.

There is always the danger of stumbling. Christ speaks of this:

"If a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" John 11:10.

Do you want to stumble? No. But if you walk in the darkness you will stumble. Then what should we do before we move? Be sure we have light. And this matter of guidance is that simple. Have light before you take a step.

Many years ago there was a minister in this denomination by the name of Canwright. He was at one time a leading worker, but he got discouraged. There were doubtless various reasons, or at least excuses. The Lord's messenger wrote him a number of letters. Special testimonies were given to try to help him. You will find one of them in the *Testimonies*. It is called *An Impressive Dream*.

"Be careful how you move. Make straight paths for your feet. Close the door to unbelief and make God your strength. If perplexed, hold still; make no move in the dark" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, page 571.

That is good advise. But all of that would be a mockery unless it were possible to get light. God is not mocking us. God has light for us. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." That is wonderful.

Can you and I have light? Yes. Could Canwright have had light? Yes.

"If perplexed, hold still; make no move in the dark. I am deeply concerned for your soul. This may be the last trial that God will grant you. Advance not one step in the downward road to perdition. Wait, and God will help you. Be patient, and the clear light will appear" *Ibid.* page 571.

How many men and women when they stand at the judgment will see how they missed the providence of God, missed the guidance of God, because in the darkness they were not willing to wait. They thought something had to be done, so they did something. Usually when we think something has to be done and we do it, we do the wrong thing. Walking in the dark is dangerous.

"If you yield to impressions you will lose your soul, and the soul is of great value with God" *Ibid.* page 571.

Canwright stumbled on the dark mountain and lost his way. He spent the latter part of his life trying to tear down what he had been previously trying to build up. He walked in the dark.

I am so glad we can be assured that Jesus wants to lead each one of us personally.

"Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God" *The Desire of Ages*, page 363.

In the Roman Catholic church it is considered sufficient if certain individuals know the will of God. The priest, the bishop, and the Pope must know things, and individuals can find out what they need to know on those matters by asking those men. We understand, of course, that is the apostasy that was foretold in the Bible. We understand that God has not arranged for any man to be left in this world without the opportunity of knowing God's will for himself. That doesn't mean that God doesn't have channels of light. He does. But we start with the fundamental statement from Jesus:

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

If you and I *don't* know what to do, press in close to Jesus and get some light before we make a move. Darkness is not a signal to move. It is a signal not to move. The time to seek the Lord with all our hearts is the time of uncertainty, perplexity and confusion. If we will seek the Lord with all our hearts, He will have an answer for us.

There is a promise that has meant a great deal to me over and over again in my own experience, and as I have counseled with others. More than once when someone sits down to talk, and lays a problem before me, I say, Brother, sister, I don't know the answer to your problem, but that doesn't mean we need to be discouraged about it. We get out the Bible and we look at a promise in Jeremiah, and we see it is made for people that don't know what to do.

If you know what to do, this verse is for you:

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" John 13:17.

If you don't know what to do, this verse is for you:

"Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" Jeremiah 33:3.

The margin says, hidden things. God promises to show you mighty things, hidden things that you don't know. I wonder if there is someone who says, That's me. There are some things it seems to me I need to know about my duty, but I don't know. Oh, I wish someone could tell me.

Well, someone can tell you. "Call unto me," Jesus says, "and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

Do you have experience in getting God's answer to your problems? God's response to your questions? Learn by experience that when you don't know what to do you can go to God and seek Him, and know that through one or more of His thousand ways He will help you to find the answer.

If you know that, in your heart you are a rich man, a rich woman. Yes you are. If you don't you are poor. I don't care if you are a millionaire, you are poor if you don't have that experience. And if you have that experience you have found the pearl of great price.

Do you suppose there is anyone here tonight that has that experience? Suppose I were to ask for a show of hands, do you think any hands would go up? Yes, I am sure of it. Somebody says, I don't see how anybody can boast of that. It is boasting in the Lord. It is nothing in us at all.

Shouldn't an ambassador in a foreign country have some communications from his homeland? We have an ambassador at the court of St. James in London. He represents the United States of America. Suppose someone were to ask him if he could get an answer from Washington on such and such a question. Suppose he were to say he wished he could. What would you think of an ambassador like that?

The men that are representing America around the world in various capitals have ways of getting in touch with headquarters and getting an answer.

We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). And if we are ambassadors, we need to know how to get answers from headquarters.

You need light on matters from time to time. Think of the various questions that come up. Where to go to school? Where to locate? Where to live? The choice of a life partner? Financial problems? Trips we are invited to take? I have an opportunity to go over here to a certain place and visit someone. Can I find out whether God wants me to go or not? Well if I can't I am certainly in a hard place, because every changing circumstance can put me in perplexity.

There are all kinds of problems. There are also all kinds of opportunities. In the matter of soul winning does it make any difference who I work for, and where I work? Yes. Philip went down to Samaria to preach Christ and a great work was done. Then the Lord arranged for him to go on the desert road to Gaza miles away. There he found one man. Was it worth it? Yes.

There was the little girl who was carried captive from Israel to Syria, and waited on Naaman's wife. God arranged that for her even though the Syrian bands were the ones that took her away. But if she hadn't had an experience in knowing the will of God she would have probably been so utterly discouraged that she would not have had any interest in helping either her mistress or her master. But because she had learned to go to God and get an answer, the Lord gave her the key to that situation.

As a result, that great man was brought down to God's sanatorium program and given some treatments under the direction of the Spirit of Prophecy that resulted in a complete recovery, and the knowledge of God was shed abroad in that home and in that country.

God is in that business today. We need that guidance. We need it in very simple things in life, because sometimes the simplest things have far reaching repercussions.

I wonder if any of you feel the need of guidance simply to know which thing to do of all the hundreds of things that are clamoring for attention. Do you ever get up in the morning and say, What in the world will I do today? I have this to do and that to do. I have that letter to write and this person to see. And before the day is half over there are a lot of new things that have come in. Have any of you had that experience?

What can we do about it?

Somebody says, We need to have more efficiency, better planning, better organization.

I am sure all those are to be considered. But the first and most important thing is to know how to get guidance from God. Jesus says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Let me remind you that if we are to know His will we must first be willing.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" John 7:17.

Another translation says:

"If any man is willing to do His will" John 7:17.

"Until you have the resolution to obey God's will, you cannot have His guidance" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, page 511.

If we are going to be guided by God in the little things, as well as the big things of life, we must have made up our minds to follow that guidance.

A young man and I were discussing a certain question. I said I had in my pocket a statement from the Master through the Spirit of Prophecy that answered the question. "Would you do it?"

He answered, "Let me see what it is."

He didn't want to get caught, did he? There are many people who are afraid of getting caught, and they won't get caught. Yet God is in the business of catching.

Are you willing to get caught? Oh, I want to be, and I praise God. I choose to say to my heavenly Father, Lord before I know what your answer is, my answer is yes. Before you tell me what to do, my decision is that by Thy grace I will do it.

When you come to that decision on every subject--the things you know about and the things you don't know about--you are on the threshold of guidance. But until you take that step you are not. You are tossed about like a ship on an angry sea.

Oh, let's come into the harbor. Let's come into the harbor where Jesus waits. Let's take Him as our guide. But remember, until you have the resolution to obey God's will, you cannot have His guidance. That means it is proper to do with God what it is not proper to do with some other human being.

We should never sign a contract with some man before we read all the fine print. But with God it is perfectly right and proper to fix our signatures long before we know all of what is involved. That's faith. That's trust. That's surrender.

Why be afraid of God? Who do you think loves you more, you or God? I think God loves you better than you love yourself. You would agree with me, wouldn't you? I think God knows more about how to take care of you than you know how to take care of yourself. I think God can do more about it than you can.

If God loves you better than you love yourself, and He knows how to take care of you better than you know how to take care of yourself, I wonder why it should ever be a struggle to just rest in the arms of our Heavenly Father? If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know.

We have the promise in Jeremiah 33:3:

"Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not" Jeremiah 33:3.

Let's put with that another text:

"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" James 1:5.

Notice again, here is a text for only certain people. If you know what to do, James 1:5 is not for you.

There are some things you already know what to do. Let me illustrate:

It would not be a proper thing for you to kneel down and ask God to give you wisdom as to whether you ought to keep the Sabbath or not. You do not need light on that subject. You already have light on that subject. What you need to pray to God for is power to do what you know.

You do not need to pray to God for wisdom as to whether you should pay tithe or not. He has made that very clear to you, hasn't He? But our text says if there is some subject on which you don't have wisdom on, "let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally."

If some people would speak out their heart sentiments they would say, I just don't believe that. I don't believe God gives all men wisdom, because He sure hasn't given me very much. They find themselves in verse 7:

"Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing from the Lord" James 1:7.

They are not in the fifth verse. They are in the seventh verse. The reason they are in the seventh verse is explained in the sixth verse:

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" James 1:6

We either get nothing or we get liberally. What does liberally mean? It means plenty. It means more than a few crumbs. If we are thirsty, it means more than an eye drop of water. How much wisdom is God going to give you? All you need. "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." Oh I think this is wonderful. Don't you?

I know those of you who are having this experience are happy to hear these things. Anyone who is not, go into the secret place of God and tell the Lord in your own words that apparently other people are having these experiences but you are not. Ask why you are missing it all, and tell Him you want it. Say to Him, I am settling it that I will do anything You say. Anything You make clear to me I am going

to do. I am going to believe your promises. I am going to quit doubting. I am going to say this is for me. I am going to believe that You will guide me. You said you would. Lord, You said so and You cannot lie.

The decision to obey and believe God will guide you are the first two steps to take. When you take those two steps you are over the threshold. You are into the guidance room, the counseling room where the supreme Counselor of the ages waits to give you advice and guidance. Counsel is the most expensive thing in this world.

A number of years ago I had an experience that impressed that on my mind. A gentleman and I called on a certain man for some counsel. We spend a little while with him, and when we got up to go the bill was fifty dollars for allowing that man to listen to us for a little while, and we listen to him. Fifty dollars please. I thought it was rather expensive. There are some people whose counseling is much more expensive than that.

The supreme Counselor of the ages is saying to you and me, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." "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."

This doesn't mean that if you will go to prayer tonight or in the morning that you will get the answer to every question you have always wanted to know right off. No. Our opening text says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

This brings me to one of the most important points in our study--how God answers. He does not answer by telling us all we would like to know. He doesn't answer by throwing a great search light up the road that reveals every step we will ever need to take. He does answer by giving us light for the next step.

Watch this point please. If the thing you are so anxious to know is still in darkness after you have sought the Lord, it may well be in the providence of God that the thing you need to do is something you have clearer light on. If you will do the thing that is clear, it will lead you into the place where you will find out the next thing to do.

I will read that:

"Christ has said, 'If any man willeth to do His will, He shall know of the teaching.' Instead of questioning and caviling concerning that which you do not understand, give heed to the light that already shines upon you, and you will receive greater light" *Steps to Christ*, page 111.

Did you ever have a child helping you in the home, and the child was interested in what was going to happen after everything got done? Sometimes it is all right to know, but there are times when the answer is, We will see about that later.

The thing to do now is to wash the dishes, or the thing to do now is to sweep the floor, or the thing to do now is to make the bed.

There are many times we carry problems to the Lord and, putting it in our language the Lord would say to us, Very well My child, I will make that clear at the right time. But I have something very practical and simple I want you to do right now. It is the thing I have already made clear to you.

Has God made something clear to you that He wants you to do? Let's make it very practical. When we get up tomorrow morning and kneel down to pray to God, do you think God will help us to know what He wants us to do? You think He might have something for us to do in Sabbath School or church service? Do some of you already know pretty well part of your program for tomorrow? Yes. You have light on that point, don't you? And this says that if we will give heed to the light that already shines upon us we will receive greater light.

Notice how this is emphasized:

"By the grace of Christ, perform every duty that has been made plain to your understanding, and you will be enabled to understand and perform those of which you are now in doubt" *Steps to Christ*, page 111.

In other words, when we get up in the morning and seek the Lord for wisdom, we should accept all the light He gives us at that time. We should start right in, and all through the day do the next thing we believe God wants us to do, and continue on until it is time to go to bed. It is just that simple.

I get up in the morning, seek the Lord in prayer and the study of His Word. There are certain things that as far as I can see He wants me to do. There may be other things He hasn't showed me yet. Perhaps the first thing I am going to do after I get up from prayer and study is to go to family worship.

If I have already settled I will do everything He makes clear, what will I do? I will go to family worship. And can I go there with the joy of knowing I am doing what my Father wants me to do? That's right. There may come something in the family worship that I haven't foreseen. Maybe I will be asked to lead in prayer. Shall I accept that? I might be asked to read a text. I might be asked something about it.

Worship is over and I go to breakfast. Should I go without knowing that is what God wants me to do? No. You say everybody goes to breakfast. No. Not everybody. Occasionally it is God's will for some people to miss breakfast. The doctor has a person miss breakfast occasionally because he is going to have a test made. Occasionally God wants some people to miss a meal because He has something else He wants them to do.

I am not trying to make this hard. I am just saying that instead of running through on a groove all the time, why not keep watching for the providence of God? Then when you go to breakfast you can bow your head and say in your heart with the one who is praying, Lord bless this food. I know I am right where you want me to

be. I know You want me right here getting this food so I will have strength to work today.

It is a wonderful thing to know that when we sit at the breakfast table we are right where God wants us. How much happier that is than to be thinking I ought to be looking after this, or I ought to be doing that. If you are where you belong you ought not to be doing anything else. There is time to eat. There is time to chew the food thoroughly. There is light on that question. So you sit there. It is not a good thing to try to crowd the day's work into the breakfast hour. No. Fill up the gas tank. There is a long trip ahead.

We have filled up spiritually and we have filled up physically. What is the next thing to do? If my work is of such a nature that I am to be at a certain place when the whistle blows, when the whistle blows I will be right there. And if my work is of such a nature that when I get there the thing for me to do is to ask the foreman, the superintendent, or the supervisor what he wants me to do, that is one of the ways God is going to guide me. And if it isn't I had better get out of that job.

I don't want to be in a situation where I can't believe God has put me. Every situation I am put in, every job I take, every appointment I accept, I want to be able to believe and know the Lord put me there. If I am watching for the signals of providence through the day, the Holy Spirit will ask me if I have thought of this, if I have talked to this person, if I have taken care of that matter.

Here is a very practical thing in guidance. The Lord's messenger suggests it. It is to have a little memorandum book where you can jot down things that need to be taken care of. I don't mean that is the only way you can do it, but it is a wise suggestion.

I find it very helpful to me. Many times while engaged in prayer the Lord will bring something to my mind that needs attention. I take out my little book and write it down. During a committee meeting, or during a meeting of some other kind something comes up. As I am walking over the place I see something the Lord wants me to do. I write it down. All these are little practical suggestions about how to get guidance from the Lord. If we will keep the channel open and keep doing what God makes clear, we can have the guidance we need.

I am going to show you one reason why many people get off the track entirely. I will read it to you from the *Testimonies*. This was written to a young minister many years ago in Battle Creek. I am happy to tell you that he learned the lesson out of this testimony, and years later became president of the General Conference. So if you are having the problem he had, be of good courage. Listen to the testimony and learn the lesson as he learned it:

"My brother, you need to cultivate promptness. Away with your hesitating manner. You are slow and neglect to seize the work and accomplish it. You must get out of this narrow manner of labor, . . .

"Your slowness of decision in connection with the cause and work of God is sometimes painful. It is not at all necessary. Prompt and decisive action may accomplish great results. You are generally willing to work when you feel just like it, ready to do when you can see clearly what is to be done; but you fail to be that benefit to the cause that you might be if you were prompt and decisive at the critical moment, and would overcome the habit of hesitation and delay which has marked your character, and which has greatly retarded the work of God.

"You are not excusable for leaving the most important, though unpleasant work, hoping to get rid of doing it altogether, or thinking that it will become less unpleasant, while you occupy your time upon pleasant matters not really taxing. You should first do the work which must be done and which involves the vital interest of the cause, and only take up the less important matters after the more essential are accomplished."
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3, page 498-500.

Here is one of the greatest lessons on guidance I can give you. Suppose that all the things you are supposed to do in a certain day are all piled. Which one shall you do first? The most important one. That is what this says. Do the most important one first.

If you are going into a kitchen to work, what should you do first? The most important thing. And after you get that done, then what? The next most important thing. And what is the third thing you will do? The next most important thing. Do it in the office, the treatment room, the hospital, or on the farm. It is very simple. Just keep doing the next most important thing.

You say, That is the trouble. There are a dozen things to be done and they are all important.

That is where God has promised to give you wisdom. If it is your decision to make, ask God for wisdom, pick out the one you think is the most important and do it. If it is your foreman, your supervisor, let him make the decision and go at it. Get it done and take the next one. These are simple suggestions regarding guidance in the home and in the institution, or wherever we labor.

So it is in missionary work. Suppose you have a list with a dozen names of people you are visiting. The time comes when you have an hour or an afternoon you can devote to missionary work. Who are you going to visit? Just anybody? On your knees ask the Lord who it is that needs to be seen the most.

There is a great amount of missionary work and Bible work that can be done with very little to show for it because people get into a groove. Believe me friends, the Devil will see to it that you are kept trotting around to people that have very little interest.

On your knees get guidance from God. Do the most important thing first, then the next most important thing, and then the next.

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

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