



ONQ
MARCH - GUIDANCE

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE RELEASE

Overview for March- Guidance

The theme you will find outlined and fleshed out on the following pages is *Guidance*. In this practice we are reminded that our relationship with God requires asking questions, listening for answers, and executing what we hear ... in other words, it's a great extension of prayer and submission (which are covered in September and February, respectively). When we seek guidance from God, we acknowledge that he is the one who gives direction and purpose to our daily lives.

No matter what our status is—believers, leaders, beginners—this practice helps us realize that the decisions we make are important, and that they effect more than just ourselves. It is critical that we develop sensitive spirits that listen for the gentle murmurs (or loud shouts!) from the Holy Spirit, seek direction from Scripture, or seek advice from a trusted advisor when necessary.

Guidance is a practice that can be done corporately as well as individually; as a corporate practice, guidance should bring about *unity* rather than division, and for an individual it should bring *peace* rather than turmoil. Because of this duality, we want to encourage you to try the sample lesson as a group (but have provided alternatives for individual guidance in the asynchronous sections which can be adapted if you desire).

One thing we know for sure is that we can trust Jesus to always lead and guide us into the way of truth; our hope for you and your group this month is that you take the time to hear the Lord, and that (once you hear his voice) you allow yourselves to be guided.

If you have any questions, or would like to recommend a resource to add to this release, please contact CBOQ Youth by emailing Meghan at mmatthews@baptist.ca

Blessings to you this month,

The CBOQ Youth team



SCRIPTURE ABOUT GUIDANCE

For these scriptures, we recommend you read them in the context of their stories. Why they were said and recorded will help expand reasoning for this spiritual practice.

Exodus 15:13

In your stead-fast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

Numbers 12:8

With him I speak face to face — clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord.

Numbers 22:18 – 35

If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them; but do only what I tell you to do.

2 Samuel 5:19

David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go up against the Philistines?”

Job 32:8 – 9

Truly it is the spirit in a mortal, the breath of the Almighty, that makes for understanding.

Psalm 31:3

You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake lead me and guide me.

Psalm 67:4

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Psalm 73:24

You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor.

Proverbs 15:22

Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.

Isaiah 30:20 – 21

When you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying “This is the way; walk in it.”

Isaiah 42:16

I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them.

Isaiah 58:11

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong.

Jeremiah 1:6 – 8

You shall speak whatever I command you.



John 10: 4–5

When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.

John 14:1– 31

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

John 16:13

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

James 1:5

If any of you need wisdom, you should ask God, and it will be given to you. God is generous and won't correct you for asking.

James 3:15– 18

The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

Revelation 7:17

The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life.



LESSON SAMPLE (ONE HOUR VERSION)

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Begin to learn how to distinguish the voice of God from other voices
- Use scripture as a means of hearing God's voice

MATERIALS NEEDED

In-Person:

Necessary Materials

- Bibles and/or copies of 1 Samuel 3 (see appendix 1)
- Pens/pencils/markers
- Notebooks or paper (invite your participants to bring their own)
- "Famous quotes" (appendix 2), printed or digitally available (you can also choose your own quotes)

Optional Materials

- TV/Screen to project the answers for "Minds On" activity

Synchronous Online:

- Same as in-person, send list out in advance so participants can have their supplies ready to go
- "Famous quotes" will need to be digitally available

Asynchronous Online:

- Same as in-person and synchronous. Send list out in advance so participants can have their supplies ready to go
- "Famous quotes" not needed

SET UP

In-Person

- Print out the "famous quotes" and "names" table (or consider using quotes that are meaningful to your group), and cut the quote and name apart (make sure you have the answer sheet available)
- If using a TV/Screen to reveal answers, have that ready to go



Synchronous Online

- Using a document sharing platform (like Google Docs) create a document with quotes on one page and names on a second page (in incorrect order)
- Share the document link with your group so they can work on putting them in order
- Have the “answer sheet” ready to reveal

Asynchronous Online

- Send lesson, appendix 1 and supply list to participants

PREAMBLE (5 minutes)

Say: Today we are going to practice the spiritual discipline of Guidance. The first question we need to ask is, who is guiding us? (wait for answer- God, Jesus, Holy Spirit...)

Great! So we know, *who's* guidance we are looking for, but *how do we know if we are hearing God's voice, or our own?* This is a tough question, but hopefully by the end of today, you'll be able to begin to hear the difference.

MINDS ON (10 minutes)

In-Person

Using the “Famous Quotes” appendix, give each participant a quote (with *no name attached to the quote*).¹

Ask: each person to read their quote out loud

Hand out: names to participants, invite them to try to match up the quote with who said it. (Note: if you have a large group, you could do this in smaller teams). In this portion of the activity, encourage conversation, critical thinking, and question asking.

After 5 minutes: stop the activity. Reveal the answers: you can do this either by reading out the answers *or* posting them on a screen (if available)

Say: We hear good words, but if we don't know *who they were said by* they don't have the same impact. It's important to know *who is speaking* in order to know *if we should listen*.

Synchronous

Send: the link to the shared document to your group, have students take turns reading quotes.

Inform: the participants that all the quotes can be attributed to the names on the second page.

¹ You can use as few or as many quotes as makes sense for your group, a good rule of thumb would be at least one quote per participant.



Invite: participants to try to match up the quote with who said it.² In this portion of the activity, encourage conversation, critical thinking, and question asking.

After 5 minutes: stop the activity. Reveal the answers: you can do this either by reading out the answers *or* posting them on screen.

Say: We hear good words, but if we don't know *who they were said by* they don't have the same impact. It's important to know *who is speaking* in order to know *if we should listen*.

Asynchronous

- n/a

ACTIVITY (30-40 minutes)

In-Person

Say: now we are going to spend some time learning about how to hear God's voice, using the story of Samuel's calling in 1 Samuel 3.

Invite: participants to open their bibles *or* hand out copies of the story (appendix 1)

Read: through the story once³

Ask: What did God say in this story? How did Samuel know it was God's voice he was hearing?

Read: through the story again, out loud. Stop at verse 1 "The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli."

Ask: what does this tell us about Samuel?

Possible answers:

- Samuel is young
- he worked for God
- Characteristics: diligent, and humble

Say: Humility, is a key characteristic in hearing God's voice.

Read: continue reading out loud. Stop at the end of verse 4.

Ask: what is happening at this point in the story?

Possible answers:

² If you have a large group, you could do this in smaller teams utilizing breakout rooms on your chosen video conferencing platform, ensure you have separate docs created for each small group.

³ Depending on your group, you can ask them to read it over quietly in their heads or ask someone to read it out loud.



- It's nighttime
- It's bedtime
- Samuel was quiet
- *Then* God called him

Say: God spoke when Samuel was lying down—the posture is interesting, but more importantly, Samuel was *quiet*. We can't hear God if we are being inundated with other noise.

Ask: where is Samuel at this point in the story?

- The house of the LORD (i.e. the Temple where God's presence lived during OT times)

Ask: where do you experience God's presence?

Possible Answers:

- Church
- A prayer closet
- A park, or somewhere outside
- In a song
- Etc.

Say: being in a place where you experience God's presence may help you to *hear* his voice.

Read: continue reading. Stop at the end of verse 9.

Ask: how does Samuel come to realize that he is hearing God's voice?

Possible Answers:

- When God repeats himself (maybe)
- When Eli tells him that it is the LORD he is hearing from

Say: even though God spoke repeatedly to Samuel, Samuel didn't catch on. Eli was the one who realized that the Lord was calling the boy—even though he was not the one hearing God's voice, he was able to give wise counsel. Sometimes we need a person with more experience hearing God to help us understand what is happening.

Read: continue reading. Stop at the end of verse 10.

Ask: What was different this time?

Possible Answers

- Samuel knew what to do/who he was talking to
- Samuel responded differently this time
- The Lord "came and stood there" (God was even closer this time)



Say: Samuel's response was different this time, and it made a difference. He didn't just *know* with his head that God wanted to talk to him, he *acted differently*. Remember that Samuel is humble (he recognizes his position as a servant of God), so he asks God to speak (rather than injecting his own thoughts into the conversation).

Read: continue reading. Stop at the end of verse 14.

Ask: this is the longest section of speaking we've heard in this story. Who was talking?

Answer: God

Say: Samuel was ready to listen, and he heard this long speech from God because he was intent on hearing what God had to say. He didn't interrupt, or insert, he was patient and waited to hear all that God was ready to reveal.

Read: continue reading. Finish the chapter.

Ask: how do you think Samuel felt when he heard from God?

Possible Answers:

- Awed
- Shocked
- Scared
- Nervous
- The message for/about Eli was pretty harsh, how was he supposed to do anything about that?
- Etc.

Ask: how did Eli respond to the message from God?

Possible Answers:

- With humility
- With honour
- With acceptance
- Etc.

Ask: what do we know about how God and Samuel's relationship progressed?

Possible Answers:

- They God closer
- They communicated regularly
- *participants may know details about Samuel from other places in the bible and can include those here.
- Etc.



Say: We learn a lot about people by how they react. Samuel heard from God somethings that he probably didn't want to (as did Eli). But we know that Samuel was faithful to what God said and acted according to what he heard. If you want to hear God's voice, you need to know that he may not say what you want to hear, but if you are ready to act on whatever he might say then you may be ready to hear his voice.

Synchronous

You can use a similar format to the in-person, consider incorporating chat features, or Q&A functions available on your chosen video conferencing platform.

Asynchronous

Send Participants the scripture references, stopping points, and questions. Ask them to pause and reflect as they slowly read through the story twice.

DEBRIEF (10 minutes)

In-Person

Ask: What have we learned from the story of Samuel's calling:⁴

- 1) Humility is important (verse 1)
- 2) Get quiet (verses 2-3)
- 3) Get into God's presence (verse 3)
- 4) Get wise counsel (verse 8b-9)
- 5) Get in the habit of saying "Speak, LORD" (verse 10)
- 6) Get into a listening attitude (verses 11-14)
- 7) Get ready to act on what God says (verse 19-21)

God doesn't always communicate in a verbal or auditory way. But when we want guidance, we need to learn to *be receptive* to what God wants us to know. Once we have made space we also need to deeply desire God's will be done—even if it's tough, we need to want to hear and act on it more than we want our own desires.

Synchronous

Same as in-person, consider utilizing the consider incorporating chat features, or Q&A functions available on your chosen video conferencing platform.

⁴ Depending on your time, you can ask people to say their answers out loud. The answers listed here are the main points from the activity.



Asynchronous

Send the participant the in-person debrief section as a summary of the lesson. Consider setting up a debrief time with your Asynchronous participants at a time that works for both of you.

HOMEWORK/WEEKLY CHALLENGE (5 minutes)

Using what we've learned today, take time this week to find a quiet space and listen for God's voice. Experiment with what that might look like for you (play worship music, read scripture, sit silently, etc.)

If you hear something that you think might be from God, consider journaling it and talking about it someone who's wisdom you trust.



APPENDIX 1

1 Samuel 3 (NIV): The LORD Calls Samuel

³ The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

² One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

⁶ Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

¹¹ And the LORD said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. ¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God,^[a] and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”

¹⁵ Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶ but Eli called him and said, “Samuel, my son.”

Samuel answered, “Here I am.”



¹⁷“What was it he said to you?” Eli asked. “Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you.” ¹⁸So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, “He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.”

¹⁹The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. ²⁰And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. ²¹The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

APPENDIX 2

Famous Quotes- Matched up

1. "The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." -*Nelson Mandela*
2. "The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing." -*Walt Disney*
3. "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking." -*Steve Jobs*
4. "If you look at what you have in life, you'll always have more. If you look at what you don't have in life, you'll never have enough." -*Oprah Winfrey*
5. "If you set your goals ridiculously high and it's a failure, you will fail above everyone else's success." -*James Cameron*
6. "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans." -*John Lennon*
7. "Whoever is happy will make others happy too." -*Anne Frank*
8. "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." -*Ralph Waldo Emerson*
9. You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated." -*Maya Angelou*
10. "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years." -*Abraham Lincoln*
11. "Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." -*Babe Ruth*
12. "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." -*Thomas A. Edison*
13. "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." -*Wayne Gretzky*
14. "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right." -*Henry Ford*
15. "I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear." -*Rosa Parks*
16. "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples." -*Mother Teresa*
17. "Nothing is impossible, the word itself says, 'I'm possible!'" -*Audrey Hepburn*
18. "The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me." -*Ayn Rand*

Quote	Who Said it
"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."	<i>Ayn Rand</i>
"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."	<i>Anne Frank</i>
"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking."	<i>James Cameron</i>
"You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated."	<i>Babe Ruth</i>
"Whoever is happy will make others happy too."	<i>John Lennon</i>
"The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me."	<i>Walt Disney</i>
"Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game."	<i>Ralph Waldo Emerson</i>
"Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans."	<i>Steve Jobs</i>
"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples."	<i>Maya Angelou</i>
"I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear."	<i>Audrey Hepburn</i>

"Nothing is impossible, the word itself says, 'I'm possible!'"	<i>Wayne Gretzky</i>
"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."	<i>Mother Teresa</i>
"Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right."	<i>Oprah Winfrey</i>
"If you look at what you have in life, you'll always have more. If you look at what you don't have in life, you'll never have enough."	<i>Thomas A. Edison</i>
"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."	<i>Nelson Mandela</i>
"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."	<i>Abraham Lincoln</i>
"If you set your goals ridiculously high and it's a failure, you will fail above everyone else's success."	<i>Rosa Parks</i>
"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."	<i>Henry Ford</i>

LESSON SAMPLE (FIFTEEN MINUTE VERSION)

MATERIALS NEEDED

In-Person:

Necessary Materials

- Bibles or Copies of 1 Samuel 3 (Appendix 1)
- This video: [How to Hear God's Voice](#) (download in advance if your space doesn't have good internet access)
- A method of playing video and sound (laptop, TV, etc.)
- Pens/pencils/markers
- Notebook, or paper to write on

Synchronous Online:

- Same as in-person

Asynchronous Online:

- This video: [How to Hear God's Voice](#)

SET UP

In-Person

- Make sure your laptop or TV is set up, ensure the sound works
- Download video (if needed)

Synchronous Online

- Same as in-person

Asynchronous Online

- Send video link to participants

PREAMBLE (2 minutes)

Say: Today we are going to practice the spiritual discipline of Guidance. The first question we need to ask is, who is guiding us? (wait for answer- God, Jesus, Holy Spirit...)

Great! So we know, *who's* guidance we are looking for, but *how do we know if we are hearing God's voice, or our own?* This is a tough question, but hopefully by the end of today, you'll be able to begin to hear the difference.



ACTIVITY (8 minutes)

In-Person

Say: now we are going to spend some time learning about how to hear God's voice, using the story of Samuel's calling in 1 Samuel 3.

Invite: participants to open their bibles *or* hand out copies of the story (appendix 1)

Read: through the story once⁵

Play: the video, encouraging people to read along with the video, maybe highlighting or noting things in the scripture that are important.

Pause: the video at the following time stamps (all of the words for the section will be visible), and ask if there are any questions or relevant stories about the point being made (if time allows):

- 1) 0:51
- 2) 1:14
- 3) 1:38
- 4) 2:05/2:15
- 5) 2:42
- 6) 3:12
- 7) 3:34

Synchronous

You can use a similar format to the in-person, consider incorporating chat features, or Q&A functions available on your chosen video conferencing platform.

Asynchronous

Send Participants the scripture references, stopping points, and questions. Ask them to pause and reflect as they slowly read through the story twice.

⁵ Depending on your group, you can ask them to read it over quietly in their heads or ask someone to read it out loud.



DEBRIEF (5 minutes)

In-Person

Ask: What have we learned from the story of Samuel's calling:⁶

- 1) Humility is important (verse 1)
- 2) Get quiet (verses 2-3)
- 3) Get into God's presence (verse 3)
- 4) Get wise counsel (verse 8b-9)
- 5) Get in the habit of saying "Speak, LORD" (verse 10)
- 6) Get into a listening attitude (verses 11-14)
- 7) Get ready to act on what God says (verse 19-21)

God doesn't always communicate in a verbal or auditory way. But when we want guidance, we need to learn to *be receptive* to what God wants us to know. Once we have made space we also need to deeply desire God's will be done—even if it's tough, we need to want to hear and act on it more than we want our own desires.

Synchronous

Same as in-person, consider utilizing the consider incorporating chat features, or Q&A functions available on your chosen video conferencing platform.

Asynchronous

Send the participant the in-person debrief section as a summary of the lesson. Consider setting up a debrief time with your Asynchronous participants at a time that works for both of you.

HOMEWORK/WEEKLY CHALLENGE (5 minutes)

Using what we've learned today, take time this week to find a quiet space and listen for God's voice. Experiment with what that might look like for you (play worship music, read scripture, sit silently, etc.)

If you hear something that you think might be from God, consider journaling it and talking about it someone who's wisdom you trust.

⁶ Depending on your time, you can ask people to say their answers out loud. The answers listed here are the main points from the activity.



RESOURCES

RESOURCES

VIDEOS

[Spiritual Disciplines: Guidance](#)⁷

[How to Hear God's Voice](#)

SONG SUGGESTION

[Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus](#)

ARTICLES

[Starving for Guidance](#)

[Understanding Guidance](#)

[The Discipline of Guidance](#)

[The Secret of Guidance²](#)

[10 Ways to Hear from God Regularly](#)

You can also check out our Tech Page, for resources and best practices on running your youth group virtually: <https://cboqyouth.ca/tech/>

⁷ This is a sermon from a Canadian Baptist church in Saskatchewan

BOOKS ON GUIDANCE

Blackaby, Henry and Claude King, *Experiencing God* (Workbook)

Meyer, F.B. *The Secret of Guidance*

GENERAL BOOKS ON SPIRITUAL PRACTICES:

Ahlberg-Calhoun, Adele. *The Spiritual Practices Handbook.*

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline.*

Shiflett, Diana. *Spiritual Practices in Community.*

Smith, Traci. *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home.*

Thompson, Marjorie. *Soul Feast.*

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines.*

The Spiritual Discipline of Guidance

- 1) The discipline of guidance is all about hearing God's voice as to His plan or will in our lives. What is most important for you in understanding how to hear God?
 - a) If you have unanswered questions about hearing or discerning God's voice, talk to someone who you know regularly hears God's voice to them.

- 2) What would be some signs in your life that might be showing, that regardless of what you say, you really don't want to hear from God in a specific place in your life, or your life in general?
 - a) What is the difference between not planning to hear God's voice and planning not to hear His voice?

- 3) What is your 'inner voice', that internal sense which only comes when God is speaking to you, seeking to get or retain your attention?
 - a) How would you help another disciple of Jesus hear/find what their 'inner voice' is like for them?

- 4) Do you ever wish God would make everything perfectly clear as to what you should do and how?
 - a) What would be the negatives of God doing this for us?
 - b) What are we seeking to eliminate by wanting God to tell us everything without our need to seek Him or His will?
 - c) How is not needing to hear from God in every decision greater than Him showing us every step?

Scripture Memorization: John 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (ESV)

Adapted from: <http://www.markhamemc.ca/bulletin/2014-09-07.pdf>



Practicing the Discipline of Guidance

The spiritual discipline of guidance is probably better recognized through a different phrase... “finding God’s will”. Seeking God’s guidance is not just for us as individuals, but also in the families we are a part of, including our church family. As individuals we may seek God’s guidance in large and small decisions. As a church family we seek God’s guidance for direction in finding solutions to problems, as well as how to minister to those around us.

Since we live in an individualistic society, we can easily forget that we were designed by God for community. This means that even as we seek God’s guidance, we look to hear His voice confirming that through His people as well. History is littered with people who thought they heard God’s voice leading them in a direction, but went without a community surrounding them, helping them to discern what they had heard and how to apply it. Not every voice we hear is from God or seeking to honour Him.

Many of the other disciplines we have looked at are involved in seeking God’s guidance. Prayer, worship, fasting, studying Scripture, and solitude are often commonly involved. In seeking guidance we use these disciplines to aid our focus on listening for the voice of God to us, and individuals or as a group.

Here are some guidelines when it comes to seeking guidance:

1. Give up the belief that you know best or are the one who hears God’s voice most clearly. The Holy Spirit dwells in other disciples as well.
2. Take what you are hearing to someone whose example of following Jesus you respect. The spiritual gift of discernment, if you know someone with it, is also of great value to help you affirm what God is saying, or help you get some additional perspective.
3. Trust that God wants to reveal to you His will.

Adapted from: <http://www.markhamemc.ca/bulletin/2014-09-07.pdf>



Suggested Activities:

- Take a decision that has meaningful impact on you or those around you (not likely what you should eat for breakfast) that you are facing and ask God what He desires for you to choose, and how to go about enacting that decision.
- When praying for guidance, also pray for the willingness to follow and obey.
- Ask God what are some better decisions you could/should be making in your life in one or more areas, than talk about them with someone who will help you take action, or just hold you accountable:
 - Diet/Health, Finances, School. Relationships, Following Jesus
- As you are contemplating an action or what to say in a situation ask yourself whether your words or actions will honour God or go against any of His commands? Will the decision cause unnecessary harm in a person's life? Will it turn a person away from Jesus?
- Get rid of any other activities you may use or turn to for discerning the future (astrology, Ouija board, psychics, etc...). Even if meant for fun, or you believe them to be harmless, the question is "Whose voice are you really hearing through those activities, and why would you settle for any voice other than God's?"
- Ask God for wisdom in a situation that you are facing today, then go forward confidently into that situation, believing that God will give you the words and wisdom you need.

Activities with Young People:

- Talk about guidance using the term 'inner voice'. Talking about their conscience, and the presence of the Holy Spirit have them begin to recognize their "inner voice" and give opportunities to practice using it.
 - As a leader, respect decisions made by those who you lead. If someone says "no" to a task or activity, value that answer as often as possible. Of course, asking questions is OK as long as you are genuinely trying to figure out the *why* of the "no" and not trying to change their answer
- Talk to about the goals, long-term or short-term with your youth. Talk about how you, as a family (church-family, youth group etc.), can help them achieve those goals.
 - Consider sharing a goal of your own. Be sure to share your goal to your group. This is an opportunity to show vulnerability and your own walk with Jesus. It is *not*, however, an opportunity
- Plan a day trip as a youth group/small group/1-on-1 with a youth you mentor (as your church's CPP allows), where the youth are given the parameters of time, distance, and cost, but they choose the itinerary.
 - When they have made the plan, talk to them about how and why they chose what they chose.
 - Give help as needed, but encourage the youth to do this in collaboration with one another (if in a small group) and with the Holy Spirit (remind them that FUN is allowed in the Kingdom of God)

Adapted from: <http://www.markhamemc.ca/bulletin/2014-09-07.pdf>



Guidance

“One reason why we fail to hear God speak is that we are not attentive. We suffer from what might be called ‘spiritual mindlessness.’” – John Ortberg

In our process of *Journeying in Community* we have strongly emphasized the importance of how to listen to God and live our lives in response to God’s leading. The discipline of guidance helps us to learn that guidance and direction for our lives comes both in individual and in corporate ways.

The discipline of guidance teaches us that prayer and interaction with God is as much about listening to God as it is about speaking to God. The disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, and meditation all prepare us for listening to God. The discipline of guidance helps us to develop the spiritual ears and eyes that are necessary for hearing and seeing God’s direction for our lives.

An important aspect of the discipline of guidance is learning to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through what others in the body of Christ are saying and doing. Richard Foster says, “God does guide the individual richly and profoundly, but He also guides groups of people and can instruct the individual through the group experience. Perhaps our preoccupation with private guidance is the product of our Western individualism. The people of God have not always been so.”ⁱ

It is easy to stray in this discipline so that it becomes a “fleece” for determining the will of God. But it is important to understand that it has more to do with character than tasks. John Ortberg says, “God’s purpose in guidance is not to get us to perform the right actions. His purpose is to help us become the right kind of people.”ⁱⁱ

-  Make the conscious effort as you interact with people this week to listen for promptings from the Holy Spirit. Don’t just listen to what the people are saying, but also try to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying. This will help you to be with people in the same way that Jesus was with people.
-  An excellent way to practice the discipline of guidance is through the influence of a spiritual director. If you do not already have someone who functions as a spiritual director in your life, consider finding one as soon as possible.
-  Spend some time intentionally reviewing your times of prayer. Reflect on what you find yourself saying, what you sense God communicating, what you feel, what is easy, what is difficult, etc. Learning to be more reflective in the area of prayer will assist you in the area of guidance.

ⁱ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 151.

ⁱⁱ John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 143.

Spiritual Disciplines – Guidance

REFLECTIONS

- What has been bouncing around in your mind since you began thinking about Guidance?
- Do you have any particular instances where guidance had enriched your life? Or where it was done poorly and had negative impacts? What was it that made it beneficial/unhelpful?

The discipline of seeking guidance goes to the heart of walking with God. Guidance involves us hearing God's voice and obeying Him. It is not only seeking His will in a specific matter, but it is a constant way of life.

God provides guidance to His people in two ways. One is individual guidance, where God gives each of His children divine instruction through Scripture, reason, circumstances, and through prompting of the Spirit in the individual's heart. In corporate guidance, God guides groups of people who gather in fellowship to seek the will of God. Both aspects are important to submit to as we seek to live in response to the voice of God.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Matthew 18:19-20

How is fellowship with other Christians vital to seeking both individual and corporate guidance from God?

The Western cultures lay a heavy emphasis on individualism. **Do you see results of this in our churches? Whereabouts and how might this look if changed to be more community oriented?**

Read some of the early church examples of 'guidance'. Acts 1:15-26//6:1-7//11:19-30//13:1-3//15:1-35

- What were the key factors in these cases that were important for godly guidance?
- How was each guidance received by those who sought it?
- Did you see any checks and balances that ensured it was God's leading?
- Do any of these practices challenge the practices of the Church today?



Read Proverbs 11:14//27:17//28:4//28:23//24:6//20:18 (also check the cross references in your Bible for more)

What helpful hints do sayings in Proverbs provide us with?

"Personalities united can contain more of God and sustain the force of his greater presence much better than scattered individuals. The fire of God kindles higher as the brands are heaped together and each is warmed by the other's flame." -Dallas Willard

THINK IT THROUGH

- How would you explain the difference between seeking the advice of a wise friend and seeking *God's guidance* with the help of mature and faithful Christians?
- What sometimes holds us back from asking close Christian friends to help us seek God's guidance before making a decision or entering on a new path?
- How will you make more room in your life to include other believer's in your seeking for guidance? Why would you make more room for it?
- What would you do if you felt you were given some insight or 'guidance' to pass onto someone else? How would you approach that?
- What value is added by including other believers? Is there an area where you could do with some of this value? What will you do about it?

Adapted from: Small Group Guidance Study, available at: <https://www.gci.org/articles/guidance-a-small-group-study/>

