

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Living by God's Guidance

KEY PASSAGE: Exodus 13:21-22 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Joshua 1:9 | Psalm 119:105 | Proverbs 3:5-8
Isaiah 64:4 | Matthew 7:7 | John 16:13 | Acts 5:29-32

► SUMMARY

Who or what is guiding your life?

This is an important question because whatever or whoever we depend upon for direction determines our thinking, attitudes, wishes, desires, and ways. Many people today are guided by their emotions, and as a result, they lack the stability that only comes through dependence upon God's Word. When the Lord is our Guide, He gives us the clarity and strength we need to live as He desires—with confidence and trust in Him.

► SERMON POINTS

When God rescued the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, He didn't leave them to find their own way to the land He'd promised to give them. According to Exodus 13:21-22, "The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Although they were traveling through unknown territory, they would never get lost as long as they followed the pillar of cloud and fire.

Today we have God's written Word as our infallible guide for life's journey.

The Lord has graciously revealed how He thinks and what He desires so we can know how to live in a manner that pleases Him. In addition, He has given His Holy Spirit to those of us who trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior. The Spirit imparts understanding of God's Word, gives

guidance, and enables us to follow and obey. It's important to align our thoughts with the Lord's because our thinking determines how we live. If we rely on our own ideas rather than God's truths, we'll end up on the wrong path and waste valuable time.

When the Israelites took their eyes off the Lord and focused on the obstacles, they rebelled against His instructions and refused to enter the Promised Land. As a result, they ended up wandering in the desert for 40 years until that entire generation died.

In order to be guided by God, we cannot live automatically without giving Him a thought, rely on our emotions for guidance, or look around and imitate what everyone else is doing. Nor can we deliberately go our own way like the children of Israel did. If we've trusted Jesus as Savior, we must also trust Him as Lord and yield to His leadership and direction by opening our Bibles to see what He has said. Reading God's Word every now and then will not be sufficient if we aspire to live as He desires in a world opposed to Him and the truths we believe.

Living according to God's guidance requires ...

- **Meditation upon His Word.** "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). What the cloud and fire were to Israel, God's Word is for us today. It's adequate to guide us through life if we'll read and meditate upon it regularly instead of just opening it when we have a problem.
- **Sensitivity to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.** "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own

initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come” (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit guides us into God’s truth so we can discern right from wrong, truth from error, and good from evil. With God’s Word and His Spirit, we have everything we need to live a godly life. Our responsibility is to be good stewards of these treasures entrusted to us.

- **Willingness to wait for God’s timing.** “For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him” (Isa. 64:4). Instead of rushing off to start the day, we need to wait for God’s direction by reading His Word and asking Him to implant it in our minds so it can guide us throughout the day.
- **Following God when the way is unclear.** “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones” (Prov. 3:5-8). When we are confused, we must trust God and learn to see our circumstances from His perspective as revealed in His Word. Then we will gain clarity and insight for each day.
- **Walking in the Spirit of God in order to be strong and courageous.** “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9). When we live by faith in the Word of God, our obedience is energized by the Spirit’s presence in us. He is the source of our hope, strength, and courage.
- **Willingness to face conflict.** “But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom

God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:29-32). We live in a world that is hostile to God, and there may be times when our beliefs conflict with culture. Therefore, we must rely on the Holy Spirit to give us discernment, guidance, and strength to stay faithful in times of opposition.

- **Willingness to obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.** Since the Lord is always true to His Word and keeps His promises, we can trust Him to handle whatever happens as a result of our obedience.

► RESPONSE

- Although you may claim that God is guiding your life, the truth of your profession is seen in your daily activities. Do you begin each day by reading and meditating on God’s Word? How well do you know the Lord as He’s revealed Himself in His Word? Are you familiar with His ways?
- What role do social media, television, friends, and cultural norms play in influencing how you think, what you value, and what you do? Do you know Scripture well enough to discern when these sources are in opposition to God?

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