

QUALITY  
OF  
LIFE  
BIBLE  
STUDY



*Discernment*<sup>©</sup>

COMPILED BY  
S.MCRAE

## **DISCERNMENT** “Quality of Life Series”

**LEADER:** Do you know what you know if you knew what you knew and do you do what you know if you knew the thing to do?

**LEADER:** “Wise Parables From Children

Source ~ [http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/wisdom\\_frameset.htm](http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/wisdom_frameset.htm)

A first grade teacher collected well-known proverbs. She gave each child in her class the first half of a proverb, and had them come up with the rest. Their insight may surprise you...

(pause and let them answer then give the kids answer)

- Better to be safe than.....Punch a 5th grader.
- Strike While the.....Bug is close.
- It's always darkest before.....Daylight Savings time.
- Never underestimate the power of.....Termites.
- You can lead a horse to water but.....how?
- Don't bite the hand that.....looks dirty.
- No news is.....impossible.
- A miss is as good as a .....Mr.
- You can't teach an old dog new.....math.
- If you lie down with dogs, you'll.....stink in the morning.
- Love all, trust.....me.
- The pen is mightier than the ....pigs.
- An idle mind is.....The best way to relax.
- Where there's smoke there's.....Pollution.
- Happy the bride who.....gets all the presents.
- A penny saved is.....not much.
- Two's company, three's.....the Musketeers.
- Don't put off till tomorrow what.....you put on to go to bed.
- Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and.....you have to blow your nose.
- Children should be seen and not.....spanked or grounded.
- If at first you don't succeed.....get new batteries.
- You get out of something what you.....see pictured on the box.
- When the blind leadeth the blind.....get out of the way.

**READER:** “Alter Your Course!”

Source ~ [http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/wisdom\\_frameset.htm](http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/wisdom_frameset.htm)

The captain of a ship looked into the dark night and saw lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south.”

Promptly a return message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north.”

The captain was angered his command had been ignored. So he sent a second message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am a captain.”

Soon another message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north. I am seaman third class Jones.”

Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: “Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am a battleship.”

Then the reply came: “Alter your course 10 degrees north - I am a lighthouse.”

**READER:** “Wisdom Is From God” (Elevator Story)

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg00/de000502.htm> (Excerpt)

It was reported in a local Chicago newspaper that a janitor at the 12-story Marriott Hotel in Bristol, England was recently fired for taking four days to clean an elevator. When asked why it took so long, before his dismissal, he said, “There are twelve of them, one on each floor, and sometimes some of them are not there.” He apparently thought that each floor had a different elevator and cleaned the same elevator 12 times.

**READER: “Discernment”#1** By Brent Nidiffer and Jamie Shell

Source ~ [http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200107/20010706\\_discernment.html](http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200107/20010706_discernment.html)

Napoleon was a genius in sparking patriotism in the common man. He often told this story... Once, while visiting a province, he came upon an old soldier in full uniform, but with one sleeve hanging empty. He proudly wore the coveted Legion of Honor.

Napoleon asked, “Where did you lose your arm?” The soldier answered, “At Austerlitz, sire.” Napoleon asked, “And for that you received the Legion of Honor?” The man said, “Yes, sire.”

“It is but a small token to pay for the decoration.” Napoleon continued, “You must be the kind of man who regrets he did not lose both arms for his country.” The one-armed man asked, “What then would have been my reward?” Napoleon answered, “I would have awarded you a double Legion of Honor.” And with that, the proud old fighter drew his sword and immediately cut off his other arm. Napoleon told the story for years until someone asked, “How?”

**READER: “Discernment” #2** By Brent Nidiffer and Jamie Shell

Source ~ [http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200107/20010706\\_discernment.html](http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200107/20010706_discernment.html)

A similar story is told of the man who collected thousands of dollars for the grieving mother of the “unknown soldier”.

It’s not wrong to question what you think you know. Sometimes it’s wrong not to. As human beings, we are often satisfied with our opinions and content with our knowledge, which is a recipe for perpetual ignorance.

Solomon, in his wisdom, has the foresight to recognize this truth when he wrote, *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* (Proverbs 26:12 NASB).

Today, remember that discerning fact from fiction is important, and that the genuine truth is found

**READER: “Spiritual Discernment”** By Neil Anderson

Source ~ <http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/devotionals/dailyinchrist/544588.html> (Excerpt)

Discernment is an overlooked spiritual discipline. But in reality, spiritual discernment should be our first line of defense against deception. It’s that “buzzer” inside, warning you that something is wrong. For example, you visit someone’s home and everything appears in order. But you can cut the air with a knife. Even though nothing visible confirms it, your spirit detects that something is wrong in that home.

**LEADER: “Spiritual Discernment”** By Neil Anderson

Source ~ <http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/devotionals/dailyinchrist/544588.html> (Excerpt)

The Greek word for discernment-- diakrino --simply means to make a judgment or a distinction. Discernment has one primary function: to distinguish right from wrong. In 1 Corinthians 12:10 discernment is the divinely enabled ability to distinguish a good spirit from a bad spirit.

Discernment is not a function of the mind; it’s a function of the Holy Spirit, which is in union with your soul/spirit. When the Spirit sounds a warning, your mind may not be able to perceive what’s wrong. Have the courage to acknowledge that something is wrong when your spirit is troubled. Share what you are sensing with others, and ask the Lord for wisdom.

**READER: QUOTE #1**

Source ~ [http://www.motivationalquotes.com/cgi-bin/db/db.cgi?uid=default&view\\_records=1&keyword=discernment&so=ascend](http://www.motivationalquotes.com/cgi-bin/db/db.cgi?uid=default&view_records=1&keyword=discernment&so=ascend)

...discernment is not simply about resisting what is evil, self-absorbed, or destructive. It is about foundational identity. It is about who we know ourselves ultimately to be. It is about paying attention to the ways in which the limited power we wield, the modest respect we command, the taken-for-granted resources we hold provide us with our primary sense of meaning. To what extent do we “know” ourselves first as civic and church leaders, or as respectable citizens or conscientious parents or homeowners or degree holders or job holders and not at all as beloved daughters and sons of God?

We are beloved not because of what we do. We are beloved because we are. - Wendy M. Wright Author: Passing Angels: “The Arts of Spiritual Discernment”

**READER: “The Skill that Enables”** From: Fan The Flame, J. StowellSource ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/d/d-67.htm>

Discernment in Scripture is the skill that enables us to differentiate. It is the ability to see issues clearly. We desperately need to cultivate this spiritual skill that will enable us to know right from wrong. We must be prepared to distinguish light from darkness, truth from error, best from better, righteousness from unrighteousness, purity from defilement, and principles from pragmatics.

**READER: “SPIRITUALLY AWARE”** By Neil AndersonSource ~ <http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/devotionals/dailyinchrist/544748.html> (Excerpt)

In many counseling cases I am able to sense in my spirit that something is wrong or that the real issue has not surfaced. Sometimes I seem to know what it is, but instead of blurting it out, I test it. If the Spirit's discernment in me is matched by the Lord's conviction in the counselee, usually the problem surfaces and we can deal with it.

Have you ever “known” that someone was a Christian before he or she even said anything about it? Have you ever sensed a compatible spirit with other believers? There is nothing magical about that; it’s just the presence of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit. At other times the Holy Spirit warns you that the spirit controlling another person is not a compatible spirit.

If we would learn to be more spiritually aware in our churches and homes, God could keep us from plowing head-on into so many disasters. In the Western world our cognitive, left-brain orientation all but excludes discernment as our essential guide for navigating through the spiritual world. But the writer of Hebrews identified discernment as a mark of maturity: *“Solid food is for the mature who, because of practice, have their senses trained to discern good and evil”* (Hebrews 5:14).

A good systematic theology is the essential foundation upon which we build our lives. It is like the skeleton of our body. It is the Holy Spirit who gives life to the body.

**LEADER: Let’s look at “Five Ways to Test A Decision”** By DavidSource ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg99/de990310.htm>

(CALL OUT THE NUMBERS)

**READER: “Five Ways to Test A Decision”** By DavidSource ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg99/de990310.htm> (Excerpt)

1. Is it in Harmony with the Bible? *“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”* Psalm 119:105 (NIV) God’s word should be our final authority concerning all decisions. Obviously if your decision goes against God’s word, it is against God’s will.

Would I want everyone to know about the decision? *“Whoever lives honestly will live securely, but whoever lives dishonestly will be found out.”* Proverbs 10:19 *“Whoever knows what is right but doesn’t do it is sinning.”* James 4:17 *“If a person believes that something is wrong, then that thing is wrong for him.”* Romans 14:14 (NCV) Would you feel comfortable letting in on your decision, everyone you know?

2. Will it make me a better person? *“We are allowed to do all things, but all things are not good for us to do.”* 1 Corinthians 10:23 For example there are some things I am allowed to do according to God’s word. But I have to ask myself would this action build me up spiritually? Would it make me more Christlike?

3. Could it become addicting?

*“I can do anything I want to if Christ has not said no, but some of these things aren’t good for me. Even if I am allowed to do them, I’ll refuse to if I think they might get such a grip on me that I can’t easily stop when I want to.”* 1 Corinthians 6:12 (Living Bible Translation)

4. The key point here is to ask: Will this decision allow something to be higher than God on my list of priorities? *“Thou shall have no other God’s before me.”* Exodus 20:3

5. Will it harm anyone else? *“All of us will have to give an account of ourselves to God. So let’s stop criticizing each other. Instead, you should decide never to do anything that would make other Christians have doubts or lose their faith.”* Romans 14:12-13

*"Those of us who have a strong faith must be patient with the weaknesses of those whose faith is not so strong. We must not think only of ourselves. We should all be concerned about our neighbor and the good things that will build his faith."* Romans 15:1-2 Is your walk, or are decisions you make, affecting those around you?

**READER: "Choices"** By Sandi Miller

Source ~ [http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start\\_pos=1&item\\_id=128798](http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start_pos=1&item_id=128798)

I climbed the ladder and stood with my head in the green, leafy canopy of our Montmorency cherry tree. I was surrounded by glowing, scarlet fruit, each one illuminated by the morning sun that blazed overhead. It was hot for the first week of June, and the humidity was stifling. As I placed cherries in a bucket, I tried to distract myself from the uncomfortable heat by letting my mind wander. I remembered that even though the flesh of the cherry is delicious, the cherry's pit contains cyanide, a deadly poison. Before we can eat the flesh of the fruit, we must discard the pit or risk poisoning ourselves.

That's when it struck me that life is like that. Almost every situation we face has the potential for both good and evil. Daily we must choose between the two. If we choose to read God's word and live by God's commandments, we are choosing to eat the flesh of a delightful fruit. But if we choose instead to act or think in ways that are evil, we risk poisoning our souls. That's when I realized that God's gift of free will is either our blessing or our curse, depending upon the choices we make.

**READER: Deuteronomy 30:19**

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,*

**READER: "A Destructive Nature"** By Jack L. Matthew

Source ~ [http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start\\_pos=1&item\\_id=44390](http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start_pos=1&item_id=44390)

One morning following a night of destructive storms and tornadoes, I arrived at our Tennessee farm to check the cattle and survey the damage. I was alarmed to see that a wild cherry tree -- blown down by the wind -- was hanging precipitously over a shallow ravine. The cattle had discovered it just recently and were beginning to feast on its leaves, which are lethal to cattle.

I attempted to drive the cattle away from the tree, but they circled back, gorging themselves on the poisonous leaves. I rushed to get the tractor and used it to drag the tree into an adjacent fenced-in field. But as I dragged the tree, the herd ran alongside, trying to get some more of this tasty but lethal green.

Isn't this the way humans sometimes behave? We do things that can destroy us physically and spiritually. But unlike the cattle who have only instinct, we have the ability to avoid what God has declared to be harmful. In fact, God promises to give us the wisdom that we need to choose wisely.

**READER: Romans 6:12-14**

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

**READER: Hebrews 5:11-14**

*Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*

**READER: QUOTE #2**

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg00/de000502.htm> (Excerpt)

"The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil." - Cicero 106-43 BC Roman Poet/Philosopher

**READER: Proverbs 2:5-9**

*"Then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."*

**READER: Proverbs 3:13**

*"How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding."*

**READER: QUOTE #3**

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg00/de000502.htm> (Excerpt)

"Wisdom is not the growth of human genius. It must be sought from above." - John Calvin 1509-64 Protestant Reformer

**READER: QUOTE #4**

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg00/de000502.htm> (Excerpt)

"Wisdom outweighs any wealth." - Sophocles 496-406 BC Greek Playwright

**READER: "God's Voice" By Wanda Evans**

Source ~ [http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start\\_pos=1&item\\_id=44192](http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start_pos=1&item_id=44192)

Jesus said, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."* John 10:27

Recently, I purchased an audiotape of bird songs so I could identify the birds in my yard by their songs. Now my ears are attuned to the chirp of the oriole amid the chatter of the sparrows. I was once oblivious to the different songs, but now I know which birds are nearby -- even if I do not see them.

I wonder if hearing the voice of God is like hearing each bird's song. Can we train ourselves to hear the voice of God amid the chatter and noise of the world? Can we form the habit of carefully listening for God's voice, the voice that tells us to stop and help a child, to reach out to a stranger, or to send someone a letter of appreciation or comfort? Can we hear the voice of God, leading us in new directions? I believe we can.

God speaks in many ways -- through scripture, sermons, other believers, and books, and also in the silence of prayer as we reflect on our lives. But often we are too busy or inattentive to hear. As we learn to recognize God's voice in the confusion of a noisy world, we will realize that God is nearby, leading and guiding us.

**LEADER: Do we listen or are we too busy?**

Are you missing opportunities for new friendships, adventures, experiences, sharing or serving?

**READER: "Who Is Your Daddy?"**

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon3b/who\\_is\\_your\\_daddy.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon3b/who_is_your_daddy.htm)

A seminary professor was vacationing with his wife in Gatlinburg, TN. One morning, they were eating breakfast at little restaurant, hoping to enjoy a quiet, family meal. While they were waiting for their food, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting with the guests. The professor leaned over and whispered to his wife, "I hope he doesn't come over here."

But sure enough, the man did come over to their table. "Where are you folks from?" he asked in a friendly voice. "Oklahoma," they answered. "Great to have you here in Tennessee." the stranger said. "What do you do for a living?" "I teach at a seminary," he replied. "Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I've got a really great story for you." And with that, the gentleman pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with the couple.

The professor groaned and thought to himself, "Great... Just what I need... another preacher story!"

The man started, "See that mountain over there? (pointing out the restaurant window). Not far from the base of that mountain, there was a boy born to an unwed mother. He had a hard time growing up, because every place he went, he was always asked the same question, 'Hey boy, Who's your daddy?' 'Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or drug store, people would ask the same question, 'Who's your daddy?' He would hide at recess and lunchtime from other students. He would avoid going in to stores because that question hurt him so bad." When he was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, 'Who's your daddy?' But one day, the new

preacher said the benediction so fast he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd." Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, 'Son, who's your daddy?'

"The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, 'Who's your daddy'. This new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment that only the Holy Spirit could give, said the following to that scared little boy... "Wait a minute" he said. 'I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God.'

With that he patted the boy on his shoulder and said, 'Boy, you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.'

The boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person. He was never the same again. Whenever anybody asked him, 'Who's your Daddy?' he'd just tell them, 'I'm a Child of God'."

The distinguished gentleman got up from the table and said, "Isn't that a great story?" The professor responded that it really was a great story. As the man turned to leave, he said, "You know, if that new preacher hadn't told me that I was one of God's children, I probably never would have amounted to anything!" And he walked away.

The seminary professor and his wife were stunned. He called the waitress over and asked her, "Do you know who that man was who just left that was sitting at our table?" The waitress grinned and said, "Of course. Everybody here knows him. That's Ben Hooper. He's the former governor of Tennessee!"

#### **READER: Hebrews 12:1-2**

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

#### **READER: Proverbs 4:27**

Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.

#### **READER: "Staying On Course" By David**

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de980211.htm>

This weekend my family and I went on vacation in the eastern part of North Carolina, along the Pamlico River. I took the kids out on the boat for a ride toward the Pamlico Sound we were looking at the different ducks, birds and sometimes we are lucky enough to spot a dolphin or river otter swimming around. On the trip home, God showed me something. Home is located off the river about 1 mile down a bay. The bay is marked with Channel markers. These markers keep you in the deeper water, and away from shallow areas and other dangers such as fishing nets and crab pots.

The water was low this weekend, so it was particularly important to follow the markers. As the sun was setting we headed in, and I noticed that if I lined up three distance markers, I could stay in the safe water, and be stay on course to guide us home. I had to "fix" my eyes on these markers and keep all three in line.

Are you fixing your eyes and your life on God's markers? Are you staying the course? It is very hard to stay on course, hard to stay in God's will. This weekend I tried to identify "course-busters" in my life. The key is to sit down, take quiet time and figure out what veers you off course, and be prepared when the obstacles come, to recognize them and deal with them. We never intend to go off course; usually it is a slow drift away from God's perfect plan for our life.

My number one obstacle is busyness. Just purely and simply being too busy to focus on God and His will. Being too busy to see the markers, too busy sit back and focus on God. I think the evil one has got a grip on this country... with keeping us busy, busy, busy. Take time out, regroup, re-evaluate your priorities, and focus more time on God. Discerning His will for your life in my opinion, is not a huge one-time "vision" or something that God will reveal to you. The discernment of His will comes from the moment-by-moment decisions we make to stay on course and evaluating what God has done so far in our life. If you slow down long enough, and look back over the course God has taken you on so far, I truly believe you will see where God is wanting you to go in the future.

## **READER: Habakkuk 2:1**

*I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved.*

## **READER: “Turn Aside” By Ronald S. Combs**

Source ~ [http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start\\_pos=1&item\\_id=39811](http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start_pos=1&item_id=39811)

When sitting in front of a fire, have you ever tossed on a log and been mesmerized as flames engulfed the piece of wood? The log does not catch fire immediately. Sometimes it takes several minutes before the wood reaches its flash point and begins to burn on its own.

Moses knew about fire. That's why he moved closer to investigate when he saw the "great sight," a fire that burned without destroying the bush from which it appeared to originate. He had thought to himself, "*I will go over and see this strange sight -- why the bush does not burn up.*" (Exodus 3:3) As Moses watched transfixed, it was as if God said, "Aha! Now I have your attention." Then God spoke to Moses.

God still speaks to us today. Our "burning bush" may be a pastoral scene, the face of a child, the message of a friend. How long has God been trying to get our attention? How many times have we been too busy to notice the great sight? How often have we missed an opportunity to hear God?

## **READER: 2 Corinthians 11:3**

*But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

## **READER: “Arguments or Obedience” My Utmost for His Highest – Oswald Chambers**

Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/utmost/09/14/>

Simplicity is the secret to seeing things clearly. A saint does not think clearly until a long time passes, but a saint ought to see clearly without any difficulty. You cannot think through spiritual confusion to make things clear; to make things clear, you must obey. In intellectual matters you can think things out, but in spiritual matters you will only think yourself into further wandering thoughts and more confusion. If there is something in your life upon which God has put His pressure, then obey Him in that matter. *Bring all your “arguments and . . . every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” regarding the matter, and everything will become as clear as daylight to you* ( 2 Corinthians 10:5 ). Your reasoning capacity will come later, but reasoning is not how we see. *We see like children, and when we try to be wise we see nothing* (Matthew 11:25 ).

Even the very smallest thing that we allow in our lives that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit is completely sufficient to account for spiritual confusion, and spending all of our time thinking about it will still never make it clear. Spiritual confusion can only be conquered through obedience. As soon as we obey, we have discernment. This is humiliating, because when we are confused we know that the reason lies in the state of our mind. But when our natural power of sight is devoted and submitted in obedience to the Holy Spirit, it becomes the very power by which we perceive God's will, and our entire life is kept in simplicity.

## **READER: Proverbs 3:21-22**

My son, let them not vanish from your sight; Keep sound wisdom and discretion, So they will be life to your soul And adornment to your neck.

## **READER: “Preserve Sound Judgment” By Phil Ware**

Source ~ <http://www.heartlight.org/cgi-shl/todaysverse.cgi?day=20010821>

God used his wisdom to create the cosmos and all that is in it. Through His discernment, he appointed to each being and to each item its place in his dazzling display of diversity. He has chosen to share that wisdom and discernment with those who reverence him and search for his wisdom. If we will use that wisdom and discernment we will possess the greatest of all jewels and a blessing that will enrich our life.

## **READER: James 1:5**

*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

**READER: “Where God Guides, God Provides” #1** By David

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpages/de970827.htm> 8/27/97 (Excerpt)

How ironic it is that most of us rarely use in an effective way, our most powerful tool, prayer. I could not imagine digging a foundation for a house with a hand shovel, when we have powerful backhoes. Nor can I imagine making decisions concerning directions to take in life, without pouring our hearts out to God in prayer. God constantly guides and provides in every detail of my life, big and small. Nothing is trivial to God.

**READER: “Where God Guides, God Provides” #2** By David

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpages/de970827.htm> (Excerpt)

As I grow up in my walk with Christ, I find myself always going back to the simple truths of God. I have little sayings that come back over and over again. Simple sayings, but not simplistic. You know the difference, simple is saying “This is the day the Lord has made, be glad and rejoice in it!”, Simplistic is saying “Have a nice day!”

One of my favorite truths is “Where God guides, God provides.” I see this simple truth played out over and over in my life and in the Bible. How do you discern where God is guiding your life? Let’s look at a few verses and see.

David prayed and prayed to God for guidance. Prayer is our most important and most powerful tool for guidance.

**READER: “God’s Ideas”** By Tais Bernardes

Source ~ [http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start\\_pos=1&item\\_id=16101](http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start_pos=1&item_id=16101)

Our son, Leozito, who is five years old, participates when we pray before meals. He also looks at his Bible, even though he doesn’t know how to read.

One night when my family was together, Leozito asked, “Mom, why doesn’t Jesus talk to us?”

I answered, “Jesus talks to us in many ways.”

While I searched for a clearer way to explain, he said, “I know. Jesus gives us ideas!”

My son’s new discovery made me think about how Jesus talks to us. Through prayer, worship within our faith community, Bible study, and conversation with family and friends, we can hear Christ speaking to us. He gives us insight and wisdom at many times in our lives, even when we do not realize his presence.

Often, we impulsively try to solve problems in our own ways, without listening to what Jesus reveals to us. As we become aware of the ways that Christ talks to us individually, we can listen and act with discernment.

**READER: “Eyes of Faith”** By Janice E. Mitchell

Source ~ [http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start\\_pos=1&item\\_id=16137](http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/default.asp?start_pos=1&item_id=16137)

Cleopas and his companion walked along the Emmaus road, talking of recent events. As they talked, they pondered the question: Was this man who had been crucified Israel’s redeemer?

Blinded by despair, they failed to recognize the risen Lord when he joined them along the way. Jesus reminded them of scriptures concerning himself that said he had to be crucified. As they listened, their hearts were stirred.

Upon reaching the village, the two men encouraged Jesus to linger with them. Then, as they broke bread together, they recognized Jesus.

Like Cleopas and his friend, we are sometimes blinded by unbelief and grief and robbed of spiritual discernment. And sometimes we fail to acknowledge Jesus’ presence that ignites the faith, hope, and love that create the glow in our hearts. But if we look through eyes of faith, we will see Christ.

**READER: Luke 24:31**

*Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.*

**READER: Psalm 25:4**

*Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.*

**LEADER: “Where God Guides, God Provides” #3 By David**

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpages/de970827.htm> (Excerpt)

Our Father in Heaven wants the best for us. He has a perfect plan for our lives. Our key to living out His plan and being in tune with His will, is not only believing in God, but obeying Him as well. Believing without obeying is not faith, and obeying without believing is salvation by works. We must simply have faith and obey.

Think about your life. Is God providing you with the necessary “tools” to go in the direction you are taking? Or is God not providing? Remember, only where God guides, will God provide. Where God does not provide, He is not guiding.

**READER: Psalm 32:8**

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.*

**READER: Psalm 16:7**

*I will bless the LORD who has counseled me, Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.*

**READER: Psalm 48:14**

*For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.*

**LEADER: “Wisdom Is From God” By Gloria**

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg00/de000502.htm>

In the New Testament wisdom is said to be given by;

- CHRIST: *“for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.” Luke 21:15*
- THE HOLY SPIRIT: *For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 1 Corinthians 12:8*
- AND GOD: *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. Ephesians 1:17*
- So let us make sure that we understand that no Philosophy class, no amount of study, although worthwhile, can give wisdom. These studies can increase knowledge, but knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is an ability to discern. In one sense it is the ability to apply knowledge appropriately.
- Wisdom is a gift from God.

**LEADER: So.... Do you know** what you know if you knew what you knew and do you do what you know if you knew the thing to do? It's a simple formula found in our key verse:

Has anybody figured out what that is?

*“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” James 1:5*

**TIME FOR COMMENTS:**

**ALLOW TEN MINUTES BEFORE CLOSING FOR  
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:**

**COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO YOUR READERS:**

## READERS

### “Alter Your Course!”

The captain of a ship looked into the dark night and saw lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south.”

Promptly a return message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north.”

The captain was angered his command had been ignored. So he sent a second message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am a captain.”

Soon another message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north. I am seaman third class Jones.”

Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: “Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am a battleship.”

Then the reply came: “Alter your course 10 degrees north - I am a lighthouse.”

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### “Wisdom Is From God” (Elevator Story)

It was reported in a local Chicago newspaper that a janitor at the 12-story Marriott Hotel in Bristol, England was recently fired for taking four days to clean an elevator. When asked why it took so long, before his dismissal, he said, “There are twelve of them, one on each floor, and sometimes some of them are not there.” He apparently thought that each floor had a different elevator and cleaned the same elevator 12 times.

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### “Discernment”#1

Napoleon was a genius in sparking patriotism in the common man. He often told this story... Once, while visiting a province, he came upon an old soldier in full uniform, but with one sleeve hanging empty. He proudly wore the coveted Legion of Honor.

Napoleon asked, “Where did you lose your arm?” The soldier answered, “At Austerlitz, sire.” Napoleon asked, “And for that you received the Legion of Honor?” The man said, “Yes, sire.”

“It is but a small token to pay for the decoration.” Napoleon continued, “You must be the kind of man who regrets he did not lose both arms for his country.” The one-armed man asked, “What then would have been my reward?” Napoleon answered, “I would have awarded you a double Legion of Honor.” And with that, the proud old fighter drew his sword and immediately cut off his other arm. Napoleon told the story for years until someone asked, “How?”

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### “Discernment” #2

A similar story is told of the man who collected thousands of dollars for the grieving mother of the “unknown soldier”.

It's not wrong to question what you think you know. Sometimes it's wrong not to. As human beings, we are often satisfied with our opinions and content with our knowledge, which is a recipe for perpetual ignorance.

Solomon, in his wisdom, has the foresight to recognize this truth when he wrote, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” (Proverbs 26:12 NASB).

Today, remember that discerning fact from fiction is important, and that the genuine truth is found

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### “Spiritual Discernment”

Discernment is an overlooked spiritual discipline. But in reality, spiritual discernment should be our first line of defense against deception. It's that “buzzer” inside, warning you that something is wrong. For example, you visit someone's home and everything appears in order. But you can cut the air with a knife. Even though nothing visible confirms it, your spirit detects that something is wrong in that home.

## **QUOTE #1**

“...discernment is not simply about resisting what is evil, self-absorbed, or destructive. It is about foundational identity. It is about who we know ourselves ultimately to be. It is about paying attention to the ways in which the limited power we wield, the modest respect we command, the taken-for-granted resources we hold provide us with our primary sense of meaning. To what extent do we “know” ourselves first as civic and church leaders, or as respectable citizens or conscientious parents or homeowners or degree holders or job holders and not at all as beloved daughters and sons of God?

We are beloved not because of what we do. We are beloved because we are.” - Wendy M. Wright Author: Passing Angels: “The Arts of Spiritual Discernment”

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### **“The Skill that Enables”**

Discernment in Scripture is the skill that enables us to differentiate. It is the ability to see issues clearly. We desperately need to cultivate this spiritual skill that will enable us to know right from wrong. We must be prepared to distinguish light from darkness, truth from error, best from better, righteousness from unrighteousness, purity from defilement, and principles from pragmatics.

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### **“SPIRITUALLY AWARE”**

In many counseling cases I am able to sense in my spirit that something is wrong or that the real issue has not surfaced. Sometimes I seem to know what it is, but instead of blurting it out, I test it. If the Spirit’s discernment in me is matched by the Lord’s conviction in the counselee, usually the problem surfaces and we can deal with it.

Have you ever “known” that someone was a Christian before he or she even said anything about it? Have you ever sensed a compatible spirit with other believers? There is nothing magical about that; it’s just the presence of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit. At other times the Holy Spirit warns you that the spirit controlling another person is not a compatible spirit.

If we would learn to be more spiritually aware in our churches and homes, God could keep us from plowing head-on into so many disasters. In the Western world our cognitive, left-brain orientation all but excludes discernment as our essential guide for navigating through the spiritual world. But the writer of Hebrews identified discernment as a mark of maturity: “Solid food is for the mature who, because of practice, have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (5:14).

A good systematic theology is the essential foundation upon which we build our lives. It is like the skeleton of our body. It is the Holy Spirit who gives life to the body.

## **“Five Ways to Test A Decision”**

1. Is it in Harmony with the Bible? “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105 (NIV) God’s word should be our final authority concerning all decisions. Obviously if your decision goes against God’s word, it is against God’s will.

Would I want everyone to know about the decision? “Whoever lives honestly will live securely, but whoever lives dishonestly will be found out.” Proverbs 10:19 “Whoever knows what is right but doesn’t do it is sinning.” James 4:17 “If a person believes that something is wrong, then that thing is wrong for him.” Romans 14:14 (NCV) Would you feel comfortable letting in on your decision, everyone you know?

2. Will it make me a better person? “We are allowed to do all things, but all things are not good for us to do.” 1 Corinthians 10:23 For example there are some things I am allowed to do according to God’s word. But I have to ask myself would this action build me up spiritually? Would it make me more Christlike?

3. Could it become addicting?

“I can do anything I want to if Christ has not said no, but some of these things aren’t good for me. Even if I am allowed to do them, I’ll refuse to if I think they might get such a grip on me that I can’t easily stop when I want to.” 1 Corinthians 6:12 (Living Bible Translation)

4. The key point here is to ask: Will this decision allow something to be higher than God on my list of priorities? Thou shall have no other God’s before me. Exodus 20:3

5. Will it harm anyone else? “All of us will have to give an account of ourselves to God. So let’s stop criticizing each other. Instead, you should decide never to do anything that would make other Christians have doubts or lose their faith.” Romans 14:12-13

“Those of us who have a strong faith must be patient with the weaknesses of those whose faith is not so strong. We must not think only of ourselves. We should all be concerned about our neighbor and the good things that will build his faith.” Romans 15:1-2 Is your walk, or are decisions you make, affecting those around you?

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## **“Choices”**

I climbed the ladder and stood with my head in the green, leafy canopy of our Montmorency cherry tree. I was surrounded by glowing, scarlet fruit, each one illuminated by the morning sun that blazed overhead. It was hot for the first week of June, and the humidity was stifling. As I placed cherries in a bucket, I tried to distract myself from the uncomfortable heat by letting my mind wander. I remembered that even though the flesh of the cherry is delicious, the cherry’s pit contains cyanide, a deadly poison. Before we can eat the flesh of the fruit, we must discard the pit or risk poisoning ourselves.

That’s when it struck me that life is like that. Almost every situation we face has the potential for both good and evil. Daily we must choose between the two. If we choose to read God’s word and live by God’s commandments, we are choosing to eat the flesh of a delightful fruit. But if we choose instead to act or think in ways that are evil, we risk poisoning our souls. That’s when I realized that God’s gift of free will is either our blessing or our curse, depending upon the choices we make.

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## **Deuteronomy 30:19**

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## **“A Destructive Nature”**

One morning following a night of destructive storms and tornadoes, I arrived at our Tennessee farm to check the cattle and survey the damage. I was alarmed to see that a wild cherry tree -- blown down by the wind -- was hanging precipitously over a shallow ravine. The cattle had discovered it just recently and were beginning to feast on its leaves, which are lethal to cattle.

I attempted to drive the cattle away from the tree, but they circled back, gorging themselves on the poisonous leaves. I rushed to get the tractor and used it to drag the tree into an adjacent fenced-in field. But as I dragged the tree, the herd ran alongside, trying to get some more of this tasty but lethal green.

Isn’t this the way humans sometimes behave? We do things that can destroy us physically and spiritually. But unlike the cattle who have only instinct, we have the ability to avoid what God has declared to be harmful. In fact, God promises to give us the wisdom that we need to choose wisely.

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**Romans 6:12-14**

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**Hebrews 5:11-14**

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### **QUOTE #2**

“The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil.” - Cicero 106-43 BC Roman Poet/Philosopher

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**Proverbs 2:5-9**

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**Proverbs 3:13**

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### **QUOTE #3**

“Wisdom is not the growth of human genius. It must be sought from above.” - John Calvin 1509-64 Protestant Reformer

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### **QUOTE #4**

“Wisdom outweighs any wealth.” - Sophocles 496-406 BC Greek Playwright

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### **“God’s Voice”**

Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”  
John 10:27

Recently, I purchased an audiotape of bird songs so I could identify the birds in my yard by their songs. Now my ears are attuned to the chirp of the oriole amid the chatter of the sparrows. I was once oblivious to the different songs, but now I know which birds are nearby -- even if I do not see them.

I wonder if hearing the voice of God is like hearing each bird’s song. Can we train ourselves to hear the voice of God amid the chatter and noise of the world? Can we form the habit of carefully listening for God’s voice, the voice that tells us to stop and help a child, to reach out to a stranger, or to send someone a letter of appreciation or comfort? Can we hear the voice of God, leading us in new directions? I believe we can.

God speaks in many ways -- through scripture, sermons, other believers, and books, and also in the silence of prayer as we reflect on our lives. But often we are too busy or inattentive to hear. As we learn to recognize God’s voice in the confusion of a noisy world, we will realize that God is nearby, leading and guiding us.

## **“Who Is Your Daddy?”**

A seminary professor was vacationing with his wife in Gatlinburg, TN. One morning, they were eating breakfast at little restaurant, hoping to enjoy a quiet, family meal. While they were waiting for their food, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting with the guests. The professor leaned over and whispered to his wife, “I hope he doesn’t come over here.”

But sure enough, the man did come over to their table. “Where are you folks from?” he asked in a friendly voice. “Oklahoma,” they answered. “Great to have you here in Tennessee.” the stranger said. “What do you do for a living?” “I teach at a seminary,” he replied. “Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I’ve got a really great story for you.” And with that, the gentleman pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with the couple.

The professor groaned and thought to himself, “Great... Just what I need... another preacher story!”

The man started, “See that mountain over there? (pointing out the restaurant window). Not far from the base of that mountain, there was a boy born to an unwed mother. He had a hard time growing up, because every place he went, he was always asked the same question, ‘Hey boy, Who’s your daddy?’ ‘Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or drug store, people would ask the same question, ‘Who’s your daddy?’ He would hide at recess and lunchtime from other students. He would avoid going in to stores because that question hurt him so bad.” When he was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, ‘Who’s your daddy?’ But one day, the new preacher said the benediction so fast he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd.” Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, ‘Son, who’s your daddy?’

“The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, ‘Who’s your daddy’. This new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment that only the Holy Spirit could give, said the following to that scared little boy... “Wait a minute” he said. ‘I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God.’

With that he patted the boy on his shoulder and said, ‘Boy, you’ve got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.’

The boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person. He was never the same again. Whenever anybody asked him, ‘Who’s your Daddy?’ he’d just tell them, ‘I’m a Child of God.’

The distinguished gentleman got up from the table and said, “Isn’t that a great story?” The professor responded that it really was a great story. As the man turned to leave, he said, “You know, if that new preacher hadn’t told me that I was one of God’s children, I probably never would have amounted to anything!” And he walked away.

The seminary professor and his wife were stunned. He called the waitress over and asked her, “Do you know who that man was who just left that was sitting at our table?” The waitress grinned and said, “Of course. Everybody here knows him. That’s Ben Hooper. He’s the former governor of Tennessee!”

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**Hebrews 12:1-2**

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**Proverbs 4:27**

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## **“Staying On Course”**

This weekend my family and I went on vacation in the eastern part of North Carolina, along the Pamlico River. I took the kids out on the boat for a ride toward the Pamlico Sound we were looking at the different ducks, birds and sometimes we are lucky enough to spot a dolphin or river otter swimming around. On the trip home, God showed me something. Home is located off the river about 1 mile down a bay. The bay is marked with Channel markers. These markers keep you in the deeper water, and away from shallow areas and other dangers such as fishing nets and crab pots.

The water was low this weekend, so it was particularly important to follow the markers. As the sun was setting we headed in, and I noticed that if I lined up three distance markers, I could stay in the safe water, and be stay on course to guide us home. I had to “fix” my eyes on these markers and keep all three in line.

Are you fixing your eyes and your life on God’s markers? Are you staying the course? It is very hard to stay on course, hard to stay in God’s will. This weekend I tried to identify “course-busters” in my life. The key is to sit down, take quiet time and figure out what veers you off course, and be prepared when the obstacles come, to recognize them and deal with them. We never intend to go off course; usually it is a slow drift away from God’s perfect plan for our life.

My number one obstacle is busyness. Just purely and simply being too busy to focus on God and His will. Being too busy to see the markers, too busy sit back and focus on God. I think the evil one has got a grip on this country... with keeping us busy, busy, busy. Take time out, regroup, re-evaluate your priorities, and focus more time on God. Discerning His will for your life in my opinion, is not a huge one-time “vision” or something that God will reveal to you. The discernment of His will comes from the moment-by-moment decisions we make to stay on course and evaluating what God has done so far in our life. If you slow down long enough, and look back over the course God has taken you on so far, I truly believe you will see where God is wanting you to go in the future.

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## **Habakkuk 2:1**

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### **“Turn Aside”**

When sitting in front of a fire, have you ever tossed on a log and been mesmerized as flames engulfed the piece of wood? The log does not catch fire immediately. Sometimes it takes several minutes before the wood reaches its flash point and begins to burn on its own.

Moses knew about fire. That’s why he moved closer to investigate when he saw the “great sight,” a fire that burned without destroying the bush from which it appeared to originate. He had thought to himself, “I will go over and see this strange sight -- why the bush does not burn up.” (Exodus 3:3) As Moses watched transfixed, it was as if God said, “Aha! Now I have your attention.” Then God spoke to Moses.

God still speaks to us today. Our “burning bush” may be a pastoral scene, the face of a child, the message of a friend. How long has God been trying to get our attention? How many times have we been too busy to notice the great sight? How often have we missed an opportunity to hear God?

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## **2 Corinthians 11:3**

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### **“Arguments or Obedience”**

Simplicity is the secret to seeing things clearly. A saint does not think clearly until a long time passes, but a saint ought to see clearly without any difficulty. You cannot think through spiritual confusion to make things clear; to make things clear, you must obey. In intellectual matters you can think things out, but in spiritual matters you will only think yourself into further wandering thoughts and more confusion. If there is something in your life upon which God has put His pressure, then obey Him in that matter. Bring all your “arguments and . . . every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” regarding the matter, and everything will become as clear as daylight to you ( 2 Corinthians 10:5 ). Your reasoning capacity will come later, but reasoning is not how we see. We see like children, and when we try to be wise we see nothing (Matthew 11:25 ).

Even the very smallest thing that we allow in our lives that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit is completely sufficient to account for spiritual confusion, and spending all of our time thinking about it will still never make it clear. Spiritual confusion can only be conquered through obedience. As soon as we obey, we have discernment. This is humiliating, because when we are confused we know that the reason lies in the state of our mind. But when our natural power of sight is devoted and submitted in obedience to the Holy Spirit, it becomes the very power by which we perceive God’s will, and our entire life is kept in simplicity.

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### **Proverbs 3:21-22**

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### **“Preserve Sound Judgment”**

God used his wisdom to create the cosmos and all that is in it. Through His discernment, he appointed to each being and to each item its place in his dazzling display of diversity. He has chosen to share that wisdom and discernment with those who reverence him and search for his wisdom. If we will use that wisdom and discernment we will possess the greatest of all jewels and a blessing that will enrich our life.

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### **James 1:5**

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### **“Where God Guides, God Provides” #1**

How ironic it is that most of us rarely use in an effective way, our most powerful tool, prayer. I could not imagine digging a foundation for a house with a hand shovel, when we have powerful backhoes. Nor can I imagine making decisions concerning directions to take in life, without pouring our hearts out to God in prayer.

God constantly guides and provides in every detail of my life, big and small. Nothing is trivial to God.

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### **“Where God Guides, God Provides” #2**

As I grow up in my walk with Christ, I find myself always going back to the simple truths of God. I have little sayings that come back over and over again. Simple sayings, but not simplistic. You know the difference, simple is saying “This is the day the Lord has made, be glad and rejoice in it!”, Simplistic is saying “Have a nice day!”

One of my favorite truths is “Where God guides, God provides.” I see this simple truth played out over and over in my life and in the Bible. How do you discern where God is guiding your life? Let’s look at a few verses and see.

David prayed and prayed to God for guidance. Prayer is our most important and most powerful tool for guidance.

## **“God’s Ideas”**

Our son, Leozito, who is five years old, participates when we pray before meals. He also looks at his Bible, even though he doesn’t know how to read.

One night when my family was together, Leozito asked, “Mom, why doesn’t Jesus talk to us?”

I answered, “Jesus talks to us in many ways.”

While I searched for a clearer way to explain, he said, “I know. Jesus gives us ideas!”

My son’s new discovery made me think about how Jesus talks to us. Through prayer, worship within our faith community, Bible study, and conversation with family and friends, we can hear Christ speaking to us. He gives us insight and wisdom at many times in our lives, even when we do not realize his presence.

Often, we impulsively try to solve problems in our own ways, without listening to what Jesus reveals to us. As we become aware of the ways that Christ talks to us individually, we can listen and act with discernment.

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## **“Eyes of Faith”**

Cleopas and his companion walked along the Emmaus road, talking of recent events. As they talked, they pondered the question: Was this man who had been crucified Israel’s redeemer?

Blinded by despair, they failed to recognize the risen Lord when he joined them along the way. Jesus reminded them of scriptures concerning himself that said he had to be crucified. As they listened, their hearts were stirred.

Upon reaching the village, the two men encouraged Jesus to linger with them. Then, as they broke bread together, they recognized Jesus.

Like Cleopas and his friend, we are sometimes blinded by unbelief and grief and robbed of spiritual discernment. And sometimes we fail to acknowledge Jesus’ presence that ignites the faith, hope, and love that create the glow in our hearts. But if we look through eyes of faith, we will see Christ.

**Luke 24:31**

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**Psalm 25:4**

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**Psalm 32:8**

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**Psalm 16:7**

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**Psalm 48:14**

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