

Practising Spiritual Disciplines



GUIDANCE

Mentors • Life Goals • Discipleship

A song often sung by songster brigades begins with these words: "Life is a journey, long is the road." Our spiritual walks are journeys, however, they do not have immediate destinations or estimated times of arrivals, but they last for the duration of our earthly existence. Our journeys may take us through beautiful valleys on warm spring days or over rough and uneven ground in the blazing sun. Whether our daily journey is easy or difficult, it never has to be walked alone. God sends companions to tarry with us and guide us along the way.

The spiritual discipline of guidance is defined in *The Renovare Bible* as "experiencing an interactive friendship with God that gives direction and purpose to daily life." How amazing that we do not need to walk alone! Ironically, it is very hard to truly surrender our spiritual journey and humbly walk in the daily presence of God. This act of surrender is what makes guidance a spiritual discipline.

Throughout the Bible, the imagery of journeys includes physical manifestations of the presence of God. While Jacob was journeying away from Esau, he encountered a ladder. As the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness they encountered a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Elijah was exhausted in his journey following the victory of Mt. Carmel when he encountered the presence of God in a whisper. While we may not see pillars of clouds or fires, in small and subtle ways God's presence reveals itself as nudges to our souls.

Consider a time you were wrestling with a decision. Were there moments in your Scripture readings when one verse seemed to leap out at you? Did you receive an e-mail or a phone call "out of the blue" that connected with your decision in some way? Was there a moment in your prayer time when you knew what you had to do? These experiences are examples of the way God's presence comes to us today. The spiritual discipline of guidance is creating a space within us to encounter these moments, and then having the humility and obedience to follow the leading when it comes.

Throughout the Bible we also encounter individuals who accompany others on their journeys. In Mark's Gospel we read how four men lowered their friend through a roof to encounter Jesus, we see that Jesus physically sat beside a woman at a well, and we learn that Jesus walked with disillusioned followers as they travelled home. Often God's guidance will come to us through the gracious presence of another. Spiritual direction is one way an individual becomes a spiritual journey companion to another. Mentoring relationships and good friendships are other ways that God will bring guidance into our lives. Community is modelled throughout the Bible—from the community in creation to the community of Israel to the community of believers in the New Testament. We are not meant to journey alone. As we engage in relationships that support our spiritual journey, we will encounter many moments when God's guidance comes our way.

God promised that he knows us, loves us and has a plan for us. Many times we acknowledge that with our minds but carry on with our lives however we see fit. Practising the discipline of guidance internalizes this knowledge to such an extent that our thoughts, emotions and actions move out from the guidance of our friendship with God.

My Action Plan

→ Create a space within you to receive God's guidance through prayer, meditation, silence or keeping a journal.

→ Form relationships with wise individuals who model God's guidance in their lives and can confirm messages you receive from the Lord.

→ Slow down to listen to others. Be open to being used by God to provide guidance to their journeys.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Cut out and keep in your Bible or journal. Allow these verses to mould your idea of guidance.

"In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling" (Exodus 15:13 NIV).

"Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me" (Psalm 31:3 NIV).

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (Isaiah 58:11 NIV).

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13 NIV).

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25 NIV).

"For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes'" (Revelation 7:17 NIV).