

Spiritual Disciplines Series

Becoming a Guidable People

date

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with

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Guidance as a Corporate Spiritual Discipline

- We tend to approach Guidance individually, but learning to recognise God's leading is not meant to be entirely a private matter.
- Guidance is not merely about God giving individuals directions for their lives; Guidance is about friendship with God, and His purpose of forming Christ in us.
- Consistently throughout Scripture, God's intention was to form and guide a people who can recognise His presence and follow Him together.

GOD GUIDES A PEOPLE

Exodus 13:21-22

²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

²² The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.



Acts 13:1-4

Paul and Barnabas Sent Out by the Holy Spirit

¹ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

GOD GUIDES A PEOPLE

Acts 15:1-31

The Jerusalem Council

When the way forward is contested, communal discernment requires the community to weigh together what it believes it is hearing—through honest discussion, testimony, patient listening, Scripture and shared judgment.



Acts 15:1-31

What Communal Discernment Looked Like

- They faced disagreement and debated the issue openly (v. 5-7)
- They listened to testimony about what God had been doing (v. 7-12)
- They allowed Scripture to interpret their experience (v. 13-18)
- They arrived at a shared decision that they could describe with humble confidence: *“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.”* (v. 19-22, 25-29)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When we make decisions together,
are we seeking the mind of Christ?

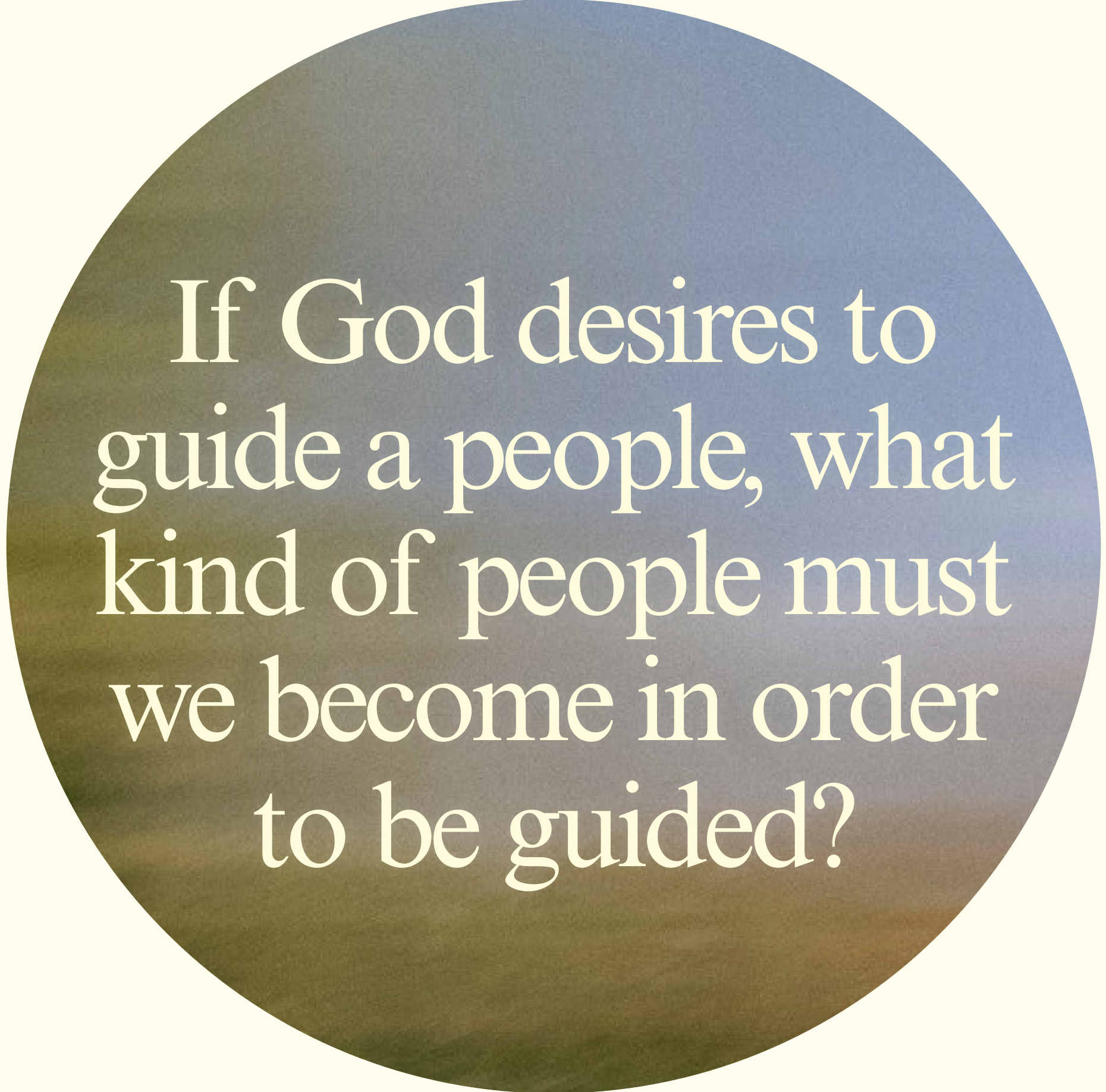
Do our processes make room for
the Spirit, Scripture, testimony,
patient listening and even
disagreement?

Or do efficiency, pressure, majority
preference or the loudest voice
determine the outcome?

2 SIMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Am I willing to be guided?

2. Are we becoming a community that can be guided—a people who can say, without presumption, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”?



If God desires to
guide a people, what
kind of people must
we become in order
to be guided?

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE CAN GOD GUIDE?

Romans 12:1-5 (NIV)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Four Postures for Guidance

1. Surrender (Romans 12:1)

- Before asking, “What is God’s will for me?” perhaps the prior question is, “Am I willing to be guided—even if God’s answer differs from what I prefer?”
- Surrender means releasing control and trusting Jesus enough to obey—even when we do not fully understand and His leading may be costly.

2. Attentiveness (Romans 12:2)

- Instead of putting out fleeces and looking for external signs, learn to recognise the indwelling Spirit within you.
- Learn to notice what is stirring within your soul - the desires, tensions, emotions and invitations we sense may be the movement of the Holy Spirit in us.
- As we grow in friendship with God, Scripture and our knowledge of God's character form our desires and renew our minds.

3. Humility (Romans 12:3)

Humility When I Am Seeking Guidance: I hold my interpretations lightly, because my desires, fears, past wounds and limited perspective can all shape what I think God is saying.

Humility When I Am Helping Another Person Discern: When someone invites me into their discernment process, I remember their life is “holy ground”; the Spirit dwells in them. I am not there to give advice presumptuously. I am there to listen, pray and help them pay attention to how God may already be working in their life.

4. Interdependence - Practising Communal Discernment (v.4-5)

- Though we are many, we form one Body in Christ. I do not possess the whole picture, and God has distributed His wisdom and gifts throughout the Body.
- Guidance is personal, but it is not private. God may speak to me personally, but He often confirms, refines, challenges and enlarges that guidance through other believers.
- Christian leaders are not infallible; neither are we. All discernment must be tested against Scripture, the character of God and the fruits of the Spirit.

Guidance Through Spiritual Companionship

Christian Spiritual Direction is:

“Help given by one believer to another that enables the latter to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.”

WILLIAM A. BARRY AND WILLIAM J. CONNOLLY

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Yuzhou's Testimony

Haiku:

*Any road it is
Strange graces will be enough
Trail angels hover*

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Su-Chian's Testimony

Haiku:

*Lover of my soul
Stepping out of this known boat
I know I am safe*

In summary...

one

Guidance is personal,
but it is not private.

three

communal discernment
is not advice-giving or
control

two

Fellow believers can help us
listen through prayer, silence
and questions

four

God forms a people who
learn to recognise His
presence together.

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PSALM 23
The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me
lie down in green pastures.
He leads me in paths
of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the valley of
the shadow of death,
you are with me; your rod and
your staff, they comfort me.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of the four postures—surrender, attentiveness, humility or interdependence—do you sense God inviting you to grow in at this time? Why?
2. If living in guidance grows out of friendship with God, so that we come to know and desire His ways, what might you need to drop from your life, and what might you need to add to your life in order to deepen your intimacy with Christ?
3. Who has God placed around you as wise and trustworthy spiritual companions? How can your cell group become a community where people discern together without giving quick advice or trying to control one another?