

Introduction – Backpack of Guidance

This morning I have everything I need to discern God’s will for my life in this backpack. I have a Bible, a journal, a devotional book, and a phone.

- The Bible is our primary way of connecting with God. Here we learn how to understand and receive God’s gift of Jesus into our lives and live according to his wisdom. We also have the experience of God’s people for the last four thousand years to guide us. The Bible is used by the Holy Spirit to help us find our story in God’s story.
- Devotional guides help us understand the background and context of the different Bible passages. They help us to stop and listen to how God is speaking to us each day.
- Journaling and prayer are ways to open our hearts and minds to the whispers of God. As we intentionally pause to reflect and talk to God, our thoughts will be guided to the places that will speak to us and draw us closer to God.
- The phone represents our relationships with others. God will often use family, friends, and even strangers to give us the wisdom and guidance we need to live in ways that honor God and fulfill our mission in life.

Is there anything else I am missing to help me hear and obey God? I am sure we can think of some other ways God guides us, but I have a particular way in mind. Let us read together this story in Numbers 12 and discover it for ourselves.

Numbers 12

¹ Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. ² “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?” they asked. “Hasn’t he also spoken through us?” And the LORD heard this.

³ (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)

⁴ At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, “Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you.” So the three of them went out. ⁵ Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, ⁶ he said, “Listen to my words:

“When there is a prophet among you,
I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions,
I speak to them in dreams.

⁷ But this is not true of my servant Moses;
he is faithful in all my house.

⁸ With him I speak face to face,
clearly and not in riddles;
he sees the form of the LORD.

Why then were you not afraid
to speak against my servant Moses?”

⁹ The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them.

Background

This passage occurs when the people of Israel had escaped from Egypt, have been given the Ten Commandments and religious and political structures to organize them. Now are on there are on the way to the Promised Land. There are problems though. The people are complaining the hardships of the desert, the lack of meat, and all the things we complain about when our focus is in the wrong place (Numbers 11).

Heart Check: Where is our focus today? Have we been complaining lately?

Complaining is a sign that we think life is all about us. Others are for making our lives more comfortable. Complaining is a warning that our focus is in the wrong place and we will miss what God has for us if we do not change our ways.

Let us go back to the book of Numbers. In chapter 11 the people were complaining about no meat so Moses talked to God about it. The Lord told Moses to share the burden of leadership by calling together seventy elders who were respected among the people and who help take responsibility for these people. Moses did as the Lord instructed. They all went out of the camp and came before the Tent of Tabernacle. There the Spirit of God rested on them like it did on Moses and they prophesied. Thus, leadership spread out among the people.

There was still a problem at home. Moses' brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, must have felt left out. Remember, God used Aaron as a spokesperson for Moses who stuttered. He functioned as the first high priest and was second in command. Miriam was the older sister of Moses. As a young girl she made sure baby Moses came to the attention of Pharaoh's daughter and then back into the care of his own mother. She grew to become a key Hebrew leader, song writer, and prophetess. When Moses got home, Aaron and Miriam laid into him about marrying a foreign wife, a Cushite. It is true, Moses married Zipporah, a Cushite from Midian years before, but why was this an issue now?

Questions

What was the elephant in the room? A foreign wife? Jealousy? Power struggle? Self acceptance? Some think that the issue is jealousy. Aaron and Miriam were envious of the relationship Moses had with God. They got Twitter and YouTube and Moses got sit down, face to face dinner.

So what does all this have to do with guidance for you and me? I think the root issue here is insecurity. For some reason Aaron and Miriam forgot that God loves them each individually and deals with them uniquely. At the core of you and me are people who yearn to be completely accepted, loved, and celebrated by God. When we allow God to love us through his Son, Jesus, we become children of God. We are fully forgiven, accepted, loved and celebrated. Like a parent with many children, God relates to each of us in very personally tailored ways.

Mirror

If I want to connect with God at an intimate level, I have to embrace who and where I am. I am one of a kind. My DNA, life experiences, and where I exist in time and space make me totally unique (and so are each of you)! I need to trust that God will give me what I need to follow him faithfully. What I need may be different than what you need. Maybe in one situation I need a passage of scripture to guide me, whereas you may require a friend or dream speaking to you. We can learn from each other how to love and follow Jesus, but we don't go down the road of comparing and envy each other. That just takes our eyes off Jesus and into the gutter. We each have different work to do for Jesus. We need to trust God to use us where we are needed and let God use others the best way he sees fit.

Sometimes it is hard to accept, embrace, and love yourself. I encourage you to get in front of a mirror today and say, “*God, you made me. Help me to love myself the way you love me. Help me forgive myself the way you forgive me. Come Holy Spirit and fill me, so I can love and follow you. I trust you will connect and guide me in the ways I need. Thank you. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*”

You and I may need to do this once a week. Do whatever it takes to keep you and God connected in an authentic and vital way. God is eagerly waiting for you.

Prayer is not a matter of *my* calling in an attempt to get God's attention, but of my finally *listening to the call of God* which is constant, patient, and insistent in my inner being. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott