

# The Summer of Psalms

By Doug Hamilton

## 5) Guidance from God

Thus far in the series of *Summer of Psalms*, we have covered five themes from this marvelous writing. We have covered Praise to God, Protection from God, Service for God and Reverence of God. In this lesson we will focus on the Guidance of God through the words of the Psalmist. We will start this theme by using the best known Psalm from chapter 23.

- Psalm 23:1-6 (KJV) The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. <sup>3</sup> He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. <sup>4</sup> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. <sup>5</sup> Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. / Song 126 "The Lord My Shepherd Is" and Song 134 "The Lord's My Shepherd"

In this passage King David reflects on God from a perspective of his childhood job of being a shepherd while taking care of his father's sheep in the pasture. David for many years guided the flock in the direction that they needed to go (1 Sam 16:11) and understood better the position of God as our guide. God was His shepherd and guided him to the green pastures, the still waters, through restoration of his soul and a righteous path. God guided him through life and the end result is being able to dwell in heaven forever with the Father. God is clearly our guide!

This was not an alien concept to David or the Jewish people as a whole. From the very beginning of the freed nation from out of the grip of Egypt many centuries before. *Psalm 78:52-53 But He led forth His own people like sheep And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;* <sup>53</sup> *He led them safely, so that they did not fear; But the sea engulfed their enemies.* God guided them with a pillar fire and the word spoken through Moses. David wants you to know from the Psalms that God is our Guide!

- Psalm 31:3 "...For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me."
- Psalm 37:23-24 The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way. <sup>24</sup> When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand. / song 406 "Just a Closer Walk With Thee."
- Psalm 48:14 For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.
- Psalm 73:23-24 Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. <sup>24</sup> With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory. / Song 412 "Jesus, Hold My Hand"

We could spend all day in the Psalms on the theme that God guides us in the proper direction that we should go, but how do we know what the source of that guidance is? There are two forms of guidance that God provides for the Christian today. The lesser of the two is in the circumstances that are presented to us in our lives. God opens and closes doors of opportunity

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- 1 Corinthians 16:8–9 But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; <sup>9</sup> for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.
- 2 Corinthians 2:12–13 Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup> I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.
  - Note: It is interesting that we have God opening the door for the gospel to Troas and when Titus did not arrive with the collection from Corinth, he left for Macedonia to meet up with him sooner. The door of Troas was closed and the immediate work of Paul focused on Philippi.
- Acts 14:27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.
  - Note: Paul and the mission team took the gospel to the regions of Asia. Even though he was followed by Judaizers and ended up being stoned, there were many converts to the faith. To this opportunity Paul referred to as an “open door” from God to grow the kingdom.

Jesus opens and closes many doors in our lives. Many of the decisions that we think are in our control are likely not. That marriage candidate might not want to be married, then what? That job opportunity is not offered, then what? That prayer for healing might not carry with it the results that we were looking for, then what? That new car that you wanted might not be in your budget, then what? These are all examples on how the circumstances of life that God allowed or did not allow will dictate what guidance we receive.

The second and far more important source of guidance that God provides for the Christian is through His holy word. Psalm 119:105 states “*Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*” There is a beautiful hymn of the Christians that comes from this verse. We will sing it at this time in preparation of the “Guidance of God”.

### Song 449 “Thy Word”

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path (Repeat)

When I feel afraid think I lost my way, Still You're there right beside me  
Nothing will I fear, As long as You are near and please be near me to the end

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path (Repeat)

I will not forget your love for me and yet, My heart forever is wandering  
Jesus be my guide and hold me to Your side, And I will love You to the end

Nothing will I fear, As long as You are near, and please be near me to the end

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
And a light unto my path You're the light unto my path

It is in the written word of God that we find the direction that we are looking for in our lives. Based on that and using Psalms as the key text, let us focus on the guiding quality of God.

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## The Heart of God Hermeneutic

The word hermeneutic refers to the standard of interpretation that one uses when seeking to understand the Bible. Whatever approach we have in this will ultimately change the outcome of our conclusions when making decisions in our daily living. The following hermeneutic is a simple and effective way to make God's word a guiding force for us.

### 1) Read the Bible every day.

- Psalm 119:160 The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

There are some people that are listening to this lesson and have yet to read the entire Bible. If you are a new Christian, then that is expected. If however you have been sitting in the pews for decades and have yet to read through the "sum" of His word, then how can you reasonably understand the guidance that God provides?

- Psalm 40:5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count.
- Psalm 92:5 How great are Your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep.

When we are not in the habit of reading the Bible every day, our focus cannot be truly on God's thoughts. If we truly believe the Bible is the word of God, then our reading schedule should reflect it. If we are claiming to be the people and claim to base it on the word of God, then read the Bible every day.

### 2) Attempt to understand the mind of God.

- Psalm 139:17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). Even though in the depth of His wisdom there is plenty revealed to us in His word (Dt 29:29) that we can understand. Much is to be learned about how God feels about certain issues of life from the Bible. With each Bible verse there is more information to be gleaned from the heart of God and added to our minds.

- *Psalm 18:20 The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.* (Translated: God rewards us in accordance to whether we are living a righteous life.)
- *Psalm 101:5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.* (Translated: God does not want us to tear down others and to have humility in our lives.)
- *Psalm 146:9 The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, But He thwarts the way of the wicked.* (Translated: God has a heart for those in need. He loves those that are at risk.)

All three of these can be combined with hundreds of other revealing verses for confirmation. All three of these thoughts can be understood and more importantly be applied.

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### 3) Make life decisions based in that knowledge of God.

1 Samuel 13:14 states of David “*The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.*” This is further confirmed in Acts 13:22 “*...He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, ‘I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.’*” David is remembered in history in such a way not because he was perfect, but that he genuinely sought out the word of the Lord for the purpose of application in his life.

- Psalm 40:8 I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.”
- Psalm 119:11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.
- considered in such a way because he sought out what was in the heart of God and attempted to carry it out
- Psalm 86:11 Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.
- Psalm 25:5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.

All knowledge from the Bible will do no good if it is not applied. James addresses this in *James 1:22–24* *But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.* <sup>23</sup> *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;* <sup>24</sup> *for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.* If we have a firm grip on the scriptures and are using them to understand the mind of God, then we can better apply it to our lives.

The “Heart of God” Hermeneutic is the most applicable means of recognizing God as our guide. Try it out and see for yourselves. God wants to be your Guide; the Psalms recognize this; we need it; the Lord expects it.

### Special Note:

If the first step, reading the Bible every day, is not taken seriously, great problems are likely to ensue. When we are not practiced in the study of God’s word, the result is likely a misrepresentation of what is at the “Heart of God”. Lacking a firm and broad biblical base leaves them vulnerable to formulating narrow-minded and/or unbiblical perspectives. Remember that the “Heart of God” hermeneutic is striving to determine the known thoughts of God and applying them to our lives.

### Service 5: Guidance from God

412 – Jesus, Hold my Hand

Prayer

31 – Be Still and Know

406 – Just a Closer Walk with Thee

Lord's Supper

134 – The Lord's my Shepherd

Sermon (449 – Thy Word: sung during the sermon)

391 – Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us