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## Guidance

*“One reason why we fail to hear God speak is that we are not attentive. We suffer from what might be called ‘spiritual mindlessness.’” – John Ortberg*

One of the greatest tasks of a follower of Jesus is to learn the importance of how to listen to God and live our lives in response to God’s leading. The discipline of guidance helps us to learn that guidance and direction for our lives comes both in individual and in corporate ways.

The discipline of guidance teaches us that prayer and interaction with God is as much about listening to God as it is about speaking to God. The disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, and meditation all prepare us for listening to God. The discipline of guidance helps us to develop the spiritual ears and eyes that are necessary for hearing and seeing God’s direction for our lives.

An important aspect of the discipline of guidance is learning to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through what others in the body of Christ are saying and doing. Richard Foster says, “God does guide the individual richly and profoundly, but He also guides groups of people and can instruct the individual through the group experience. Perhaps our preoccupation with private guidance is the product of our Western individualism. The people of God have not always been so.”<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to stray in this discipline so that it becomes a “fleece” for determining the will of God. But it is important to understand that it has more to do with character than tasks. John Ortberg says, “God’s purpose in guidance is not to get us to perform the right actions. His purpose is to help us become the right kind of people.”<sup>2</sup>

- Make the conscious effort as you interact with people this week to listen for promptings from the Holy Spirit. Don’t just listen to what the people are saying, but also try to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying. This will help you to be with people in the same way that Jesus was with people.
- An excellent way to practice the discipline of guidance is through the influence of a spiritual director. If you do not already have someone who functions as a spiritual director in your life, consider finding one as soon as possible.
- Spend some time intentionally reviewing your times of prayer. Reflect on what you find yourself saying, what you sense God communicating, what you feel, what is easy, what is difficult, etc. Learning to be more reflective in the area of prayer will assist you in the area of guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 151.

<sup>2</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 143.