

Helpful Steps in Discerning God's Will



BRIDGES COACHING

If you have a next step you are considering or a dream or goal you are contemplating, here's a helpful step-by-step process using wisdom from the book of Proverbs. Use these P's to invite input and feel stronger about your decision and avoid what we like to call "throwing the God card" where a person just says, "God told me to..." and does not wisely invite input from others.

In the end, the decision is yours. You need to move forward, pause, or table the plan and live with the choice you have made. Wise people invite input. Mature people discern wisely and invite others into the process.

Start here:

Step #1 Clarify your **Prompting** or next step. Write it in a sentence from. What exactly do you want to take through this filter system?

Step #2 Write out what is prompting you toward this? How have you felt led by the Spirit?

These first two steps are what you will want to share with the people you are inviting in this process, but first let's go a little deeper.

Step #3 Ask yourself if you have **Peace** and a **Passion** in your in own heart for this goal. On occasion people find that what they are pursuing isn't even something they want. Someone else told them to do it, or they feel obligated to follow through on something that really isn't even in their heart to do.

God is offering to guide you.

Proverbs 4:11, "I will teach you wisdom's ways and lead you in straight paths."

Stop here and consider if this focus you are taking through these filters is even in your heart as a passion area and do you have peace to pursue it further at this time.

He speaks to us through His Spirit in our own hearts, but also, we are encouraged to guard our hearts.

Proverbs 4:23, "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life."

Incorporating the following principles is a way to offer for God to speak to you and confirm your next step or goal, clarify the timing or even redirect your path in a different direction.

Step #4 Check your goal with **Passages** of scripture.

Check it out with scripture. Is there anything amiss with your desire? On occasion our hearts deceive us.

Proverbs 3:7, "Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil."

Truly viewing your goal through the lens of scripture helps you be more sure of your next step. If you are trying to justify a goal that doesn't align with scripture, you can redirect here before you bring anyone else into it. (Examples could be something with a wrong motive or shady actions.)

What verse(s) could you claim as touch points if you find you are moving forward with this goal?

Step #5 Make your own lists to start with and add on as you move through the pathway.

What are the pros and cons of this focus? (Write them here or start a document or journal.)

Pros:

Cons:

Similarly, but a little different, list the costs and benefits of this focus:

Costs:

Benefits:

Somewhere in these lists make sure to include the risks of moving forward as well as the cost of wondering if you should have moved forward.

Step #5 Run it by your **Parents**.

Proverbs 13:1, "A wise child accepts a parent's discipline; a mocker refuses to listen to correction."

The age of "adulthood" is an American thing, not necessarily a Biblical one. If you are still living with your parents this is even more true. Even if you are well established as an adult and have your own family there is still value in asking your parents perspective in whatever you are thinking about.

Note: Asking perspective is different than asking permission! And this rings true for the other people you will be inviting into this process as well.

Build your lists by asking what pros and cons they may see. Ask what they like about the option and what concerns they may have.

Proverbs 15:5, "Only a fool despises a parent's discipline; whoever learns from correction is wise."

Getting input on the front side of an option is always better than hearing there were concerns from someone after a mistake is made. Why wouldn't you want input ahead of time?

When you ask for their perspective be sure to ask in a way that allows you to be responsible for the decision in the end. Your inquiry is to ensure you are going into this with your eyes open and aware of any potential blind spots.

You should not ask your parents, or anyone, to make a decision for you. You are responsible for your life and your choices and God wants you to make decisions or yourself. In fact, maybe it is best not to even ask what they would do if they were you, or whether, or not, they think it is a good idea.

Be sure you share your heart with them. Share the research you have done, share your lists, share why you are considering this option at this time. When you present your choice in the end be sure you ask for their blessing on whatever decision you make. Ask if they will support you and walk with you whatever may come.

You may want to include others here as well like your spouse's parents (if you are married), grandparents, significant aunts and uncles, or spiritual parents.

What specific questions do you want to ask?

Who do you want to include in this step?

Step #6 Inquire of your **Partners.**

Proverbs 27:6, "Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy."

Who in your life will be affected by this decision? A spouse, co-workers, a team, possibly even your children or adult children depending on the decision. Each of these people

could have valuable insights and if your decision will affect their lives, it is even more important to have their insights and buy-in.

Pull from the question prompts in Step #5 but add inquiring about how this decision will affect their lives, what costs they see for you and for them in the process and whether the outcome will be worth this investment for all involved.

What questions would be most helpful here?

Who should be included in this group?

Step #7 Get input from your **Pastor** or leaders.

Proverbs 15:22, "Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success."

Take some time and ask a variety of people who you look up to as spiritually mature. Don't necessarily go to the lead pastor, especially if they don't know you personally- go to those who know you, those who are walking with you like a small group leader or mentor. Remember this is not about permission, but about learning and growing, gaining perspective.

What specific questions do you want to ask?

Who should you invite to speak into your life as a spiritual leader?

Step #8 Get input from **Professionals**

Proverbs 15:22, "Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success."

Another possible group to get input from. Consider if there are any professionals that could or should speak into this decision. If you are considering a career shift or a project that someone may have expertise in it would be wise to ask them what they know now that they wish they would have known on their journey. They can likely add to your costs and benefits list as well.

In this group you could also consider any professionals that know your life well. If you have a counselor, therapist, mentor or even coach in your life, asking them for input could be quite valuable.

What specific questions do you want to ask?

What professionals should you invite to speak into your life?

Step #9 Ask your **Peers**

Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so people can improve each other."

Pick a couple friends who will be honest with you and perhaps ones who have a different viewpoint than you. It can be easy to only share what you see with your leaders and think you are being gut-level honest, but your friends see your real life. They often know your strengths and weaknesses better than you do. Asking them for honest input could be the most valuable step.

Try questions about concerns they may have, patterns they see, costs they want to highlight etc. But also ask questions about what they like about the idea, what it could give you or how it could benefit the world.

What do you want to ask?

Who do you need to weigh in?

Step #9 Particulars tell us a lot. They pull in circumstances and help consider timing

Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust the LORD with all your heart, and don't depend on your own understanding. Remember the LORD in all you do, and he will give you success."

There are some sub steps in this one:

- Make a list of what you would need in order to move forward.
- Make a second list of what is holding you back
- Take some time in prayer and ask if these things are God's way of telling you to wait or He is telling you to press through.

Sometimes what you are hearing or wanting to focus on is the right thing, but the timing is off. You may need to save up for this next step or take time to accumulate other resources. The delay is not a “no” just a wait.

Step #10 Prayer

Proverbs 4:11, “I am guiding you in the way of wisdom, and I am leading you on the right path.”

Now set aside some time to pray. Take your lists with you and lay them on an altar, maybe even literally, and ask God for guidance. You are not checking to see if the costs outweigh the benefits or if the pros outweigh the cons, you are lifting this decision up to the Lord with a fuller understanding of what is involved.

You may, or may not, get a clear “word” from God, but you can move forward, pause, or table your idea with more confidence and connection.

Step #11 Process

It may help to talk out your decision with a coach. Whether you are a verbal processor or not, having to explain what you are thinking and feeling as well as sharing what you found out in these steps often brings clarity.

ENJOY THE JOURNEY!

May these steps help you discern God’s guidance for whatever you are considering!