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Angels and Guidance

Acts 8:26-40; 10:1-48

The meeting had lasted several hours. Every aspect of the decision we were facing had been debated, analyzed and discussed. All that remained was to make the decision! A long silence settled over the room. One question put everything in perspective: "How do we know if this is God's will?"

That is a question every Christian faces at times. We would be willing to make any decision, even one that would result in difficulty and sacrifice, if we just knew for certain what God's desire was.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What person or resource do you rely on most when you need advice? Give an example of when you have relied on that advice and what the results were.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Think back to a time when you needed the Lord's guidance in a decision. How did you go about seeking his direction?

Sometimes God gives his people guidance when they aren't even seeking it. The early Christians were pretty content to keep the gospel confined within the Jewish community. What burdened God's heart, however, was the world! So God began to move his people in a totally new and unexpected direction—and God used angels to help open the door. *Read Acts 8:26-40.*

1. Describe both what the angel does and how Philip responds (vv. 26-28).

2. God sent an angel to point Philip in the direction of a seeking man. Why didn't God just send the angel directly to the eunuch?

3. An angel directed Philip to the road; the Spirit of God directed him to a specific person (v. 29). What distinctions can you draw between how an angel may guide a Christian and how the Spirit guides a Christian?

4. God obviously "sets up" this opportunity to witness about Jesus. How does that perspective help you with your fears about evangelism?

5. Imagine yourself faced with the eunuch's questions (vv. 31-35). What thoughts and feelings would you have in such a situation?

What steps can you take to grow in knowledge and faith so you will be prepared for such opportunities?

6. *Read Acts 10.* How would you characterize Cornelius's responses to God's messages?

How would you characterize Peter's responses to the messages he received?

7. An angel brought God's message to Cornelius, but the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter (vv. 19-20). When you are seeking God's guidance, should you look for an angel, listen for the Spirit's voice, or both? Explain how you came to your conclusion.

8. If a friend told you that an angel had given him or her specific guidance in a decision, how would you respond to your friend's claim?

9. Peter's visit resulted in the conversion of Cornelius's whole family. Should we look for confirming evidence of God's leading in our lives? Why or why not?

10. As the result of this study, what will you ask God for when you must make a difficult decision?

Pray that God will give you a sensitive heart to his direction in your life.

Now or Later

Read Matthew 1:20-21; 2:13, 19-20. Three times an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. What specific details would lead Joseph to conclude that these were genuine angelic messages and not just imaginative fantasies?

Would you rather have the permanent (but quiet) leading of the Spirit in your life or the occasional (but spectacular) instruction of angels? Explain the pros and cons of each experience.