

Guidance

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Date: 26 July 2009

Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] You are what you eat. So some people say, what you consume makes up your physical makeup, your product of what you consume.

! You are what you believe. ! So says the Bible. Or, you practice what you believe. In this brief study, we're talking about how what we believe.

The doctrines of grace, or Calvinism, or Reformed theology, how those things should affect the way we live. And we've focused in on three particular areas so far. We've talked about how those things should affect our worship, how they should affect our assurance.

That was last week, and the week before that, our outlook on life. And today, one more. This is the last class that I'll have with you this month. And I think Jason will begin teaching this class again in August.

But one further area where the doctrines of grace should affect our lives, there's many that we could name, but this is just the last one that we'll focus on, is guidance. Guidance.

[1:04] And maybe you think, guidance? Maybe you should go down to that class with all the young whippersnappers down there that need to figure out what they're going to do with their lives, and how to raise their kids, and some of them, who they're going to marry, and all of those things.

You think, I'm not at a point in my life where I need guidance anymore. And even Terry Johnson, we're using his book, When Grace Comes Home, he begins this chapter saying, Whom shall I marry?

Where shall I live? Where shall I work? These are the three big questions in life. And I dare say, for most of you, you've got those settled. Whom I'm going to marry?

Where I'm going to live? And what I'm going to do? And so, what's the point of a Sunday school lesson on guidance? Well, I hope that given what you've studied and the class on growing old gracefully, that you see the need for guidance from God at this point in your life, whatever that point is, and that's different.

There's a broad range of people in here. Some people just didn't have kids that made the 10 and under cut off, and so we've got some younger folks in here, and some don't have kids in the house anymore, and they've got grandkids even that are grown.

[2:08] So, wherever you are in life in this group, that's a big range. But wherever that is, you still need guidance. You still need help from God. You still need Him to show you what you ought to do.

And Johnson notes that there's other questions besides the big three that he names for which we need guidance. You all help me out. What are some matters where you are in your life right now where you need guidance, where you need direction from God?

What do you need help with? There. Okay, what Mike does after he retires. How should I spend my time once I'm retired?

Good, good. Need guidance for that. What else? Wait, what you should do after he retires, or what he should do? Oh, him. Okay, all right. All right.

Somebody else had a hand up. Jim. Okay. Okay. Good. We need guidance to do what's pleasing. Guidance for how to run the business that we have.

[3:06] Good. What else? Eileen. Raising our kids. Just because you're not down in the parenting class doesn't mean you're still not raising your kids. We need guidance for that.

Good. Ed. Okay. That takes guidance. We need some help from God. And how can I use my gifts and resources best at this point in life? And where are my resources going to come from?

Good. Lou. Amen. Amen. Just everyday life. Every step of the way. Good. What else do you need guidance for? Jim.

That's a good choice of words. Maybe. Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

You change. Your spouse changes. Life changes. Circumstances change. You need guidance on ordering your marriage in a way that's honoring to God. Good. Good. You might need some guidance afterwards, brother.

[4:01] I don't know. All right. Good. Good. Anything else we need guidance for? Okay.

That's a good list. Yeah. Questions about retirement. Questions about employment and how we should run our business, our resources, how we should spend our time, our marriage, our children. How much time and energy should I give to this pursuit or that? What should I pursue? If I have more free time, if I'm retired, if I don't have any free time, I've still got kids in my house. How do I use that time best to please God? I focus on my spouse and my children. How do I balance that? All right. And I trust that you're practically working through some of those things. And in light of the previous Sunday school series on growing old gracefully and using your time and resources well. And I'm encouraged to say that I've seen some of you finding the answers to some of these questions.

[5:00] How am I going to spend my time? How can I be useful? I've seen you all working out what you learned in that other Sunday school class. And I thank God that he's guiding you into greater usefulness and service for his church and for his people.

Let's go back today and look at some basic principles of guidance that should apply no matter what stage of life you find yourself in. Whether you've got a newborn at home like I do, or whether you've got newborn grandkids or newborn great grandkids, or somewhere in between.

How does God guide us? Let's lay a little groundwork to start with. And one assumption to begin with is that God leads his people. We're talking about guidance from God here is what we're aiming at.

And I guess I haven't made that explicit, but we're looking about how God guides us and directs us. And we're assuming that God guides us, that he leads his people. Any scripture references pop to mind that indicate that God leads us, that he guides us, that he doesn't just leave us to ourselves? Okay, Isaiah 58, 11. Excellent. Anybody else? Okay, direct our footsteps according to your word. Good. Anybody else? Okay, excellent.

[6:07] Instruct, teach you, counsel you. That's guidance. Good. Somebody else was? Okay. Alright. The dare standard version. And that's right. He will.

Okay. How about Psalm 23? Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.

He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Or Psalm 25. Verse 12. Who then is the man that fears the Lord?

He will instruct him in the way chosen for him better, in the way he chooses. God instructs us, and in the verses before that he talks about guiding and teaching. He instructs us in the ways that we choose.

In the choices that we make. The question is not usually whether or not God guides us, but rather how he does it. And a couple errors to avoid as we lay some groundwork.

[7:02] We're assuming, one, that God does guide his people. But secondly, some errors to avoid. And one is, Johnson calls the excess of the super spiritual, for whom inner promptings, unusual providences, dreams, and voices apart from the word become infallibly authoritative.

These are the people that say, God told me to do this. And they claim some specific, special word from God. Now, we're going to balance all this out, okay?

But this is one extreme. They just say, God told me. He spoke to me, and he said to do this. That's one extreme to avoid. But the other extreme is one that says, the Bible is my blueprint for life, and we need no illumination or supernatural help from God to guide us on our way.

It's sort of a deism. God has set us up in this world, and he gave us the handbook for the world, and now he's hands off. He's not going to lead or guide. He's just going to step back and let us find our own way.

He's given us some help. He's given us the Bible, but he's hands off. It's the clockmaker. God winds up the world, and then he lets it run on its own. And so we want to avoid going to that extreme, or the supernatural, or the super supernatural.

[8:12] What did he call it? The excess of the super spiritual, God told me. And we want to strike a balance between these two things. And to do that, we want to see three things.

One, the Spirit's illumination. We're going to talk a little bit about the Holy Spirit, how he illumines us, gives us grace to understand. And then we're going to talk about some sort of, I guess, more broadly evangelical principles for guidance.

These are things that pretty much any evangelical Christian would agree with. And then a Reformed supplement, something that we as Reformed believers can add into that and give us a fuller picture of how God guides us.

But let's start with the Spirit's illumination. Though we don't believe that God speaks to us in a way that says, Aaron, you should go buy this car, we do believe that He's given us the Spirit to guide us, to direct us, and to help us to understand His Word and the circumstances that He gives us.

When you talk about the work of the Spirit, you can always run the risk of saying too much, like God told me, X. And to qualify this, we're cessationists.

[9:21] Who can tell me what that means? What it means to be a cessationist?

C-E-S-S-A-T-I-O-N-I-S-T. Cessationist. Mark.

Okay? Yeah, they ceased. The word there is, yeah, they ceased. We don't believe that God is giving new revelation anymore. That ceased with the closing of the canon, the completion of the Scriptures.

And Lord willing, in a couple months, we're going to have a Sunday school class on that, on the canon, the forming of the Bible, how that all came to be, and some of those matters. But as our confession says, we believe that the manner in which God formally revealed His will has long ceased.

You know, God revealed Himself to prophets and to apostles and to those that wrote the Bible, and they wrote down His Word and He was giving revelation. We don't believe that process is happening anymore. That has ceased. It's come to an end.

But even when God was giving new revelation, it wasn't the ordinary experience of average people that God came to them and said, you should do this. God more usually revealed Himself to prophets and apostles, not just to anybody, and said, well, who should I marry?

[10:29] And God gave them a revelation. That's not usually how it worked, even when God was giving further revelation. But this is not to deny the ongoing work and influence of the Holy Spirit.

Johnson says, His work, this side of the completion of the canon of Scripture, should be understood as that of illumination and not inspiration. The Holy Spirit is the key to guidance, but He guides us not by giving us new information, as in do this or that, but by illuminating the given Word and our circumstances, and thereby showing us the path of wisdom.

When we pray in Psalm 119, verse 18, Open my eyes that I may see wonderful lit things from Your law. We're not asking for new revelation. We're asking that God would send a Spirit to open our eyes to understand the revelation that He's given.

And the Spirit is the one who answers that prayer. Or John 16, verses 13 and 14, But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.

He will not speak on His own. He will speak only what He hears. And He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. He will guide you into all truth.

[11:39] That's the work of the Spirit. To open our minds, our eyes, our hearts to understand the Word that God has given and the circumstances that God puts us in. The illumination of the Spirit. Well, how does that work out?

Well, that's the next point. These evangelical principles of guidance. Things that we share in common with most Bible-believing Christians about how God guides us. Not unique to us as Reformed believers.

And there's three things here. God guides us by His Word, by prayer, and by wise counsel. And again, this isn't rocket science. This is hopefully self-evident in some ways.

God guides us by His Word, through prayer, and through guidance. Let's start with His Word. His Word, to begin with, tells us to do some things and tells us not to do other things. And those things should be obvious to us.

Johnson says, literally thousands of options are eliminated by the Bible's influence on us. Nothing that is illegal, immoral, selfish, or unloving can even be considered. So the Bible says, you must do some things and you must not do other things.

[12:41] And that guides us. So if you're thinking about marriage, for example, God guides you very clearly to marry only in the Lord. So you're wondering, is this person the right one for me?

Well, if they're not a believer, then they're not the right one for you. Okay? God's Word guides us. It's very clear on that point. You shouldn't pursue a profession as a hitman, an extortionist, or a prostitute because God's Word forbids murder, theft, and adultery.

Okay? God is guiding you. You say, that's obvious, but He's guiding you and giving you commands. Commanding some things and forbidding other things. You're looking for guidance on how to raise your children or on how to be a good grandparent.

Well, it's clear that God's Word teaches raising them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It teaches not letting them have their own way. And so that's plain to us. Complete self-indulgence in retirement with no thought of God or His kingdom is forbidden since we do all things with an eye to God and for His glory.

Should I worship? Yes. God tells you to. Should I set apart the Lord's day as holy and keep it holy to the Lord? Yes. God's Word tells you. He guides us.

[13:52] He tells us to do some things and not to do other things. But His Word also works in a way that's a little bit more subtle than that. His Word shapes our desires, our outlook, and our perspective.

Johnson says, by the constant reading, study, and meditation upon God's Word, we begin to think God's thoughts after Him. And that's a statement from Calvin. The more you soak up the Word of God, the more you begin to think like God does.

The more you begin to look around at the world and view it the way God does. You look at your settings and your circumstances and you see it the way God does. And so the Bible paints for us a picture of, let's go back to marriage, a picture of marriage as good and honorable.

It shows us qualities of faithful husbands and wives. And when you talk about work and retirement, it shows us that working with our gifts that God has given is noble and it's pleasing to Him.

And so Johnson says, thus a godly single man will seek a Christian wife, both because this is what Scripture demands and because Scripture has shaped his desires so that this is also what he wants, even longs for.

[14:58] If I were not looking for, and he moves from marriage to a job, if I were looking for a job, the Scripture would tell me not to look for a job as a drug pusher or a gangster, but it would also tell me of the dignity of labor and to look for work that maximizes my gifts while serving the church and society.

And so as we face various choices in life and various paths and things, we could do this or we could do this, what should I do? We don't only consider what we think and what we want and what we like and what seems or feels good to us, we try to look at the situation as God would, and the more familiar we are with the Bible, with the Scriptures, the more natural that will be.

the more you saturate yourself in the Word of God, the easier it will be to look at the circumstances and the setting before you and see it as God sees it.

So if you want guidance, I trust that you're studying God's Word. I trust that you're seeking to think His thoughts after Him. That should become almost like second nature to us as we draw closer and closer to Him in communion, listening to His Word, speaking to Him in prayer.

Prayer is the next way. God guides us through His Word and also through prayer. James 1.5 If any of you lacks wisdom, He should, He should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to Him.

[16:23] Do we need to say any more? You want wisdom? You want guidance? Ask God. See Pastor John's message on that passage. Now God's not going to give an audible answer, but He may give you new insight into His Word.

He may so order the circumstances of your life that the proper path is unmistakable. Quiet your heart in prayer before God, seeking His guidance and wisdom. God delights to give good gifts to His children.

So ask. Jesus prayed prior to the important decision of selecting the twelve apostles. Luke 6. 12 and 13. One of those days, Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God.

When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them whom He had also designated apostles. We find Jesus, the Son of God, praying. Depending on the Spirit, we find that language in the Scripture that He does things in the power of the Spirit.

Shouldn't we do the same? Pray and seek the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It should be our regular practice praying and seeking guidance from God.

[17:27] Not just when we face big decisions. We get into life all of a sudden and there's this big decision to make and then we pray. We should have been praying all along. We should have been seeking His face all along.

It should be our regular habit and practice. Johnson says, Do not minimize the foolishness of the human heart or the thickness of the human skull. We are slow and prone to error.

We need the wisdom of God if we are to live wisely. To get it, we must ask. I don't know you all, but I'm thick skulled too often.

And I need God's wisdom and so I need to ask. So He guides us through His Word, He guides us through prayer and then through godly counsel. Seek godly, wise people who have been down this road before you.

Coming up on retirement maybe. You don't know how to best use your time and resources. There are people right here in this room that have gone down that path before you.

[18:26] I'd talk to them. I'd see what they did. See what they learned. Find the mistakes that they made. The things that helped them. Find some godly counsel. There's a wealth of counsel sitting in the seats right around you.

And even some more down there with the younger folks. You can find godly counsel. You've got trouble in your marriage and you're unsure what to do. Find the godly couple who's been through the same struggles and learn from them.

God's given us wise people in our lives. take advantage of it. Proverbs 11 and verse 14 where there is no guidance of people falls but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

That's the ESV version. Proverbs 12, 15 the way of a fool seems right to him but a wise man listens to advice. You've got counselors.

Listen to them. And that should especially make sense to us if we understand anything of the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Jeremiah 17, 9 the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

[19:28] Who can understand it? I don't know about you but I'm good at rationalizing my way around sin and poor choices and making poor choices seem like good choices because it's something that I want that I know I really shouldn't want.

I'm good at deceiving myself. At rationalizing in that way. You know what helps you correct your perspective? Another set of eyes that can look at you and go you're just you're deceived.

You're blind. You're not seeing what you're saying. You're not seeing what you're about to do here. And so understand the deceitfulness of your own heart and seek wise guidance. We see that principle reflected lots of places in society.

In the church we've got three branches of government checks and balances so the misguided ideas of one person can't control everything. We have a plurality of elders in the church.

The traditional home God gives two parents to make decisions for the children. And the call to the ministry there's the inward call and I'm convinced that I'm called to the ministry but then there's the outward call the church has to confirm that.

[20:35] There's a multitude of counselors in preaching. I seek to study the text for myself and exegete it but then I make sure I read the commentaries too and more than one of them because there's help in an abundance of counselors.

See if I've really missed the boat here. And is that principle reflected in your life? You like to make decisions flying solo. I'm sort of an independent kind of guy.

I don't really like to ask other people for advice. I don't think I need it. What's your tendency?

There's great danger in not seeking godly counsel. It's one of the ways God has given to guide us. Okay, so far so good. God guides us. There's the illumination of the Spirit and then God guides us by His Word, by prayer, and by godly counsel. But now, one further area that should help us as we think about guidance and Johnson calls it a reformed supplement, something that we add to some of these evangelical principles.

We believe in the sovereignty of God, right? And so, we believe in a God of providence who is bringing all things in our individual lives to pass according to His plan.

[21:45] The abilities, gifts, desires, opportunities, and experiences that you have are things that God has given to you. Now, interpreting providence can be very tricky and even dangerous business, but when we do so guided by God's Word and in dependence on Him, we have another help in seeking guidance.

I want to think about three areas here. Creation, Providence, and Redemption. Creation. How did God make you? God made you what you are. He made you who you are and He made us all very different, didn't He?

You can look around and you can see that's true physically and then you can look around and think about the interest of different people here and you can see that that's true in more than just physical ways. He made us different. Johnson says, There have been no accidents.

He, God, is the author of all the factors. Because He is, we may assume that all of these things work together in indicating the kind of life that God has ordained that I should live.

Profound insight into what God wants from us may be found in understanding what God has made of us. Some people are born with a gift and inclination for music and others very clearly are not.

[23:00] And you know that. some are born with a natural athleticism and strength and others are not. Some are born with a natural bent towards numbers and mathematics.

Others are not. Not good at math. Don't get it. Doesn't click very well with me. I can add, but just not a big number. My wife was an accounting major.

I can't. That just would have bored me to tears, I think. But she loved it. She loved the numbers, how they all add up or how to find it when they don't add up. I'm not that way. Some were born with an appreciation of science and the way the world works.

They loved to see the laws of nature and how they interact and interplay and how God sometimes supersedes those laws and miracles. I'm one of those people. I love science. I love to see how things work like that.

Some people are born with a shy and timid nature. Others are born with a boldness that's fearless to talk with a stranger, to stand up in front of people and give a presentation. Some people are just boring.

[24:07] It doesn't bother them. It doesn't faze them. And other people, you couldn't pay them enough money to stand up in front of a group of people because they're, by nature, less bold.

They're shy or timid, which is fine. Some are born with a speech impediment and others are born with a golden tongue. Some have an analytical mind and others have a more, I don't mean this in a derogatory way, I just couldn't think of how else to put it, an artsy sort of way of thinking about things.

Creative. Thank you. Creative. I just crossed out artsy.

See, I'm not very that way. Now, some of these things can be learned or taught. They can be emphasized and helped.

They can be downplayed. But, they're natural tendencies with which God has made us. And so, what are your natural tendencies? And that gives you a hint about some of the things that you can and could do in life or could do with your retirement or direction in your vocation.

[25:19] How did God make you? I'm not talking about sinful tendencies or desires. Those are things that must be curbed and denied. And we see that when we talk about redemption in a moment. But, how did God make you? And Johnson says, how do you apply these principles?

These are the questions I would ask of someone who is seeking God's guidance. Who made you? God? Well then, what has He made you to be? What are your natural gifts? What are your natural instincts? Why would God have given to you these gifts and interests unless He intended you to use, even develop these gifts?

Isn't it honoring to the Creator when that which He creates functions to its fullest capacity? So how did God make you? Creation. But then providence.

Where were you born? What experiences and opportunities have you had? That's going to be a very different answer if you ask me than if you ask you.

Because we're born in all sorts of different places and have had all sorts of different opportunities and circumstances in life. A person born and raised in the Deep South might have real issues trying to plant a church in upstate New York.

[26:28] That's a fact. They talk different in the Deep South and all sorts of things. What are the opportunities that you've had? I was born in South Carolina. I'm a Clemson fan. Sometimes that helps me and sometimes that hurts me.

Depends on who I'm talking to. Those are some of the opportunities that I've had as I've grown up. I lived in California for three years. That gives me a point of contact and an open door over here with a certain person that somebody that hasn't lived in California might not have.

Maybe you were born and raised and grew up in northern Indiana and you have a bent towards history. Well, that makes you a great person to do some research and writing about the history of northern Indiana.

Good. Do it. Me? Not so much. I've lived here for seven years and I'll say to somebody, I met so-and-so, I've known them for years, I knew their dad and their granddad and their brother and everybody else and they know all these connections and I don't know that stuff.

I'm working on it and they know all the little towns all around northern Indiana. I don't know that. I'm working. I've got seven years of it under my belt but I'm not there like somebody that was born and raised here.

[27 : 37] I've had the opportunity to learn the sport of soccer in my life. That opens up a door for me to coach kids playing soccer whereas faced with the decision of joining the knitting club, one, I'm not creative and crafty.

That's different? I told you, I don't know. So, you know, here's the knitting club. I'm not really interested and I haven't had the opportunity to learn that.

That hasn't been the place God has put me in life. So, I'm not going to be really so inclined to crafty, creative, artsy. That's not the opportunities and not how God has put me together.

My providential experiences are going to point me one direction. Yours are going to point you another direction. I was, I have time for this, I was guided last night to the Plymouth Motor Speedway.

What in the world? God gave me a child that loves cars. Loves race cars. He's got a bent for things that go fast.

[28 : 49] God made him that way and he's seen the movie Cars and so he's had that providential opportunity. He's formed into a little boy that loves race cars and so I've done special things with others of our kids and I hadn't done something big with Andrew and so Andrew and I went to the Plymouth Motor Speedway night.

Now, you take your kid to the Plymouth Motor Speedway and he might be bored to tears and be begging to leave. My kid sat there entranced for four hours, didn't move. I try to do that with him at a baseball game.

He's all over the place. He's cotton candy, whatever, and we did some of that but that's providence and creation working together to lead me to a place that it didn't lead you last night.

At least I didn't see any of you there unless you were in disguise. So you apply these principles.

You ask the questions about how God made you but then you ask the questions what opportunities have you had?

Who has given them to you? Isn't God sovereign over your opportunities and lack of opportunities? That's a quote from Johnson applying those things. So there's creation, providence, and then redemption.

[29 : 56] And that's what guards us from going astray. For the child of God, we view these goals and inclination and desires and gifts and opportunities and experiences through the lens of having been redeemed by the grace of God and wanting to use those things for His glory.

Now it doesn't mean everybody's going to be involved in formal Christian ministry but it means that whether you're working or retired, parenting or grandparenting, knitting or playing soccer, it means you're doing it for the glory of God.

You're seeking to honor Him in it. Not to bring glory to your own name. And so I'm not going to take my tiny smidgen of athletic inclination and it's small and the opportunity that I've had to learn soccer and I'm not going to go and try to make a great name for myself and fame and glory all for me.

Nothing wrong with being a professional athlete done with the right motives but a lot of times it's all about me. One, I would fail if I tried that. But two, that's not viewing it through the lens of redemption.

But I am going to get involved in a local soccer league and enjoy coaching kids and making contacts and work that into some sort of gospel witness. That's not going to work for some of you because you haven't been created like me and haven't had the opportunities I have.

[31 : 04] But it'll be different from you. I'm not going to be involved in the local horse riding club and I wouldn't be particularly welcome there. I don't really know much.

I know the difference between the different kinds of saddles and there's tack and there's bits, bridles, fillies, mares, foals.

You know, I know the words but I haven't learned that and I don't particularly haven't been. I went horseback or anyone so I enjoyed it. I think that's good but that's probably not the direction I'm going to go for you it may be.

Good. You can enjoy creation when you're doing that. You can praise God for it. It's going to lead you to contacts that I would never have. We can enjoy these things to God's glory and for good. The Apostle Paul is a great example of this I think and Johnson gives us sort of an extended picture from the life of Paul about how creation and providence and redemption were woven together in his life to guide him down the path that he went.

[32 : 14] And it's helpful enough that I'm going to read it to you and then just a comment will be done. He says, let me give an example. When was Paul called to be an apostle?

On the Damascus road when Jesus appeared to him in a blinding light. In one sense, yes. That was when the call itself was received. But he tells the Galatians that God had set him apart from my mother's womb.

Yes, he had been called through grace, through his grace on the Damascus road but Paul can look back over the whole of his life and see the hand of God at work. God was preparing him for the work of evangelizing the Gentiles while he was still in the womb.

And then all through his development prior to his conversion up to the Damascus road experience. I have known of people who have been converted as adults and then despised their natural gifts and family background and refused to make use of them.

As far as natural gifts and background relate to salvation, Paul regards them as rubbish. But he was born with Roman citizenship and when trapped he used it.

[33 : 16] You can find that in the book of Acts. He was trained as a Pharisee and when cornered identified with him defending himself as a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. He received a first-rate education from Gamaliel and the university at Tarsus and his use of it is obvious throughout his writing.

Thus when he looks back over the whole of his life he sees the sovereign God preparing him for his work each step of the way. All of the factors were ordained of God to equip him for the task of taking the gospel to the Gentiles.

The first Gentiles attending the Jewish synagogues. He understood the thinking of the strictest sect of Judaism and his most vehement opponents the Pharisees and later Judaizers.

Why? Because God had ordained that he should be born into a family of Pharisees. That was Paul's background. He was born a Pharisee. That helped him to understand and deal with the Pharisees. He knew the Jewish world but he was also born into a family of Pharisees living in a Gentile city Tarsus.

Thus he knew the Gentile world as well. He could speak and write the Greek language. He had been to their schools. He knew their thinking. He read their poets. When saved there were then added spiritual gifts on top of the natural.

[34 : 27] Creation, providence, and redemption were in harmony with each other. You see that in the life of the Apostle Paul. God gave him a background. He gave him certain opportunities and education. All of these things that fed into who he was and what he did and guided him down the path to being an apostle.

Culminated on the Damascus road there when the call was made explicit. You're not going to get a Damascus road but you do get all of those background things leading up to it, don't you? God pointing you, leading you, guiding you in a particular direction.

Are there any questions or comments before we wrap this up on how God guides us? The illumination of the Spirit, his word, prayer, wise counsel, and then these providential things.

The way we were made and the opportunities that he's given us. Any questions or comments? Okay. Good.

We're all well-guided people then, I trust. And we can pray that God will make it so. So we take the way that we were made, the providential opportunities that we've had and places we've been and we view them through the lens of redemption and make it our aim to honor God, never going against the commands and precepts of his word, seeking to think God's thoughts after him, praying for guidance for the illumination of the Spirit, seeking wise counsel along the way.

[35 : 54] May God make it so let's pray together and then we'll be dismissed. Father, we thank you that you've given us your word. We thank you that it does give us guidance and counsel for the things that we should do and the things that we should not do.

We pray that more and more your word would shape our thinking, that we might view the world as you view it, we might view the opportunities and choices as you would. And we pray that you would guide each person here in whatever stage of life they are, whether they have children at home still or their children are grown and out of the house and they have grandkids or they're thinking about retirement, whatever is lying before them, would you make the way plain?

Would you give them that gift of the Spirit to illumine their mind, to understand your word and the circumstances that you place them in? Would you give each of us grace to be frequently and often in your word studying so that we thank your thoughts after you.

Make us a people that thank your thoughts, Lord. Make us a people of prayer. Make us a people that aren't too proud to seek wise guidance. And we thank you that you've made us all different, that you've made us unique and that you've given us different opportunities and backgrounds.

And we pray that we would take those things and use them for your honor and your glory, for the good of your kingdom, all that you might be praised. And so, be our teacher then.

[37 : 13] And help us in the hour to come to give you the worship that's due to your name. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.