A Model Prayer for Guidance

“Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” (Psalm 25:4–5)

Every one of us struggles at one time or another with the desperate need for direction in life. What should we do? David’s answer was simple. He prayed. And we can learn from his prayer in Psalm 25.

This psalm contains at least 18 petitions in this psalm where David comes to God with every aspect of his situation.

He asks God to guard his life and deliver him from his enemies (25:20).
He asks God to turn toward him and to be gracious, relieving his loneliness (25:16).
He asks God not to remember the sins of his youth (25:7), but to pardon his guilt (25:11, 18).
He asks God to help him walk in integrity and uprightness (25:21).
He asks God to redeem and deliver Israel from trouble and oppression (25:22).
And in verses 4 and 5, he asks God to take away his uncertainty and confusion by helping him to know God’s ways by leading him in truth.
• List some of the prayer requests you make the most often. What are they? Are they prayers begging God to rescue you? Are they prayers of confession? Are they prayers of thanksgiving?

• Take some time this week to pray through the verses of Psalm 25. Use David’s outline and personalize your requests. Why do you need protection? When do you feel lonely and unsupported? How often do you feel guilty and condemned? Why?

• What would “walking in integrity” look like? Is there a spiritual mother or father you know who exemplifies an upright life of integrity? What incidents in your life can you remember that demonstrated integrity? Write them here.

In sum, David comes to God with his fear, loneliness, guilt, and confusion, pleading with God to make things right and to lead him in the way of love and faithfulness (25:10). I suppose most of us take David’s immediate response of prayer for granted. Of course, that’s what we do when we are uncertain about God’s will for your future—we pray.

**PRINCIPLES OF GOD’S GUIDANCE**

Pay close attention to this issue of guidance. How does God answer our prayer for His leading? When we face a decision and cannot find a biblical command relating directly to that specific choice, should we wait for a dream, a vision, or a voice in our ears? Will there be some miracle in our circumstances to point the way? God can certainly use any of these means. But it is important to note that these are not the usual means of guidance God uses in such cases. The Bible describes the ordinary guidance of God as originating in the development of our spiritual sensitivity and alertness to circumstances.

In other words, God guides us by bringing our hearts and minds into harmony with His own heart and mind. Therefore, when we study a situation, we work to discern what path would best concur with the character and purposes of God that we know from Scripture. So what we ought to be asking when we pray, “Lead me in your truth and teach me,” is that God would create in us a spiritual sensitivity to Himself and that He would help us see all the relevant factors that relate to the decision we’re about to make. God teaches us His way by alerting us to the significant facts of the situation and by awakening us to the implications of His purpose in it.

• Have you ever experienced a supernatural revelation of God’s guidance? What was it? Did you follow His voice? If you haven’t experienced “supernatural” leading, how does God ordinarily speak to you? List a particular incident where His leading was clear.

• How do you discern God’s will when you read scripture? How does scripture impact the way you pray through an issue?

• Do you ask God for guidance in your day-to-day activities, or do you save those prayers for life’s big landmark decisions? Why or why not do you feel comfortable petitioning God to lead in the “little things of life”? 

LESSONS FROM PSALM 25

What are the practical lessons we learn from David’s prayer model?

Lesson One: Trust. In the first few verses of the psalm, David says, “To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in You I trust.” The first step in knowing the will of God is trust—believing that He is who He says He is and that He will do what He says He will do. He is in charge of all things, and He operates in love. He is trustworthy.

• When you are in trouble, where do you go to seek help for your problem? Is it someone you know? Do you try to “fix it” yourself? How does your faith in God fit in to the equation?

• Do you have trouble trusting God and others? Were there experiences in your past that caused you to be guarded and skeptical of others? What were those painful experiences?

• Spend time meditating on Psalm 25:10: “All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep His covenant.” Thank God for the times He has shown Himself to be faithful and loving in your own life. Recall those experiences and list them below.

Lesson Two: Humility. “He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way” (Psalm 25:9). In other words, God-dependence and “lowly gentleness” (from the Hebrew adjective `anav) is an indispensable spiritual qualification for discerning what pleases the Lord. The quest for guidance must be a quest for humility. We have to place our own knowledge and desires aside, instead seeking out His.

• Read James 3:13-17. What will keep you from receiving wisdom, according to this passage? List the adjectives that describe what Divine wisdom look like. Can you recall a time in your life when you were not sure God was speaking? Did you struggle with any of those issues James mentioned in the passage?

• Is humility self-deprecation? Is it all right to be competent—or is that pride? What is the difference?

Lesson Three: Covenant Keeping. “All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies” (Psalm 25:10). The final step in discerning His direction for our lives is clear. We need to hold to His Word faithfully, observing and obeying it in every aspect of our lives.

• Spend time meditating on Psalm 25:10: “All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep His covenant.” (NIV) Thank God for the times He has shown Himself to be faithful and loving in your own life. Recall those experiences and list them below.

• In what aspect of your life would you like to be more sensitive to God’s leading? Have you made any promises to God? What were they? What are some of the most special promises God has made to you? Write them here.

So let’s make it very simple. How can we find God’s will for our lives? Trust God, be humble, and keep His covenant.