



BIBLE CONFIDENCE SERIES

How God Speaks Today

A beginner-friendly guide to hearing, testing, and following God's guidance with confidence

God has not left us guessing

God has spoken clearly through His Son and His written Word. The Holy Spirit helps believers understand and obey that truth. God may also guide through prayer, wisdom, godly counsel, circumstances, and spiritual gifts—but every claim must be tested by Scripture.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Many sincere Christians wonder whether a thought, feeling, dream, opportunity, or inner impression is from God. A biblical framework protects us from fear and confusion while helping us remain attentive, humble, and obedient.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path."

Psalm 119:105 WEB



START HERE

Does God still speak?

Yes—but we must define speak carefully. God's complete, trustworthy written revelation is found in Scripture, and Jesus is God's decisive self-revelation (Hebrews 1:1–3; 2 Timothy 3:16–17). Believers also depend on the Holy Spirit, who illuminates the Word, reminds us of truth, convicts of sin, produces godly fruit, and guides us in faithful living (John 14:26; 16:7–15; Galatians 5:16–25).

The short answer

Begin with what God has already said. No impression, teacher, dream, prophecy, opportunity, or personal experience has authority to correct, replace, or outrank Scripture.

Begin with four simple truths

01

God speaks truly

God does not lie or contradict Himself. His character and His written Word provide the standard for testing every claim (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2).

02

Jesus reveals the Father

To know what God is like, look to Jesus—the Word made flesh and the exact representation of God's being (John 1:1–18; Hebrews 1:3).

03

Scripture is sufficient

The Bible equips God's people for faith and obedience. We do not need hidden messages to know the gospel, God's moral will, or how to follow Jesus (2 Timothy 3:14–17).

04

Guidance must be tested

Christians are told neither to believe every spiritual claim nor to dismiss everything automatically. We examine it carefully and hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 John 4:1).

God's guidance will never make sin obedience

A message is not from God if it contradicts Scripture, excuses sin, denies Jesus, feeds pride, or pressures us to ignore wisdom and accountability.



HOW GOD GUIDES HIS PEOPLE

Six ordinary ways God leads believers

01

Through Scripture

The Bible reveals God's character, saving plan, commands, promises, wisdom, and priorities. It is the final standard for belief and practice (Psalm 19:7–11; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

02

Through the Holy Spirit

The Spirit helps believers understand truth, convicts of sin, forms Christlike character, and empowers obedience (John 16:8–15; Romans 8:13–16; 1 Corinthians 2:12–16).

03

Through prayer

Prayer aligns our desires with God, asks for wisdom, and brings decisions before Him. Prayer is relationship—not a technique for forcing an answer (Matthew 6:9–13; Philippians 4:6–7; James 1:5).

04

Through wise counsel

Mature believers, pastors, and the church can offer correction, perspective, confirmation, and wisdom (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; Ephesians 4:11–16).

05

Through providence

God sovereignly works through circumstances, opportunities, delays, and ordinary responsibilities. Circumstances matter, but they must be interpreted cautiously (Proverbs 16:9; Acts 16:6–10).

06

Through wisdom

Many decisions are not answered by a private message. God gives principles, renewed minds, experience, and freedom to choose faithfully (Romans 12:1–2; Colossians 1:9–10).

These guides work together

A wise decision should fit Scripture, honor Jesus, reflect godly character, welcome prayer and counsel, and remain humble about circumstances. One unusual feeling should not overrule the whole pattern.



ONE STORY WITH DIFFERENT MOMENTS

Why biblical experiences do not all look alike

Scripture records God speaking through prophets, dreams, visions, angels, the Law, wisdom, Jesus, apostles, and the written Word. It also records priestly Urim and Thummim and the casting of lots (Exodus 28:30; Acts 1:26). These methods belong to particular covenant or transitional moments; description is not automatic instruction for every believer.

01

God spoke through the prophets

The Old Testament prophets delivered God's covenant message to particular people and generations (Jeremiah 1:4–10; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

02

God came to us in Jesus

The eternal Son became human. Jesus perfectly revealed the Father and accomplished salvation through His death and resurrection (John 1:14–18; 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

03

The apostles testified to Jesus

Chosen witnesses proclaimed His resurrection, taught the church, and helped lay its foundation (Acts 1:8, 21–22; Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 John 1:1–4).

04

Scripture preserves the message

The Spirit-inspired writings give the church a public, stable, testable witness rather than leaving each generation dependent on private experiences (Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Learning to recognize God's voice

Young Samuel repeatedly mistook God's call for Eli's voice until Eli helped him respond (1 Samuel 3:1–10). Elijah later encountered God's quiet presence after wind, earthquake, and fire (1 Kings 19:11–13). These accounts encourage humility and attentiveness—not a formula for identifying every thought as God.

Creation and conscience

Creation displays God's power and divine nature, and conscience bears witness to moral responsibility (Psalm 19:1–6; Romans 1:18–20; 2:14–16). Neither provides the saving clarity of the gospel. We need God's Word to know Jesus and interpret ourselves and the world truthfully.



HOW TO TEST GUIDANCE

Seven questions to ask before saying “God told me”

01

Does it agree with Scripture?

God will not guide us to disobey what He has already revealed. Read the relevant passages in context, not merely one supporting phrase.

02

Does it honor Jesus?

The Spirit glorifies Christ. Guidance that minimizes Jesus, distorts the gospel, or elevates the messenger should be rejected (John 16:13–14; 1 Corinthians 12:3).

03

What fruit does it produce?

Look for love, truth, holiness, humility, patience, and self-control—not fear, manipulation, confusion, greed, or self-importance (Galatians 5:22–23; James 3:13–18).

04

Does it welcome testing?

Using “God told me” to demand compliance, silence questions, or isolate someone from counsel is spiritual manipulation. Godly leadership welcomes testing (2 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Peter 5:2–3).

05

Am I forcing circumstances?

An open door is not automatic approval, and a closed door is not automatic prohibition. Consider Scripture, responsibilities, wisdom, and counsel.

06

Can I wait without panic?

Urgency can be real, but pressure is not proof. When possible, pray, gather facts, examine motives, and allow time for clarity (Psalm 27:14; James 1:5–8).

07

Can I speak humbly?

Instead of claiming certainty God has not given, say, “I believe the Lord may be leading me,” and remain open to correction (Proverbs 16:2; 1 Corinthians 13:9–12).

Certainty should match the source

Say “Scripture says” when the Bible clearly says it. Use more modest language for impressions, circumstances, dreams, interpretations, and personal decisions.



COMMON EXPERIENCES

“I felt a strong inner impression”

An impression may prompt helpful attention, prayer, generosity, caution, or conversation—but strength of feeling does not prove divine origin. Test it, avoid adding God’s authority to your preference, and obey any clear biblical responsibility whether or not the feeling remains (Romans 12:2; 1 John 4:1).

“I had a dream”

God used dreams in Scripture, and Christians disagree about how often He does so today. A dream must never create doctrine, override Scripture, or control another person. Most dreams may simply reflect ordinary mental and emotional processing. Respond with humility rather than fear or certainty (Ecclesiastes 5:3, 7; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17).

“A door opened—or closed”

Providence matters, but circumstances do not interpret themselves. Paul sometimes entered open doors and sometimes faced opposition within them (1 Corinthians 16:8–9; 2 Corinthians 2:12–13). Evaluate the opportunity through Scripture, wisdom, responsibility, and prayer.

“I asked God for a sign”

The Bible records signs in important redemptive moments, but Jesus also rebuked sign-seeking that refused to trust God’s revealed truth (Matthew 12:38–42). Arranging coincidences as secret tests can create confusion. Ask for wisdom and obey what is already clear.

“God seems silent”

Silence does not mean absence or rejection. Psalms of lament teach believers to speak honestly while remembering God’s character and promises (Psalms 13; 42; 77). Continue in Scripture, prayer, fellowship, wise action, and patient trust—even when no special answer arrives.

God’s presence is not measured by intensity

Emotions rise and fall. God’s faithfulness rests on His character and promises, not on whether a moment feels dramatic (Hebrews 13:5–8).



COMMON QUESTIONS

Should Christians expect an audible voice?

God can do whatever He chooses, and Scripture records audible speech. But the Bible does not teach every believer to expect it as the ordinary path of guidance. Do not treat inner thoughts as audible revelation. Begin with Scripture and test every claimed message carefully (Hebrews 1:1–3; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

How can I know God's will for a decision?

Start with God's revealed will: trust Christ, pursue holiness, love others, give thanks, act justly, and live wisely (Romans 12:1–2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:16–18). When several lawful choices remain, pray, gather information, seek counsel, examine responsibilities, choose wisely, and trust God with the outcome (Proverbs 3:5–6; 16:9).

How do I distinguish the Spirit from my own thoughts?

No single feeling provides an infallible test. The Spirit's guidance agrees with Scripture, honors Christ, produces His fruit, and can withstand wise examination. Growth in discernment usually develops through long familiarity with God's Word and practiced obedience (Hebrews 5:14; Galatians 5:16–25).

What if sincere Christians reach different conclusions?

Some decisions require direct obedience; others involve wisdom and conscience. Believers may apply principles differently without either person receiving a private command from God. Practice conviction without contempt and humility without indecision (Romans 14:1–13; Philippians 1:9–11).

Do miracles and spiritual gifts continue today?

Faithful Christians agree that God is powerful, prayer matters, and the Spirit gives gifts for the church. They differ about whether all New Testament sign gifts continue in the same way. This disagreement should be studied from Scripture with charity, careful definitions, and attention to biblical order (Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12–14; 1 Peter 4:10–11).

A safe center

Do not limit God to your experience—and do not call every experience God. Remain open, discerning, Scripture-grounded, and centered on Jesus.



WANT TO GO DEEPER?

A closer look at revelation and guidance

Revelation, illumination, and application are different

Revelation is God making truth known. Scripture is the church's authoritative written revelation. Illumination is the Spirit helping believers understand and receive that truth. Application is wisdom about how biblical truth should shape a particular situation (Luke 24:44–45; 1 Corinthians 2:12–16; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Why Christians speak of a closed canon

Canon refers to the recognized books of Scripture. Christians do not expect new messages to become additional Bible books or revise the apostolic gospel (Galatians 1:8–9; Jude 3). Traditions differ about present-day prophecy, but responsible views do not allow it to outrank or contradict Scripture and require claims to be tested (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22).

Continuationists and cessationists

Continuationists believe all spiritual gifts may continue until Christ returns, though claims must be tested. Cessationists believe certain revelatory or sign gifts were especially tied to the apostles and the church's foundation. Both positions contain variations, and both should affirm Scripture's authority, God's present activity, prayer, and the Spirit's work (1 Corinthians 13:8–12; Ephesians 2:19–22; 4:11–16).

Descriptive and prescriptive passages

A descriptive passage tells what happened; a prescriptive passage directs what believers should do. Acts records unique moments as the gospel crosses boundaries, alongside patterns the church should follow. Genre, repetition, apostolic teaching, and the whole Bible help us tell the difference (Acts 2; 8; 10; 15).

Providence is real, but interpretation is humble

God governs events without promising to explain every detail to us (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28–39). We may recognize His wise care in hindsight, yet should be cautious about declaring exactly why He allowed a particular event.

Go deeper without losing the center

The goal is not to master a formula for receiving messages. It is to know God through His Word, follow Jesus faithfully, depend on the Spirit, love the church, and grow in wise obedience.



YOUR NEXT STEP

Practice with a real decision

Choose one decision you are currently facing. Write down what Scripture clearly commands, which choices are biblically permissible, what responsibilities must be honored, what facts are still missing, and which mature believers could offer wise counsel. Pray for wisdom, then act faithfully without demanding perfect certainty.

A simple reading path

Read Psalm 119:97–112; John 14:15–27; Romans 12:1–2; Galatians 5:13–26; James 1:5–8; and 1 John 4:1–6. Note how truth, the Spirit, obedience, wisdom, character, and testing work together.

Questions to carry with you

- What has God already made clear in Scripture?
- Does this direction honor Jesus and fit the gospel?
- What desires, fears, or assumptions may be influencing me?
- What fruit is this producing in my character and relationships?
- What do mature, trustworthy believers see?
- Am I treating circumstances as information—or as unquestionable commands?
- Can I move forward faithfully while remaining open to correction?

Helpful passages for further study

Psalm 19:1–14; 119:97–112; Proverbs 3:5–7; John 1:1–18; 14:15–27; 16:7–15; Acts 16:6–10; Romans 8:1–17; 12:1–8; 1 Corinthians 2:6–16; 12–14; Galatians 5:13–26; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–22; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; Hebrews 1:1–3; James 1:5–8; 1 John 4:1–6.

The goal is confidence—not dependence

Use this guide as a starting point, not a substitute for Scripture. Open your Bible, test every claim in context, seek wise counsel, and trust the Holy Spirit to help you grow in faithful obedience.

Made to be shared

There is no charge to use or share this resource. You may print it, copy it, and pass it along so others are encouraged to open and study the Bible. Please preserve source acknowledgments, do not sell the resource, and do not represent the content as error-free.