

How to seek God's GUIDANCE

OFTEN I AM ASKED, "ANNE, I HAVE A MAJOR DECISION TO MAKE. HOW CAN I KNOW IF IT IS IN GOD'S WILL?" IN RESPONSE, I USUALLY BEGIN BY EXPLAINING THAT WHEN AN AIRPLANE COMES IN TO LAND DURING THE NIGHT, THE CONTROLLER TELLS THE PILOT TO LINE UP THE RUNWAY LIGHTS. WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE KEPT IN A STRAIGHT LINE, THE PILOT CAN BE ASSURED THAT HE IS LANDING IN THE CENTER OF THE RUNWAY.

THE FOUR RUNWAY LIGHTS

Acts 10

When you and I are making a decision "in the dark," we also can line up the "runway lights" that assure us our decision is in the center of God's will. The four runway lights that I use to determine God's will in making a decision are:

1. The confirmation of God's Word
2. My inner conviction
3. Practical circumstances
4. The counsel of godly, mature Christian friends

In Acts 10, Peter made a major decision that has affected the Church to this day. In Acts 11, Peter explained his decision to the church leaders in Jerusalem. See if you can line up his "runway lights."

THE BACKGROUND

Read Acts 10. Describe in your own words the decision that Peter made that then had to be explained to the Jerusalem church leaders in Acts 11.

THE CONFIRMATION OF GOD'S WORD

Acts 11:4-10

- What did God say to Peter that related to his decision?
- What Bible verses or passages have come to you during your daily devotions, Bible study or through a sermon—that relate to your decision? Make a list with references and content.
- As you read the Scripture that you have written out, does it seem to indicate one course of action over another?

THE CONVICTION OF HIS SPIRIT

Acts 11:12

- What phrase indicates that Peter felt deep within himself he was to make this decision?
- What do you believe in your heart is God's will for your situation?

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS DECISION

Acts 11:11, 13-17

- What practical circumstances seemed to fall into place for Peter?
- What doors of opportunity immediately opened for him?
- How did subsequent events confirm the decision he made?
- Make a list of the practical circumstances surrounding your call. What doors of opportunity seem to be opening?

THE COUNSEL OF GODLY FRIENDS

Acts 11:1-3, 18

- What counsel is implied in Acts 10:23 and also in Acts 11:12?
- How did the initial reaction of the church leaders seem to contradict the earlier counsel and Peter's decision?
- After hearing Peter relate the details of his decision, what was the leaders' final response?
- List the names of two or three mature Christians who know you. Go over your answers to the above questions with them. Ask them to prayerfully give you wise counsel concerning your decision.

"Into the Word," a Bible Study by Anne Graham Lotz, is designed to draw you into God's Word. Although the study-question format may be more challenging than one might find in an article that provides all the answers, we believe that this format will help you to discover a treasure of truths and insights from God.



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PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Acts 10 & 11

In order to step out in faith, confident that your decision is in God's will, you should have at least three of the four runway lights in place.

Sometimes, practical circumstances don't seem to line up. God may be testing you, requiring you to take a step of faith before things work out. When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, they had to get their feet wet before the waters rolled back (Joshua 3:15-16). But if God closes the door, you cannot force it open (Revelation 3:7), so don't try to manipulate circumstances to make your decision work.

At other times, you may be unable to discern your inner conviction, or you may not feel strongly one way or another about a specific direction. But as you begin to walk by faith, increasingly you should have a deep inner confidence that your decision is of God.

It may be that your Christian friends disagree with your decision. Or you may not know several godly people to whom you can go for wise counsel. As a result, this runway light will not line up. However, as you begin to follow through on your decision, mature Christians should confirm it.

When one of the above runway lights is missing, it is still possible to step out in faith. But the one runway light that is indispensable is the confirmation of God's Word. You must have it—no exceptions. God's Word can come to you in various ways: through your daily devotions or Bible study, through a sermon, through a verse that comes to mind while praying, or through searching the Scriptures specifically for it. But in order to be assured that your decision is in God's will, you must have His Word to confirm it.

I am cautious of formulas, but I can testify from years of experience that these runway lights work. Are your runway lights in line? If so, praise God! You can step out in faith, asking and trusting God to shut the door if for some reason you have misread His direction. He has promised to guide the meek—those who have no agendas of their own but simply desire to walk in the center of His will (Psalm 25:9). ■

"WHEN YOU AND I ARE MAKING A DECISION 'IN THE DARK,' WE ALSO CAN LINE UP THE 'RUNWAY LIGHTS' THAT ASSURE US OUR DECISION IS IN THE CENTER OF GOD'S WILL."