

## **“What Is Your Guide?”**

### **By Brother Kenneth Ray**

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It says in Hebrews that our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). Sometimes we say, “You’re going to Hell; you better get it right.” Sometimes we say, “God is good.” The truth is, yes, He is a consuming fire, and yes, He is my Savior. Life is hard, and sometimes it’s a struggle. Sometimes I mess up, but I learn from my mistakes. It’s a natural process.

No, I cannot give my own public opinion from the pulpit. There’s not a stamp on here that you can read, but it’s on there. The pulpit is not for your private interpretation, your soapbox... It is for God’s Word, sound doctrine. Baptism in Jesus’ name? That’s sound doctrine; that’s in the Bible (Acts 2:38, Acts 10:48, Acts 19:5). The fact that we have missionary works in Haiti and Sri Lanka, that’s in the Bible, too: it says go ye forth unto all the nations, baptizing them (Matthew 28:19). That is the work that we have been asked to do. But what I want to talk to you about today is, what is your guide? What is it that guides you in those actions that you do? Is it your own personal opinion? Did you hear it from someone else? Did you have a consensus, where a bunch of you decided, “This is the route we’re going to go?” You can do that, right? That happens. Did you get up this morning and just feel like, “Well, I’m going to jump today?” Did you wake up this morning and say, “Well, I’m in the Navy, I guess I might as well go to school; that’s what I’m here for. I don’t really feel like it, but...” It happens. Sometimes we’ll get what we call, a wild hair, and we go do something. Or did we get up this morning and say, “Lord, what would you have me to do today?” Did we seek God for the counsel about the thing that was on our minds, so that when we have it rest upon our hearts, it is on a good, solid foundation? Or did we just blow by the wind? If so, then we have no foundation.

These things are important to us as Christians, or even as every-day life. You know, I joined the Navy. Why did I do that? I had to have a reason. I am now currently a member of the United States Air Force reserves. Why did I do that? I had to have a reason. I didn’t just wake up one day and say, “I think I’m going to go join the Air Force.” You don’t just get up and say, “I think I’m going to take up smoking.” I say that, because when I went to Germany, I had a guy, and this sounds funny, and yet, it’s not funny at all, and he said, “I think I’ll start smoking today.” That was his rationale. “Why did you do that?” “Oh, I just thought I’d try that.” That actually happened; this was not on TV. Sometimes in the church, we decide that I need to preach on this today, because someone did this, and you need to hear about it. But, yet, did I take time to talk to God today before I talked to you?

We all have our heroes. I have my heroes. When I was growing up, there were people that, if they gave advice to that effect, then I was going to do it. They were my heroes. They were there for me. I had a teacher in school, and one of my neighbors, that I went to for counsel. Because they had value to me, I did what they said. Sometimes they told me something good, sometimes they told me something that might have gotten me into trouble. They did the best they could, but in none of those times was I at a stage in my life where I asked Jesus anything. I wasn’t to that point, and maybe you’re not to that place in your life today, if you’re visiting with us this morning. You may be wondering, “I don’t really know about this talking to Jesus thing.” Okay. I acknowledge that some people don’t really get into that kind of thing. And maybe some of us have been involved with Jesus for so long that we think we’ve got it down. We don’t talk

to Him as much as we used to. You know, I've done that a thousand times before; I'll just do the same thing again. That's usually when people get themselves in trouble. Have you ever had the opportunity to watch one of those safety videos (and they are boring)? If you can stay awake, you will hear them say, "I have done this thing a thousand times before." It was just like any other time before when I had done it. And yet, this time, half your body is burnt to a crisp. Something wasn't like it always has been, if that happened. And, then, being guided, if you simply say, "This is the way we've *always* done it..."

What do they teach you in the Navy about when you go home, right after boot camp? Everything is going to be the same except for ... *you*. You're the only thing that is going to have changed. Your friends are all going to be the same way as when you left, the town looks the same as when you left it, but *you're* going to come back and they're going to look at you and say, "You're the one who's changed." Well, in our Christian life, everything around us changes all the time. Tomorrow will not be like today. The only thing that stays the same is Jesus. The same yesterday, and today, and forevermore (Hebrews 13:8). He's still a consuming fire, and He's still our savior. It's still a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a living God, and He's still the rock that we cry out to for our help. He's arm is still not too short, and He still will chastise His people, because if He doesn't chastise you, then he said you are one of His. None of that has changed. And yet, I wake up some days and I feel good, and I feel bad other days, because I have outreach. And the Source, our Spiritual Guide, calls for us to either be up, or to be down. Let's look at this thing for just a moment:

*Psalms 31:3 ...for Thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.*

Why am I wanting to be led by Jesus? for His name's sake and everything that attached to it. For His name's sake, for the sacrifice that He made, for the glory and the blessings that He's given me this week, for the chastisement, for the rod that He has laid upon me spiritually so that I may learn. All of those things. Because when I learn, I learn how to do it better. I told a guy, "I can only teach you two things: how to do it the right way, and how to do it the wrong way, and you're going to learn both." I can teach you those things by living a life that either shows you the right way, or that shows you the wrong way, and then you can look at it and say, "Nope, I don't want to do it that way." If you look to me for your guide, then you have a poor guide in me. If you look to your brother or your sister for your guide... We have a guy in our shop at work, and, when he gets up, everyone else gets up. If the boss comes in and tells us to get to work, if he doesn't get up, no one else gets up. What happens when we a get written up? You've got to have a good guide. Your brother and sister may be good counsel sometimes, but you've got to be careful how often you choose to make them your guide. Our guide is supposed to be our rock. I'm no rock, I'm quicksand; if you're standing on me, you're in trouble. I can do all things through Christ, but I have to go *through* the Mediator that can handle everything. It says, for Thy name' sake, guide me.

Everything that you do as a congregation gets stuck on me, because I'm in charge. If you do something awesome, I get a badge. If you do something wrong, I get this big stamp on me. It reads "Ugly," "Not Good," "Religious," whatever. You say, "It's just my life, it doesn't affect anyone else." Oh, but it affects the whole body. Whenever you point out something insignificant, they look at the whole fellowship. They don't know the difference between you, me, or anybody else; they just know that you're part of this body. If your feelings, your emotions or your piousness or just your grumpiness is your guide; that's not the Rock.

*Psalms 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee...*

Wow! What a God! My brother would say, "But Mr. Swallow said..." (he was a teacher). One day he said that, and one of my other brothers said, "Oh, no, not the great one! Not Mr. Swallow!" because he got tired of hearing Mr. Swallow's name every time something came up, as though he were the authority on all things. There are people who have taught you some good things, but they're not the authority over God. If the Word says something, it doesn't matter what Brother Kenneth said you could do, for *He* will instruct you, not me. I was just regurgitating what He said. His Spirit will guide and teach you, whenever it comes time. And it says, I will guide thee with mine eye. God will give you the sight which you need to get by. Somebody asked me the other day, "What would you do if your wife cheated on you?" I said, "I've got to look at myself first, to see if I've been failing to take care of her needs, so that she had to go look for it somewhere else. It starts with me. I'm supposed to be providing for my wife, to give her what she needs," and he gave me look like, "Huh? But I like the way you think about that." I have to look at me. Am I looking at it with God's eyes, or am I looking at it with my four? If I'm looking at it with my four, then I've got the wrong vision, because I'm being guided by my mind, instead of being instructed by the guide that I should be following.

*Psalms 48:14 ...for ever and ever: He will be our guide, even unto death.*

Does that mean He doesn't get outdated? You got it: He doesn't get outdated. Does that mean that something's going to happen in six months that supersedes Him, like a platform on a computer system? No. Forever. And He's going to guide us. He will instruct us, He will teach us. I will do what I choose to do. There's that wonderful, horrible thing called free will. I choose to get up and go to work, or I can choose to call in sick, or I can choose to take vacation. They're all my choices. But which one's going to pay my bills? Which one's going to provide for my family, or for me (if it's just me)? Which one of our actions is going to provide for ourselves, *spiritually*? God's way or my way? Which one is going to provide for growth and increase of God's people, both in education, knowledge, and number?

I do not get too old to be called and guided by God. I do not get too old to be useful to God. In twenty years, I will not retire. I may not be doing the same thing, but I will not be retired, and my shoes hanging up, saying, I have done mine, time for someone else to do it. I probably won't be in the pulpit; I probably will have moved on from that in twenty years. Twenty years, I'll be like sixty. You would be surprised what you can do when you're older if God is guiding you.

I watch the Olympics. I'm glad that one guy won a gold medal, but I'm hurt that Michael Phelps didn't win one. I like Phelps. My wife jokes with me because I like watching curling. There are things that I will watch on TV that I would *never* watch if it wasn't the Olympics. If the US is playing badminton, I'm watching badminton. If the USA is curling, I'm watching curling. If the USA is playing field hockey, then I'm watching field hockey. They represent my country, and the beliefs that I have. Do we support each other that way? Are we allowing God to guide us that way, to instill, to impugn, to teach, at that moment, what God is guiding us to teach, or are we just being the elder to the younger and keeping them in line? Are we adjusting with the times as they change? Are we allowing God to guide us in the here and now, or are we still using sliderules, sliding little dots to count. Can we figure the square root long hand? Can

we do it if the calculator is not present? You've got to know the old ways, and the lessons that you learned, for God to guide you. You have to be able to apply them today, and to do the work that it takes to get it done, and not always take a shortcut, and not be able to function if you can't. You have to put the work in for God to use you. Those of you that work out, can you work out once and look like Ah-nuld? no. And, does it feel good? no. I've been running and doing push-ups. It doesn't feel good. But when I score a 90 and don't have to do it again until next year, that feels good. When you're guided by God, sometimes you do things that just don't feel good. If you're being guided by God to talk to a brother about something that's wrong, you're going to provide some encouragement and a solution, too. If you see a brother in need, can you say, "He needs something, and I can provide that something." You can if you're doing it by the Holy Ghost and not caring about what anybody else says or anybody else does. Cream rises to the top.

*Psalms 73:24 Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel...*

We just answered the three-letter question: Why? Why am I not going to do it my way? Why do I have to listen to God? Because when I do, not only am I beneficial here, I get to be up there. That's why. Because Jesus said so. That's the bottom line. "But I don't want to." Okay. Free will. I'm not going to make you; I can only tell you what God's Word says. You have to choose to be guided by Jesus. I want to make it to Heaven, and I want to stay there. It's not good enough just to make it there. Don't you want to be guided by something that will get you there? It starts with baptism in Jesus' name. I don't apologize for that. And I don't apologize if that's not the way you were raised, because I wasn't raised that way, either. I'm not going to change what God's Word says.

*Ecclesiastes 4:1 ...but they had no comforter.*

They saw the oppression, and they had no comforter. And yet I read in the book of John...

*John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost...*

He will teach you all things. If I could teach you all things, doesn't that guide you? If I teach you the way to go, am I not guiding you? The Holy Ghost will teach you all things. And you will have comfort. And, with that comfort, you will have assurance. I've got *full* assurance, the Bible tells me.

*Colossians 2:2...unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding...*

I've got full assurance of His understanding? I'll understand how He wants it to happen? I'll understand why I have to go through this? I'll understand that when I come out the other side, that there's a benefit?

*Hebrews 10:22 ...full assurance of faith...*

We have full assurance of faith. That's really what it comes down to. I have faith that the Spirit who made this world and gave me life can teach me, and guide my steps, and walk me through life. Through faith, I have assurance that He won't lie to me, that He is true, that He is

just, and that my steps will go where they need to go, that my speech will be what it needs to be, that my counsel will be of Him, and that, if I follow Christ, then you can follow me (1 Corinthians 11:1). Not do as I say, but to walk in the same path, in the same fashion, guided by the same Holy Ghost.

We should always be able to acknowledge that all of the glory must be His, and it will be, if we have the right guide.

