

Principles or Guidance?

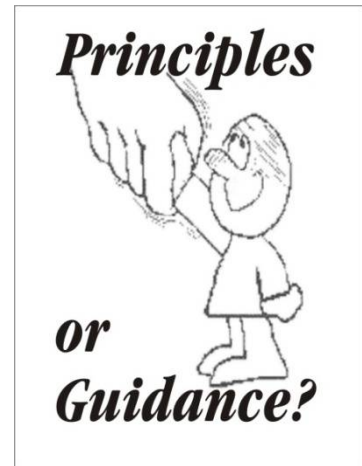
Suggested Reading:

Romans 2:11, 8:28f, and Philippians 3:8

Shortly after finishing with seminary, my wife and I found we had no visible means of support, only invisible means (as God supplied), and were available to travel. We journeyed to a large city to attend a teaching conference hosted by some prominent Christian leaders. After about a week of attending, while walking to the meeting place one morning, the Lord said to me, “Tomorrow you will be leaving.” I asked, “Where will we be going, Lord?” He answered, “Declare your intentions to the leading brothers, and then I will tell you.”

When I arrived at the meeting place, I went to the leading brothers and delivered the message that I would be leaving the next day. Their response was, “Brother, you may not leave; the principle is that God is doing something here, and you must be part of it.”

Over and over again that day we had this same conversation. The next morning at 7 a.m. the leading brothers were at our door with the same message. My response was, “But my brothers, do you have a word from the Lord explicitly saying I must stay?” And their answer was always the same: “The principle is that God is doing something here, and you must be part of it.”

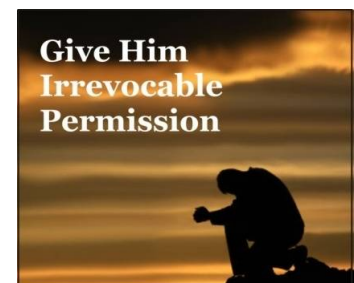


We had walked in obedience for several years by then and knew the voice of God in our lives, and so we went on our way. It was important that we were obedient because God had a plan for our lives; we were to meet with an oyster farmer on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. We stayed in the farmer’s home, located way out on a wooden pier, for several days, eating oysters and sharing.

One morning the oyster farmer said to me, “Have you ever given God irrevocable permission to do whatever He needs to do to change you into His likeness? That is the eternal purpose of God in your life.” I had not prayed that before, and so we knelt down at the sofa in his study and I gave God irrevocable permission to do whatever he needed to do to change me into His likeness. This was a very important defining moment in my Christian walk.

Over the years we have shared about our encounter with the oyster farmer and the impact it has had on our lives, and we hear again and again that this simple message has made a major impact on others’ lives.

Our lives are not to be spent walking according to principles, a set of rules, or the law. We are to walk in an intimate fellowship with our heavenly Father. He has a *next most needful thing* for each of us in our walk. Only He knows what that is, and only His specific guidance can take us there. If I had gone with the principle and listened to the leaders of the conference instead of following God’s guidance, I would have missed the *next most needful thing* in my Christian walk.



Prayer: Engage your heart and pray: “Father, show me everything that is dead religion in my life: the principles, the law, and the rules that replace an intimate relationship with you in my walk. I give you permission to speak to me and confirm your voice to me. I want to walk in Life; Father, I give you permission to replace the principles in my life with your guidance. Father, I give you irrevocable permission to do whatever you need to do to change me into the likeness of your Son, Jesus.