

The Lord Directs Our Steps

Proverbs 16:1 The plans of the heart belong to man
 But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.
Proverbs 16:9 The mind of man plans his ways
 But the Lord directs his steps.
Psalm 37:23 The steps of a man are established by the Lord
 And He delights in his way.

To what degree does the Lord direct our steps? Is every action foreordained? Are we but puppets who believe they make meaningful choices? If not, how do we explain the verses above?

Ecclesiastes 9:1 ...righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God.
 Man does not know whether it will be love or hatred; anything
 awaits him.
Proverbs 20:24 Man's steps are by the Lord.
 How then shall man understand his way?
Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself.
 Nor is it in man who walks to direct his steps.

If the Lord unavoidably directs our steps, do we make meaningful choices? If not, this discussion is pointless. It would seem that God would be deceiving us by allowing us to think that we make choices. But the Bible asks some people to make choices, uses the ability to choose as an illustration, and chastizes others for making bad choices.

Joshua 24:5 Choose you this day whom you will serve
2 Samuel 24:12 Choose for yourself one of them
Proverbs 1:28-29 ...and did not choose the fear of the Lord.
Isaiah 7:14-15 ...refuse evil and choose good.
Isaiah 65:12 ...and chose that in which I did not delight
Isaiah 66:4 ...and chose that in which I did not delight

The Bible also describes those who choose to be directed by God.

Proverbs 25:12-15 Who is the man who fears the Lord?
 He will instruct him in the way he should choose.
Proverbs 21:29 The wicked man shows a bold face
 But as for the upright, He directs his way.
Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him
 And He will make your paths straight.
2 Thessalonians 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the
 steadfastness of Christ.

How are we directed if we choose to be directed? Note that each of these passages gives only one method without implying the existence of other methods. Neither do any of the passages exclude other methods.

1. Natural consequences Proverbs 11:5
2. Scripture 2 Timothy 3:16-17
3. Other Christians Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:2&24, Titus 2:4
(Hebrews 8:10-11)
4. Prayer (wisdom) James 1:5-8
5. Holy Spirit 1 John 2:27 (2 Corinthians 1:21)

Using one method to the exclusion of others can be dangerous.

Knowledge 2 Timothy 3:7, 1 Corinthians 8:1 (bad result)
Colossians 1:9-10 (good result)

Via the Spirit Ephesians 1:17 (good result)
1 Corinthians 14:26 (bad result)

How specifically does God have plans for us?