



Being Led by the Holy Spirit

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom 8:14)



We know that during Jesus’ earthly ministry He was led by the Holy Spirit. Luke records that, “Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and ***was led by the Spirit*** into the wilderness” (Luke 4:1). How can we be led by the Holy Spirit?

We read in Paul’s writings that, “For as many as are ***led by the Spirit*** of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). Obviously, we must learn to be directed by the spirit, “For to be carnally minded is death; but ***to be spiritually minded*** is life and peace” (Rom 8:6).

Jesus lived his entire life with the benefit of revelation knowledge, “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, ***the spirit of wisdom and understanding***, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:2). Nevertheless, John the Baptist witnessed the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him” (John 1:32). Jesus received revelation as the Holy Spirit germinated the word of God that was sown in His heart.

Indeed, one of the jobs of the Holy Spirit is to germinate the word of God in our hearts! Without the Holy Spirit we become like the people over which Isaiah prophesied, “But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; ***that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken***” (Isa 28:13). This is a picture of religious people much like the Pharisees who merely had an intellectual understanding of what the word said; nevertheless, they lived without the spirit, which would give them revelation of that word!

Peter teaches that we have “exceeding great and precious promises” which come “though the knowledge of Christ!” Jesus said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” Jesus meant that without the Holy Spirit the disciples were incapable of hearing Him! He continued, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, ***he will guide you*** into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but ***whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak***: and ***he will shew you things to come***” (John 16:12-13). Notice that he said, “whatsoever he shall hear, ***that shall he speak.***” Let’s break down that important passage into each of its various component parts:

- (1) the Holy Spirit of Truth will come to us;
- (2) the Holy Spirit of Truth will guide us in to truth;



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- (3) the Holy Spirit of Truth will not speak of himself;
- (4) the Holy Spirit of Truth will hear from God;
- (5) the Holy Spirit of Truth **will speak what He hears**;
- (6) and, the Holy Spirit of Truth will show us things to come.

Notice the fifth item above; how does the Holy Spirit speak? The Holy Spirit does the speaking and gives the revelation! The job of the Holy Spirit is to reveal things to us! The process is not one of, “getting things deep down into our hearts.” For example, one might say, “I know the Gettysburg Address by heart.” We can humanly place things in our heart; however, these natural things do not compare to the germination of the word of God in our hearts. In fact, the opposite is true; the Holy Spirit brings things up out of our spirits and into the world!

We are going to research Biblical examples of individuals who clearly have been “led by the spirit.” Our effort will be to learn the Biblical secrets concerning how to be “led by the spirit!” We can easily find individuals during the early New Testament period who were clearly led by the Spirit! Let’s observe just eight unmistakable passages, all from the book of Acts, that verifies this special leading:

1. Acts 8:29 “Then **the Spirit said unto Philip**, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot”
2. Acts 10:19 Regarding Peter, “**the Spirit said unto him**, Behold, three men seek thee”
3. Acts 11:11-12 “And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. And **the spirit bade me go with them**”
4. Acts 16:7 “They assayed to go into Bithynia: but **the Spirit suffered them not**”
5. Acts 18:5 “**Paul was pressed in the spirit**, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ”
6. Acts 19:21 “**Paul purposed in the spirit**, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem”
7. Acts 20:22 Paul said, “**I go bound in the spirit** unto Jerusalem”
8. Acts 21:4 “finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who **said to Paul through the Spirit**, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”

We live in the age of technology and as a result we somehow feel superior to ancient societies. However, we must understand that we are **not** far advanced especially in the area of spiritual understanding in comparison to that original New Testament church; instead, we have a long way to go just to catch up to them! The leading of the Holy Spirit as expressed in the passages above is unmistakable. Therefore, these verses should leave us asking introspective questions, “Have we been led in that same fashion in our Christian Walk? Maybe the better question is, “Have I always followed the Holy Spirit in my Christian walk?” Don’t be too quick to judge yourself as entirely “carnal.” Notice items



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6, 7, and 8 (the last three examples above.) Those three examples contain two different instructions for Paul. Was he supposed to go to Jerusalem or not? This specific question has been studied and discussed throughout the millennia. Some claim that the capitalization of the word “Spirit” in example number 8 above gives that specific command the precedence. Others claim that all three verses use the definite article “the” meaning that the Holy Spirit was clearly the author of all three commands. Still others say that the Holy Spirit will never give conflicting instructions.

So what is the answer? Were there two Holy Spirit commands? How did Paul know which command to follow? One of the goals of this study is to discover the answers to this and other leadership issues of the Holy Spirit.

Being “led by the Spirit” is not always simply making choices. Sometimes there are other factors in play. Have you ever gotten upset at some delay in your plans or your daily routine? How do you know whether or not the Holy Spirit fostered your delays? He might have held you up on purpose! Some of you have shared personal accounts of how you drove upon an accident that had recently taken place on the highway; however, that morning you were delayed before you left your home because your lunch spilled and you resentfully had to prepare another luncheon delight!

But how do you know when you are following God’s leadership? Have you ever placed something in your mouth and just knew that it was spoiled; so you spit it out? In the same fashion, we must test the spirits, “Beloved, **believe not every spirit** (John 6:63 quotes Jesus who said, “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit” – words are spirit!), but **try the spirits** (Job 34:3 teaches us, “For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat”) whether they (the spirits or the words) are of God: because many false prophets (Here John uses a word composed of two Greek words, *pseudo*–false combined with *prophetes*–inspired speaker) are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). We must train our human spirit to meditate on the scripture then when we hear something (the spirits or the words) we can test the thing that we have heard against the actual Word of God. Through this process we prove or try the thought or the spirit not the person who brought the idea.

How do we test the spirits? We can start with the “truth test,” “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true . . . think on these things” (Phil 4:8). Yet we must be careful that we are using spiritual eyes and not merely those physical eyes. For example, let’s assume for a moment that we have just broken our finger and it is twisted and obviously looks rather crooked. Immediately we cry out to God in our pain and pray, “Lord I accept your healing for by your stripes I am healed!” Yet, when we look down we may still see with our physical eyes the twisted finger! But what is the truth in that instance? The truth is, “(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)” (2 Cor 5:7).



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Beyond “testing the spirits” we can measure things by an inward witness. The Holy Spirit often acts as that inward witness. The very existence of the Holy Spirit in us is a witness, “And God, which knoweth the hearts, **bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost**, even as he did unto us” (Acts 15:8). The Apostle John probably made the most clearly expressed statement about this witness, “He that believeth on the Son of God **hath the witness in himself**” (1 John 5:10).

Solomon had some genuine insight regarding the witness within man. He realized that God employs unknown methods: “The spirit of man is **the candle of the LORD**, searching all the inward parts of the belly” (Prov 20:27). The belly from the Hebrew word, *beten* (beh'-ten); means to be hollow such as the belly and especially the womb. Therefore, the proverb expresses that there is a hollow part within every man. That hollow locality is where man’s spirit resides, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the **spirit of man which is in him**?” (1 Cor 2:11). That entity identified as the “spirit of man” gives every person his private thoughts and his individual being. The spirit of man should be related to your mind. Right now you are experiencing thoughts that no one knows but you and God. It is important that you realize that those thoughts are not coming from your physical brain! Your brain is merely a storage location of past memories and impressions. The thoughts come from, “The **spirit of man**,” which the proverb describes as “**the candle of the LORD**, searching all the inward parts of the belly (*hollow*)” (Prov 20:27). Our thoughts emanate from the spirit of man which dwells within us! All human beings are spirit directed; that is, we are all accustomed to experiencing the direction of a spiritual entity within! However, that verse from First Corinthians continues with the notion that that even though every person has a spirit within, their human spirit is limited in its abilities, “even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” This means that there are things of God that the spirit of man cannot comprehend! Now, don’t miss the concept that every believer is different from every natural man! Jesus Christ (*the Anointed One*) has anointed every believer. Lets notice how the Apostle John expresses this anointing, “But ye have an unction (*anointing*) from the Holy One, **and ye know all things**” (1 John 2:20). Did you notice the difference as a result of that anointing, “**ye know all things**” (1 John 2:20).

Now wait a minute, do you really know all things? If I were to ask you if you had all knowledge, you would most likely answer, “Absolutely not!” You could even prove to me that you do not know all things! Why then did the Apostle John write, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and **ye know all things**” (1 John 2:20)? Was John just stretching the truth? Was John merely using a metaphorical expression or some figure of speech? We have already read John’s statement three chapters forward which states, “He that believeth on the Son of God **hath the witness in himself**” (1 John 5:10). The point is, John is not just writing meaningless words to fill the page!



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When John plainly wrote, “ye know all things” (1 John 2:20), John meant exactly what he wrote, “you know all things!” You might ask, “How can we know all things?” The answer is given by the Apostle Paul, “But God hath **revealed them unto us** by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10). We actually have an inner teacher as Titus expresses in 2:11-12, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, **Teaching us . . .**” Notice that the same grace which brought salvation is the entity that teaches us! In his Gospel John writes, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, **he shall teach you all things.**”

Yes there are other ways that God speaks to us such as dreams, visions, and voices! But the number one method that God instructs and advises us is through the “inward witness!”

Jesus Christ Himself is that witness in our very flesh, “And from Jesus Christ, **who is the faithful witness**” (Rev 1:5). Our physical bodies are the actual flesh of Jesus. He walks in us and leads and directs our very steps, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and **all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ**” (1 Cor 12:12). Paul develops this concept more clearly, “Now **ye are the body of Christ**, and members in particular” (1 Cor 12:27). The Church is the body of Christ, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ**” (Eph 4:12). So what does the Spirit of Christ do for us? Notice the following:

- Ezek 36:27 “And I will put my spirit within you, and **cause you to walk in my statutes**, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them”
- Rom 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who **walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit**”
- Rom 8:4 “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit**”
- Gal 5:16 “**Walk in the Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”
- Gal 5:25 “If we live in the Spirit, **let us also walk in the Spirit**”

Every single child of God should expect to be led by the spirit! This should not be the exception; instead it should be the rule. You and I who are in Christ have become something new. Jeremiah speaks of God doing some new thing, “for the LORD hath created **a new thing in the earth**” (Jer 31:22). The Apostle Paul expands the concept, “Therefore if any man **be in Christ, he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Paul teaches us that we need to put on this new man, “put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:10).

We must function in the spirit in order to even communicate with God, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). We cannot contact God any other way than in the spirit, “For we are the circumcision, **which worship God in the spirit**” (Phil 3:3)!

Written by M. Larry Perrino

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God leads in the spirit! David wrote, “**he leadeth me** beside the still waters” (Ps 23:2). This concept of God’s leadership was not just an Old Testament idea espoused by David, Isaiah also wrote of this leading, “he that hath mercy on them **shall lead them**, even by the springs of water **shall he guide them**” (Isa 49:10).

So, let’s begin to tie these concepts together here. The Book of Proverbs teaches us that, “the spirit of man is **the candle of the LORD**” and that the spirit of man “searching all the inward parts of the belly (*hollow – empty place*).” We established that the bible teaches that our mind (*the hollow – empty place which is the center of our thoughts*) originates from the spirit of man which dwells within us. It is natural therefore to conclude that all human beings are accustomed to experiencing leadership originating from a spiritual entity from within! Christians failing to recognize the voice of God are simply not in their right mind!

Because we have lived for (___) years prior to our conversion, living and experiencing exclusively our own private thoughts, we experience difficulty at first listening to the direction of God! When Christ came to live in our physical bodies, He brought His mind right along with Him! When Christ moved in, we actually got a new mind “But **we have the mind of Christ**” (1 Cor 2:16). Therefore we must yield to the thoughts of the new mind! Paul writes, “**Let this mind** be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” (Phil 2:5). “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?” as Paul asked in 1 Cor 2:16. The answer to His question is simple; the Christian has known the mind of the Lord!

Your very thoughts are filtered through Christ’s mind! Do you truly get the concept? We have become one with God the Father and Christ. We studied last week what John specifically expressed, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21)! After conversion, we become one with God!

Once we comprehend and appreciate that we are one with God we naturally begin to realize that our very thoughts are God directed! Our biggest problem usually lies in the question, “Did that thought come from my own thinking or from the Holy Spirit?” We will study the Biblical teaching concerning how to discern a little bit later. However, for now, here is a real breakthrough key of Christian living: the more that we move toward holiness (*Becoming pure in every aspect of our lives as we grow in the revelation that we are the righteousness of God in Christ!*), the more that we activate the inner trust that our thoughts have originated in Christ! Then once that we have that inner conscience (*inner witness*) agreeing with our human mind, we supernaturally grasp that God has directed a specific thought! When we seek God’s holiness with all of our being Jesus reveals Himself to us, “and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will **manifest myself to him**” (John 14:21). This revelation of Jesus Christ in our lives



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gives us tremendous confidence that we can do whatever Jesus has told us because we know that He is behind us!

We must develop the realization that God wants to direct us! In fact, we should boldly realize that we have the right to be led of God! We should outwardly anticipate and actively pursue His leadership! After all, Jesus said, “**My sheep hear my voice**, and I know them, and **they follow me**.” If you are a lamb in the sheepfold of Jesus, you need to expect to hear from the Shepherd! In fact it should be your comfort for it is written, “thy rod and thy staff they **comfort me**” (Ps 23:4). After all He sent us the Comforter! He promised, “I will not leave you **comfortless: I will come to you**” (John 14:18). Both the Father and Jesus will take up their abode within us, “If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will come unto him, and make our abode with him**.” If God living in your flesh does not comfort you, nothing will!

Now the big question that may be in your mind, “Did that thought come from my own thinking or from the Holy Spirit?” That is a good question and the Bible does give us a specific answer regarding how to make the distinction. First we must be walking in love; only then can we let God’s peace make the ruling, “And above all these things put on charity (*love*), which is the bond of perfectness. And **let the peace of God rule (brabeuo) in your hearts**” (Col 3:15). The word translated into the English word “rule” is from the Hebrew word *brabeuo* (brab-yoo'-o); meaning to arbitrate, or to govern; the concept is that it makes a decision! Just like an umpire makes a snap decision on a baseball pitch so the Peace of God must govern or make decisions in our heart! Jesus did not have peace in the classical sense; on the contrary, He was crucified! Yet He told us, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). In case we don’t completely believe that, we can read further, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me **ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation**” (John 16:33). The peace of God goes far beyond human comprehension, “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7).

The peace of God is absolutely essential! For example, just because a door is open does not mean that we are supposed to walk through it! God must lead us! We must seek the will of God. Satan can and does set-up circumstances! He provides false doors for us in an attempt to lead us into a trap. Let me share with you an experience I went through last year when I was not carefully paying attention to the inward witness of the Holy Spirit!

When we walk through a door where God has not led we expose ourselves to unknown evils! We literally “open a door” for problems! Given this information we ought to pattern at least a portion of our morning prayers after Jesus’ example, “and **lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil**.” Notice that we are to be wise and understand God’s will, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but **understanding what the will of the Lord is**” (Eph 5:17). How do we understand what the will of the Lord is? In this very context of understanding, the next verse astonishingly gives us the simple answer! Let’s read it,



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“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; **but be filled** (*continual process or an on-going process*) **with the Spirit**” (Eph 5:18)! The context of understanding and being filled with the spirit is unmistakable! As if to place a Biblical exclamation point on the concept Paul choose to relate the idea of being filled with the spirit to the state of drunkenness! How does the Bible relate that concept? Let’s go to the example of the initial giving of the Holy Spirit to men. The Apostle Peter stood up and said, “For these are not drunken, as ye suppose” (Acts 2:15).

Why do you think that they supposed that the new Christians were drunk? Next week we will focus upon the answer to that question. We are also going to learn that in order to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we must first be thirsty, “**If any man thirst**, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). This does not mean that they haven’t had a drink of water for the last hour; instead, a man that has been in the desert for a week without water can perhaps best describe this thirst. We see this man in a delirious state and his lips are parched for lack of fluid! When we thirst in this fashion for God’s spirit; then all we need to do is **ask**, “how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit **to them that ask him?**” (Luke 11:13).