



## LEARNING TO BE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

—Romans 8:14

Every child of God can learn how to be led by the Holy Spirit. God's richest blessings await those who follow after His Spirit, instead of being directed only by their senses and circumstances. But in order to be Spirit-led, you will have to consecrate yourself to God's plan for your life instead of following after a plan of your own making.

Learning to be led by the Holy Spirit is of primary importance if you are going to obey God. If you can't discern what the Lord is saying to your spirit, you'll have a difficult time following His plan and purpose for your life. It's that simple.

### GOD LEADS YOU BY YOUR SPIRIT

How can we discern the Lord's leading and learn to cooperate with Him so we can follow His plan for our lives?<sup>1</sup> First of all, we must understand that God contacts us and deals with us through our *spirit*.

You see, God is *not* a physical being, so He doesn't respond to the call of our *fleshly nature*. And He is not a mind, so He doesn't respond to the call of our *intellect* or our *emotions*.

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

That's where so many folks miss it. They try to reach God through their mind and feelings. They say, "Oh, if I could only *feel* God's Presence when I pray!"

But what they actually need to do is crucify their flesh, renew their mind with God's Word, and get quiet on the inside as they seek the Lord in prayer (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 12:2). Then the Holy Spirit would respond unto the cry of their *spirit*.

God is a Spirit, a divine Personality (John 4:24). Man is also a spirit being. Man *is* a spirit, he *has* a soul (which includes the mind, will, and emotions), and he *lives in* a body (see Gen. 1:26-27; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12).

The spirit man or inward man is the eternal part of a person that gives the outward man color and personality. And it is the inward man of a believer—his spirit—that hears what the Spirit of God is saying.

The Bible says, "*The SPIRIT OF MAN is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly*" (Prov. 20:27). The Bible also says the Holy Spirit bears witness with our *spirit* (Rom. 8:16).

In other words, the Holy Spirit will use our spirit to guide and enlighten us as to God's will for our lives. He doesn't communicate with us directly through our *mind* or our *body*, because He dwells in our *spirit*. Therefore, He communicates with us through our spirit.

We can expect the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us so we can fulfill God's plan and purpose for our lives. The Bible tells us

## Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit

that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). Notice it does *not* say, "As many as are led by the *mind* or *flesh*, they are the sons of God."

And that verse also doesn't say, "As many as are led by *prophets* or by *someone else telling them what to do*, they are the sons of God." Although it's good at times to seek wise counsel from someone you respect spiritually, you shouldn't look to man to receive God's guidance for you. That's unscriptural.

As Christians, we all have the Spirit of God, and we are each responsible to discern the Lord's leading for ourselves. We are to be led by the Holy Spirit according to God's Word, *not* by other people's guidance or opinions.

How does the Holy Spirit lead us? The first and foremost way God leads His children is by *the inward witness*. Romans 8:16 talks about the inward witness: "*The Spirit itself [Himself] BEARETH WITNESS with OUR SPIRIT, that we are the children of God.*"

When you are born again, the Holy Spirit lets you know you are a child of God *by bearing witness with your spirit*.

You don't know you're a child of God because someone prophesied to you that you're saved. And you don't know you're born again because someone told you, "In my opinion, you're a Christian."

No, you know you're a child of God because God's Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you are born again. You might not be able to explain to someone else *how* you know you're saved, but

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

you just know it down on the inside. You know you've become a new creature in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:17).

The inward witness is the way the Holy Spirit guides you in the most important event that could ever happen to you—becoming a child of God. Therefore, it's logical that the inward witness will be the primary way the Holy Spirit will continue to guide you throughout your Christian walk.

In my own life and ministry, I'm almost always led by the inward witness. Yes, at times I've had spectacular guidance, such as visions, but most of the time I'm led by the inward witness. That's the number one way God leads all of His children.

As you seek to follow God's plan for your life, there will be many times your spirit will know things by the inward witness that your head doesn't know. Your spirit will pick up that information from the Spirit of God who dwells within.

Sometimes it can be difficult to explain to another person in logical terms how you know something by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. You just know it on the inside. It's not a physical feeling. It's a *spiritual sense or perception*.

For instance, when Paul was a prisoner on board a ship headed for Rome, he said, "*Sirs, I PERCEIVE that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives*" (Acts 27:10).

Paul didn't say, "The Holy Ghost spoke to me" or "I had a vision." He said, "I *perceive* that this voyage will be fraught with danger." Evidently Paul had an inward witness or a spiritual

## *Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

perception about the voyage. His spirit picked up that knowledge from the Holy Spirit dwelling within him.

The second way the Holy Spirit leads us is through *the inward voice*, also called *the still small voice*. Did you know your inward man has a voice, just like your outward man does? The voice of your spirit is called your *conscience*.

You don't hear the inward voice—the voice of your inward man—with your physical ears, like you do the voice of your outward man. You hear the voice of your inward man on the inside of you in your spirit. Your spirit man will speak to you by the still small voice of your conscience and pass on to your mind the information he receives from the Holy Spirit within.

The third way the Holy Spirit leads you is through *the authoritative Voice of the Holy Spirit*. Although the Holy Spirit may choose to speak to the believer in the authoritative Voice, we are not to seek after voices. These things happen as the Holy Spirit wills (1 Cor. 12:11).

There is a distinct difference between the inward voice of your own spirit and the audible Voice of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit speaks to you, it is more authoritative.

You'll hear the authoritative Voice of the Holy Spirit on the inside, in your inward man. Or you might hear His Voice out loud; it can seem just as real to you as if you are hearing a person speak to you out loud.

You see, when the Holy Spirit speaks to you, it can actually seem *audible*, even though no one else in the same room hears it.

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

That's because the Holy Spirit doesn't speak in the *sense realm*, since He doesn't have a physical body. He is a Spirit, a divine Personality, and He speaks in the *spirit realm*.

You are also a spirit being. So when you hear the Holy Spirit speak, you are hearing His Voice with your spirit. And His Voice is audible in the spirit realm.

Spiritual things are just as real as material things. In fact, the spiritual realm is even more real than the natural realm because God, Who is a Spirit, *created* the material, natural realm. So if you are going to successfully follow God's plan for your life, you need to become more Spirit-conscious than you are mind-conscious or body-conscious.

Too many Christians spend their whole lives conscious only of what their natural senses tell them. They are sense-conscious and body-ruled, and because of that, they often become spiritually deaf.

Their spiritual ears get stopped up, so to speak, because they don't pay attention to the Holy Spirit inside them, and their heart is all cluttered up with natural concerns.

Other Christians don't ever hear from God because *they* are the ones doing all the talking. They chatter all the time, and they don't take time to listen to what the Lord is trying to tell them in their spirit.

And some Christians don't even know they *have* spiritual ears or that they are *supposed* to be hearing anything from the Holy Spirit!

## DEVELOP YOUR SPIRIT SO YOU CAN KNOW GOD'S WILL

Too often our problem in following God's plan for our lives is that we have failed to train our spirit as we should have. We have spent most of our lives in the mental and physical realms, developing our intellect at the expense of our heart.

When we neglect the development of our spirit, our intellect takes the throne in our lives. And our spirit, the part of us which should dominate and guide our mind and body, is kept locked away in prison, so to speak, and is not permitted to function.

But the Holy Spirit through the inward witness is always seeking to give guidance to our mind—if we would only take time to develop our spirit and to listen.

Here's an important point to remember if you are ever going to develop your spirit. You must determine to *always keep a tender conscience*.

Don't violate your conscience. Instead, make it a practice to always instantly obey your spirit. Remember, your conscience is the voice of your spirit, and it relates to your mind what the Spirit of God is saying to you in your heart.

If you persist in violating your conscience, you will make your conscience calloused to the Holy Spirit's promptings. Spiritual things will become indistinct to you, and your conscience will no longer be a safe guide. Once your conscience is seared, it will be difficult for you to discern the Lord's leading and to follow His plan.

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

Also, as you seek to develop your spirit, remember to *make sure you aren't being led by your flesh*. This is where many Christians miss it. They make decisions according to their own fleshly nature, desires, and inclinations.

And because their spirits are not in tune to the Holy Spirit inside them, they miss the things of the Spirit which God has prepared for them in their spiritual race.

It will also hinder the development of your spirit if you *allow yourself to be led by your soul—your feelings, natural reasonings, and emotions*.

This is another area where Christians often miss it. They allow themselves to get emotionally worked up about plans and desires of their own making, and then they convince themselves that it is the Lord leading them. But actually, they are being led by their emotions, not their spirit, and their emotions lead them astray.

It's also important in the development of your spirit *not to be led by outward circumstances*.

When I was a young pastor, I knew pastors who were led by circumstances. When they encountered problems in their church, they'd say things like, "If I ever get the Sunday school attendance back up to where it was, I'm going to leave."

Or they'd say, "Once the finances of the church are doing better, I'm going to take another pastorate." But, you see, those pastors were being led by natural circumstances rather than by the Holy Spirit.

## *Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

As a pastor, I never let circumstances move me. It didn't bother me the least bit if the Sunday school attendance or the offerings fell off. I never allowed myself to be motivated by crowds or money or any other natural circumstance.

When I encountered problems in the churches I pastored, I'd just say to myself: "I don't ascertain the will of God by outward circumstances. I ascertain the will of God by what He's saying to me in my spirit. God told me to pastor this church, and I'm not going to question His judgment. I'm not going to wonder whether or not He'll tell me to leave next week or next month. That isn't any of my business; that's *His* business. I'm going to stay put until He tells me to go.

"If God wants me to go somewhere else, He has enough sense to talk to me. He's an intelligent Being, and so am I. I'll understand what He's saying to me. I'm in contact with God, and I'm open to His leading. He'll give me the signal when He's ready for me to move on. I'll know it on the inside of me by the inward witness."

That's how I've operated in my almost sixty years of ministry as I've followed God's plan for my life. I go as much by what the Lord *doesn't* say as I do by what He *does* say.

In other words, I live by the principles of God's Word and by the leading of the Holy Spirit in my spirit. I just keep heading in the direction the Lord has already told me to go unless He sees fit to initiate a new direction in His plan for my life and ministry. I don't try to initiate a new direction on my own.

In developing your spirit and ascertaining God's direction for your life, it will also help you to *strive for unity and*

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

*agreement with those around you who are spiritually mature. Be careful about making a move when those who are close to you and whom you respect spiritually are not in agreement that you have the leading of the Lord.*

For instance, the Early Church practiced biblical principles of unity and agreement in making some decisions, especially regarding ministry. We see an example of that in Acts chapter 13 when Paul and Barnabas were being set apart for the ministry.

### ACTS 13:1-3

- 1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch CERTAIN PROPHETS AND TEACHERS; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- 2 As THEY ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul [Paul] for the work whereunto I have called them.
- 3 And when THEY had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, THEY sent them away.

The Bible doesn't say *how* the Holy Spirit spoke in this instance. One of the prophets could have spoken out by the unc-tion of the Holy Ghost in prophecy. Or someone could have heard the authoritative Voice of the Holy Spirit.

But it doesn't really matter how the Holy Spirit spoke. The point is that all five ministers involved in that meeting at Antioch were in agreement that it was the leading of the Lord to separate Barnabas and Paul to the work of the ministry.

Now it's true that as you follow God's plan for your life, you're going to have to make some decisions for yourself. You

don't need to always be questioning everyone around you about what they think your decision should be. God may not tell others what He wants you to do in a given situation.

Too many Christians let others tell them what to do because they don't want to take the responsibility of seeking God for guidance themselves. But every believer has the responsibility of receiving the Lord's direction for his own life.

On the other hand, we read in Acts chapter 13 that everyone involved agreed on what the leading of the Lord was and then acted on it.

Therefore, it is certainly scriptural for those whom you trust spiritually to be in agreement when you're making a major decision that will greatly affect your life. But that doesn't mean you're supposed to allow others to take the responsibility for receiving guidance for your life.

However, many times it's wise to consider the counsel of those who know the Lord and who care about you. In my own life, I can think of some people whose spiritual walk I have the utmost confidence in. And there are times when I talk to them about decisions I need to make. The Bible says, "*Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety*" (Prov. 11:14).

Also, it's important that those whose lives are affected by your decision agree that the Lord is leading in that particular direction. For instance, in the early 1940s when the Lord began dealing with me about going back to pastor the church

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

in Farmersville (I had left the church earlier out of God's will), I wanted that decision to be confirmed by my wife.

I was pastoring another church at the time, and I had been struggling with the prospect of going back to the Farmersville church for about a month.

Sometimes I'd be praying in the sanctuary, and the burden for the Farmersville church would come on me so strongly that I'd get up and physically run out of the building. I was trying to run away from that burden. I kept telling the Lord, "I don't want to go back there and pastor!"

You know, sometimes your flesh and your mind rebel against what the Lord is asking you to do. And you can get all mixed up if you try to listen to your physical senses, your mind, *and* your spirit.

So finally I prayed, "Lord, if you want us to go back to Farmersville, bear witness to that fact with my wife too."

Soon after that, Oretha and I were washing dishes together, and I asked her, "Honey, has the Lord been talking to you about anything?"

"No, not that I know of," she answered.

"Well, let me know if He does tell you anything," I said to her.

I waited about thirty days, and one morning when we were washing dishes together again, I asked my wife, "Have you heard anything from the Lord?"

*Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

Oretha said, "No, I haven't." Sometimes people have heard from the Lord, but they don't recognize it as the Lord's leading.

So I asked her, "Do you have any leading to resign from this church and go pastor another church?"

"No," she said.

"Do you have anything in your heart at all about the church in Farmersville?" I asked.

"Oh," she said, "I thought that was just me." You see, she had something from the Lord and just didn't recognize it.

"Well, let me ask you a question," I said. "Do you want to go back to Farmersville to pastor?"

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed. "A thousand times no!"

I said, "Well, then, it couldn't be you, could it? *You* don't want to go back there."

"I guess you're right," she answered.

In the natural, neither one of us wanted to go back to that church. But we both obeyed God and went, and we were happier pastoring that church than we had ever been in our lives.

Because we had left that church prematurely the first time, God wasn't able to accomplish what He wanted to. But as a result of our obedience to go back there, God was able to teach me how to develop that congregation spiritually more than any other church we ever pastored.

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

We learned many valuable lessons there. God's way is always best!

But the point I'm trying to get across to you is that the Lord dealt with both of us by the inward witness to go back to that church in Farmersville.

Oretha and I both agreed that the Lord was leading us in that direction. Whenever possible, that's the way it should be when more than one person is going to be affected by a decision.

There may be times when others don't agree with the direction you sense the Lord is leading you to take. Ultimately, you have to follow the Lord's leading to the best of your ability. But when others aren't in agreement with you, be very careful to make sure it's the Lord's leading.

### GET GOD'S DIRECTION CLEAR IN YOUR SPIRIT BEFORE YOU ACT

It's important not to be too quick when making decisions that affect your life. Remember what Jesus told me: "I'd rather you be too slow than too fast."

Therefore, if you're going to develop your spirit so you can discern God's plan for your life, you need to *take enough time to pray until you have the Lord's direction clear in your spirit.*

The trouble with some Christians is that when they do receive some direction about God's plan for their lives, they mix that revelation with their own feelings and thinking. They follow after their own human thinking and entirely miss *God's*

thinking on the matter. Then the plan doesn't turn out right, and they get confused, wondering if they ever really heard from God.

The only way you can keep that from happening is to get in the Presence of God long enough to sift out your own human emotions and thoughts and lay them on the altar before God. Then pray and meditate on the Word until you hear from the Lord in your spirit and you know on the inside what to do.

What you need to realize is that God's thoughts are so much higher than man's thoughts (Isa. 55:9). And it is in God's Word where you find His thoughts. That's why meditating and feeding constantly on God's Word renews your mind so your mind can come into agreement with your spirit.

You see, the voice that speaks to you in the Word is the same voice that leads you by your spirit. So being in the Word sharpens your spiritual perception and ability to hear God's voice in your own spirit.

Therefore, waiting before the Lord in prayer *and* in the Word is vitally important if you want to walk in God's ways according to *His* thinking, rather than according to your own natural reasoning.

When I was still young in my Christian walk, I learned to take time to wait before the Lord in prayer and in the Word until I got it clear in my spirit what He wanted me to do. Sometimes I've sought God in prayer for several days about His direction. In fact, I have sometimes prayed several months before making major decisions in my ministry.

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

I don't mean I was on my knees praying all the time. I still went about my daily business. But whenever I could, I'd pray, many times all night long. Much of the time I'd pray in other tongues.

Actually, one of the greatest assets God has provided for the believer in seeking God's plan for his life is the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:2-4).<sup>2</sup>

The Bible says that when you pray in an unknown tongue, your *spirit* prays (1 Cor. 14:14). Your spirit is actively communicating with God when you pray in other tongues as the Spirit gives you utterance. This is a great enablement in prayer because it is through your spirit that God gives you guidance.

First Corinthians 14:2 says that when you pray in tongues, you are speaking mysteries to God. So as you seek the Lord for guidance and direction, the Holy Spirit will help you pray out the mysteries of God's plan for your life as you pray in other tongues.

In my own Christian experience, I've found that praying in other tongues is one of the best ways to get my body quiet and my mind in neutral so I can hear what my *spirit* is saying. You see, you can be just as noisy with your mind as you can be with your hands and feet! And if your mind is hollering at you—constantly bombarding you with its soulish thoughts or the devil's lies—you aren't going to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to your spirit.

Over the years, it has become easier for me to get my mind and body quiet as I pray. It used to take me at least an hour and

*Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

a half of praying in tongues to get my soul and my body quiet. But now it only takes me a few minutes.

You see, spiritual things have to be practiced just like natural things do. For instance, baseball players practice in the spring in order to get ready for the upcoming baseball season. Similarly, the more you wait before the Lord and pray in other tongues, the easier it will be to get quiet and listen to your heart.

Of course, that's not easy on the flesh. Your body won't necessarily want to pray. It's a whole lot easier to watch television or to visit Susie Q or Joe Blow down the street than it is to make yourself pray, isn't it? But if you are going to receive God's wisdom and direction in your life, you'll have to keep your body under subjection to your spirit and diligently give yourself to prayer (1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Peter 4:7).

As I sought God's guidance about various decisions, sometimes I'd pray night after night over a period of several weeks. I wouldn't stop until I got it clear in my spirit what the Lord wanted me to do.

The whole time I'd be praying, I'd have my "spiritual antenna" up. Do you know what I mean by that? In other words, I was constantly alert in my spirit to hear what God was saying to me.

You, too, can put up your spiritual antenna simply by an act of faith. On the inside of you, reach toward God with your spirit. As you do, you will contact the Father God, Who is a Spirit, and He will respond to your spirit.

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

As I prayed during those prolonged seasons of prayer, from somewhere deep inside, the knowledge of what God wanted me to do would rise up in me. The Lord's wisdom and guidance would take shape and form within me, and eventually I'd know on the inside of me exactly what direction I was supposed to take. Once I got it clear in my spirit, no one could knock the knowledge of God's plan out of me. I had it!

Getting God's direction clear in your spirit is what will carry you through to victory when the trials come. If you don't know for sure what God's will is for you concerning a particular matter, you could be easily swayed by adverse and contrary circumstances. If you don't have God's direction clear in your spirit and you make a decision anyway, you could waste a lot of time wavering back and forth in fear wondering if you missed God.

Without the knowledge of God's will fixed firmly in your spirit, you'll ride the waves of circumstances, so to speak, up one day and down the next. And you'll eventually get off course, because you'll be led by natural circumstances rather than by the leading of the Holy Spirit in your spirit. *Knowing* God's will in your spirit is your anchor to keep you on course no matter what comes against you.

### RID YOUR HEART OF ANY HINDRANCES

So make it your lifelong aim to develop your spirit and to always get God's guidance and direction clear in your spirit before you make a move. However, remember this: You won't be able to accomplish that goal unless you *get rid of anything in your heart that might be a hindrance to your prayer life*. If

*Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

you don't rid your heart of hindrances, you'll spend a lot of time praying with no results.

What can hinder your prayer life? Jesus gives us one hindrance in Mark 11:25. After talking about the prayer of faith in Mark 11:24, Jesus states that unforgiveness is a hindrance to getting prayers answered.

**MARK 11:24-26**

- 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.
- 25 And **WHEN YE STAND PRAYING, FORGIVE**, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
- 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

When you pray—forgive. Why did Jesus say that? Because Jesus knew our prayers would be ineffectual if we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts toward anyone.

Unless you practice walking in the love of God and you are quick to forgive, you will greatly hinder the development of your spirit and your ability to receive guidance and direction from the Lord—*because it's by your heart or spirit that He leads you.*

The Book of First Peter mentions another hindrance to the believer's prayer life.

**1 PETER 3:7-9**

- 7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; **THAT YOUR PRAYERS BE NOT HINDERED.**

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

- 8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:
- 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Verse 7 says that husbands can hinder their prayers by not giving honor to their wife as a fellow heir of the grace of life. The truth is, both husbands and wives can hinder their prayer lives and their spiritual development by not walking in love toward each other. That's absolutely the truth!

That scriptural principle is also true for every believer. In other words, if you don't rid your heart of every bit of animosity, ill will, or unforgiveness, you are *blocking* the channel of communication between you and God.

These are not the only hindrances to your prayer life and to the development of your spirit so you can successfully follow God in life.

Your prayer life will be hindered if you don't strip off everything that is a bondage to you personally—every weight and sin that would try to hold you back from running your spiritual race to the best of your ability (Heb. 12:1).

\*So don't dam up the flood tide of God's blessing and glory and guidance! Don't hold on to weights and sins that clog the flow of His Spirit in your life. Get those things out of your mind and your heart. Repent of them and get them under the blood of Jesus.

Take care of any hindrance to your prayer life *before* you begin to seek God for guidance on a matter. Then you can be assured that your heart is clear and uncluttered so you can hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. \*

### LET GOD REMOVE THE OBSTACLES IN YOUR PATH

Once you do have God's guidance on a matter, don't be concerned with seemingly impossible obstacles that might stand in the way of following His plan. As you continue to seek the Lord for wisdom and obey Him each step of the way, He will remove each obstacle in ways that will amaze you.

For example, I remember once when God began to deal with me two years ahead of time about pastoring a particular church. I began picking this church up in my spirit, and I asked the Lord, "Are You talking to me about pastoring that church?"

As I continued to pray about the matter, I became convinced that the Lord wanted me to pastor that particular church.

Then I prayed, "Lord, I see some major obstacles blocking the way of my ever pastoring that church. From the natural standpoint, those obstacles look like insurmountable mountains. So You'll have to work it out so I *can* pastor there."

Some of the leaders at that particular church were opposed to my ministry because of the message of faith and healing that I preached. They had tried to confront me in the past, wanting to fuss and argue with me about what *they* believed. But I just

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

kept quiet and let *them* fuss. (I decided long ago that I'm going to walk in love whether anyone else does or not!)

So I told the Lord, "I'm not going to take what You've told me about pastoring that church and try to make it happen myself. I'm not going to say a word to anyone. I'm just going to stay committed to the church I'm pastoring now while I watch *You* work it out."

And God did just that! To my utter surprise, two years later those leaders who had so adamantly opposed me were the very ones who asked me to come and pastor that church! God took care of every obstacle as I continued to pray and trust Him with the matter.

But the reason I could trust God to work out the situation is that I first sought Him in prayer until I had it clear in my spirit that pastoring *that* particular church was God's will for me.

### PRACTICAL INSIGHTS TO PRAYING OUT THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S PLAN

It's so important to learn to wait before the Lord and pray out the mystery of God's plan for our lives. One way we can do that is to pray in other tongues.

The Bible says when we pray in tongues, we are praying *mysteries* to God: "*For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries*" (1 Cor. 14:2). *Moffatt's* translation says we are praying "*divine secrets* in the Spirit."

### *Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

Many of the bad things that happen to us—or the good things that should have happened but didn't—are a result of our failing in the past to pray out God's plan. You see, God has planned many things for us in the future that as we pray in the Spirit we will be praying out ahead of time. (We can pray in the Spirit both in tongues and in our native language when we pray by the unction of the Holy Spirit.)

In fact, what is happening in your life in the present, whether good or bad, is a result of what you have or have not prayed out in days gone by. And what will happen in your life in the future will be a result of your *present* prayer life.

At times, the Holy Spirit will impress you to pray about certain things that concern His plan for your life. You'll have an anointing or unction of the Holy Spirit to pray. But if you ignore the Holy Spirit's promptings and busy yourself with natural affairs, that anointing will leave, and you'll wonder if you ever sensed it! If you keep ignoring the Holy Spirit's promptings, you'll grieve the Holy Ghost, and He won't deal with you any more about that issue.

So determine to always stay sensitive to those gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit. Take the time to wait upon the Lord in prayer and in the Word to discover His guidance and direction for your life. Wait long enough before Him until your mind becomes quiet and is no longer active. Wait long enough in prayer for all of your physical senses and emotions to be brought into captivity so they no longer dominate you. Then you'll be able to hear from your spirit.

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

Also, as you spend time in God's Presence, ministering to the Lord in praise and worship will quiet your mind and strengthen your spirit. That's why spending much time ministering to the Lord will greatly aid you in developing your spirit.

What does ministering to the Lord mean? It means to linger in His Presence, loving and worshipping Him for all that He is and for all He has done for you. It means to drink in of His glory and power and to let Him saturate every part of your being.

Ministering to the Lord will also help you hear from Him. For instance, in Acts 13:2, it says, "*AS THEY* [certain prophets and teachers at Antioch] *MINISTERED TO THE LORD, and fasted, THE HOLY GHOST SAID*" (Acts 13:2). When you worship the Lord, you create the kind of atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit can speak to your heart.

As you spend time just loving and worshipping the Lord, it's so much easier to quiet your mind and emotions and focus on Jesus.

So if you want to experience intimate fellowship with the Lord and hear what He is saying to you, spend *much* time ministering to Him.

It can take some time to get your mind and body quiet. That's why the scripture says, "*BE STILL, and know that I am God*" (Ps. 46:10).

Take the time to let your body become quiet. Let your mind be still. Let your emotions subside, until there's no emotion at all in manifestation coloring your thoughts. Once your mind and

### Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit

body are quiet, listen way down deep in your innermost being to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Although at times your mind may seem to be in a fog, the Lord will enlighten your spirit and give you the guidance you need.

Don't allow yourself to become spiritually lazy and stop short of hearing what the Lord is saying to you in your spirit. If you become spiritually lethargic, you could end up following your own soulish desires, thinking all the time you're following God's plan for you.

You have to learn to distinguish between your soulish thoughts and desires and the Lord's leading in your spirit. To do that, you must become well-grounded in the Word, which is the only thing that can distinguish between soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12).

Becoming established in the Word will also help you learn to recognize the voice of Satan as well. The devil will try to speak subtle lies to your *mind* to deceive you (John 8:44; Rev. 12:9).

However, remember that God speaks to your *spirit*, and what He says to you will always line up with His Word. So always examine your leading in the light of the Bible. God will never lead you one step beyond the principles in His Word.

Also, examine your motives for taking the step you're considering. Ask yourself: "Why do I want to do this? Do I want to do it for my own selfish benefit or because someone else is doing it? Is this something my soulish nature wants to do or something God wants me to do?"

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

Sometimes it takes a considerable amount of time staying in the Presence of God for you to settle those questions. You can't always do it in one session of prayer.

Sometimes it takes long seasons of waiting before the Lord in prayer in order to get your motives pure and your priorities sorted out according to the Word so you can distinguish between the clamorings of your soul and the voice of your spirit.

But if you'll get still enough on the inside, and if you'll meditate on God's Word and pray in the Spirit long enough, you'll get deeper over into the Spirit, and you'll be able to differentiate between your soul and your spirit man. You'll be able to tell the difference between your *own* wants and desires and what *God* wants for you.

Then from way down inside of you, direction and guidance will rise up. And you'll be able to say with confidence, "Now I know what to do! This is the choice of the Lord. In times past, I was misled by my own emotions and my own human personality. But now I've heard from the Lord in my spirit. And although all the world might stand against me and say it's not so, I know what God wants me to do!"

And as you obey God's will and follow His plan, you'll enjoy the blessings He has provided for you.

The truth is, ministering to your own spirit—constantly feeding your spirit by meditating on the Word of God and fellowshiping with the Lord—is the most important thing you can do to develop your spirit so you can ascertain God's will for

your life. Only then can you live in the abundance God has provided for you.

Many Christians miss it by remaining in the mental and physical realms. Forgetting that the spiritual realm is the root, the stem, and the ground out of which all else grows, they get all agitated in their mind and emotions. And they run here and there, seeking for someone to give them mental, natural counsel.

But if they'd only stop, get quiet on the inside, and fellowship with the Lord, they'd begin to hear Him speak to their heart. Peace, contentment, and satisfaction would flow out of their spirit into their mind and emotions. All of their questionings would simmer down and become as nothing, and even their bodies would respond in joy and health.

Someone may say, "Well, I've been praying a long time, and I haven't heard anything yet." Then don't make a move until you do! Keep on seeking the Lord in the Word and in prayer.

Someone else may say, "I'm going to give God only this long to give me an answer. If He doesn't, I'll have to do it my way." No, it doesn't work that way. You can't give God *your* deadline! If you try, you'll be going the wrong direction for sure! You must wait before the Lord in faith that He will answer you in *His* time and in *His* way.

If you want to be led by the Holy Spirit, always be willing to respond to His leading, even if it doesn't agree with your own human reasonings, expectations, or desires. Don't hinder your ability to discern His guidance through wrong thinking or selfish ambition. Stay teachable and open in your heart to anything

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

the Lord may tell you. And as you do, He will teach you His ways and direct you into His plan for your life.

In my own life, I determined long ago to always respond instantly to the Holy Spirit's leading. And through the years, every time I took the time to seek the Lord for guidance in the Word and in prayer, God always gave me an answer. The Holy Spirit would bear witness with my spirit to God's plan, and I'd *know* on the inside I had received God's direction on the matter. I knew it better than I knew my own name!

You can experience the same success in receiving guidance from the Holy Spirit. But I want to emphasize this fact: Knowing the will of God and walking *in* the will of God is contingent upon your prayer life and upon being established in the Word.

The more time you spend waiting before the Lord in the Word and in prayer, the more sure you will be of the next step to take. In God's Presence, what is not of God in your life will gradually fall away.

You'll come to the place where you won't be bothered any more by those weights and sins that caused you to stumble in the past. And you'll find that you are able to walk in the clearly defined will of the Father.

As you practice praying out the mystery of God's plan for your life according to the Word, the Lord will take you deeper in the realm of prayer than you've ever been before.

I'm not talking about some mystical realm where you float around like a cloud in the sky and are too spiritual to be any

## *Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

earthly good! I'm talking about learning to enjoy a more intimate level of communion with the Lord. The things of the Spirit of God will become more real to you than the natural world around you.

That's the way it should be for every believer. Walking in the Spirit should be normal for the child of God. It should be as natural for a believer to be led by the Holy Spirit and to walk by faith as it is for fish to swim in the sea and birds to fly in the sky.

You see, you can become so attuned to the Holy Spirit who dwells inside you that in every situation of life, you'll know exactly what He is saying to you as you seek Him for guidance and direction. You'll develop a working relationship with God.

What do I mean by *a working relationship*? I mean you'll become so intimate with your Heavenly Father that it will become natural to talk everything over with Him just as a child would talk with his earthly father. You won't make any significant decisions without asking Him first, and He won't do anything that concerns you without telling you first.

Throughout my own Christian walk, I've developed that kind of intimate, working relationship with the Lord. I've kept myself consecrated to God's will, whatever it may be. But I've always felt free to talk with Him just like a son would talk to his father.

For instance, on some matters that weren't that crucial, I've asked the Lord, "If it's all right with You, could I do it this way?" And the Lord told me, "That's fine with Me. It's not exactly what I had in mind, but if you want to do it that way, it's all right."

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

On the other hand, there have been times when the Lord told me, "No, don't ask to do that. It wouldn't be best." So I've trusted His wisdom and obeyed Him.

You can have an intimate relationship with the Lord if you'll stay in the Word, stay "prayed up," and stay yielded to the Holy Spirit's leading. God wants you to develop your spirit so you can enjoy close communion with Him. And as you wait in His Presence in prayer, in that holy place of sweet communion, at times you will catch glimpses in the Spirit of His plan for you as He shows you things to come (John 16:13).

### DON'T LET SATAN THWART GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU!

As you spend time in the Presence of the Lord, not only will you enter into a new dimension of communion with Him, but you will also gain a greater understanding of your authority and power in the Name of Jesus to stop Satan's strategies in your life.<sup>3</sup> This is extremely important, because Satan will do his best to thwart God's purpose for your life from being fulfilled.

Has the Lord spoken to you by His Word and by His Spirit concerning His plan for you? Perhaps you've waited and waited for what He has said to your heart to come to pass, yet nothing has happened. You need to seek the Lord and determine if your lack of results is due to Satan's strategies against you. If that is the case, you must speak to your mountain—whatever problem or circumstance Satan is using against you—and command it to be removed in the mighty Name of Jesus (Mark 11:23).

## *Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

You see, there are often spiritual battles in prayer that we must wage as we stand our ground on the Word against the enemy who wants to keep God's plan from coming to pass in our lives. I'm not talking about a mental or physical battle. I'm talking about standing against spiritual forces of darkness in the Name of Jesus as we fight the good fight of faith by the Word of God (Eph. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:12).

As we exercise our God-given authority in Jesus' Name, we enforce the victory over the devil that Jesus already bought for us on the cross (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). That is the kind of warfare Paul was talking about in First Timothy.

### **1 TIMOTHY 1:18**

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest WAR A GOOD WARFARE.

In my ministry, there have been times when it seemed like every demon in hell was ganging up on me to keep me from following God's plan for my life. For instance, the first five months after I left my last church and went into the field ministry, it seemed like I had to stand against more demons than I had the previous fifteen years put together.

Everywhere I turned, I encountered oppression and opposition from the enemy. The devil tried to keep me out of the place of ministry that God had planned for me, but I overcame by steadfastly exercising my authority in Jesus Christ in prayer. You see, the Bible calls it a good fight of faith because sometimes we have to *steadfastly* and with *perseverance* take our stand against the enemy (Eph. 6:11-18).

## FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

You can do the same thing in your life. For instance, if a spirit of depression or oppression has been causing your spirit to be sluggish and your mind to be unclear, you need to command the enemy to stop his operations against you in the Name of Jesus.

Command Satan's power to be broken over *every* area of your life. Stand your ground against the enemy's strategies with the Word of God and the mighty Name of Jesus.

At the same time, hold fast to your confession of faith that God's purposes will prevail in your life. Begin to say, "The Lord has spoken to me and therefore, in the Name of Jesus it *shall* come to pass!"

When you walk in that realm of authority in Jesus Christ, no man, no enemy, no demon, and no circumstance will be able to stand between you and the fulfillment of God's purposes for your life. And as you determine to develop your spirit and to always follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, to a greater and greater degree you will walk in victory and experience the fullness of God's plan for you.

I've shared different ways the Holy Spirit may lead you and some scriptural principles that when acted upon will help you successfully follow the Holy Spirit's guidance. But remember, spiritual things require practice, just as natural things do.

So don't get in a hurry and become discouraged if you don't grow up and develop spiritual maturity in these matters overnight. You didn't develop mentally and physically overnight, did you?

## *Learning to Be Led by the Holy Spirit*

You didn't enter first grade one week and graduate from high school the next week! You didn't mature overnight. In the same way, your spiritual development will take some time too.

So just continue to be diligent to seek the Lord for guidance and direction in your life. Remember to exercise your God-given authority in Jesus Christ to stop Satan's attempts to thwart God's plan for your life. Most importantly, spend much time in God's Presence, meditating on His Word, worshipping Him, and praying in the Spirit.

Don't get upset because you miss it a few times. Just keep on growing spiritually and developing your spirit. Refuse to walk after your own natural mind, and ask the Lord to make *His* thoughts *your* thoughts. As you are rooted and grounded in the Word and take time to listen to your spirit, the Bible promises that you *will* learn to be led by the Holy Spirit!

---

<sup>1</sup>For further study on the subject of how to be led by the Holy Spirit, see also *How You Can Be Led by the Spirit of God* by Rev. Kenneth E. Hagin.

<sup>2</sup>For further study on the subject of the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, see also *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts* by Rev. Kenneth E. Hagin.

<sup>3</sup>For further study on the subject of the authority of the believer, see also *The Believer's Authority* by Rev. Kenneth E. Hagin.