

God's Leading

You Can Be Led By God

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
James 4:8 NASB

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Introduction

A book such as this one is not intended for those who are not serious about their faith in Christ. Neither is it intended by anyone who does not subscribe to the following.

Ultimately the scriptures of the 66 books of the Old and New Testament are the final authority for Christian believers. Anyone who wants to be guided by God should never expect their guidance to be contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

For instance, God would never “tell” a believer to murder or steal. I use the word ‘murder’ because there is such a thing as lawful self-defense and a righteous war. The values set forth in scripture should always guide us and not private revelation should conflict with them.

In addition, sincere Christian believers should always be willing to accept correction from fellow believers. No single believer is a law unto himself. No single church leader is the final authority. Sincere believers must be willing to listen to the corrections others as well as being able to commune with God themselves.

There is no doctrine or experience that so sets one believer apart from another so that some may be considered to be superior or special believers.

There is one body of Christ. Certain churches and groups have theological or doctrinal differences. These differences are to be expected so long as they are not contradictions to the very basics of believing Christianity. The teachings of Jesus and the rule of love should prevail.

There is no place for crazies when seeking the leading of God.

I. Twelve Ways God Led The Disciples In Acts

1. Acts 8:29 Then the SPIRIT said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

Christian believers often think that the voice of God to them should be distinctly different than the voice they hear in their own minds, a strange voice. But if a person is a regenerate believer, born again, God is not a stranger to him or her. He is very close. He indwells us. His voice often sounds like the voice of our own mind.

When Jesus became a man he had, of course, in his life on earth a human voice. He still does. But, more than that, it is His Spirit that indwells us. And that voice is not only human, but it is much like our own inner voice. God spoke to Elijah with a “still small voice.” It was not a booming voice. It was not a loud voice. It did not move as He spoke. And that was in the Old Testament. In the New He is very familiar with us.

There may be several problems when we cannot hear the voice of the Holy Spirit within us. His voice comes from within, but He lives in us at a level much deeper than the mind.

Perhaps there is too much ‘noise’ in our mind. These noises can be caused by turmoil, emotions on the rampage. Sometimes we have to ask him to calm our fears and emotions so that we will be able to hear.

Perhaps we are not willing to hear what He has to say. Then we must ask him to help us to be willing to hear anything He wants to tell us or our superficial mind will filter out His communications. He is the God of the Gospel, He has GOOD news for us. We need to believe that. Even if He is telling us to expect a hard time ahead He will be there with us to see us through it.

There is a particular ‘tone’ to the voice of God. Jesus said that His sheep would know him and hear his voice. In one church that I began we rented space for our Sunday meeting so that some of the sounds of the nursery could be heard in the meeting room. It seldom failed that if a child let out a loud wail from the nursery the right mother would get up and leave the room to check on her child. This is true among both humans and animals. Mother and child recognize each other’s voice. Why should this not be true where the voice of God is concerned?

If we commune with him regularly we will learn to recognize his voice.

The voice of fear cannot imitate God's voice. But when we a fear filled it will predominate. As an example, take a bell and hold it by the handle, then strike it with another metal object. It will ring true and pure and clear. Then hold the bell in one hand and strike it. Then there is a hollow sound. You can strike it harder and it will get louder. But it will still sound hollow, like a thud. You can strike it repeatedly and louder and it will still be dull and lifeless and unpleasing. The voice of fear is never clear and crisp let alone loving and pure and good. God's voice is.

When God first speaks listen and take note. He often speaks the moment before fear or our reasoning process becomes involved. Remember what He said. Don't doubt it later or listen to the 'thud' of fear. God will always consistent with His word. A wise man once told me not to doubt in the dark something that I heard in the light. I realize that is mixing two metaphors, but it does hold true.

Believers should fellowship in small groups enough so that they respect the voice of God as He speaks to others. When you are in a jam you need to have a few others that you have learned by experience can and do hear from God.

2. Acts 8:39 And when they were come up out of the water, the SPIRIT of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

This is a real miracle. But it also says to us to look around and discern if God is showing us anything pertaining to where we are at the time.

Furthermore, Philip was led by the Spirit to go into the desert in the first place. He left a perfectly good revival where he was to go into the desert. Then he saw the man riding by in a sort of a chariot. Then the Lord led him to approach the chariot where he found an Ethiopian man reading from the Old Testament prophet but he could not understand what he was reading. Philip explained about Jesus to the man and he took the message back and spread it in the nation of Ethiopia. The man was the special assistant to the Queen there. God had laid foundations for this many centuries before when another Queen of Ethiopia, an ancestor, visited Solomon to learn from his wisdom.

There was no way for Philip to have figured this all out in advance. He left a large crowd already in revival to teach on man crossing the desert. And this way in the long run he had more effect

on my people than if he had stayed where he was in the first place.

Then the miracle happened and Philip was supernaturally transported to Dothan. We are not told what he did when he got there.

3. Acts 10:19 While Peter thought on the vision, the SPIRIT said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

A vision is when you are awake. This vision was given to Peter while he was in a drowsy state to show him God's plan to bring salvation to the Gentiles. A sheet was lowered from heaven in Peter's sight and he heard the voice say, "kill and eat." The problem was that some of these animals were kosher. As a Jew Peter was not supposed to eat them. But God told Peter that He now considered them to be clean. Peter wondered what God wanted him to understand by this. Just at that time he was told that there were some men at the door who wanted to see them. These men were there to ask about the Gospel and they were Gentiles. So Peter understood that God now wanted the Gospel to go to non-Jews, the gentiles. That was a major breakthrough for the New Testament church. All brought about by a simple vision with the voice of God.

4. Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

A dream is when you are asleep. They are similar none the less. Sometimes in order to get past our reasoning and emotional turmoil God will speak to us or show us something in a dream where these things cannot interfere. He knows what we are like.

There are some important guidelines in scripture to help us with dream interpretation. Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament were interpreters of dreams and visions. These occurrences contain important keys.

Joseph interpreted Pharoah's dream about the fat cows and the thin cows and about the fat sheaves of grain and the thin sheaves. It was all in sevens. The 7 thin cows ate the 7 fat cows and yet remained thin. Then the 7 thin sheaves ate the 7 fat sheaves and yet remained thin.

Joseph explained that there would be seven years of plenty to eat followed by an enormous famine in the entire mid-east. He counseled Pharaoh, the king, to appoint a wise man to supervise the collection of the grain and cattle so that Egypt could eat during the second 7 years.

Pharaoh said that he was looking at the man he needed for this and appointed Joseph second only to himself in all the land of Egypt.

This way Joseph saved not only Egypt but his father and brothers who came for food and the children of Israel stayed in Egypt for 400 years until they became God's great nation of millions of people. Then God sent Moses to lead them out.

Joseph had told Pharaoh, "The vision is one," meaning that the 7 cows represented the same thing as the 7 sheaves. He also emphasized that when God communicates the same truth twice it means that it is truly a sure thing. God does this for emphasis. Joseph interpreted the dream in a straightforward and childlike manner. Even a child could understand it. This is a consistent trait of God's symbolic language.

God's provision from Joseph's actions was far reaching by in scope and in time. When Moses went to Pharaoh 400 years later and the king finally let his people go Pharaoh told them to take whatever they wanted with them. Israel literally sacked Egypt. They took all the Egyptian valuables with them with Pharaoh's blessing.

How was this made possible? When Joseph stored up food 400 years earlier he collected the deeds from all the people of Egypt to pay for the

food and gave them to Pharaoh. So then Pharaoh was not only the king but the owner of all Egypt. This foresight directed by God gave the new nation of Israel a good start as a nation.

What giant consequences the interpretation of a dream or vision can have.

Daniel is the other primary dream interpreter in the Old Testament. Daniel was taken prisoner when Babylon conquered Judah in about 585 B.C. He was neutered and with many other promising young men taken captive as part of a brain trust by Nebuchadnezzar the emperor. Therefore, Daniel was under the supervision of the “prince of the eunuchs.” The reason for this harsh treatment was to keep the young men of the palace from seeking sexual relationships with women in the emperor’s harem.

Daniel was dream interpreter and advisor to two dynasties during his lifetime and, as far as we know did not return to Judah seventy years later when so many returned. As a young man, probably a teenager, Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. As an old man he was advisor to Darius the Mede after the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. Daniel also dreams of his own which he interpreted. He also interpreted the “handwriting on the wall.”

Overall, Daniel was part of God's plan to return Judah to their land. The other great leaders in this movement which ends the Old Testament were Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. By the time of Jesus the area was known as Judea under the Roman rule.

When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's great dream of the statue of a man he and his companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, held an emergency prayer meetings so that God would give them both the dream and the interpretation which the emperor said he had forgotten. This simple picture of a giant man with a head of gold, chest and shoulders of silver, midsection of brass, and legs of iron and toes of iron and clay was the grand vision of the future empires of the Old Testament of which, some believe, even extends to the present day in the toes of iron and clay which are smashed by the stone cut out without human hands that falls from heaven to crush the toes and bring the entire statue tumbling down.

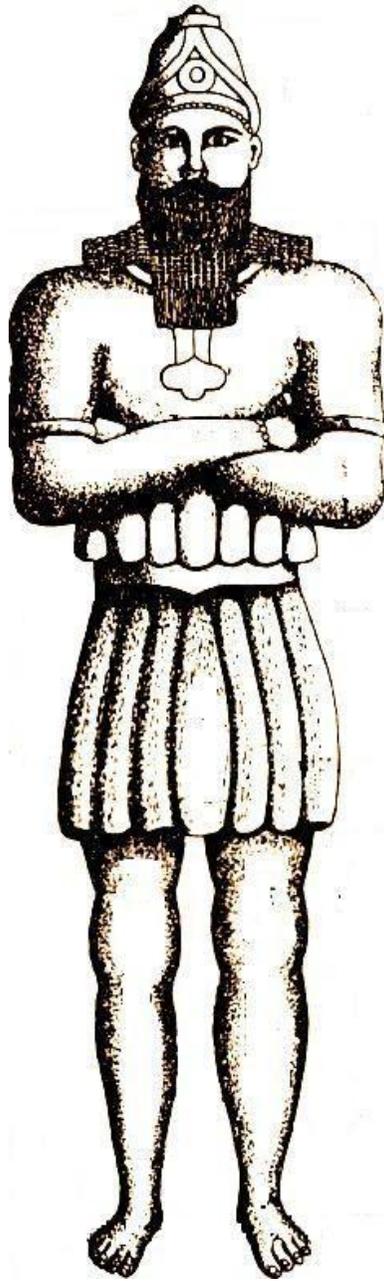
Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold because he was an absolute monarch; he made laws on a whim and enforced them without mercy. The Median and Persian kings could not rescind a law, they could only make another one to counter an existing law. The Persian King Ahasuerus, who married Esther, helped the Jews by issuing a countermanding law. The Greeks

beginning with Alexander the Great were the empire of brass. Rome was the empire of iron. The toes are the iron law of rulers mixed with the common humanity of clay. This represents a mixture of democracy of iron mixed with clay.

The great vision of a man is total simplicity. Roman did indeed split into the western and eastern empire in 285 A.D.

When a Christian believer asks God for an interpretation of a vision or a dream the Holy Spirit will give a clear and simple interpretation for believers which usually hides the meaning from unbelievers. God does this on purpose. But, the clarity must be maintained throughout. Some Christian scholars interpret the stone falling from heaven as the coming of Christ, the first coming as the incarnate son of Mary and God. This cannot be true as that coming was centuries before the division of the Roman empire. Therefore, the great stone from heaven is the Second Coming of Christ to a form of a reassembled Roman empire. This is awkward to some Bible interpreters. But it is a must. The rest of the vision of the man is true in every detail. There can be no error at the end.

Let this dream and interpretation along with Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream be the model for all dream interpretation.



5. Acts 11:12 And the SPIRIT bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

In this instance Peter was telling about the vision that he had in Acts 10 while in a drowsy state. He explains that the Spirit “bade him go, nothing doubting” to a house of the gentiles. Another version says, “told me to go, without misgivings.” That was when Peter led the first gentiles to Christ when the Holy Spirit interrupted his preaching by falling on these Gentiles.

Actually we are not sure what God actually said to Peter but it had the right effect. And the instructions included that when we are urged to go for God we should act quickly and obediently trusting in God all the way. If He leads us and we do not follow it may be some time before He offers again. We should pray that we will grow in our faith walk so that we can obey without misgivings.

6. Acts 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the SPIRIT that there should be great dearth

throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

7. Acts 16:7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the SPIRIT suffered them not, (or did not permit them).

There is no specific information as to how the Spirit hindered them from going. However, many present day Christians talk of a “hindering impression” from the Holy Spirit when He does not want a believer to proceed in a particular direction. And there have been written testimonies of this hindering only to find out later that a bridge is out or some other dangerous thing.

There is a gesture used at dog training classes that goes with the command “stay.” The gesture is to simply hold your opened hand in front of the dog’s face. This is a clear instinctual signal not to proceed. More than once a sensitive believer has experienced this impression only to find out later that their intended action would not have been the thing to do at the time.

After the disciples in this verse staid put they received a night vision of a man from Macedonia asking them to come and preach the gospel. They did and it produced great fruit. If

they had not waited for this guidance many people might not have heard about Jesus Christ.

One might ask, “what if you feel hindered but never learn of a reason for the hindrance?” The answer might be that the entire faith walk of a believer is what gives us perspective.

Much of a believer’s knowledge about God and His will is learned by our being joined to him. He that is joined to the Lord is One Spirit (1 Cor 6:17); stirred, pressed, fervent, purposed, bound.

8. Acts 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his SPIRIT was stirred in him, (or was being provoked within him.) when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

The reference here might mean that The Holy Spirit within him was stirred or that his human spirit was stirred or both. This difference here is not important. Since the believer’s spirit is joined to the Holy Spirit as “one S/Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17) the results will still be the same and this emphasizes the union of the believer with Christ which is evidence of a rich and growing relationship and not a book of rules or a stringent self-improvement project.

9. Acts 18:5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the SPIRIT, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

Being pressed in the Spirit is something like a strong nudge. Parents often nudge their children either by a physical push or even a facial expression. This is a personal intimate action. Should not God have the same effects on His children. Again it is instinctual, but not a natural instinct but a spiritual one.

10. Acts 18:25 This man (Apollos) was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the SPIRIT, he (Apollos) spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Sometimes being fervent can result from motivations that are not truly spiritual, so we should proceed with caution relying on the scriptures, sound counsel from others and our better judgement.

11. Acts 19:21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the SPIRIT, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

It is a good thing to make decisions after thinking, meditation and prayer. This way we can test our decisions and leadings before we proceed. If we do these things first we can then purpose in the Spirit with the confidence that we are not operating on a whim.

12. Acts 20:22 And now, behold, I go bound in the SPIRIT unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.

When all is said and done sometimes we come to the conclusion that we are being very strongly urged by the Holy Spirit to take a particular course. This kind of urging bring each person to the place where they are convinced that they **MUST** do something. This something should be submitted to the revealed will of God in scriptures.

SUMMARY

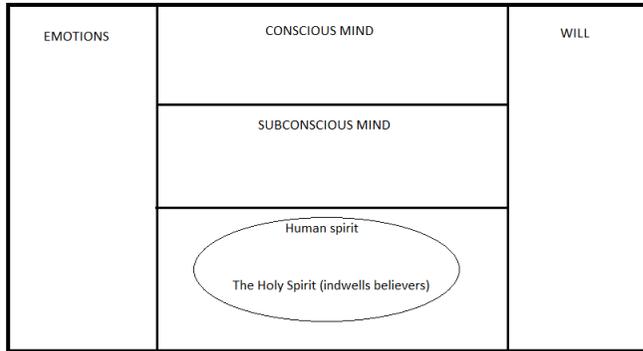
1. Said
2. Caught away
3. Vision (while thinking on vision Spirit said)
4. Dreams
5. Bade me go (with nothing doubting)
6. Signified
7. Suffered them not (did not permit)
8. Spirit was stirred
9. Pressed in the Spirit
10. Fervent in the Spirit
11. Purposed in the Spirit
12. Bound in the Spirit

My old minister used to say, “God speaks to us through our thought processes. He was Presbyterian all the way. He was not a Pentecostal or a Charismatic Christian. The prophetic gift or ministry is helpful to confirm things to us, but we should not have to count on it.

Sometimes it is a word. Sometimes it is a dream or a vision. Sometimes it is a push. Sometimes it is a pull. Sometimes it is a blockage. Sometimes it is a joint action with God. It is not the intelligence or obedience of a robot. It is a lifestyle grown out of a relationship.

II. Some Ways The Soul Handles Impressions From God

Think of your inner being something like this.

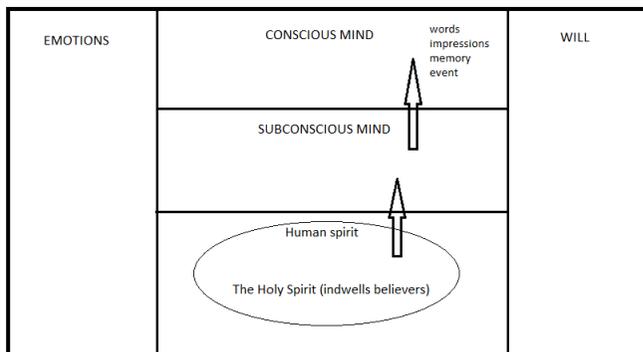


Edward Irving, the nineteenth century revivalist, said “If Christ’s flesh was in the conception or generation changed, so as to be in a different condition from man’s, either as it stands related to its susceptibility of temptation from the world, or handing up temptation to the mind, then I see these consequences; which I will not here undertake to open.”(Edward Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, London, Printed by Ellerton and Henderson For Baldwin and Cradock, 1830.) underlining mine

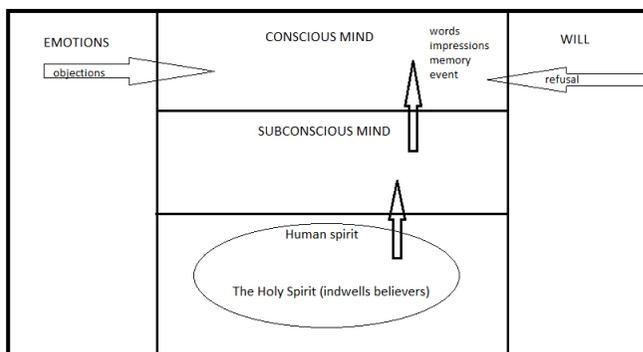
Irving understood that the deeper part of our being is were spirituality lives. Whether for

evil, such in temptation, or in obedience, that is where it all begins.

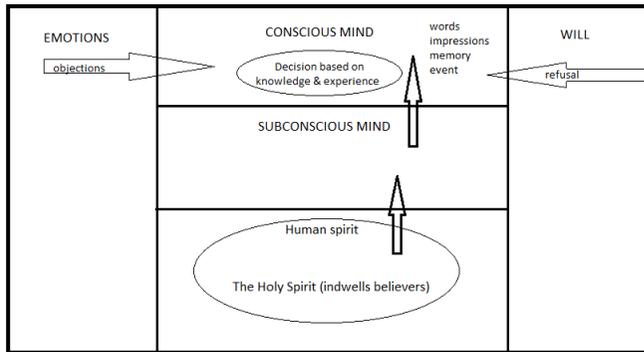
What you hear from God internally has to travel to the conscious mind.



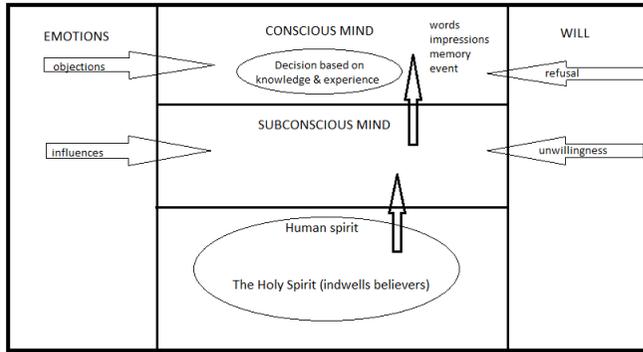
But there are certain things in the emotions and the will that interfere with this process.



In the final analysis a decision has to be made.



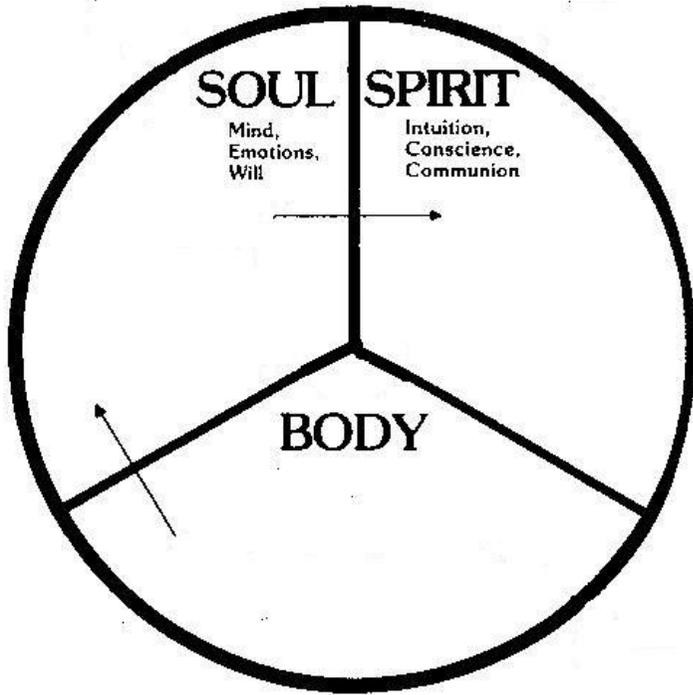
Our inner life has to have a close and ongoing relationship with God so that subconscious issues do not get in the way.



One may ask, “So, how difficult is it to actually make this work. There seem to be so many things that can hinder my hearing from God. Actually, it is childlike simple. Here is how we do it.

What is our part? “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” James 4:8. This means praise, prayer, worship, fellowship, friendship, talking, listening, relationship with God. Not complicated. Not even difficult if you actually do it. This will open up all the channels and change your heart and mind. Read the Bible. Do not underestimate any of these practices. God is there. He is willing. He will help us grow and change. But we do have a part to play in this.

III. The Body-Soul-Spirit Human Being



Even with the examples of those persons in the book of Acts and the various ways that the New Testament says that they were led of the Spirit, it is sometimes still difficult for us to understand how this actually works in the lives of modern day believers. One idea that has often been a great help to believers today is the concept of how we are constructed as human beings. The Bible speaks of several concepts regard human make up. Some of the more

familiar concepts are found in words like “flesh,” “body,” “soul,” “spirit.” and Let’s consider each of these words.

The word which we translate into English as “flesh” is used many time by the apostle Paul. The Greek word is “sarx.” When Paul uses this word he is almost always referring to our natural fallen human nature and not to our actual physical nature. In this meaning then the “flesh” is found in our feelings and attitudes. These are inward or psychological or emotional areas. But Paul intends for the word “flesh” to also represent our deepest spiritual condition as well. The “flesh” is part and parcel of our fallen human nature. Even as Christians when we operate in the “flesh” we are operating out of our sinful selfish desires. When we operate in the flesh we are not operating in the Spirit or in love. The “flesh” represents our lowest nature. The body, on the other hand, is our outward physical being.

The Greek word of body is “soma.” The body has appetites and urges which must be managed, but they are not in themselves necessarily bad or evil. We have the need to eat food. But we should avoid gluttony. We have the need to sleep, but we should not be lazy.

We have the need to propagate, but we should not be lustful. As Christians we endeavor to manage and govern our bodies. The body is also the possessor of the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Through these senses we receive information from the world around us and we process this information with our brains. God gave us these senses to put us in touch with the world around us and He intended them to be a blessing. If a person is lacking in any of these senses he or she is said to be handicapped. However, the “flesh,” that inward fallen nature, often uses these senses to satisfy its own evil desires.

Inside the body are two other parts, neither of which can be seen by the scientist’s microscope or dissected by the surgeon’s scalpel. There are the soul and the spirit. An understanding of the soul and the spirit is very important to understanding how to be led by God. There had been much study both by psychologists and theologians on these two entities found within every man and woman. I will present here a brief discussion of each. The soul is essentially the conscious reasoning part of our inward man or mind. He resides out mind, emotions and our will. In the letter to the Hebrews Paul says that the Word of God is living and sharper than any two edged sword

able to divide the soul from the spirit and to separate the bones from the marrow and to discern the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb. 4.12

This statement is primarily about the Word of God, but it also reveals a lot about the internal human makeup. First of all it distinguishes between the human soul and the human spirit. This means that there is a fundamental difference between these two entities. The soul and the spirit are not identical. They are different and they are different for a reason. This reason is that they perform different functions within us. Some have said that the spirit being referred to here is actually the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Himself God. But this is not what Paul is referring to here. Granted that every Christian believer has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within him or her. And if they ask for it they can also be filled

with the Holy Spirit. But the human spirit is part of our original makeup. It is the third part of our tripartite nature which is body, soul and spirit. Before we proceed on this line of thought let's first consider the other primary verse in Paul's writings that distinguishes between soul and spirit.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I Thes. 5.23

Here Paul mentions all three parts of us. Here he prays that these three part be preserved blameless until the coming of Christ. Now if the spirit referred to here was actually the Holy Spirit of God there would be no need to pray that He be preserved blameless. He is, after all, God almighty and the one who actually does the preserving of our own bodies, souls, and spirits. No, the spirit referred to here is our own individual human spirit with which we were created. Now we have established that the human spirit is different than the human soul, but what is it like and what is its function as compared to the soul? Some have said that the very fact that we are made "in the image of God" is reflected in the fact that we are constructed of three parts, body, soul and spirit

just as God is Father, Son and Spirit. This is called the “tripartite” position. Those who believe that the words “soul” and “spirit” in reference to the human being are referring to the same entity are said to hold the “bipartite” position. However, I believe that we have shown from the two scripture references above that the tripartite position is more accurate.

In modern terms we can liken the soul and the spirit in humans to the conscious and subconscious areas of the mind although this is not precisely accurate. The soul contains the mind, emotions and will of the person. In the mind we reason or think whether we think sequentially (left-brain) or contextually (right-brain.) In the emotions we experience our feelings whether positive or negative. In our will we make and adhere to our decisions. Each of these areas is variously stronger or weaker in any individual depending on heredity or training or both. In the spirit other things happen. The spirit is buried deep within us. At the death of the body both the soul and the spirit depart together.

If we are Christian believers the Holy Spirit indwells us at the deepest level and blends with our human spirit. It is our human spirit that understands and relates to the Holy Spirit. If we are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit our human spirit

is said to be “dead towards God.” It is not joined to the Holy Spirit. “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” I Cor. 6.17. What does your spirit do? Your spirit is your “knower.” The question has been asked, “How do you know that you belong to God, that you have eternal life?” In the end it is because “you know that you know that you know.” The Holy Spirit witnesses this to you as He speaks to your spirit to which He is joined. No human reasoning can convince or sway you from your conviction.

This is known in your deepest most part. The Holy Spirit communicates other things to your spirit down deep where they live in full communion. What these things occur to your mind they come more like intuition than by reasoned fact or contextual fact. Although they are more often related to contextual fact than reasoned fact. Contextual fact, or right-brain creative thinking is not done in a linear fashion. Contextual thinking merely recognizes similarities between things. This is what we call more of an Eastern mindset than a Western mindset. The contextual mind is more spiritual and intuitive than the left-brain. When your spirit knows something it communicates it to your conscious mind or soul mind and then you realize it fully.

Some reasonable scientific modern people might say that this is too “spooky” for modern intelligent people to participate in. But many a modern intelligent person has made very important decisions based on a “gut feeling.” This is intuitive. Your spirit communicates a truth or a fact to your soul mind and then you understand. Sometimes it is good to heed the spirit mind before you really understand. To do this you must train yourself to trust the spirit mind and, therefore, the Holy Spirit.

Christian Believer

