

ARE YOU LED BY THE SPIRIT?

Dowlen Road, October 4, 2009 AM

Introduction:

- A. If someone were to ask you, "Are you led by the Spirit" or "Does the Holy Spirit guide you through life," how would you respond?
 - 1. When I get a question like that, my first response is, "Can you tell me what you mean?" I want to ask that question first because people have very different ideas about how the Holy Spirit leads and guides us. Before I answer, I want to be sure we are talking about the same thing.
 - 2. For example, when some say they are led by the Spirit, they mean the Holy Spirit literally speaks to them. I was reading one guy's blog who said that the Holy Spirit whispered to him and asked him questions about how faithful and dedicated he truly was to God.
 - 3. For others, it's not an audible voice, but a feeling they get in their gut – prompting from the Spirit to do certain things.
 - a. Preachers will sometimes say, "The Lord laid it on my heart to preach this lesson." What they mean is that they just got this feeling that they ought to talk about this subject. They believe this prompting came from the Spirit.
 - b. One of my friends claimed that the Spirit would prompt him to go talk to someone on the bus about Jesus. Oddly enough, this same friend also believed that the Spirit prompted him to believe things that contradicted the Bible.
 - 4. Obviously something is wrong. The Holy Spirit would not be telling this guy something that contradicted the Bible. Something isn't right. Clearly we have some misunderstanding out there about how the Spirit leads people today.
- B. However, the Bible does say that Christians are to be led by the Spirit (**Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16-18**).
 - 1. But what does that mean? When it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us through life, we need to be able to distinguish Bible fact from denominational fiction.
 - 2. In this lesson we will tackle this important question, a question with powerful applications in the life of every disciple.
 - 3. How are we led by the Spirit? To figure out how the Spirit guides us, there are three Bible facts that we must understand.

Fact One: The Holy Spirit revealed God's will for man.

- A. Certainly no one can better explain the work of the Holy Spirit than...the Holy Spirit. So, let's open our Bibles and allow the Spirit to speak for Himself. Let's consider two passages that will clearly identify the Spirit's work.
 - 1. **John 14:25-26.**
 - a. Jesus would be leaving His disciples. But to prepare them for this moment, He promises that the Father would send them a Helper – the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Notice what He says about the Spirit's work. He would remind them of the things Jesus said and teach them all things – complete the message God wanted to reveal to man.
 - c. What, then, is the Spirit's work? It is to reveal God's will for man.
 - 2. **John 16:12-15.**
 - a. Notice what Jesus says about the Spirit's work:
 - 1) He would *guide* them into all truth.
 - 2) He will *speak* what He hears.
 - 3) He will *disclose* what is to come.
 - 4) He will take of Christ's and *disclose* it!
 - b. In this second passage Jesus explains the need for this work.
 - 1) The apostles had not been taught all of the truth at this point. There was more that God wanted men to know.
 - 2) Jesus assures them that the Holy Spirit would remind them of all He had said and guide them into all of the truth.
 - 3) He would reveal to the apostles God's complete will for man. Take note of that; it's important.
- B. Let's dig a little deeper.
 - 1. We've said that the Spirit would reveal God's will for us, but what exactly would He do?
 - a. First, He would have to speak to these guys and tell them what God's will is. Somehow the message will have to be communicated from the Spirit to them.
 - b. Second, He would also have to provide some way for people to know that these men have been truly given God's word.
 - 2. When we look beyond the gospels to the rest of the New Testament, we find the Spirit doing these two things.
 - a. Paul says that the Spirit gave him the message he preached (**I Corinthians 2:6-13**).
 - 1) He makes clear that this is not something he learned from men, but the Spirit, just as Jesus promised.
 - 2) Notice also that the Spirit did more than supply some vague ideas He wanted them to address. He gave him the very words!
 - b. The Spirit also empowered these men to work miracles so that people would know their message was truly from God.
 - 1) Acts 2:4. They were empowered to speak in languages they had never learned.
 - 2) Acts 3:1-26. They were empowered to heal the sick.
 - 3. Here's the point: When we open our Bible and study the work of the Holy Spirit, what we learn is that He was in the business of revelation. He was busy making sure that men were able to know God's will for their lives.

Fact Two: This work was completed.

- A. Remember the promise Jesus made to His Apostles (**John 16:13**).
 - 1. He promised that the Spirit would guide them into all the truth.
 - a. How much truth is that? There is something complete, all-encompassing about the language Jesus uses here.

- b. There is a body of truth that God wanted revealed to men – a complete message.
 - c. This message would not be delivered in bits and pieces down through time. Jesus promised that the whole thing would be revealed at that time to the apostles.
 - d. Jude confirms this when he speaks of the faith as being once for all delivered to the saints (**Jude 3**).
2. The Holy Spirit would also ensure that all generations of men would have access to this message. He would oversee the recording of this message so that people of every generation would know the will of God for their lives (**II Timothy 3:16-17**).
- B. When this revelation was completed, Paul says that the process through which it came would stop and the signs that confirmed it would cease (**I Corinthians 13:8-10**).
- 1. Paul makes clear that a time was coming when prophecy, tongue speaking, miraculous knowledge – in fact all the miraculous spiritual gifts would cease (v. 8). When would this be?
 - 2. Paul says, “when the perfect comes”. The “perfect” in this passage completes the parts in verse 9. It’s not Jesus or Heaven, it’s revelation. At this time revelation was being given in pieces as it was revealed to different inspired men. But the time would come when all the parts would be assembled together and God’s revelation would be completed – PERFECT! This is what we have in our Bible (**II Timothy 3:16-17**).
- C. There are some weighty implications that follow if the Spirit’s work is indeed a finished work.
- 1. First, if a man comes along claiming to have a new revelation from God, we know he’s a fraud. Jesus said all the truth would be revealed to the apostles. Either he’s wrong, or Jesus is wrong.
 - 2. Second, if someone claims they can work miracles by the power of the Spirit, we know his claim is false before we even see what he can do. The Spirit told us that, when the revelation was completed, the miracles would cease. Whatever the “miracle-workers” of our day are doing, it is not true miracles wrought by the power of the Spirit.
 - 3. Here’s the point: There is no one today hearing the voice of God or receiving revelation from Him. We have God’s complete will for our lives in this book.

Fact Three: The Spirit leads us through His word.

- A. Consider for a moment some things you will not find in the Bible.
- 1. The Bible never tells us that we can know how to live by listening for a voice from heaven. You never find that in the New Testament.
 - 2. The Bible never tells us to go with our gut. How is a person to know if this inner prompting is from the Lord or just his own gut feeling. After all, it is clear that at least some of those who claim to get these impulses from the Lord are wrong. For example, Pentecostals and Mormons both claim to get them, but clearly both cannot be right. My friend who claimed the Spirit was leading him to believe something that contradicted the people was clearly not getting an impulse from the Spirit.
 - 3. Here’s the point: This is not the way the Spirit leads us. This is not how we come to know His will for our lives.
- B. How do we come to know God’s will? How does the Spirit lead disciples?
- 1. He leads us through this message He revealed. He leads us through the word of God (**II Timothy 3:6-17**).
 - a. Not only does this passage teach that the scriptures are inspired, it also teaches that they provide me with the direction I need in life.
 - b. They show me how God wants me to live.
 - 1) They expose areas of my life where I’m failing to be what God wants me to be.
 - 2) They nudge me in the right direction when my life gets off course.
 - 3) They equip me with everything I need.
 - c. The scriptures serve as the Spirit’s instrument by which He leads me to do God’s will.
 - 2. To illustrate: sometimes when I see a soul that looks like they are searching, I feel a nudge in my gut to go and speak with them.
 - a. I believe that nudge comes from the Spirit.
 - b. But it is not the Spirit working on me in some miraculous way.
 - c. I feel that nudge because through His word the Spirit has convicted me that this is my duty (**Matthew 28:19**).
- C. Understanding this process ought to renew our passion to study God’s word.
- 1. We began with this question: Are you led by the Spirit of God?
 - 2. If it is true that we are led by the Spirit through His word, and I’m not studying His word, then I’m not being led by Him.
 - 3. This has serious consequences. One of the reasons we suffer as children of God and miss the joy God wants us to have is because we do not let the Spirit lead us.
 - 4. We need to renew our love for the Spirit’s word and our zeal to study it (**Psalms 119:129-133**).
 - 5. Let us be a people who are genuinely led by the Spirit.

Conclusion: Is the Spirit leading you today?

- A. If you committed to serve God but have wandered away from Him, what does the Spirit want you to do (I John 1:9)?
- B. If you are not a Christian and have never made a commitment to serve the Lord, what does the Spirit want you to do (Mark 16:16)?