

## GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. Introduction: We're working on becoming God-inside minded. As part of our discussion we're talking about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
1. Paul prayed that Christians would know the exceeding greatness of the power toward and in us. It's the same power that raised Christ from the dead, the power of the Holy Spirit. Eph 1:16-23; Rom 8:11
    - a. God is one God who simultaneously manifests as three distinct (but not separate) Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They co-inhere or share one Divine nature. You can't have one without the other. If you have the Father, you have the Son, and you have the Holy Spirit.
    - b. These three Persons work in cooperation with one another. The Father planned redemption. The Son purchased it through the Cross. The Holy Spirit performs it (or makes it a reality in our lives) when we believe God's Word about what the Father has provided through the Son.
    - c. We've spent a number of weeks discussing the fact that the Holy Spirit is in us to work in and through us as He empowers us to be and to do all that God desires. He's in us to build us up or conform us to the image of Christ. Eph 3:16; Phil 2:13; Heb 13:20,21; Rom 8:29; Eph 4:11-13
  2. John 14:16-18--The night before Jesus went to the Cross He told His disciples that once He returned to Heaven, the Father would send the Holy Spirit to indwell them.
    - a. John 16:13--Jesus said one of the things the Holy Spirit would do was guide them into all truth. The Holy Spirit is here to guide those who follow Jesus. (We'll say more about this verse shortly.)
    - b. Rom 8:14--As God's sons and daughters we can expect to be guided or led by the Holy Spirit in us. Looking to God for guidance is part of our relationship with Him. He wants to guide us.
      1. The psalmist David referred to the Lord as his Shepherd (Ps 23:1). Wrapped up in the word shepherd is the idea of one who "feeds, guides, and shields" (Amp).
        - A. Ps 32 describes the blessings of a man whose sins have been dealt with (the man to whom God has imputed righteousness). One of those blessings is God's promise to guide that man (v8). We qualify this blessing because we've received the gift of righteousness through Jesus (Rom 5:17; Rom 10:9,10).
        - B. Isa 58:11--The Lord wants to continually guide us. Yahweh will always guide you, giving you relief in desert places. He will give strength to your bones. (Jerusalem)
      2. In this lesson we're going to begin to discuss this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work—how He guides us and how we cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He leads and guides us.
- B. When we start talking about getting guidance and direction from God people immediately begin to think in terms of: What job should I take? Where should I live? Who should I marry? What kind of car should I buy? Probably the number one question I get from people is: How do I know God's will in these areas?
1. But that's not the place to begin a discussion on how to get guidance from God. We must back up and lay some ground work.
    - a. The first thing you must know is that God has both a general will and a specific will for us.
      1. God's general will is the information revealed in the Bible. The Bible tells us what God has provided for us through Jesus and the Cross—everything we need for our physical and our spiritual life. And it tells us how God wants us to live. We're to walk even as Jesus walked.
      2. God's specific will includes things such as who to marry, where to live, what job to take, what ministry, etc. Although there are general principles in the Bible, these kinds of issues are not specifically spelled out in the Bible.
    - b. People tend to focus more on God's specific will than His general will. That is putting the cart before the horse. If we'd put as much effort into learning the general will of God as we do worrying about the specific will of God, His specific will would be easier to figure out.
    - c. There are situations where you need to hear the Holy Spirit's direction. But if you're not familiar with the Bible, you'll have trouble receiving guidance because you're not familiar with His voice.

1. You see, the same Holy Spirit who guides us wrote the Bible, or inspired the human authors as they penned the words. II Tim 3:16--Every scripture is God-breathed—given by inspiration of God (Amp); II Pet 1:21--Men were moved by the Holy Spirit as they wrote.

2. The Holy Spirit gives us specific direction in our spirit (inner man). God's written word helps us become familiar with His voice so we can hear clearly. (more on this in upcoming lessons)

2. At the Last Supper, as Jesus prepared His disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit, He called Him the Spirit of truth and said: John 16:13,14--When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not be presenting his own ideas; he will be telling you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by revealing to you whatever he receives from me. (NLT)

a. Jesus said the Holy Spirit is here to guide us into all truth. That same evening Jesus defined truth as Himself and as the Word of His Father (John 14:6; 17:17). The Spirit of truth works with the Word of truth to reveal the Truth, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The Bible is the written will of God. It reveals His purposes, intents, desires. Jesus was the will of God in action on the earth. John 14:9; John 8:28,29

2. God guides us by His Spirit through and in line with His written Word and in doing so, reveals the Living Word to us, in us, and through us.

b. We could make entire lessons out of these statements, but consider this thought. What is truth? *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines the word as the reality lying at the basis of an appearance. *Webster's Dictionary* defines it as the real state of things. Truth is the way things really are.

1. Almighty God sees the way things really are. Because He sees and knows everything, He has all the facts about everything. He sees reality as it truly is.

2. None of us see things the way they truly are because our perception is limited to what we know and we don't have all the information about anything. Therefore, when we become

Christians we must renew our minds. Rom 12:1,2

A. To renew your mind means to change your perception of reality and bring it in line with the way things really are according to God. (a subject for another day).

B. The Bible helps us renew our mind because it shows us reality as it truly is or the way things really are according to God. That in turn helps us cooperate more fully with the Holy Ghost as He directs our lives. Discerning God's will (general and specific) is much more difficult if your mind is not renewed to the truth of God's Word.

C. Rom 12:2--(Renewing the mind) "is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do." (Jerusalem)

3. Renewing the mind involves much more than committing a few scriptures to memory. It means changing the way you see things by allowing the Bible to shape your view of reality.

a. This will only happen through regular, systematic reading of the New Testament. That means reading it through start to finish without jumping around. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Understanding comes with familiarity. (You can look up words, consult a

commentary, or read a devotional book at another time.)

b. The greatest gift you can give yourself (and the rest of the body of Christ) is to become a regular, systematic reader. It will take some time, but your view of reality will change. The way you live and act will become more Christ-like. And you will be better able to hear and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (lessons for another day)

C. For the rest of this lesson we're going to look at what is probably the biggest mistake Christians make when seeking God for guidance. They look at their physical circumstances and try to figure out what God is saying and doing.

1. You cannot determine the will of God by looking at your physical circumstances. He does not guide us through what we can see. God leads us by His Spirit in line with His written word, the Bible.

- a. II Cor 5:7--Christians are instructed to walk or order our lives by faith and not by sight: For we guide our lives by faith, and not by what we see (20<sup>th</sup> Cent); For we guide ourselves by faith and not by external appearance. (Weymouth)
- b. If we are told to walk, not by what we see but according to what we cannot see (II Cor 4:18), then what makes us think that God will guide us, direct us, or speak to us through what we can see, through physical circumstances?
2. Possibly you're thinking: Yes, but doesn't God lead us and guide us through open doors and closed doors? Doesn't He lead us and guide us by closing some windows and opening others? No.
- a. Once again, why would God lead you by something you can see (an open or closed door) when He tells you to walk by faith and not by sight?
- b. When the New Testament speaks of open doors it always means an opportunity for ministry. The Bible never uses "open doors" as a method of guidance or a means direction. Acts 14:27; I Cor 16:8,9; II Cor 2:12; Col 4:3
- c. Paul wrote that when he was in jail in Rome, a man named Onesiphorus was a great blessing to him. But, Paul said, Onesiphorus had to seek for him diligently. II Tim 1:16,17--When he came to Rome, he searched everywhere until he found me (NLT)
1. If Onesiphorus believed God that leads us through circumstances like closed doors he could have easily concluded it was not the Lord's will for him to find Paul when he didn't find him (or the door was closed) in the first place he looked.
2. That's how many Christians lead their life. If it looks like smooth sailing it must be God's will. If it doesn't, it must not be God's will. But, that is walking by sight. That doesn't mean if something looks good it can't be the will of God. The question is: What are you looking to for guidance and direction? Circumstances or the Word of God and the Spirit of God?
3. Not only does God not communicate to us or guide us through physical circumstances, you can draw faulty conclusions from them if you try to use them to discern God's purpose or will.
- a. For example, have you ever been in a situation where it looked and felt as though God had forgotten you? All of us have. But the information we're getting from our circumstances and feelings is contrary to the written Word of God. The Bible assures us God is with us and for us no matter how things look. Matt 10:29-31; Heb 13:5,6; Isa 43:2; etc.
- b. The Bible records several instances where people looked at their physical circumstances to try to determine the will and mind of God and drew faulty conclusions.
1. Acts 28:1-6--While Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Melita he was bitten by a deadly snake. The islanders concluded he was a murderer who had escaped justice by surviving the shipwreck, but that it had caught up with him through the snake. When Paul didn't die from the bite they concluded that he must be a god. Both conclusions (which were based on what they could see in their circumstances) were wrong.
2. Josh 9:3-15--When Israel entered Canaan, God told them not to make treaties with any of the tribes in the land. One tribe, the Gibeonites tricked them. Although they lived nearby they sent ambassadors to Joshua dressed to look as though they came from far away. They asked for and received a peace treaty. Israel's leaders assessed their situation based on what they saw and not on what God said (v14). Walking by sight led them to do the opposite of God's will for them.
- c. Sometimes Christians use fleeces to try to determine God's will. A fleece is a physical test used to determine God's will. Here's an example: A Christian says to God: Lord, if it is your will for me to take this job, let them call me by 10:00.
1. The idea is based on the example of Gideon in Judges 6:36-40. To determine if God had called him to be a judge over Israel he put a fleece of wool on the floor and left it overnight. Gideon said: If the fleece has dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I'll know for sure that God has called me. Through the fleece Gideon made certain the will of God.

- A. Gideon was an Old Testament man who did not have the Spirit of God in him. As New Covenant sons of God, we have the Spirit of God in us to lead and guide us.
- B. Gideon did not have the command to walk by faith and not by sight. Nor did he have the revelation of the will of God that we have in and through Jesus Christ.
- 2. You can't look at circumstances to determine God's will. Not only does God tell us to walk by faith not sight Satan, the god of this world, is fully capable of setting up circumstances.
  - A. In fact, Jesus said that Satan uses physical circumstances to try to steal the word of God from us. Mark 4:14-17; Matt 13:18-22
  - B. Jesus also said that some things happen by chance in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Luke 10:31--Now by coincidence a certain priest was going down along that road. (Amp)

- D. Conclusion: We have more to say about being guided by the Holy Spirit but consider a few thoughts now.
  - 1. If ever there was a time to learn to hear the Holy Spirit's leading and direction, it's now. Jesus' Second Coming is near, and the Bible says that perilous (or fierce) times will precede His coming, due in large part to the behavior of people at the end of this age. II Tim 3:1-5
    - a. We're going to see more and more violence and murderous rampages where innocent people are killed. Our natural tendency is to ask: Why did this happen? What does this mean? What is God doing or trying to say to us?
      - 1. You must understand that God doesn't speak to us or guide and direct us through physical circumstances. Messages and meaning are found in the written Word of God, the Bible.
      - 2. Catastrophic events and crazed behavior happen because that's life in a sin cursed earth, a world damaged by sin. If you wrongly attribute these things to God, it will undermine your trust and confidence in His goodness and your own security in Him. (Lessons for another day)
    - b. We need to learn to follow the Holy Spirit's leading and direction so that He can guide us around and away from dangerous situations. We must be able to hear Him say: Don't go that way today. Don't attend that event tonight.
  - 2. The Bible has many examples of people being guided by God around or safely through danger and to places of provision and safety in the midst of chaos caused by the behavior of ungodly men.
    - a. Ex 13:17,18--God took Israel on the best route back to Canaan even though it didn't look like the best way because it was longer. I Kings 17:1-9--God led Elijah to provision in the midst of a famine brought on by wicked men in government. Matt 2:13-23--God led Mary and Joseph away from danger to a place of safety when Jesus was a child.
    - b. Ps 32:8--Our physical senses are limited so we don't have all the facts in every situation. It's as if we live in a thick forest where we can't see more than a few feet in front of us. But God sits in the tree tops and sees it all. He can and will guide us with His eyes. We need to learn to hear Him.
    - c. Isa 58:11--Yahweh will always guide you, giving you relief in desert places. He will give strength to your bones and you shall be like a well watered garden (Jerusalem). More next week!