

GUIDED TO WHAT?

- A. Introduction: If Jesus is your Lord and Savior you have been indwelt by the Spirit of God. You are His temple or dwelling place. We're working on becoming God-inside minded. As part of this discussion we've recently been talking about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. I Cor 6:19; I John 4:4
1. We've covered a lot of ground these past several months. We've noted that the Holy Spirit is in us to empower us to live and walk even as Jesus walked. The Holy Spirit is working in us to conform us to the image of Christ (make us like Jesus in character and power). Rom 8:3-4; 12-13; 29-30; I John 2:6
 2. In the last few lessons we've been discussing the fact that the Holy Spirit is in us to lead and guide us through His inward presence. John 14:17; 16:13,14; Rom 8:14
 - a. The number one way the Holy Spirit guides us is through the written Word of God, the Bible, which reveals God's will, plans, and purposes. He reveals Jesus (the Living Word) to us, and He gives us revelation from the written Word of God (the Bible) as He helps us understand it.
 - b. In areas not specifically addressed in the Bible, the Holy Spirit leads by an inward witness, an inner knowing or hunch. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit, in line with (in agreement with) the written Word of God. Rom 8:16
 3. We need to discuss one more aspect of the Holy Spirit's guidance. There is much misunderstanding about what life looks like when you're guided by God.
 - a. Some say that if you're truly led by God you'll miss life's troubles and have a blessed, abundant life. Some preachers are foolish enough to say that the great apostle Paul missed God, as evidenced by all the troubles he experienced in his life.
 1. Paul developed a burden to go to Jerusalem. But as he traveled toward the city, the Holy Spirit bore witness that troubles awaited him and he would be bound and turned over to the Gentiles. Paul went anyway and that is indeed what happened. Acts 20:22-24; 21:4,10-12
 2. The idea that Paul missed God is ridiculous for several reasons. First, Paul encountered numerous difficulties (including being stoned to death, Acts 17) before he "missed God". Second, one-third of the Book of Acts (Acts 20-28) is devoted to what happened after Paul "missed God", with no admonition to the reader to be careful not to make the same mistake as Paul. Third, why would the Holy Spirit use a man so inept at following His leading to write two-thirds of the New Testament.
 3. Acts 21:4--People misinterpret this verse to mean the Holy Spirit said "don't go to Jerusalem" and Paul disobeyed this direct command. These Christians were hearing and sensing from the Spirit of God that trouble lay ahead for Paul. Because of their relationship with him, they didn't want him to go, and urged him not to. It's clear from Acts 21:14 that the believers understood it was God's will for Paul to go. Not my will but your will.
 - b. Because of erroneous teaching like what is preached about Paul, many Christians have the idea that their lives should be prosperous and relatively trouble free. I've had more than one sincere Christian express these kinds of concerns to me: I've got troubles and I'm not living a life of abundance. What am I doing wrong? Where am I missing God?
 1. These kinds of ideas come from Bible verses taken out of context, misunderstanding why Jesus died, and false expectations about what life should be like in this fallen world.
 2. We need to sort this out and make sure we understand what the Holy Spirit is ultimately guiding us to. That's our topic in this lesson.
- B. It's quite common to hear preachers say: Jesus came to give us an abundant life and, if you're not living a life of abundance, something is wrong. However, Jesus did not come to give us an abundant life—meaning a prosperous, problem-free life where all our desires and dreams are fulfilled.
1. This idea comes from taking a verse completely out of its context and imposing a meaning on it that it would not have had for the original hearers. John 10:10

- a. Remember, the Bible is not a collection of independent, unrelated sayings. It was divided into chapters and verses in the Middle Ages to make it easier to find specific passages.
 - b. Every statement in the Bible has a context and is dependent on statements that come before and after the one you are considering.
 - c. Everything in the Bible was written by someone to someone for a specific purpose. We must determine those three things to accurately interpret a particular verse. Who wrote (or spoke it)? To whom did they write (or speak)? What message were they conveying?
2. Jesus made the statement in question and John the apostle was inspired by the Holy Spirit to record it. Let's begin with the word "life" and see what it meant in the context of the entire book (the Gospel of John) and in the context of what Jesus had already said up to the point where He made the statement.
 - a. By this point Jesus has defined the type of life He came to bring as eternal or everlasting life (3:15-16; 4:14,36; 5:24,39; 6:27,40,47,54,68). In John 10:28 He defined it as eternal life. John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, also called the life Jesus came to give as everlasting life (3:36).
 - b. The Greek language has six words for life. When Jesus said He came to give abundant life He used the Greek word *zoe*. By this point in John's gospel (chapter 10) this word (*zoe*) has been used 26 times. All but 5 are in red letters, meaning they are direct quotes from Jesus.
 1. The first time the word appears John defined this life as something in Jesus Himself (John 1:4). Jesus also said it's something in the Father and something in Him (John 5:26).
 2. *Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines the word life (*zoe*) thusly: "It is used in the New Testament of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it"
 - c. Eternal life is not "live forever life". All human beings live forever in the sense that they don't cease to exist at physical death. The only question is where will they live forever—with God or separated from Him.
 1. Jesus came to earth to make it possible for men and women to receive or become partakers of the life in God Himself. That's what the new birth is all about. God puts something of Himself in us (His life, His Spirit) and we become literal sons of God through this new birth (lessons for another day). I John 5:1
 2. *Zoe* life is a type of life. It's the life in God Himself. Abundant means superabundant (in quantity) or superior (in quality). Jesus came to fill us up with eternal life.
 3. John 10:10--I came so that they (my sheep, my people) will have life and have it overflowing in them (Beck); have it to the full (Moffatt).
 3. The people to whom Jesus spoke the day He made the statement in question in John 10:10 would never have understood Jesus to mean: I have come to give you a blessed, prosperous life in this life.
 - a. How do we know? Peter made it clear that he and the other disciples understood Jesus what kind of life Jesus was talking about.
 1. Jesus began to preach some things that many in the crowd didn't understand and found distasteful (lessons for another day) and they quit following Him.
 2. Jesus asked the original twelve disciples: Will you leave also? Peter responded: You have the words of eternal life.
 - b. How do we know? At the Last Supper, the night before He went to the Cross, Jesus told His disciples that in this world we will have tribulation. There's no such thing as a trouble-free, problem free-life in this world. John 16:33
 1. We live in a fallen world, a world that has been damaged by sin. Natural laws have been corrupted, resulting in earthquakes, killer storms, and other natural disasters. We have bodies that are mortal and subject to corruption and death.
 2. We interact with people who are sons of the devil, who make choices that affect our lives. And, because we aren't yet fully conformed to the image of Christ, we Christians sometimes make less than the best choices. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Eph 1:1-3; I John 3:10; etc.
 - c. How do we know? Look at what Jesus' first followers went out and preached after He returned

to Heaven. Not once did they preach: Jesus came to give us an abundant life.

1. Acts 14:22--Paul (who was personally taught the message he preached by Jesus Christ, Gal 1:11,12) preached that through much tribulation we enter the kingdom of God.
 2. By this point, the apostles were experiencing persecution for proclaiming Jesus. Stephen and John's brother James had been killed (Acts 7:60; Acts 12:2). Paul had been stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). By the time John wrote his gospel both Peter and Paul had been executed for their faith. All the rest (except for John) would also be killed.
4. These men were commissioned by Jesus to go into the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15,16). That's exactly what they did. The gospel is not: Jesus came to give you an abundant, prosperous life.
- a. In I Cor 15:1-4 we find a Bible definition of what the gospel is: Jesus died for our sins as it was prophesied. He raised from the dead, proving that His sacrifice paid the price for our sin.
 1. Your biggest problem is not your lack of education, your dysfunctional childhood, or the fact that you can't catch a break in life. Your greatest problem is sin.
 2. Now, through believing that Jesus died for your sins and bowing your knee to Him as Lord, you can be saved from the penalty of sin which is death or eternal separation from God.
 - b. We don't realize how much the version of Christianity we hear preached has been influenced by the times and culture in which we've been born.
 1. Live your dreams! Fulfill your destiny. Those are all 20th Century America standards. If your only source of information about Christianity was the New Testament you would never draw the conclusion that Jesus died to help us fulfill our dreams.
 2. Jesus died for every human being who has lived since Adam and Eve. The gospel has to be something that works everyone in every part of the world in every time period since man fell in the Garden of Eden. The kind of lifestyle that we live here in America did not and does not exist for most of the people who've lived on this planet.
 3. Every human who has ever lived has the same problem: We are guilty of sin before a holy God and destined for eternal separation from God. The gospel or good news is that Jesus remedied this condition through His death, burial, and resurrection. If you believe on Him and His sacrifice He will give you eternal life, abundantly.
 - c. When we read the epistles or letters written by the apostles (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) there's no hint of God came to give you an abundant life. At that time there were sixty million slaves throughout the Roman Empire. Note what Paul wrote to Christian slaves.
 1. I Cor 7:21,22--Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let that trouble you. Of course, if you have a chance to get free, take it. If you are a slave when you are called in the Lord, you are the Lord's free man. (Beck)
 2. Col 3:22,23--Slaves...whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, because you know the Lord will give you the inheritance as your reward. Serve the Lord Christ. (Beck)
5. Jesus' first followers had an awareness that a plan is unfolding and this life is only a temporary, small part of our existence. They understood that we are passing through this life as it is. I Pet 2:11
- a. They knew that Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin so that men and woman can become sons and daughters of God through receiving eternal life. Jesus didn't die to make this life the highlight of our existence.
 1. When God deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage it was a real event that happened to real people, but it also pictures redemption (Ex 6:6; Ex 15:13). God brought them out of Egypt to bring them to Canaan. He led them all the way (as a pillar of fire and cloud).
 2. Even though they were following God, there was no easy way to get where they were going. They had to pass through a mountainous desert region and deal with all the challenges it produced. But God led them on the best route (Ex 13:17,18), brought good out of bad, and got them through until He got them out (lessons for another day). The point is: There's no

easy way through this life, even if you're following God.

b. Jesus' first followers knew He will come again to cleanse the earth of all corruption and death and establish the kingdom of God. Heaven and earth will come together and God and His family will live here forever. Then we'll have the prosperous abundant life God intends for us. Rom 8:18

1. Jeremiah 29:11 is often used as a proof text that God will fulfill your dreams and destiny in this life because He has a plan for you. These words were given by the Holy Spirit to the prophet Jeremiah for people who had been taken from their homeland in Canaan into captivity in Babylon. The large majority of them died in captivity.

2. God's Word to them was not: I'm going to make this life the highlight of your existence. The Holy Spirit, through the prophet directed them to settle down in the land of their captivity and pray for their captors. Jer 29:4-7

3. Where is the future and hope in this? In the life to come those who put faith in the revelation of God's grace given through the Cross of Christ will return to their homeland to live the abundant life God has for them.

1. John 6:40--In the context of what Jesus came to give us He said: This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who believes may have eternal life and be raised up at the last day. We could do a series on His words, but consider one point.

2. "Raised up at the last day" is a reference to resurrection of the dead which will reunite all in the present Heaven with their original body to live again on earth. This time it will be forever and it will be what God always intended it to be.

C. Conclusion: I'm not arguing against being blessed or having abundance. I'm talking about priorities and expectations. We're on our way to something beyond this life. And there's no easy way to get there.

1. But God will take care of us in this life. Jesus said that if we seek His kingdom and righteousness first (keep our priorities right) we will have what we need to get through this life. Matt 6:33

2. Ps 73:24--The psalmist wrote: You will guide me with your counsel and afterwards receive me or take me into glory. He looked to the Lord to lead and guide him in this life, but he knew this life is not all there is to life.

a. v25,26--Whom have I in Heaven but you? There's nothing more important to me than you, Lord. My life (my flesh and heart) will come to an end, but you're my strength and hope.

b. You will receive me to glory or take me to the present invisible Heaven and then bring me back to this earth made new, restored to my glorified (resurrected) body to live with you forever.

3. Prov 3:5,6--Trust in the Lord and lean not to your understanding. There's no easy way to get through this life. You may not be able to figure out how you'll get through. But God sees a way.

Acknowledge Him in all your ways and He will guide and direct your path. He'll get you to where you need to be in this life and the life to come.