

Led by the Holy Spirit

The Bible says: Romans 8:14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*

Surely, we would all like to know that God accepts each of us as His very own 'children'!

So we need to know;

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What does it mean to be led by the Holy Spirit? and
- How can we be led by the Holy Spirit?

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

He is the third person of the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who together make up 'God'. Jesus told us before His crucifixion that, after He had left, He would send us the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

The Holy Spirit is the one who directs us (Acts 8:29, 10:19, 11:12) leads us (Luke 4:1), teaches us what to say (Luke 12:12), guides us (Galatians 5:16) fills us with the power of God (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 2:24), enables us to speak in tongues (other languages) (Acts 2:4), enables us to prophesy (1 Corinthians 2:13), teaches us all things, (Acts 14:26, 1 John 2:27) and helps us to pray (Romans 8:26).

When we pray to the Father, in the name of Jesus – which means with the right and the authority to do so, because we are saved and members of the family of God – the Holy Spirit responds to our prayers.

2. What does it mean to be led by the Holy Spirit?

A personal and unique calling

There are always lots of 'good' things to do, and even though they may be in line with the Bible, such as starting a church, becoming a missionary, joining a ministry or serving a charity, the real question is whether we are doing what God specifically and individually created each one of us to be and to do. God creates each one of us with a specific and unique purpose and calling, and we need to identify and then to focus on fulfilling this divine assignment. When we do, we can truly expect to hear God's commendation; "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" (Matthew 25:21+23). Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you,*" says the LORD. "*They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*

In contrast, those at the other end of the scale may one day be faced with the following: Matthew 7:21-23 "*Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'*"

Simeon is described as a man who was righteous and devout, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. When Jesus, as a baby, was presented to Lord at the Temple, the Holy Spirit led Simeon to the Temple where he prophesied over the baby Jesus (Luke 2:22-38)

Jesus set the example for us – the Bible says that he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil (Matthew 4:1).

John 5:19 *So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.*

All of us. And then of course we get the scripture telling us plainly that we are all to be led by the Holy Spirit: Romans 8:14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*

How does this work? To me it is like driving a car, and using my GPS. I can drive, and use my own knowledge and make my own decisions on where to go and how to get there. Or I can still drive, but listen to and be guided by the voice of GPS telling me the best route to take, and what to

look out for along the way. It is my choice; I can listen and follow the instructions from this voice, or I can ignore it, or even turn it off. The same applies, even when we are involved in one or another form of ministry.

3. How can we be led by the Holy Spirit?

- **First, we each need to have received the Holy Spirit**

Some folk think that we automatically receive the Holy Spirit when we are saved – when we repent of our sins and accept Jesus as our Lord and our Saviour. However the Bible shows that this is not necessarily so – being filled with the Holy Spirit is an event that typically takes place sometime after receiving salvation.

Acts 8:15-17 As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit. ('How to be Baptised in the Holy Spirit' is the subject of a separate article).

Having received (been baptised in) the Holy Spirit, we need to 'listen' when the Holy Spirit speaks to us. How can we hear the Holy Spirit? Let's look at some steps to help you:

- **Decide in your heart that the Lord is good, and wants you to know Him personally**

God wants us each to know Him personally, and to love Him just for who He is.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

- **Decide that you will listen and obey God.**

Commit yourself to be obedient to God – to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life in all your decision making, whether it makes sense or not. Just ensure that your decisions are not in violation of the word of God. When in doubt:

- Pray and ask God to confirm His word or instructions to you, and then be open and sensitive to hear, and quick to obey.
- In addition (not instead) seek the council of spiritual leaders who you can trust, especially those who have themselves demonstrated an ability to hear from God and to be led by the Holy Spirit, e.g. your pastor and the elders and accepted prophets in your church, or personally known to you,
- Get rid of anything that may offend the Holy Spirit - in your life, your thoughts, in your actions, and even in your house or office, and repent for each of these, as they come to mind. Destroy any articles or symbols of false religions or anything that you have kept, even if only for decoration, and especially any you may have previously regarded as an 'idol' or a good luck charm in which you placed your trust or faith, instead of solely in God, and repent for each of these.

John 14:21 Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."

How to hear from the Holy Spirit

- Believe that God wants to, and does, speak to each one of us, and that when we ask, He will answer.
- Decide in advance that you will obey when you hear.
- Ask God to help you to hear His voice, and then keep asking and listening! (See Matthew 7:7).

Remember that God loves and cares for each of us, and wants to guide us, like the good Father He is. God searches our hearts, and what he is looking for is a heart that fully believes in, trusts in, and is prepared to obey Him.

2 Chronicles 16:9 The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

God, the Father, typically communicates through the Holy Spirit, who then speaks to us in different ways. (See 'How to Hear the Voice of God').

The Holy Spirit typically speaks to us as a quiet voice to our spirit, which comes to us as a thought which we just know is from the Lord, or through the message given to a prophet for our benefit. We can also hear through dreams (whilst asleep) or visions (whilst awake).

Acts 4:24-25 When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them - you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, 'Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans?"

Acts 8:29 The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

Acts 10:19 Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Three men have come looking for you."

Acts 11:12 The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us.

Acts 16:6 Next Paul and Silas travelled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time.

Acts 21:4 We went ashore, found the local believers, and stayed with them a week. These believers prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10-11 Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'"

Acts 28:25 And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet,

2 Peter 1:20-21 Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

God also speaks to us in dreams and visions, or even when we are in a trance

Paul and Ananias

Acts 9:10 Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord!" he replied.

God also spoke to Paul in a vision, telling him to expect a visit from Ananias (Acts 9:12).

Peter and Cornelius

Acts 10:3 One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.

Acts 10:9-10 The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

God spoke to Paul several other times in visions which are recorded in Acts, and probably several more time which were not recorded!

Acts 18:9 *One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent!"*

Acts 22:18 *I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me.'*

The book of Revelation is a report on what John saw in a vision (Revelation 9:17, 17:18).

Strengthen yourself in the Spirit, by praying in the Spirit (in tongues).

Ephesians 6:18 *Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

Be open and available to be led

When I recently prayed before a Sunday church service for the Holy Spirit to lead all of us, this is what I felt Him say: *"I will be there to the extent that you let me"*.

Here are some examples of being led by the Holy Spirit:

- Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. (Matthew 4:1).
- The Holy Spirit told Peter to go and witness to Cornelius and the other gentiles. (Acts 11:12)
- The Holy Spirit prevented Paul and Silas from preaching in the province of Asia at that time. (Acts 16:6).

Conclusion

So whether you are a pastor preparing a sermon or a message, or even while you are preaching it, or a businessman making a business decision, or someone deciding on who is to be their marriage partner, or anyone making a decision at all in their daily lives, I urge you to ask and then to take the time to listen for the instructions and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and then to be prepared to obey, even if it means a change in your plans!

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