

## **General and Specific Guidance**

When we were discussing general and specific guidance in our last issue, we mentioned that 95% of our guidance is general. This is guidance which comes from reading the Word. Conversely, specific guidance which occurs only 5% of the time may be an audible voice, a prophecy, a word of knowledge or a number of other things.

One of the problems in the body of Christ is that quite often people want their guidance to be specific. They want God to speak to them audibly. They want "a word" or a prophecy from another believer. While there is nothing wrong with receiving a prophecy, a word of knowledge, or a word of wisdom concerning a decision you are facing, you do need to make sure that the word or prophecy given to you bears witness with your spirit. Remember, we are not led by prophecy or words of wisdom and knowledge; we are led by the Spirit of the Lord living within us. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit leads in line with the Word.

According to Proverb 20:5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out." Last month we brought out the fact that we don't necessarily have to depend upon man for counsel. This is not to say that you should not go to anyone for counsel, for if you need counsel and it is available from someone who is in the Word, get it. The point of this verse is that we don't have to depend upon others for counsel because we can go directly to the Word of God. Another scripture which adheres to the same idea is Psalm 119:24, "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors." Here "testimonies" is a synonym for "the Word". Thus, God's Word can become your counselor.

I hear many people say, "I don't know whether or not the Holy Spirit is leading me because every time I pray about this certain thing, all I get is a scripture coming to my mind." What did they expect? They received the guidance they requested, but they didn't recognize it because they expected the 5% guidance. They expected the Lord to take their arms and pull them down the road He wants them to take. They haven't learned that counsel is in the heart of man; consequently, there is more to being led by

the Spirit than overt signs from God.

Personally, I know I am being led by the Spirit when I am facing a situation and a scripture comes to my mind, no blinking lights, no voice from heaven, just a scripture. There have been times when the devil has asked me, "Was that really God, or was that just you?" My answer to that insinuation is, "It had to be God because I'm not smart enough to have thought of it!"

As we have said in previous teachings, one of the seven ministries of the Holy Spirit is to give guidance or counsel to believers. Also as we have said, most of our counsel comes from the Word. For this reason it is imperative that we are aware which scriptures are directed toward believers and which are not. Unfortunately, some Christians are confused by John 16:8-11 which speak of one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. In verse 7, Jesus says to believers, "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.*" This was a promise to believers, but in verses 8-11, Jesus tells us that while the Holy Spirit is here to help believers, He also has a ministry to the world.

*(John 16: 8-11)*

*8 And when He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

*9) Of sin because they believe not on me.*

*10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

*11) Of judgment, because the prince of the world is judged.*

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will reprove or censure the world of three things - sin, righteousness, and judgment. Notice that the only sin which brings this reproof is the sin of rejecting Jesus. This leads to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit does not reprove the church for sin because those who believe on Jesus cannot commit the only sin which

brings reproof.

Nevertheless, many believers think that when they feel badly about something they have done it's because they are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We know that according to John 16:8-11 this is not so. Furthermore, the nineteenth and twentieth verses of I John 3 tell us the source of this condemnation.

*(1 John 3:19-20)*

*19) And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.*

*20) For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

Do you see what generates this condemnation? Your heart. You are answerable before God for your heart but not because of any condemnation from the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to lead the believer into truth. Although your heart may tell you that you missed it, the Holy Spirit will say, "Here's the way back." The main thing we need to realize is that when we feel condemned in our hearts, it is not the Holy Spirit guiding us.

Why then do we feel convicted? Our hearts condemn us according to what we have been taught. And so, if we feel convicted, it is because we have done something that does not line up with what we have been taught regardless of what the Word has to say on the subject. Ironically, Christians are running around feeling condemned about some particular thing that does not even concern God.

When I was growing up many churches had "clothesline" preaching. They preached about skirt length, about hair length, against television and movies, or whatever was the personal conviction of the preacher. The result was that very little Word came forth from the pulpit to lead the people into truth. Yet, those who heard such messages truly were convicted every time they got around a TV set. They also believed that this conviction was from God. While this may seem relatively harmless, it's

really deceiving because when someone is convicted and believes that the conviction comes from God, they also believe that they are closer to God than a person who is not similarly convicted. They set themselves up as being more spiritual than the next fellow. After all, their conviction proves that they hear God and are led by the Spirit. No! A condemning heart is not a sign of being led by the Spirit.

Logically speaking, their reasoning is faulty because if the Holy Spirit did condemn believers for their wrongdoings, all believers (having the same Holy Spirit) would be condemned about the same things. The fact that we have erroneous beliefs which allow our own hearts to condemn us is one more reason why the Word is adamant on the subject of renewing our minds to the Word. We need to take in the Word so that our convictions line up with the will of God.

I John 3:21 continues with, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God." If your heart condemns you for something you have been taught, get into the Word and see what God has to say. You'll get rid of the condemnation and you will have confidence toward God.

Let's return to John 16:12-15 and see what Jesus now has to say about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church. In these verses Jesus addresses believers.

*(John 16:12-15)*

12) *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

13) *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come,*

14) *He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.*

15) *All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.*

These verses stress the point that the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church is

to guide believers into all truth. He speaks to us and He shows us things to come. He speaks to us through the Word, and He speaks to us through our spirits.

Another point we need to consider is that being led by the Spirit is a growing process. In Romans 8:14 we are told, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*" Then verse sixteen says, "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*"

These verses refer to two different designations given to believers. In verse fourteen the Greek word used for son is "huios" which more exactly means "a mature son". You know you have reached maturity in the Word of God when the Holy Spirit starts to lead you in line with the Word. When you face a difficult situation for example, you don't have to run around looking for your Bible because an appropriate scripture immediately comes to your mind.

Believer's are referred to as children in verse sixteen. A child of God is different from a son of God because *child* designates the new believer who is as yet immature in the Word. When the Holy Spirit came to live in you at the moment of the New Birth, your spirit was recreated and the first thing the Holy Spirit started doing for you was bearing witness with your spirit that you truly were a born-again child of God. This is to be distinguished from being led by the Spirit which in requires knowledge of the Word. As a new believer continues to grow in the Word of God, the Holy Spirit starts to lead him and guide him and eventually the child of God develops into a son of God.

In Romans 8:22-25 we are introduced to another way to be led by the Spirit. In these verses, Paul is teaching that the whole world is under the Curse and is groaning while awaiting the return of Jesus.

*(Romans 8:22-26)*

22) *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

23) *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit,*

*even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

*24) For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?*

*25) But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

*26) Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

The infirmities referred to in verse 26 are our bodies. Because we are limited to our physical bodies, there are things surrounding us that we don't know anything about. Sometimes we run into circumstances about which we cannot find specific guidance in the Word of God. For example, should I take a job with company A or company B? In this case, we could sit back and wait for God to do something about it some day, but we don't have to do that, for as Romans 8:26 says, the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings. Thus, one way the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us is through One way the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us is through intercessory prayer and groanings in our spirits.

There are times when we groan of our own accord because of what we see around us. For example, if you turn on the TV and hear that a recession is predicted, you may want to groan in the natural and get mad at the devil. However, a better thing to do would be to turn it over to the Lord and let the Spirit groan on the inside of you. When the Holy Spirit does this, He is punching you and saying, "Everything is going to be all right. I know how it's going to end. I was there when God ordained you, and I'll be here when He takes you up."

Have you had times when it seemed as though the whole world was oppressing you? It is times such as that you can go before the Lord in intercessory prayer. When you get up from prayer, you will feel as though a ton of weight was lifted from your

shoulders. You will be free in the Spirit knowing that the Holy Spirit has helped you and guided you into all truth.

A further bonus for me, and I'm sure for others, is that after a time of intercession the Word means more to me than it ever has before. I find things in the Word that I had not realized were there. In order to gain these insights I had to break through from the inside of me with the Holy Spirit making groans which I couldn't even articulate. Whether it comes out in groans or in tongues, the point is that when we don't know how to pray the Holy Spirit does.

Romans 8:27 assures us that when we intercede we can have confidence that what we pray is in line with God's will. "*And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*"

Let's read a few more verses from this eighth chapter of Romans.

*(Romans 8:28-31)*

28) *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

29) *For whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

30) *Moreover whom He did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

31) *What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

According to verse 29, God knew you were going to be here before the foundation of the earth. Moreover, He also knew that you were going to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. Because of this He predestinated you to become conformed to the image of His Son. And when He predestinated you, He called you and elected you

from eternity past to sit with Him in Heavenly places. The summation of this is that God knows your past, He knows your present, and He also knows your future.

As we have said, we humans are bound by time. We can look back on yesterday; we can see today, but we don't know what is coming tomorrow. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit who lives in us knows. He was there when we were first known. He was there when we were predestinated. He was there when we were elected, chosen, and justified, and He will be there when we are glorified!

We found in Romans 8:26 that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. This is itself is powerful and yet, according to Romans 8:34, there is more. "*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*" What an alliance-- Jesus and the Holy Spirit! Each plays a distinct role in intercession. When we pray according to the Word of God, Jesus Christ is our intercessor who makes our petitions known before the Father.

However, when we don't know how to pray, Jesus steps aside and the Holy Spirit takes His place as our intercessor. Thus there is no way we can fail! If we know how to pray we can get through to the Father, and yet, even if we don't know how.

As we continue in Romans 8, verse 35 asks the question, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*"

Then verse 36 instructs us about the way Satan perceives believers, "As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Let me make it clear that God does not kill us, nor does He account us as sheep for the slaughter. Verse 37 refutes Satan's image of us and encourages believers when it says, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

The final two verses of the eighth chapter of Romans enumerate the things which though they may seem powerful are not strong enough to separate us from

God's love.

*(Romans 8:38-39)*

*38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

*39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

You see, even if you died today you would not be separated from God's love, for as Paul said, ". . . *Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:6). "*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Did you notice that included in the list of things that cannot separate us from God's love is "things to come"? We don't know what is coming so the Holy Spirit is sent to lead us and guide us into all truth so that we don't have to fear things to come.

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