

01 – LOOKING FOR LEADINGS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

- ✓ Most Christians are interested in following God's leading. But not every Christian knows how to recognize it. We've all heard people say, "The Lord told me such-and-so". But what does that even *mean*? (Did you hear an audible voice? Did a thought come to your mind? What do you mean when you say, "God *told* you"?)

The Two Main Ways God Leads Us

1. He leads us through the Written Word.
 2. He leads us by His Spirit.
- ✓ **Through the Word, I receive God's general leading.** If I want to get married, I can go to Proverbs 31 to find out what makes a good wife. She's strong in God (v. 17, 25, 30), she manages her home well (v. 15, 21, 27), she's faithful to her husband (v. 11), she's diligent (v. 13-16, 18-19, 22, 24), and she's nurturing and kind (v. 20, 26). Then from the New Testament, I learn that she should be a Christian, so I'm not unequally yoked. That's all part of God's *general leading* that comes from His Word.)
 - ✓ **What I *can't* get out of the Bible, are specifics.** There's no verse of Scripture that says, "Ron Swanson, marry Bev Casemore from Swift Current, Saskatchewan. She's the middle daughter of Dave and Marcie Casemore, and you'll meet her when you visit the Alpine Church of God". I can get general *principles* from the Word. But when it comes to specifics ... I can't get those from the Bible. I need the Holy Spirit to make those things clear to me. But, how?

"It's Too Hard to Hear from God!"

- ✓ If I say, "It's too hard to hear from God", and ignore Him, what are my other options?
- ✓ I Can Lean to My Own Understanding. (That's never good. Proverbs tells me not to do that – 3:5-6!)

- ✓ I Can Lean On Someone *Else's* Understanding. (A pastor, a friend, a counsellor, or an "expert". But that's *still* not a good idea.) The truth is there's nothing wrong with getting godly counsel. But you have Someone on the inside Who knows the outcome of every possible path you could take. And He'll never steer you wrong!
- ✓ **Bottom Line:** For general things, the Word is the safest way to be led. But for the specifics, I still need to learn how to hear from God. The question becomes, "How do I hear from the Holy Spirit?"

Wrong Ways to Be Led

1. Some People Look for a Thought
- ✓ "Well, this *thought* came ..." That means literally nothing! As we learned from the Sermon on the Mount, thoughts come from a lot of sources. Some thoughts come because of what you see. Others come by association. Still others come from the devil. You can't assume, just because a thought came – even if it came "out of the blue" – that it was from God. **Thoughts are NOT a safe way to be led.**
2. Some People Look for a "Voice"
- ✓ Have you ever had this happen? You pray, "God should I take this job?" And you "hear", "Yes! No!" Thoughts aren't a good way to be led either. Even "hearing a voice" isn't proof that you heard from God.

Matthew 16:13-23 – "When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?' And they said, 'Some say you are John the Baptist: some say, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said, 'And what about you? Who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for **flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.** And I say to you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hell won't prevail against it.'" (You can almost see the pride in Peter's face. "Well boys, I guess we know who's the greatest *now*, don't we?")

*“Jesus ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. Then he began to tell his disciples what would happen to him – that he would go to Jerusalem and suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders – that he would be killed, and three days later he would be raised to life again. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Impossible Master! That can never be!’ And Jesus turned, and said unto Peter, ‘**Get behind me, Satan**’ ...” (Jesus wasn’t calling Peter “Satan”. Peter had *listened* to Satan and was repeating his thoughts.)*

- ✓ Did you catch it? Peter heard two “voices”, moments apart. One was God, one was the devil. And he was too immature to know the difference!
- 3. Some Look at Circumstances (Put Out a Fleece)
- 4. Others Make Up Crazy Ways of Determining God’s Will.
- ✓ I had a fellow in my first church. (He was one of the nicest guys I’d ever met. He was 50-60 years old.) He had saved “\$100,000 for his retirement. He got the idea that he’d invest the money and surprise his (unsaved) wife by turning it into a million dollars.
- ✓ He came to me one day and confessed that he’d lost quite a bit of the money. When I asked, “How much?”, he sheepishly said, “\$86,000.00”. (Out of the \$100,000, he only had \$14,000 left. Definitely not enough to retire on.) “I don’t understand how that happened”, he said. “God was leading me!”
- ✓ When I asked for the details, he said, “I’d ask God if I should invest in a particular stock. If I got a shiver up my spine, I’d take that as a ‘yes’. If there was no shiver, then God was saying ‘no’.” Yikes!
- ✓ The Bible doesn’t say, “As many as are led by shivers, they are the sons of God!” He was looking for leadings in the wrong place! (Even worse, he’d never invested more than \$2000 at a time. That means he’d watched it FAIL 43 times! You’d think he’d have caught on!) **You can’t just invent ways to be led.** You need to find out how

God TOLD us to be led, and then do *that*! (Those are hard lessons, but they need to be learned. We’re not led by thoughts, or voices, or circumstances, and especially not shivers! Then, how does the Bible say we hear from the Holy Spirit? That’s what this series is about.)

Stuff You’ve Gotta Know

(i) You’re Not at a Disadvantage

- ✓ I used to say, “If only I had lived in the Bible days! I’d just have to look over at Jesus and say, ‘Should I?’ It would have been so easy!” The truth is, you’re not at a disadvantage.

*John 16:7 – “I tell you the truth: It’s **better** for you that I leave.”*

- ✓ You See, When Jesus Was on Earth: If He’s in Capernaum, and you’re in Jerusalem, and you need Him ... you’d better start walking. But now, in the New Covenant, He’s available anywhere you are, any time you need Him. (“But it was so easy back then!” It’s easy NOW, if you know what you’re looking for!) Hearing from God is available!

(ii) The Holy Ghost **DOES** Speak:

John 16:13 – “But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. The Spirit doesn’t speak on his own. But whatever He hears from Me, THAT SHALL HE SPEAK ...”

- ✓ He does speak! (You might say, “Well, I never hear Him!” Yes, you do! “No, I don’t!” Yes, you do. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice” (John 10:27). He didn’t say, “Some of my sheep hear my voice.” He said, “My sheep hear my voice”.
- ✓ If you never hear His voice, there are only two possibilities. (a) Either you’re not His sheep; (b) Or, you ARE hearing His voice, but you’re not recognizing it as Him. (Now, THAT’S the truth! He’s been speaking to you all along! You just need to know what you’re looking for.)