

How to be led by the Holy Spirit

Foundational Truth Volume 10

By Peter Tan

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PREFACE

From my years of counselling and sharing with Christians, I have found that the most frequent question asked of me is “How do I know the Will of God?” Countless thousands of sincere and hungry Christians long to know God’s perfect Will for their lives.

The key to flowing into God’s perfect Will is learning to be led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14). The leading of the Spirit consists of five inward witnesses, the voice of the human spirit and the voice of the Holy Spirit. Each of these areas can be taught and acquired.

As we grow in being led by the Holy Spirit, we will grow to be truly the sheep who hear the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 10:27).

May God by His grace and mercy enable all of us to flow in the river of His perfect Will.

Pastor Peter Tan

CHAPTER 1

THE INWARD WITNESS

The Holy Spirit speaks in many ways to us but the most important and basic way by which the Holy Spirit leads us is the inward witness. Ninety-five percent of the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives is by means of the inward witness. He does give visions and prophecies as confirmation in our lives but we still need to be led by the inward witness. Even those in the fivefold ministry have to learn to be led by the inward witness.

Some people think that all the fivefold ministers just sit around and see visions every day. They may operate spectacularly in their ministries but God still requires them to be sensitive to the inward witness in many of the daily affairs of their lives. People have always equated the spectacular with the supernatural but the supernatural may not be spectacular. For example, it is a supernatural act for us to speak in tongues every day, any time we desire, but it may not be that spectacular.

Definition of the Inward Witness

The inward witness is a spiritual sensation in our new born spirit man. When we were born again, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). After we are born again, the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirits and leads us the rest of our lives through our new born spirits (Eze. 36:26, 27). We are under His guardianship until Jesus comes again for us (Eph. 1:13, 14).

The inward witness is also called the anointing within. The anointing within will teach and lead us in all things (1 Jn. 2:27). The manifestation of this anointing within produces the sensation that we call the inward witness. In a sense, the anointing within is like the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that led the Israelites through the great and terrible wilderness (Num. 9:15-23; Deut. 8:15). The distinct difference is that in the Old Testament, the leading was outward whereas in the New Testament, the leading is inward.

The basic sensation of the inward witness is that of right or wrong, red light or green light; although there are five other variations to this spiritual sensation. It is also the working of the conscience, which bears witness to the rightness or wrongness of a thing (Rom. 9:1). In the same way that Paul served God with his spirit, Paul also served God with his conscience (2 Tim. 1:3; Rom. 1:9). Our inward witness and conscience can be trained.

The spiritual senses of our spirit man can be trained to discern right or wrong (Heb. 5:14). The conscience needs to be trained and guided by the Word of God. The conscience is so tender that it can be seared or deadened with sin and unrighteousness (1 Tim. 4:2). When we were born again, our conscience was restored by the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:22). Henceforth, we should like Paul, seek to live our lives with a pure conscience.

Conscience works together with faith in order to keep us operating at our level of faith and not in presumption. Acting on presumption is acting on something which we do not have faith for. Our conscience is the barometer of our faith level. It tells us if we are stepping out beyond our faith level. Paul told the Corinthians that those who do not walk in their faith and revelation level will defile their conscience (1 Cor. 8:7). Although in First Corinthians, Paul was speaking in regard to idol food, the principle of operating at our personal faith level guided by our conscience applies to all aspects of our daily lives. We must learn to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, otherwise we will be shipwrecked (1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9).

The Five Sensations of the Spirit Man

There are five incidents in the New Testament which speaks about the working of the inward witness in the spirit man. Each of these demonstrates a different area to which the inward witness bears witness. There are different levels of the working of the inward witness. We need to develop sensitiveness to these various levels of the inward witness.

Jesus, when conversing with the Pharisees, sighed deeply in His spirit (Mk. 8:12). Something was obviously happening in His spirit man. The word 'sighed' comes from the Greek word 'stenazo.' This same word has been used when Jesus prayed for the deaf and dumb man. Jesus looked up into heaven and sighed. After that He spoke the words 'Be opened' and the man was healed (Mk. 7:34).

The word 'stenazo' has also been translated as 'groan' (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:2,4). It is very clear from the context of the book of Romans that the groaning referred to has to do with prayer. We can therefore soundly conclude that the word 'stenazo' when used in reference to the spirit man, speaks of the prayer burden that the Holy Spirit imparts. The first sensation of the inward witness is therefore a sensation to pray.

Jesus also groaned in his spirit when he saw Mary and the Jews weeping over Lazarus (Jn. 11:33, 38). However, the word 'groaned' here does not come from the same word as in the first sensation of the inward witness.

The Greek word in this passage is the word 'embrimaomai' which carries a totally different meaning. The word 'embrimaomai' has been translated as 'sternly warned' (Matt. 9:30; Mk. 1:43; 8:30). Jesus sternly warned those he healed not to advertise their healing because he had too much publicity and it would prevent Him from entering the towns He desired to preach in. When His orders went unheeded, the crowds that came were so great that Jesus could no longer enter the city (Mk. 1:45). 'Embrimaomai' is speaking in an authoritative tone.

Based on these passages, what Jesus was experiencing at Lazarus' tomb was not just mere sorrow. Jesus was experiencing an infusion of authority. It was an authoritative sensation in his spirit. He was sensing a special anointing of the Holy Spirit to take authority over the situation. At the tomb, Jesus called out with an authoritative and loud voice saying, "Lazarus, come forth." Immediately, Lazarus arose and came out in his graveclothes.

This second sensation of the spirit man is a leading of the Holy Spirit to take authority over a situation. This is always experienced in the casting out of demons and in the healing ministry. Those who desire to flow in the anointing and minister by the Holy Spirit must sense this second sensation of the spirit man before they take authority over demons or sickness.

As Jesus was speaking to His disciples, He was troubled in His spirit (Jn. 13:21). The word 'troubled' comes from the Greek word 'tarasso.' Jesus sensed a betrayal was taking place at the very moment that He was speaking (Jn. 13:21). This third sensation of the spirit man is like an early warning system. This term is used in nuclear warfare strategies of early warning in the probability of first strike by opposing nations. God has built into us an early warning system by which we know of impending dangers supernaturally through the spirit man. Satan should never be able to take Christians by surprise. Jesus knew every move of Satan before it even happened. He was sensitive to the Holy Spirit working in His spirit man.

The third sensation is like a troubled stirring within the spirit man. Its purpose is to warn us of strategic moves by the enemy against us. The right response to this sensation would be to exercise spiritual warfare by intercession and prayer. After the reception of this sensation in His spirit man, Jesus went into deep prayer. He prayed until His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Lk. 22:44). He received a breakthrough in the spirit realm through His prayers (Heb. 5:7; Lk. 22:43). This third sensation works like an alarm bell that calls our attention to the great need of immediate intercession and spiritual warfare.

When Paul was in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him at the sight of the idolatry that prevailed in the city (Acts 17:16). The word 'provoked' comes from the Greek word 'paroxunomai.' Paul was experiencing a positive stirring in his spirit man. This fourth sensation of the spirit man is a positive stirring to minister. It is different from the fourth sensation. The fourth sensation carries an element of excitement and zeal whereas the third sensation carries an element of being troubled. Upon sensing the positive stirring, Paul went into the synagogue and in the marketplaces to preach and to teach God's Word (Acts 17:17). This fourth sensation of the inward witness is like a bubbling in the spirit man to perform a work of God. If this sensation is not obeyed, a quenching of the Spirit takes place (1 Thess. 5:19).

Later when Paul went to Corinth, he experienced a stronger sensation of the inward witness. He was constrained by the Holy Spirit (Acts 18:5). In some translations, the word 'Spirit' is not capitalized to convey that the spirit of Paul was involved. This is the fifth and the strongest sensation. It is very much like the fourth sensation except that it is multiplied many times in strength and in intensity. It is a stirring to perform a work of God through the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Unlike the fifth sensation, the fourth sensation is a stirring to perform a work of God without the gifts of the Holy Spirit in manifestation.

Paul stayed in Corinth for about a year and six months (Acts 18:11). Jesus even appeared to him and encouraged him to stay and minister boldly (Acts 18:9,10). Mighty signs and wonders were performed in Paul's ministry with the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:12). The word 'constrained' comes from the Greek word 'sunecho' which speaks about being pressed or held together. In this sensation the Holy Spirit and the human spirit works as one entity together. This sensation is always present whenever the anointing upon is in manifestation.

Those without spiritual training will not be able to sense these five sensations of the spirit man clearly. We need to train our spirit man through the Word of God and through prayer. Fasting and prayer can also increase the sensitivity of a person to the experiences in the spirit man.

CHAPTER 2

THE VOICE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The five sensations of the human spirit do not constitute the voice of the human spirit in that they only relate to various sensations. There is no impartation of knowledge or understanding when the sensations occur. Through teaching, a person can be trained to understand and relate to what the inward sensations mean but by themselves, the inward witness do not convey an intelligible communication.

However, the spirit man is capable of communication with our souls. Our perception of the voice of the human spirit is liken to the perception of an inward voice within us. However, we also have the voice of the soul within us. Our spirits and our souls dwell in our physical bodies. As such, whether it be the voice of our soul or the voice of our spirit, we hear these voices as inward voices. We need, therefore, to differentiate the voice of the soul from the voice of the spirit man.

Differentiating the Spirit from the Soul

We ‘hear’ the voice of the spirit and the voice of the soul as inward thoughts and imaginations. The task of differentiating the voice of the human spirit from the voice of the soul is in differentiating the different types of thoughts and imaginations that we receive. There is a mind of the spirit and there is a mind of the soul. There is a knowing by the spirit which is far above knowing by the mind (1 Cor. 2:11, 12, 14). We need to set our minds on the things of the Spirit and not on the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5-7).

There are three levels of consciousness: the function of the conscious mind, the function of the sub-conscious mind and the function the spirit mind. Scientists today have discovered the two main stages of consciousness in sleep: Rapid Eye Movements (REM) and Non-Rapid Eye Movements (NREM). These two represent the two functions of the mind. However, scientists have yet to discover the highest level of consciousness which is an awareness state of the spirit mind. It is consciousness at the spirit level.

Those who venture into spirit consciousness without the protection of the blood of Jesus Christ become prey for demons. All the false cults and metaphysical religions end up receiving false doctrines and theories of the universe. Paul called these doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). Their so-called

‘revelations’ do not produce holiness nor godliness. Most of them end up in immorality and live in the most degrading human conditions.

Where there is a counterfeit, there is a genuine. There is a true state of spiritual consciousness that has been opened to us through the redemption of Jesus Christ and not by works. It is a consciousness of the presence of God in our lives. It is the state of being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18, 19). It is a state of ‘minding the things of the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:5). Paul speaks about living in the state of looking not at the outward things but rather being renewed in the inward man and looking at the things of the Spirit which are invisible (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Those who live in this conscious state of the spirit man are men who are filled with the Spirit and of faith. Those who are filled with this yieldedness can do mighty exploits through the Holy Spirit. Stephen did great wonders and signs among the people (Acts 6:8). When he was persecuted and about to be stoned, Stephen was more conscious of God than of his persecutors (Acts 7:54-56). One of the great secrets of Kathryn Kuhlman was her yieldedness and consciousness of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho in his books describes about his closeness and partnership with the Holy Spirit.

It is a definite requirement for all Christians to have a controlled thought life. We must bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). There are three sources of thoughts: our own thoughts from the soul, thoughts of temptations from the devil and thoughts of the spirit man from the Holy Spirit within us. The thoughts of the human spirit are the inward voice of the human spirit.

We can notice a mark distinction between the thoughts of the spirit man and the thoughts from the soul and the devil. They can be outlined as follows:

THOUGHTS FROM THE SPIRIT

1. In line with the written Word of God
2. Produce love and faith
3. Stronger in times of worship and prayer
4. Is patient but firm
5. Seek to glorify Jesus
6. Edify the church
7. Loving and forgiving

THOUGHTS FROM THE SOUL

1. Contradictory to the written Word of God
2. Produce doubt and fear
3. Stronger when lacking in fellowship with God
4. Is hasty and pushy
5. Seek self-glorification
6. Destroy the church
7. Jealous and resentful

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| 8. Inspire a strong inward witness | 8. Cause a sensation of grieve to the spirit man |
| 9. From the Holy Spirit and the spirit realm | 9. From the sense realm |

When we spend much time in prayer and waiting on the Lord, we are able to hear the voice of the human spirit more clearly. It is such a gentle and sweet soft voice that when we get busy in the things of this life, we cannot hear what the human spirit is saying due to the hustle, bustle and clutter of human activity. Through training we can discern the voice of the human spirit better but there is still a constant requirement to take time away from the daily affairs of this human life and wait on God.

The human spirit also communicates to our soul through images and pictures. Some of the dreams that we have in our lives are instructions that the human spirit is seeking to convey to us. Not all dreams are the direct result of the human spirit. Most dreams are the result of the soul reprocessing data from our daily life. A dream can come through much activity (Eccl. 5:3).

When the human spirit communicates to our soul during our waking hours in images and pictures, we have a picture and an impression projected on the screen of our imagination. They are sometimes projected so softly and sweetly that they can be easily ignored. They are the opposite of wild tempting imaginations thrown like fiery darts at our imagination by demons. The same nine characteristics present in thoughts that come from the human spirit are also present in images and pictures.

Training the Human Spirit and Mind

The human spirit needs to be fed and trained. The food of the spirit man is the Word of God. We should learn the art of meditation in the Word of God as covered in Volume One of this Foundational Truths Series. Only the Word of God can divide what is of the human spirit and what is of the human soul (Heb. 4:12). The human spirit, like the human body needs exercise. The main avenue of spiritual exercise for the human spirit is praying in tongues. When we pray in tongues, it is our human spirits that pray (1 Cor. 14:14). Paul was a man well exercised in his spirit man for he said that he prayed more than all the Corinthians put together (1 Cor. 14:18).

The human mind also needs to be trained if it is to be a sensitive instrument to receive thoughts and images from the spirit man. Paul also said that he will worship God with his understanding (1 Cor. 14:15). He spoke about thinking upon things that are noble, just, pure, lovely, good and

having virtue and praiseworthiness (Phil. 4:8). When these things take place, the peace of God will garrison the heart and the mind in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). It is in the atmosphere of a peaceful mind that we can hear the inward voice of the human spirit. Listening to the voice of the human spirit in such an uncontrolled mind is like listening to a radio program without the antenna fixed properly. There will be too much electrical noises and static.

Be sensitive to the thoughts that pass through your mind. Not all of them have any spiritual significance but some of those thoughts that you receive could be instructions from the human spirit. It pays to listen to your human spirit. Our spirits know more about conducting the affairs of this earthly life than our souls. Even the best education and schools cannot compete with the intelligence that is available from the human spirit.

Only the spirit of man within him knows all that is in the man (1 Cor. 2:11). Some of the instructions that we receive from the human spirit may sound foolish to the natural mind. For the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit for they are foolishness to him (1 Cor. 2:14). The natural man can only do all that is possible based on his understanding of the natural laws. However, the newborn spirit within a believer knows all the natural laws plus all the spiritual laws and can therefore work at a higher level than the natural man can. It is not bound by the limitations of natural law. Many times natural laws are transcended and miracles resulted.

Pay heed to the voice of the human spirit within you. The key to the miraculous realm is in you. All the riches and resources for your life are within you. Paul said that he served God with his human spirit (Rom. 1:9). One thought, one imagination from the spirit man can change your whole life.

CHAPTER 3

THE VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The voice of the Holy Spirit is still an inward voice although it sometimes sounds like an external voice. The Holy Spirit lives in the spirit man (Jn. 14:17; Eze. 36:27). The voice of the Holy Spirit is different from the voice of the human spirit in the following ways:

1. The voice of the Holy Spirit is more authoritative than the voice of the human spirit.
2. There is a stronger manifestation of the presence of God when the Holy Spirit speaks.
3. The voice of the Holy Spirit is inwardly louder than the voice of the human spirit.
4. We cannot reason with the voice of the Holy Spirit for He is firm in His instructions; on the other hand, the human spirit will reason with us and persuade us to follow the ways of God.
5. The voice of the Holy Spirit covers areas of ministry life whereas the voice of the human spirit covers areas of our earthly lives. Occasionally, the Holy Spirit may cover an instruction in an area of our earthly life but this is still finally related to the ministry that He has called us to. By ministry life, we include all areas of ministry whether fulltime or non-fulltime.
6. The Holy Spirit deals with revelation whereas the human spirit deals with perception.
7. The Holy Spirit communicates on behalf of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ while the human spirit communicates on behalf of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts

The Holy Spirit is not just an invisible presence. He is a real person. Jesus told the disciples that the world will not know the Holy Spirit because the world does not see Him nor know Him (Jn. 14:17). However, Jesus in the same passage said that we will know Him because He dwells in us. The secret of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit is in learning His abiding presence and Person in our hearts. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is being filled with the awareness of His indwelling presence.

The disciples in the book of Acts were not outwardly conscious of the Holy Spirit but rather they were inwardly conscious of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, one hundred and twenty disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues (Acts 2:4). The Holy Spirit was

controlling them from the inside out. From thenceforth, it was an outworking of the Holy Spirit through the lives of the disciples.

The works of Jesus Christ were continued through men filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he answered the questions of the Jews (Acts 4:8). Stephen, filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, did great wonders and signs (Acts 6:8). Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, pronounced a judgment on Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:9). In each case, the Holy Spirit dwelling in the disciples was the One working the mighty works.

The voice of the Holy Spirit was clearly identified by Philip as he waited at the roadside (Acts 8:29). If we were standing next to him at that time, we would not have heard anything because it was an inward voice that Philip had heard. Peter, wondering what was the meaning of the vision that he had just seen, had his thoughts interrupted by the Holy Spirit telling him to go down and meet three men (Acts 10:19,20). Peter later explained to the Jews that it was the Holy Spirit who bade him to go (Acts 11:12). Peter knew the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The five prophets and teachers in Antioch heard simultaneously the voice of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1, 2). Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6). Apparently, he knew the voice of the Holy Spirit. Agabus knew the voice of the Holy Spirit and prophesied saying, "Thus says the Holy Spirit."

All the men highlighted in the book of Acts knew the Holy Spirit personally and recognized His voice. They did not mistake His voice to be their own inward impression but knew with certainty the voice of the Holy Spirit. All of us can recognize the voices of our loved ones with our eyes closed. Yet not all Christians can recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit. That is a reflection of how close we are with the Holy Spirit and how much He is a Person to us.

The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

The word 'fellowship' comes from the Greek word 'koinonia' which means three things. It means union, partnership and sharing. We must all learn the 'koinonia' of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). The word 'koinonia' has been used in reference to union in the Lord's Supper, which is called the communion (koinonia) of the blood and the body of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). The same root word 'koinoneo' has been used in reference to James and John being fishing partners (koinoneo) with Simon (Lk. 5:10). Paul

speaks about sharing and making a contribution (koinonia) to the needs of the saints (Rom. 15:26)

We should learn the secret of union, partnership and sharing with the Holy Spirit. Union speaks about a development of the consciousness of His abiding presence in our hearts. Partnership with the Holy Spirit means taking Him as our Senior Partner in life, ministry and business. He sits as the Chairman of the board. He gives the ideas and He makes the final decision. Sharing speaks of intimacy with the Holy Spirit; a total dependence upon Him for all of our needs.

Even though the Holy Spirit is invisible, we should live our lives as if He is present physically. He is the One whom Jesus has sent to take the place of His physical absence (Jn. 14:15-18). He is our Helper (parakletos - the One who is called to be beside us). He teaches us all things and brings the Word of God to our remembrance (Jn. 14:26). If we cannot hear His voice, how can we hear His teachings?

Differentiating Revelation from Perception

The works of the Holy Spirit upon this earth are sevenfold. They are as follows:

1. To give new birth to those who accept Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:5-8).
2. To empower a believer through the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).
3. To enable believers to communicate to God (Acts 2:4; Rom. 8:26, 27).
4. To equip believers to function in the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7-11).
5. To anoint believers to stand in the nine ministries of believers and in the fivefold office (Acts 13:2; 20:28).
6. To perfect the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (Gal. 5:16-18, 22-25).
7. To reveal the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father (Jn. 16:13-15).

The eighth and last work of the Holy Spirit at the end of the church age would be to take us all home in the great rapture of the church (Rom. 8:11). All the above points are covered in different volumes of this Foundational Truths Series. We will, therefore, look into the point of revelation since it is in line with discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the instrument behind all revelations that we receive in this life. The difference between perception by the human spirit and

revelation by the Holy Spirit is as the difference between the physical sense of touch and the physical sense of sight. It takes us a long time to identify an object by feelings whereas it takes us a few seconds to identify an object by sight. We can grow in our perception as our spirit man grows and are trained (Heb. 5:14). Our spiritual judgment improves proportionally to the improvement of our perception. We need to grow more and more in perception (Phil. 1:9).

Spiritual revelation by the Holy Spirit is eternal and unchanging. He never contradicts Himself nor changes what He says. His revelations are final. Of course, they will always be in line with the written Word of God for the Word of God was a revelation from Him in the first place (1 Pet. 1:11,12; 2 Tim. 3:16). Paul said that he neither received the gospel from man nor was he taught it but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12). In the gospel of John, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will reveal all things from Him. We can, therefore, be assured that it was the Holy Spirit who has brought Paul this revelation (Jn. 16:13-15).

In all his years of ministry, Paul has neither changed one dot nor one tittle of the revelation that was given to him by the Holy Spirit. He even said that if he or another person or even an angel were to preach contradictory to the gospel that he has preached, the person should be accursed (Gal. 1:7, 8). Many people who claimed that the Holy Spirit spoke to them but keep changing their so-called revelations are only perceiving dimly through their human spirits (1 Cor. 13:12).

We should learn the difference between the voice of the human spirit and the voice of the Holy Spirit so that we can function in the anointing upon. Every time the Holy Spirit speaks, He imparts an anointing upon. His authoritative voice is firm but gentle. Most of the time, it is the human spirit who leads us but from time to time, the Holy Spirit will speak instruction and direction into our lives and ministries. Blessed is the man who hears the voice of the Holy Spirit. Every move of God in church history have been headed by men who have heard the voice of the Holy Spirit and taken heed. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Great are the rewards of those who hear and obey.

CHAPTER 4

SPECTACULAR LEADINGS

All the leadings of the Holy Spirit are supernatural although all of them are not spectacular. Spectacular leadings of the Holy Spirit have a place in the Christian life. However, there need to be guidelines as to discern all spectacular leadings.

Visions and Dreams

We should not seek for visions and dreams. Rather, we should seek to obey God as much as we have discerned His perfect Will in our lives. In His own time and by His discretion, God may choose to operate in visions and revelations in our lives. It is not necessary to see a vision to be greatly used by God. Kathryn Kuhlman was greatly used by God but there is not a single record of her seeing any visions.

On the other hand, there are other men of God like William Branham whose ministry moved in the spectacular. Before he left the main stream of Christianity and went into error in his teaching, he operated in visions regularly together with an angel. We must not be sceptical about people who operate solely in the spectacular realm nor must we be those who seek only the spectacular. We must be balanced and yet be opened to the manifestations of God.

By His impartation of operation grace, God sometimes chooses to work through a vessel in visions and dreams. It is also a manifestation of this dispensation of the Holy Spirit for visions to abound (Acts 2:17). There are three types of visions as covered in Volume Eight of this Foundational Truths Series. We will therefore not cover the same ground but instead point out common areas of those who are accustomed to visions.

There is a timing of God for His manifestation of visions to a vessel. All the recorded visions of the prophet Daniel were seen in his old age. All of them occurred during the reigns of Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus (Dan. 7:1; 8:19; 10:1). Daniel was probably in his eighties by this time. Samuel neither knew the voice nor the visions of the Lord as a small boy. It was some time after his faithful service in the temple of God that he experienced his first spectacular encounter with God (1 Sam. 3:1-4).

This does not mean that a believer cannot receive and experience a spectacular vision when they are born again. It merely means that God does prepare a vessel before He manifests in a spectacular way. Without adequate preparation, those who experience visions can go off-track. It can be noted that those who are extremely intellectual do not have as many visions as those who are freer in releasing their emotions in the worship of God. The sceptical and doubting intellectual mind is a hindrance to receiving visions in the spirit realm. It takes a simple hearted childlike faith to move into the realm of visions.

Most of those in the Bible who received visions were in an attitude of prayer or worship. This is not a requirement for a vision to manifest but it seems to be a regular feature in the Bible. Daniel received the revelation concerning the seventy weeks from the archangel Gabriel while he was in prayer (Dan. 9:20, 21). He saw another vision and communicated with Gabriel at the end of his twenty-one day fast (Dan. 10:3-11). Zacharias, while offering worship in incense to God, saw a vision of Gabriel in answer to his prayers for a child (Lk. 1:11, 13). Paul was in prayer when he saw a vision of Ananias (Acts 9:11, 12). Peter saw a vision after he had spent some time in prayer (Acts 10:9-11).

Dreams have been called visions of the night (Job. 33:15). They have been used to lead God's people. Joseph had his future predicted by a dream (Gen. 37:5-10). It took fifteen years for his dreams to be fulfilled (Gen. 37:2; 41:46; 45:6). The parents of Jesus, Joseph and Mary, were led by three dreams. In the dreams, it was an angel of God who communicated with Joseph (Matt. 2:13, 19, 22).

Symbolic dreams need interpretation. There is a gift of the interpretation of visions and dreams (Dan. 1:16). Daniel manifested it and it was this gift that brought him into recognition by Nebuchadnezzar. Joseph also manifested this gift of interpretation (Gen. 40:8). We need to pray for this gift of interpretation when we have a symbolic dream. Plain dreams are direct and do not need any interpretation. This gift is an aspect of one of the nine gifts of the Spirit called the gift of interpretation of tongues. Note that Daniel through the same gift upon his life interpreted the unknown handwriting on the wall (Dan. 5:13-16, 26-28).

The Audible Voice of God

Occasionally, God leads His people by His audible voice. In Jesus' ministry, the audible voice of God was manifested at the beginning of His ministry. Upon being baptized with water, a voice came forth from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

It was a confirmation from God as to His appointment. Apparently, no one else heard it except Jesus and John for there was no response from the people to the manifestation. The audible voice of God can be heard only by those whom God chooses to manifest it to. It is the same as the manifestation of a vision. Not everyone may be aware that a vision is being received.

The second time when the audible voice was manifested was on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat. 17:5). The experience of hearing the audible voice of God stayed with Peter throughout his whole life. He wrote about it in his last epistle before his departure (2 Pet. 1:14, 17, 18). This was probably the first and last time that Peter had heard the audible voice of God.

The third time that the audible voice of God was manifested was at the closing of Jesus' earthly ministry before His crucifixion (Jn. 12:27-30). In this case many people heard the voice but the responses were varied. Some of them only heard it as thunder. Others heard it as the voice of an angel, probably hearing some words but not understanding it. The spiritual state of the listeners affected their ability to discern the audible voice of God.

In all three incidents, Jesus was not looking for the voice nor did He need it. He even told those who heard the audible voice of God that the voice came not for Him but for their sake (Jn. 12:30). It was a special manifestation of God to confirm the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Similarly, the manifestation of the audible voice of God has a special purpose. God does not work spectacular signs without a purpose and without a reason.

If our faith depends upon the spectacular rather than on the Word of God, it would be most unlikely that God will manifest spectacularly. It would not edify us in the long run. In His wisdom, God grants this type of manifestation when we are ready for it. Usually, if we are anxious for a vision or any other spectacular manifestation, we are not ready for it. But if we no longer require the spectacular, having developed our faith in the Word of God alone, God may choose to manifest spectacularly.

I have heard the audible voice of God only once in my life. I was in the middle of a forty day fast when the Lord woke me up early one morning. As I was about to get up from the bed, I heard a sweet clear voice coming from across the room. It sounded like rivers of waters but with a musical quality to it. It only said three words - I love you. Instantly, I was enveloped in His embrace and pulsating love. I wept like a child before Him. I could sense an inward cleansing and healing as I was washed by the waves of His love. The

changes that took place in me have stayed with me since that experience. I think that the greatest reward we can ever receive in heaven is to hear Jesus tell you personally how much He loves you.

Angelic Guidance

It is in the Will of God that we sometimes receive instructions from angels and cooperate with them. The evangelist Philip was told by an angel to go forth to the road which leads from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26). While there he heard the voice of the Holy Spirit telling him to join the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip was led by a combination of manifestations. God has chosen to combine some of His leading in our lives with instructions from angels.

Angelic guidance in our lives can take place through visions or through the thought realm. When they manifest themselves, we can see them and receive the messages that they carry from God. Sometimes they remain invisible but they still deliver the messages from God. We 'hear' the messages as spiritual voices in the corridors of our spirit mind. They influence our lives through influencing our thought lives. Demons also do the same thing except that demons influence toward evil while angels influence towards the perfect Will of God. They can also give their messages through dreams.

The preparation required for the ministry of angels is prayer, worship and the Word of God. It was the prayer life of Daniel that brought forth the manifestation of angels in his life (Dan. 9:23; 10:1). The prayers of the church in the book of Acts brought forth the deliverance of Peter through an angel (Acts 12:5-7). Many of the circumstances of life that seem to just 'fall into place' are the work of invisible angels.

Guidelines for Spectacular Manifestations

All spectacular manifestations must come under the scrutiny of the Written Word of God. We must observe the following guidelines in order not to be deceived by false manifestations:

1. Spectacular guidance must be in line with the written Word of God. Any leading that contradict the written Word in principle or in practice must be forsaken.
2. Spectacular guidance must be confirmed by the inward witness. If your inward witness is troubled by the spectacular guidance, you should check it out further.

3. Spectacular guidance is not the final authority. The written Word is the final authority. As such those who receive spectacular guidance must be open to counsel from mature saints of God.
4. The spirit of spectacular guidance must still be in the same Spirit of Christlikeness - humility and love. Anyone who has a true revelation from God will be more humble as a result of the experience. The true knowledge of God is humbling to the soul.
5. Spectacular guidance is consistent in its instruction. In other words, it will not keep changing and contradicting itself.
6. Spectacular guidance should never lead the vessel to isolation but rather to edification of the body of Christ.
7. Spectacular guidance should never be commercialized. The deep things of the Spirit are never to be loosely shared. Paul speaks about things of the Spirit that are not lawful to utter (2 Cor. 12:4).
8. Spectacular guidance given to one vessel must be in harmony with all other guidance that other vessels who stand in the fivefold are bringing forth.

CHAPTER 5

BALANCE IN GUIDANCE

It is important for us to note that guidance must be balanced. Every move of God in church history has started with a revelation that at first was considered a heresy. Martin Luther was considered a heretic by the Catholic church. The Pentecostal movement in its infant stages was regarded as heresy. Even Christianity itself was first regarded as a heretical offshoot of Judaism by the Pharisees in Paul's time. The most important thing for the present church to be free from is tradition.

Tradition versus Revelation

It was tradition that led the Jews to crucify Jesus. It was tradition that brought forth the first Jerusalem Council of the church. The early Christians had to settle the question of Gentiles keeping the Jewish religious traditions. Thank God, that they did not impose them on the Gentiles although there was a group of Jews who were keen to do so (Acts 15:5).

In the natural world, we see the course of world history changed through men and women who dared to think differently and invent new devices and vehicles. Many of them faced objections from the traditional thinkers. It was the scientists, the innovators, the entrepreneurs who help shaped the world into what we know it now. The field of medicine and science is filled with biographies of men who were booed at for their new way of thinking. When Nicolaus Copernicus first stated that the earth revolved around the sun, he was sneered at by all the scientific community of his days. Today we know who was right and who was wrong.

In the spiritual realm, we have seen the church of Jesus Christ come a long way since the book of Acts. Many of the great doctrines of God that have been seen darkly before are now seen more clearly. Fresh revelations have been brought forth in each new generation. Each generation has its own fivefold ministries who have brought forth progressive revelations to the body of Christ. Some of them were persecuted and some killed for the revelations they hold but the Truth lives on.

Being Balanced in the Truths of God

We now stand on the threshold of Christ's coming. We have the vantage point of church history behind us. We need men and women of God who will be bold to bring forth different aspects of the Truths of God. These are days when the Spirit of Truth is bringing a complete revelation of all Truths.

We are at the climax of church history. The body of Christ must come to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

On the other hand, we have also seen extremes of practices when a truth was revealed. Church history also abounded with overzealous Christians who pushed a revelation to its unnatural extreme in practices. They go beyond the limits that God has set on all revelations - the boundary of His written Word. Claiming extra-biblical revelation, they spawn the sub-cultures of mainline Christianity. Today we look back and see them as the heretics of Christendom.

Christianity needs to know the balance between openness and rigidity, revelation and tradition, fluidity and stability. Those who are bound by traditionalism need to be bold enough to drop their security blanket. Those who receive fresh revelations need to exercise supernatural patience for it to be implemented in the church of God. Always remember that time is on the side of Truth. The longer it takes, the clearer it becomes and the stronger its 'rightness.'

Increasing our Perception to God's Leadings

We must be faithful to whatever level of revelation that God has revealed to us before He imparts more revelation. Unless we have been sensitive to the leadings of the inward witness, it is unlikely for God to reveal in other manifestations. We need to receive the revelations of God in fear and trembling for the greater the revelation, the greater is the responsibility.

The following would be ways to strengthen our ability to be led by the Holy Spirit:

1. Pray in tongues for hours.
2. Meditate on the Word of God.
3. Fellowship with spiritual men and women.
4. Worship in private and public.
5. Singing psalms, hymns and songs throughout the day.

I have found the above useful in maintaining my spiritual life with God. For as many as are led by the Holy Spirit, these are sons of God (Rom. 8:14). Be bold to move into new things that the Holy Spirit leads you into. But move into it with the stability of the Word of God.

The Experience of being led by the Spirit

Being led by the Holy Spirit is like being led into a journey along the rivers, lakes, seas and oceans of the world. The only boat that can sustain us throughout the whole journey is the Word of God. Only the boat of the Word of God can come against the difficulties that abound in our journey. Only the boat of the Word of God can withstand the fierce storms that prevail in the deep oceans of our journeys.

When I was a young Christian, I have frequently heard Christians saying, "The Lord told me and said..." and I have always been fascinated by the fact that they could hear God's voice and be led by Him. Whenever I asked such Christians to explain to me what they meant by 'the Lord said,' I have been frustrated by their answers. Some said that it was 'impressions.' Others said that it was an audible voice they heard. Yet others even said that one day I will just automatically know it.

In my desperation, I cried to the Lord to teach me His voice so that I can be led by Him. I knew that the secret of all the men of God in the Bible was their ability to hear God's voice. Slowly but gently, the Lord began to show me the answer. The first thing He taught me was that each Bible verse that says 'The Word of the Lord said' or 'The Lord said' was not necessarily audible to the human ear. The excitement of that revelation lasted for several months.

A whole prayer of Hannah was recorded as 'she said' but it was actually an inward thought that she thought towards the Lord (1 Sam. 1:11-13). It struck me like a thunderbolt that if the Bible recorded Hannah's prayer in this manner in spite of the fact that it was actually silent, then many of the other Bible records where it used the word 'said' may also be silent to the human ears, especially those of the Lord speaking.

The second thing that the Lord showed me as I was reading the Bible during my devotional was that when it says that we have the mind of Christ, it encompasses having the thoughts of Christ. Like another thunderbolt, it suddenly hit me that some of the thoughts that I have been receiving, especially those which have helped my spiritual life, was the voice of the Holy Spirit talking to me. I didn't know at that time the difference between the voice of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the human spirit nor the five sensations of the inward witness. But I was taken up by the fact and excitement that I was hearing the Lord talking to me in thoughts and I didn't realize it.

The most amazing thing was that it was so simple that I had missed it. The Living Bible translates First Corinthians 2:16 as ‘we have the thoughts of Christ.’ Suddenly, I began to understand why Paul instructed us to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). I did a research on every Scripture that speaks about the mind and thoughts. The truths that God spoke to me about the purpose and the object of the mind that He has created have been astounding. The Holy Spirit will teach us all things and bring to our remembrance (a thought process) all things that Jesus spoke (John 14:26).

The Importance of the Mind

The mind is an instrument sensitive to both the spiritual world and the natural world. It is a marvel of creation. Of course, the fallen mind cannot tap its full potential but through renewal of the mind, great restoration can take place. The mind is both a receiver and a transmitter in the spiritual realm. It is the first place affected when temptations occur. All temptations come to the mind first. Positively, it is also the first place God seeks to renew. Unless the mind is renewed, we cannot be led by the Holy Spirit. Notice how the renewal of the mind is connected to the doing of God’s Will (Rom. 12:2).

The third greatest discovery that I came across was that the mind was not just designed to be a receiver. Virtually all human minds have been used as receivers and data processors. When God began to show me that my thoughts could somehow affect another person and life, I was astounded. We are not talking about telepathy but rather about the spiritual influence that our thoughts carry. We influence people knowingly and unknowingly by our actions and speech. The fact is that we also affect others by our thoughts. Jesus was sensitive to the atmosphere of wrong thoughts broadcasted by the disciples (Lk. 24:38).

Every man’s thinking takes on worldwide importance. Every evil thought not only contaminates the man himself, but makes the world worse, pushes it to hell. Every good thought not only blesses the man himself but pushes the entire world up toward heaven. (All these are figures of speech, to be taken in its context). Jesus knew that the source of all evil is in the thoughts and spoke accordingly in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28).

Most people’s thoughts are too weak, like a low power broadcasting station. Through training and meditation on the Word of God, we can make our thoughts strong and effective for God; influencing the whole world to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Make a study of what the Bible says about the thought life and it will astound you how important it is to God.

Most of the leadings that we receive in this life will be through our inward witness and through our human spirit. In ministry, most of the leading we will receive will be the voice of the Holy Spirit working together with our inward witness and the human spirit. The other forms of being led by the Holy Spirit are reserved for special times. However, a person standing in a particular ministry office may consistently manifest a particular leading according to God's operation grace upon Him. It should however still be subject to the Spirit manifesting as He wills and not as the person wills.

Learning to be led by the Holy Spirit is not an overnight experience. It is a gradual growth and training process. Don't be discouraged if you made mistakes. Pick yourselves up. Ask God for forgiveness. Admit that you missed it and go on from there. Practice makes perfect.