

LEADING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

by

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Prisoners Bible Crusade
2212 Stonecypher Road
Lucedale, MS 39452

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We are living in a time of great uncertainty. Changes in our culture come so rapidly that people are losing their “roots,” their sense of belonging. That creates a mental, emotional and spiritual turmoil which leaves man with a sense of helplessness and despair. Therefore, people are frantic to have faithful guidance today. They seek the fortune-teller, read their horoscopes and pay counselors for guidance. None of those sources gives true and reliable direction.

The ancient prophet Jeremiah lamented in the words of God, “*My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*” Jeremiah 2:13.

The same thing has happened in our generation. People have sought guidance in all areas except that one source from which infallible guidance comes. God offers His direction to the person who is available to follow where He leads.

Romans 8:14 reads “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*” The text suggests three things: The Spirit of God is available to lead us. Some follow the

leading of the Spirit of God, while others do not. Those who follow the leading of the Spirit of God indicate thereby that they are the sons of God. Accept this as absolute truth: The Holy Spirit of God is available and anxious today to lead you in the way of God, if you will follow Him.

I propose we investigate the subject of the leading of the Holy Spirit, as it relates to you and me. We will ask and seek a Bible answer to several questions. Who is the Spirit which leads us? Whom does the Spirit lead? Where does the Spirit lead? How does the Spirit lead? When does the Spirit lead us? Answers to those questions will greatly encourage our hearts and give us assurance in the uncertainties of today's world.

WHO IS THE SPIRIT WHO LEADS?

Now to the first question. Who is the Holy Spirit of Whom the Bible speaks as leading those who are children of God? Simply stated, the answer is this: Our Leader is the Holy Spirit of God, third person of Holy Trinity, absolute deity and equal to the Father and Son in every divine perfection. To say we are led by the Holy Spirit is to say we are led by God Himself.

You will notice I speak of the Holy Spirit as if He is a person. He is! The Spirit of God is more than an influence, more than an emotion, more than a power. He is a person as much as God the Father is a person, as much as God the Son is a person, as much as you and I are persons. "In dealing with the Holy Spirit we have to do, not with an impersonal influence however vast, but with a personal Being whose quick sensibilities can be grieved, whose vigilant love can be gratified, whose forbearance can be exhausted by those who resist him, but whose sympathy with those who yield to his voice is more tender than that of the tenderest parent, or brother, or friend." (Bickersteth, *The Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1959, pp. 48f). Consider some of the Bible evidences of the personality of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit has the characteristics of a person

The Holy Spirit is a person. He has mind, emotion and will. Yes, the Holy Spirit can think. He searches out and understands the deep things of God so He can reveal them to us (I Corinthians 2:10, 11). God knows what is the mind of the Spirit as He makes intercession for the saints (Romans 8:27).

The Holy Spirit can feel. He loves us with the infinite love of God (Romans 15:30). He is grieved when we sin against God and against one another (Ephesians 4:30) He feels and responds the same as you and I do.

The Holy Spirit can exercise His will in choosing, purposing and planning. The spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit, "*dividing to every man severally as he will*" I Corinthians 12:11.

A power like gravity or a feeling like love cannot think, feel or will. Only a person can do that. The Holy Spirit has those characteristics of a person (mind, emotion and will) because He is a divine person, the third Person of Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit acts like a person

The Holy Spirit performs acts which only a person can perform. The Bible mentions many acts of the Holy Spirit which can be performed only by a person. He hears (John 16:13), speaks (Acts 13:2), intercedes (Romans 8:26), teaches (John 14:26), comforts (Acts 9:31), guides (Acts 16:6-7), reveals (John 16:14, 15), performs miracles (Acts 2:4; 8:39), calls to the ministry

(Acts 13:3) and sets pastors over churches (Acts 20:28). Those are personal acts. They can be performed only by a person. That the Holy Spirit does those acts is proof that He is a person, a divine person who is God Himself.

The Holy Spirit is called a person

The Holy Spirit is referred to with personal masculine pronouns in the Bible. Over and over again the Spirit is referred to as "He." That indicates personality. An object, force, power, or influence would be called "it." But the Spirit is called "He." Read John 16:13, 14, and add particular emphasis to the personal pronoun by which the Holy Spirit is called. "*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: for HE will show you things to come. HE shall glorify me: for HE shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*" Such an emphasis on the personality of the Holy Spirit is no accident. Those personal pronouns are used to teach us that He is a person.

The Holy Spirit is a divine person

The name of God is applied to Him, so the Holy Spirit is a divine person (Acts 5:3-5; Romans 8:9-11). Consequently, one's relationship to the Holy Spirit is his relationship to God. Matthew 28:19 sets the Holy Spirit equal to the Father and the Son when it commands us to baptize "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" He is the person by Whom God speaks to the churches today and in every age (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17).

The attributes of God are ascribed to the Spirit. He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), omnipotent (Luke 1:35), omniscient (I Corinthians 2:10, 11), and is "*the Spirit of God*" (Romans 8:9) and "*the Spirit of the living God*" (II Corinthians 3:3).

This time period in which we live is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Every contact we have with God is through the Spirit. He convicts us, converts us, sanctifies us and seals us as God's own dear children. He indwells us, fills us, empowers us and does the work of God through us. And, as we are currently concerned in this study, He leads us in Christian life.

Every holy impression you feel within your heart is God's dear Spirit dealing with you. Your response to Him is your response to God. The fact that He is unseen does not make Him any less important or His leadings any less definite.

Be available to Him. Say "yes" to every direction in which He sets you. Keep your mind in the Bible and the Bible in your mind, for the Holy Spirit never leads contrary to the Word of God. To follow the leading of the Spirit is to follow the leading of God.

WHOM DOES THE SPIRIT LEAD?

The Bible says, "*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*" Romans 8:14. The text raises the question, "What kind of person experiences the leading of the Holy Spirit?" W. J. Coneybeare has translated the verse, "All who are led by God's Spirit, and they alone, are the sons of God." It is evident that it is the sons of God who are led by the Spirit of God.

And who can be called "*the sons of God*? John 1:12 reads, "*As many as received him (Jesus), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*" Galatians 3:26 continues, "*Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" First John 5:1 assures us, "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ born of God.*" The Christian

Scriptures teach that each person who trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is a “*son of God.*”

To say, “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*” Romans 8:4, means every Christian should experience the leading of God’s Spirit as his spiritual birthright.

The Holy Spirit does not lead sinners

Take care to keep this truth clear: the Spirit of God leads one who is a child of God. He does not lead a sinner to become a child of God.

To say the Spirit “leads” a sinner to Christ is not a biblical statement. It suggests one comes to Christ by his own initiative and effort. Not so! The Bible makes it quite clear that man is unwilling and unable to turn from sin to the Savior. Jesus said, “*No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him*” John 6:44.

The sinner comes to the Savior through the work of the Holy Spirit, not through the course of human initiative. Before the sinner receives Jesus Christ, he is “*dead in trespasses and sins*” Ephesians 2:1. There is no good in him which merits the grace of God. He is totally undone and without hope in this world. Only when the Spirit of God ministers to him in grace is it possible for him to respond.

John 16:8-11 refers to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in these words, “*When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*”

The Spirit comes and presents to the person without Christ convincing proof of the sinfulness of his unbelief, of the insufficiency of his self-righteousness and of the certainty of coming judgment. The person is quickened in his spirit and can respond in repentance from sin and personal trust in Jesus. When he does, the Spirit performs another miracle: He “borns” that penitent believer into the family of God!

Jesus spoke of that spiritual birth saying, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again*” John 3:3-7.

That spiritual birth, born of the Holy Spirit, is what makes one a child of God. Before that spiritual birth takes place, each person is a child of the devil (John 8:44). The sinner becomes a child of God through personal faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26).

God convicts the sinner of personal guilt and certain judgment. But He is not concerned to make a person miserable in his guilt. God’s concern is to deliver him from guilt and make the sinner a saint. That is exactly what happens when a repenting sinner receives Jesus Christ.

Then another wonderful thing happens: the Spirit of God moves into the human spirit of the new believer in Christ and remains there forever. The indwelling Holy Spirit assumes the direction of the life of the believer, and we say the believer is “*led by the Spirit of God.*”

That is what Paul meant when he wrote in Romans 8:14, “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*”

The Holy Spirit leads the child of God

That is the clear teaching of Holy Scripture. He leads by the statements of the Bible, by providential circumstances, by inner impressions of the human mind and in other ways, but it is His leading however it may come.

Accept this truth without argument. Rest in the assurance as a Christian that when you

come to the crossroads of life, where decisions must be made, you are not alone. The Spirit of God is personally present with you to guide you. You are not alone. Praise the Lord!

Remember that you are God's child through faith in Jesus Christ. God is often called "Father" in the Bible. He will care for His dear children far better than a loving earthly parent can care for his children. One Christian hymn reads,

Be not dismayed, what'er betide

God will take care of you.
Beneath His wings of love abide
God will take care of you
-Civilla D. Martin.

Expect God to guide your life; you are the child of His love. The Holy Spirit leads only the child of God. The grammar of our text makes that quite clear. Therefore Montgomery translates, "For only those are the sons of God who are led by God's Spirit." Coneybeare chooses the words, "All who are led by God's Spirit, and they alone, are the sons of God." The person who has rejected God's offer of grace in Jesus Christ has no claim to the leading of God's Spirit. If you are a child of God, you can expect the leading of God in your life. If you are not a child of God through faith in Jesus, you will not experience His leading. It is as simple as that.

The Holy Spirit leads every child of God who will follow Him

It is possible for a Christian to draw back from the will of God for his life. It is possible for him to not follow the way the Spirit would lead. It would be sin to fail to follow the Spirit, of course, but such a failure is possible.

It is the business of the believer in Jesus to remain available to the leading of the Spirit of God. That is how he will be fulfilled in his personal life, be a blessing to other people and be of glory to God. It is possible to know the will of God and follow it, for the Spirit always leads us in the will of God.

Are you experiencing the direction of God in your life? You may have witnessed it without realizing it was God at work. He works through many things, and in all circumstances, to direct His dear children in the way of righteousness.

Learn to thank Him for His personal presence and continual involvement in your life. And remain available for the Spirit of God to lead you in the ways of God.

WHERE DOES THE SPIRIT LEAD?

Many people are afraid of the will of God. They seem to think God will make life miserable if He does His will in them. Not so! The best thing that can happen in any person's life is for the will of God be done fully in him. Those who experience the will of God discover it is "*good, acceptable, and perfect*" Romans 12:2

A discussion of the leading of the Holy Spirit should not make us draw back in hesitation, not at all. We should be delighted that God's infallible guidance is provided for us by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We should respond with joy as the Spirit leads us in the full will of God.

That raises an important question. "Where does the Spirit of God lead the Christian?" Or to make it more personal, "Where would the Spirit of God lead me if I followed

Him completely?"

I cannot answer whether He would lead you to live in this city or that city, whether to work in this profession or that profession, whether to join this church or that church. But I can answer in three great Bible statements the broad outlines of the Spirit's leading. When you follow those broad principles, you will know the details as they must be decided day by day.

The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to an understanding of the precepts of Christ

The Holy Spirit will lead you in knowing Jesus better and better, more and more personally. This is the heart-desire of men and women of God: *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"* Philippians 3:10. The Spirit of God creates that desire and then satisfies it as He leads us to know Christ in His fullness.

Jesus spoke of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit in these words, *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 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. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you"* John 16:12-14.

The Bible commands us to *"grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* II Peter 3:18. But God requires nothing of us which He does not provide. So the requirement to grow in the knowledge of Jesus is accompanied by the ministry of the Holy Spirit to teach us the things of Christ.

The Bible has come by the *"inspiration of God"* II Timothy 3:16. The Holy Spirit of God "moved" the men of God who wrote the Bible (II Peter 1:21) so that what was written was not the words of men but the Word of God. Now the same Spirit of God is present to teach the child of God what is contained in the Word of God.

You can know the Bible. You can know God personally and increasingly in Jesus Christ. You can know and do the will of God. *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"* I Corinthians 2:12. You can know because you have the best teacher in the world, the Holy Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to the practice of the purity of Christ

It is his purpose to conform us to the likeness of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28, 29), to make us more and more like Jesus. Therefore, the Spirit works in us to produce what the Bible calls "the fruit of the Spirit." The "fruit" of the Spirit is the character which the Spirit approves, the character which is like Jesus.

The fruit of the Spirit is given in Galatians 5:22, 23. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* It stands in stark contrast with *"the works of the flesh"* which are listed in Galatians 5:19-21 as sexual sins, spiritual sins, and social sins of every sort.

What kind of person was Jesus? In his own human spirit He was filled with *"love, joy peace."* In His relations with others He was marked by *'long-suffering, gentleness, goodness.'* In His relation with God He showed *"faith, meekness, temperance."* The fruit of the Holy Spirit was manifested perfectly in Jesus because the Father gave the Spirit to Him without measure (John 3:34).

What kind of person are you and I to be as Christians? We are to be like Jesus. We are

to be filled with “*love, joy peace*” in our human spirit. We are to show “*long-suffering, gentleness, goodness*” toward others. We are to have “*faith, meekness, temperance* (self-control)” before God. Christians are to be like Christ.

That sounds impossible when we think in terms of our fleshly abilities. But it is a blessed reality when we remember the work of the Holy Spirit in us. He will lead us to the practice of the purity of Christ.

Discipline yourself under God. Walk so as to cultivate those graces mentioned as “fruit of the Spirit.” And “*grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” Ephesians 4:30.

The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to places of service for Christ

We recognize that in the life of preachers, missionaries, and evangelists. But the leading of the Spirit in Christian service is the birthright of every Christian.

Acts 8:26-29 tells how Philip, a deacon and evangelist in the early church, was led by the Spirit of God to meet a man who needed to hear the message of Christ. Christians have experienced that over and over again through the years. That is a normal experience in the life of the obedient Christian.

Acts 13:1-3 recounts how the Holy Spirit calls particular men to special areas of service. He spoke to the church in Antioch, Syria, informing her to set Barnabas and Saul apart for a special ministry. That began the formal world missionary outreach of the Christian churches. The Spirit probably spoke through a person with the gift of prophecy, saying, “*Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*” verse 2. The church did so. “*So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed*” verse 4. Here is the work of the Spirit in calling men to special service.

Acts 16:6-10 reports the work of the Spirit in guiding Paul and his missionary party to their place of service. They thought to go toward the northeast while God would have them to go west. So the Spirit forbade them to enter one place and directed them to go to another place.

The leading of the Holy Spirit is still experienced today by the people of God. It is the birthright of every child of God: “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*” Romans 8:14. You can expect the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life.

He will lead you to know Jesus better and better. He will lead you in a life of holiness in which you emulate the character of Christ. He will lead you to the place where you should serve Christ.

HOW DOES THE SPIRIT LEAD?

A discussion of the leading of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian must answer the question, “How does the Holy Spirit lead the believer in Jesus?” If that answer is not made clear, we might not recognize His leading. Or we might mistake other things for the leading of the Spirit. Either way, we would miss the opportunity and neglect the responsibility of following as He leads.

I suggest three primary ways in which the Holy Spirit leads us. He leads by the clear statements of Holy Scripture. He leads through the happenings of divine providence. He leads by inner impressions on the human spirit. Let’s discuss those three methods of spiritual direction.

The Spirit leads by the Bible

The Holy Spirit leads the Christian through clear statements of Holy Scripture. That is what the Bible is for. Many of the great decisions required in your spiritual life can be made in the light of biblical principles. You can know the will of God in many instances if you know the Bible.

Second Timothy 3:16, 17 reads, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”*

What a precious ministry of the Bible! It teaches us, rebukes us, corrects us and instructs us in the way of righteousness. Its ministry is so complete under the teaching of the Holy Spirit that the man of God is completely equipped to perform any good work God requires of him.

In many instances we offer a petition to God and add, “If it be your will.” But the Bible is so complete we can offer most petitions, claim a statement of Holy Scripture concerning it, and say, *“Do as thou hast said”* II Samuel 7:25. And what assurance that gives to our faith when we pray according to the Word of God!

You can trust your Bible. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. What the Bible approves, God approves; what the Bible forbids, God forbids. The Bible is the written Word of God. In it God speaks to us. Stay close to the Bible if you would know the Spirit’s leading.

The Spirit leads by providence

The Holy Spirit leads the Christian through the happenings of divine providence. By “providence” we mean the circumstances of life which set the course of our lives. We believe God is in control of all things, and that He providentially guides His children according to His will.

The classic example of divine providence directing a man of God is the case of Joseph, recorded in the book of Genesis. Through the hatred of his brothers, Joseph was sold away from his homeland and taken into Egypt. There he came to the attention of Pharaoh as a man in whom the Spirit of God dwelt. Joseph was elevated to a place of great authority in the government of the nation. Afterwards, when his brothers were fearful of Joseph’s vengeance on them, he explained, *“God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God”* Genesis 45:7, 8. *“As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive”* Genesis 50:20. He need not ask, “Is it the will of God for me to be in Egypt?” The providence of God had located him there.

You can trust the providential working of God. But be careful in “reading” the events which happen. Your personal desires can influence your interpretation of the events.

Some people have come to depend on fallible “signs” instead of the infallible Spirit of God. God does not always indicate His will by signs, nor does He promise ever to do so in the age in which we live. It is true God indicated His will to Gideon by laying out of the fleece. But it is also true that this is the only time in the Bible where God showed His will by a fleece.

Do not always take the way of a “closed” door (meaning a difficult and seemingly non-productive place) as indicating God’s will is some other direction. It may be that God is testing you and helping you grow.

Providential happenings must always be interpreted by the Bible and by the further impressions of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Spirit leads by inner impressions

The Holy Spirit leads the Christian through impressions in the mind. This is subject to misinterpretation, also. So one must be sure the thoughts he has are directed by the Spirit and not by personal preference or other influence, human or demonic.

Several times in the book of Acts it is recorded, "*the Spirit said,*" in communicating His will to people of God (Acts 10:19; 13:2). I do not understand that to mean that the Holy Spirit spoke with an audible voice so that the person heard with the ears. The "saying" of the Spirit was probably an inner impression, an awareness of the human spirit, a communication through the mind.

I have experienced that kind of leading by the Spirit. There arises a discontent with present situations. There comes to mind another ministry, or the same ministry in another place. There is a repeated turning of the mind to that new or different ministry. Interest shifts from here to there. And gradually there is a definite impression that God's will is for me to change from this to that.

But again, that kind of leading is not without possible error. One may mistake personal preferences for divine leading. One may grow discouraged with present situations because of reasons other than God's impressions. One must pray much that he would have God's mind, rather than depending on his personal interpretation of impressions. God will keep such a humble spirit from making a mistake.

We find God "opening" doors and "closing" doors, as we use the expression. An "open door" is a place where service is possible; a "closed door" is a place where it seems one has no opportunity to serve God.

Acts 16:4-8 shows "closed doors" as Paul sought to go into Asia, and Bithynia, but "*the Spirit suffered them not.*" We are not told how God stopped their plans, but there was no permission of the Spirit in their hearts.

Acts 16:9-15 shows "opened doors" as Paul had a dream where the land of Macedonia was shown to be his mission field. They journeyed in that direction "*assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.*" Verse 10.

You cannot trust circumstances, but you can trust God to work through circumstances. You cannot trust your impressions, but you can trust God to work through your inner impressions. You cannot trust your personal interpretations of the Bible, but you can trust God to speak through the Bible.

Divine guidance is available to you. By the written Word, by divine providence, and by inner impressions, the Spirit of God will lead you. Through whatever method God wishes to speak, "*thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left*" Isaiah 30:21.

WHEN DOES THE SPIRIT LEAD?

The Bible says, "*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*" Romans 8:14. Someone might respond, "If the sons of God are led by the Holy Spirit of God, why is it that I have not know His leading even though I trust Jesus?"

It is an appropriate question which deserves a biblical answer. I will answer it by asking it in these words, "When does the Christian experience the leading of the Holy Spirit?" The answer comes in a five-fold revelation which we will consider.

The Spirit leads when the Christian seeks His guidance

The Christian experiences the leading of the Holy Spirit when he seeks the Spirit's guidance. Divine guidance is not automatic. It is evident to the seeking heart. He who is content without God's guidance will probably not be aware of it. But he who desires to be led of God and seeks to know His leading will find it to the blessing of his soul.

Hebrews 11:6 reads, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

The text suggests three things. It is impossible for an unbeliever to please God. To come to God one must believe that God exists. To come to God is to seek Him in confidence that He meets those who seek Him diligently. Look at that third statement.

"God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Seeking God is what Jesus meant when he spoke of those who were *"hungering and thirsting after righteousness"* Matthew 5:6. The Bible is filled with commands like that of Isaiah 55:6, *"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."* The ancient Psalmist admonished *"Seek ye the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore"* Psalm 105:4. It is the person who seeks the Lord who meets Him. Seek the Lord and He will be found.

Do you desire God's will in your life? Do you wish above all else that the Spirit of God would guide you? Then tell God so. Open your heart to Him. Invite Him to take control of the direction of your life. He is *"a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

The Spirit leads when the Christian deals with sin

The Christian experiences the leading of the Holy Spirit when he has dealt honestly with the problem of sin. Psalm 66:18 warns, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* God is too holy to condone sin. He would ascend to the presence of God and stand in the holy place must have *"clean hands, and a pure heart"* Psalm 24:4. His acts and motives must be clean before God.

Joshua 7 recounts how the ancient nation of Israel suffered a shameful defeat in battle because there was sin in their camp. What happened to the nation will happen to individuals. Sin blocks the channel of communion with God. If sin is in your life, you cannot commune with God, and He will not commune with you in peace.

Someone may not be experiencing God's promised leading in his life because he has sin which is unconfessed and unforgiving. Settle the sin problem and God's ministry in your life will be evident once more.

Settling the sin problem is made possible through the atoning death and victorious resurrection of Jesus. He has become the Captain of our salvation and the Sanctifier of our souls. Take your sins to Jesus and He will forgive them.

The Spirit leads when the Christian is not self-willed

The Christian experiences the leading of the Holy Spirit when he has renounced self-will. One cannot deal in options regarding the will of God. He who comes to God with a prayer, *"Lord show me your will, and if I agree with it, I will follow it,"* will never receive an answer. To put one's own will above the will of God is to allow a form of idolatry, for there would be a power which would contradict the power of God. It must not be. The prayer, *"Not my will, but thine, be done"* Luke 22:42, is the key to knowing the will of God. Let us learn to pray, *"Lord, show me your will and I will do it."* That kind of prayer gets an answer.

Jesus warned, *“No man can serve two masters”* Matthew 6:24. The solution to the problem is beautifully expressed in Romans 12:1, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”*

The will of God cannot be turned to fit the will of man. God is sovereign. His will is always the right way. His leading is always the correct leading. He leads His dear children in love.

The Spirit leads when the Christian waits on God

The Christian experiences the leading of the Holy Spirit when he has learned to wait on God. We creatures of time are so impatient. We want what we want when we want it. God works by a different time schedule. *“Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* II Peter 3:8. That means God is not bound to the limits of time as we are. We may get ahead of God’s leading if we move at our own preferences instead of waiting for the revelation of His will.

The Spirit leads when the Christian is prepared

The Christian experiences the leading of the Holy Spirit when he follows a three-fold preparation. These three things are not a magic formula of any sort. They are but practical common sense applied to spiritual things.

The Christian should have a thorough knowledge of Bible principles.

That is because the Holy Spirit commonly leads through Bible truth (as we have seen before in this study) and never leads contrary to Bible truth. Often we would not have to ask or wait for leading if we knew the Scriptures, for the will of God is commonly expressed therein. Know and obey the Bible.

The Christian should pray sincerely for the Spirit’s direction. God has promised that He will answer any prayer which is according to His will (I John 5:14, 15). It is His will that we know and follow Him, so a prayer for the knowledge of the leading of the Holy Spirit will be answered. Pray sincerely and continually that the Spirit may guide you in the way of God’s will.

The Christian should engage in an honest exercise of natural wisdom, judgment, and discernment with dependence on God to show the truth.

We may not always understand why God leads in a particular way, but His leading is never contrary to common sense. He gave us minds to use, and we should use them in spiritual matters. He can direct our thoughts as well as our steps.

Divine guidance is available today and every day. It is to be the natural experience of the Christian as He walks in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Let the Christian set his heart to study the Bible, to pray for the heightening of his natural faculties of judgment and knowledge, to ask God to control him and his circumstances, to honestly desire to walk in the full will of God. Then, and only then, can he follow his impressions with the confidence that God is leading.