

How to be Led by the Holy Spirit, Part 3

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(Continued from last month)

Romans 8:14 (NKJV) “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

In this third part I want to give you several Scriptures to help you discern and understand the third way we receive guidance from God—through the inward voice. The inward voice is the voice of the human spirit, also known as the human conscience. The human conscience is an inner compass that tells us right and wrong. A person’s conscience is commonly portrayed in animation as the good angel sitting on one shoulder opposing the devil sitting on the other shoulder.

God gives every human being a conscience toward God, including the unbeliever. The unbeliever has a conscience toward God. Consider the following verses:

Romans 2:14–15 (NKJV) says, *“for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)”*

John 8:9 (NKJV) *“Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”*

Unfortunately the unbeliever has a defiled conscience making it an unreliable guide (Titus 1:15). The reason their conscience is defiled is because they ignore and violate it (Romans 1:18-21) causing them to accept a demonically inspired wisdom in place of the wisdom of God (James 3:13–18). Those who continue to ignore or violate their conscience will experience the judgment of a “seared” and unfeeling conscience toward God (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

Because the fallen human conscience is defiled by sin, God in His mercy has sent into the world the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to those whose conscience is defiled. Jesus said in John 16:8 (NKJV): *“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”*

Once a person is born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5), their conscience is cleansed and sensitized to the Holy Spirit. As a result, the believer’s conscience is restored as a safe guide to be followed (For further study see 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:25-26; Hebrews 8:10; 9:13-14; 10:22; Romans 8:9-10; 9:1; 14:22-23; 1 Corinthians 10:25; 1 Peter 2:9; 3:13-17; Acts 23:1;)

The human conscience is such an important avenue for guidance that violating our conscience is called sin (Romans 14:22-23; 13:5). In fact, as believers our conscience is so sensitive toward God that it often condemns us when we sin. We often confuse the condemnation of our own heart with the condemnation of God. However, 1 John 3:20-21 tells us that God’s forgiveness and mercy toward us when we repent is greater than the self-condemnation of our heart: *“For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.”*

As believers we must obey our conscience before God (Romans 14:22-23). However, our conscience can be weakened by our ignorance of the Word of God (Read Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). Due to ignorance of what Christ has accomplished on the Cross, some have a

weak conscience which entraps them in unnecessary legalism, strife, and judgment among believers. As our minds are renewed by the Word of God, our conscience is set free by God's truth and becomes a more accurate guide that God can use to guide us.

The fourth way we receive guidance from God is through the voice of the Holy Spirit. The voice of the Holy Spirit is more distinct, clear, and authoritative than the voice of the human spirit. The voice of the Holy Spirit can seem so real on the inside that it seems God spoke on the outside. The voice of the Holy Spirit usually comes when the direction needs to be highly emphasized or confirmed because of great challenges or adversities ahead. In Acts 10:19 the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter in a dream to overcome Peter's reluctance to minister to the Gentiles because of his perception that God considered them unclean. Peter also would face great opposition from Jewish believer because of opening the door to the Gentiles for salvation. In the book of Samuel we find that the Holy Spirit spoke to Samuel because of the judgment about to come upon the wicked priest Eli and his sons. The voice of the Holy Spirit comes as He wills. We must be ready to hear when He speaks.

The fifth way we receive guidance from God is through the voice of godly counsel. God often speaks to us through godly people in our lives. Consider the following verses:

Proverbs 1:5 (NKJV) *"A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,"*

Proverbs 11:14 (NKJV) *"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety."*

Proverbs 12:15 (NKJV) *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise."*

Proverbs 15:22 (NKJV) *"Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established."*

Proverbs 24:6 (NKJV) *"For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety."*

I value the godly people that God has put in my life. I understand that they are God's gift to me and I expect that God will speak to me through them. Granted, I am still responsible to choose which counsel I will follow, but I listen carefully to discern the voice of God speaking to me through the counsel of these individuals.

The sixth way that we receive guidance from God is through what may be called "spiritual intuition". Spiritual intuition may also be described as "listening to your gut." In other words, spiritual intuition is an inspired "gut feeling" concerning a situation or circumstance. Many times a "gut feeling" can feel as though it has the weight of a word from the Lord. A good example of spiritual intuition is found in Acts 27:9–10 (NKJV): *"Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, 10 saying, 'Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.'" Paul had a gut feeling that trouble was ahead and on this basis he warned others of impending danger. In regard to spiritual intuition, never ignore a gut feeling but never believe it is enough. Always verify it.*

In Part 4 we will explore other ways that God can guide us.

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