

## **On Being Led by the Spirit** **Part III - The Practical Application**

Ultimately, what we all seek is a meaningful, workable relationship with Christ. That is what the issue of guidance is really all about. We want from God both help and approval, but approval probably stands higher. That, of course, is a good sign. It assures us that the Spirit of Christ is in us. Else, we would not care.

In many quarters of Christendom, most of the peace that is held out as the enticement to salvation is lost in the constant tension in the struggle for approval. Very few Christians really believe that Christ is satisfied with them. Well-meaning, but misguided zealots keep the Christian constantly in turmoil with the incessant pressure to perform. "Have you done your best for Jesus?" One gets weary of the incessant challengers. Where is the rest that Jesus promised? "*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:28-30). It was the Pharisees who brought bondage with their religious perfectionism. If perfection were the criterion for God's approval, the Pharisees should have had His favor. Jesus never found fault with their adherence to the letter of the law, but the letter had crushed out the life. Love and mercy were gone, and in their place only a barren wilderness of regulation and striving. So would many make of Christianity today.

Jesus said, "*THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT IN ME YOU MIGHT HAVE PEACE*" (John 16:33). When we come to Christ, we are made members of His family. We are, in a sense, granted asylum from the world. But, the asylum is in the Spirit realm—not the flesh. Our spirits are completely safe in the haven of God's Spiritual Kingdom, for all is in order and under the Divine aegis. Thus, we do have the peace Jesus promises, but it is in the Spirit realm. The Bible, everywhere, indicates that God wants peace for His children. Satan tries to rob us of that peace, either by getting us stirred up in the religious flesh, or by disrupting our earthly circumstances.

It is true that we are given refuge in Christ, but that secures only our spirits. Our spirits are beyond the reach of Satan. Where he can get at us, however, is in the realm of the flesh. Our flesh is still subject to the afflictions and adversities of the earthly realm. The measure in which these things devastate us is, in a way, proportionate to the measure in which we expose ourselves to them. In other words, if we look to the fleshly, or earthly, realm for security, or satisfaction, we are bound to be hurt by its perversity. In many ways the situation is analogous to the circumstances of human asylum. If one seeks asylum in the United States, and then wanders back into the country from which one has fled, one loses the protection that had been gained. As long as we "*walk in the Spirit,*" that is, as long as our lives are governed by the will of God for us and the principles of His Spiritual Kingdom, we minimize the effects of the world. Jesus said, "*The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me*" (John 14:30). In other words, there were no earthly ambitions or desires to which Satan could appeal. Every earthly ambition is like a handle with which Satan can shake us. He has a strong control over the affairs of this world.

As surely as he knows that one has one's heart set on a certain thing, he will

attempt to frustrate that desire and then to bring us into torment. Often, we begin to blame the Lord for not granting our desires, or we question the promise of His peace. *“Why did I not get that promotion?”* Or, *“Why can’t we have a nice home like everyone else?”* Or, *“Why doesn’t God give me a husband, or wife?”* If God would always grant our earthly desires, we would never grow up. We would not be prepared for the Spirit realm, which is our eternal destiny. A pacifier may be acceptable at 12 months, but ludicrous at 12 years, and psychotic at 21. God wants to wean us from depending on earthly circumstances for our peace. If we insist that He must always whisk away our troubles and banish sickness and pain, we put ourselves in the position of focusing our lives on the flesh.

The more handles one has for Satan to shake one with, the more one allows him to rob one of peace and to retard one’s spiritual growth. One of the fundamental criteria of guidance is—how much does this decision feed earthly ambitions and desires. If it doesn’t matter whichever way it goes, it is evident that one has unscrewed that handle.

Reach out and grasp the tranquility that accompanies the life that can say with Christ, *“The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”*

So you see, guidance is not so much a matter of striving always to make just the right move so we don’t lose God’s approval. It is rather a matter of following His guidance so that we may avoid the pitfalls of Satan, with which he would attempt to destroy us. Some people see guidance as a sort of *“celestial pinball game,”* where one must light up the right pins in order to win. In this respect, it becomes a problem of trying to outguess God. Rather, guidance is a fellowship of interaction with God regarding the issues of our lives. It is reasonably assessing the known, and trusting God for the unknown. Discuss your life with Christ. Share with Him the options and potentials; the immediate and long range plans; the crucial decisions confronting you. Then, go in peace and trust that He will make the way known, when the time comes.

There is no need to make a decision until one needs to make a decision. One cannot always know in advance. Sometimes factors may enter the picture at the last minute that will have an ultimate bearing on the decision. For example, one may contemplate changing to another firm. The day before the decision is to be made, the owner of the firm dies, or the firm goes into receivership. Or, something may come up with the firm one is going to leave that may spur the move. There are scores of illustrations.

In decision making, one must first be open to whatever God wants. If that is not the case, just tell the Lord about it. Admit the difficulty. The Lord has ways of helping us overcome our feelings if He wants us to make the move.

Then lay the matter out before the Lord and discuss it with Him. Don’t press Him for special revelations. Going by *“tokens”* can be very tricky. When we ask for tokens, we limit God’s options in making His will known. Furthermore, we keep things at a fleshly level. Tokens can have a confirming effect, but the main communication should be in the Spirit. That is, we are moved to make the right decision without always knowing why or feeling one way or another. Going by feelings is different than being moved by the Spirit. When we are moved by the Spirit, we make the decision in spite of ourselves. When we are moved by the flesh, we are affected by how we feel about the matter. Feelings can be very

misleading. They can be based on all kinds of biases, or habit patterns of thought. Feelings are not always wrong—just undependable as the ultimate test.

When you have discussed the matter with the Lord, leave it. Don't brood over it. Don't keep hashing it over. You'll only confuse yourself. Above all, don't get a variety of amateur opinions; that will confuse you even more.

Ultimately, we must trust the Lord's ability to deal with us and work with us and communicate with us in regard to our lives. We always try to fortify ourselves with sure-fire indicators. Usually, this is because we simply don't trust our capacity to be guided by the Lord. If guidance depends on our own spiritual qualifications, or our ability to outguess God, or our ability to make proper evaluations of the situation, we are all in difficulty. Our only hope is that God is able to cut through the veneer of human illusion and misconception, and ultimately bring about within our spirits and within our minds that which He desires for us. You don't need to be an expert. You don't need ten sure-fire rules. You only need to come as a child to the Father, and trust Him to do with you and through you and for you what He will.

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*Next month "Part IV - Not Practicing Christianity, but Living with Christ"*

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