

**The Sound of His Voice**  
**How to be Led by the Holy Spirit**

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## Chapter 1

# What the Holy Spirit is Like

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### *The Person of the Holy Spirit*

God reveals Himself to us as one God manifest in three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not impersonal, a mere force, but a loving person who created you and provided for your every need through His covenant. Jesus made clear reference to the person of the Holy Spirit when He was teaching His disciples. The Holy Spirit is described as 'He' six times in one verse.

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. **John 16:13***

When we understand this and begin to relate to The Holy Spirit as a divine person, it becomes easier to follow His leading. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to minister to us and indeed through us. He led us to Jesus at the point of our salvation. He helps us in our walk of faith and strengthens us to exercise our authority over the evil one.

*Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. **John 16:7-12***

The Holy Spirit also seeks our fellowship. This 'communion' is cultivated through spending time talking to Him.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. **2 Cor 13:14***

We are to address, cooperate with and yield to Him as a person. We love and honor Him as God, the Spirit.

Like any other person, He has differing moods and expressions. At times He comes in great power and strength, at others with quiet gentleness. He is grieved by indifference and unbelief; yet can inspire laughter and intense joy. Become sensitive to His person and nature. He serves to impart the life of God to you, and does not hold anything back. He is generous and always glorifies the Lord Jesus. In these ways we recognize the Holy Spirit's operation in our lives.

The Holy Spirit reveals and teaches the Word. As the spirit of revelation His anointing teaches you how to practically apply the Word in unique situations.

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. **John 14:26***

## Chapter 2

# The Need

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*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Rom 8:14*

God has given the gift of His word and His Spirit to develop maturity as adult sons. The Word applies to everyone, everywhere at the same time. Yet, our unique details are not specifically recorded. I come from Johannesburg, South Africa and I cannot find it anywhere in the Bible. Nor could I find anything about taking my family from their land of birth to another country and settle there. This is what we did in 1994 when we moved across the planet.

In matters like these, God uses the Holy Spirit to guide us into His detailed will for our lives. The person who can do and say the right thing in the right place with the right emphasis with the right people at the right time in the right sequence with the right attitude, is surely led by the Holy Spirit! This high goal is attainable in the Lord.

In this book, I want to help you position yourself to be led by the Holy Spirit in your walk of faith. God still speaks personally to His children, and He will speak to you today as you read on. Your success in life will depend on hearing His voice in these times. The decisions you make today in your family, on the job, will determine where you will be tomorrow. God wants you to prosper and be a blessing, and it takes some help from the Holy Spirit. Take the time to read the scriptures and let them soak into your way of doing things.

## Chapter 3

# The Sound of His Voice

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### *What Does the Voice of the Lord Sound Like?*

It will sound like the voice of a good shepherd whose job it is to take care of you. He will lead you towards safety and provision.

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”* **John 10:1-5**

In the rural areas of Africa, young shepherds still look after their family’s animals. The sheep get to know the shepherd’s voice through constant daily contact. They will after time not follow a stranger’s voice or the voice of another shepherd. As a Christian we can get to know the voice of the Holy Spirit through daily fellowship with Him. We can become confident in His leading as we get to know His voice through familiarity and practice.

Know that the Holy Spirit is not going to speak anything that will contradict the revealed will of God found in His written word. He will always speak in line with the truth as He is the ‘Spirit of Truth’ and the Word is truth! You will be steered towards blessing, service, giving, peace, and all that is promised in God’s word. You will never be led to compromise or disobey the Word in any way.

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.* **John 16:13-14**

*“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”* **John 17:17**

Jesus taught His disciples the importance of the Word when he walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection. They did not even recognize Him in the flesh, but their hearts burned as He spoke the Word to them. He was weaning them from relying on their senses and the Holy Spirit helped Him burn the Word into them like CD is ‘burned’ on a computer. The impressions and leadings we get from the Holy Spirit will always fit into a framework of acceptable doctrine and practice in the Word.

### ***What Will God be Speaking About When He Does Speak?***

Generally, God will focus on four key areas. First, He will focus on aspects of our relationship with Him. As our heavenly Father, He is committed to bringing us up to maturity in His family. If the relationship is hampered by sin, ignorance or disobedience for example, he will speak to us about these issues. Secondly, He will mold our character: how we act and react to life's challenges. Thirdly, He will impart the gifting we need to fulfill the call on our lives. Finally, He will speak about where and how we are to function in the church. He works through the church, and will position us to play our part. The process involves bringing us to maturity as 'adult sons' and conforming us to the image of His Son Jesus. His goal is to produce Christ-likeness in us.

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:29-30*

Take some time to ask yourself a personal question: what area is God highlighting in my life right now? Is it about improving my relationship with Him through such things as deeper Bible study, prayer or worship? Or, is He requiring that you get before Him to receive gifting and power for service? Start listening to what He has to say in any of the four areas: relationship, character, gifting and function. Very often there may be elements of all four that He is focusing on.

God is a Spirit and He will speak into your innermost spirit or heart. It will not be frivolous, but life changing. When God speaks, He expects change for the better!

*The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD,  
Searching all the inner depths of his heart. Prov 20:27*

Take Mary, the mother of Jesus for example. When the angel came from heaven and spoke to her with a message from God, she responded in faith with an affirmation of the Word. She received the Word into Her womb and conceived the living Word – a miracle! Her question was not one of unbelief but simple astonishment. She responded to the Word and came into agreement with God's plan for her life.

*Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38*

The Holy Spirit will always lead you into the will of God, not way from it. Any voice that nudges you to compromise and drift way from God is not from Him.

The Apostle Peter is another classic example of how the Lord deals with us. The following account shows Peter receiving revelation that Jesus is the Christ.

*When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others*

*Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.*

*From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

**Matt 16:13-24**

God spoke to Him as he listened to Jesus' question. Jesus was trying to locate his disciples. He does the same with us and will ask us some questions too! He gets personal and wants to know what you really know and believe. He wants to reveal His true person to you, His purposes, ways and the part you play in His overall plan in the church.

Read the account again. Revelation is a divine thing, given to those with ears to hear. Peter answers and the Lord then shows Peter what He is going to do and the part he, Peter, will play. That's the pattern. If God shows you something He is doing it will be for the purpose of playing a part in the process.

Be careful though. Peter heard one thing accurately, and then almost immediately presumed to know what was next. He missed it by trying to talk the Lord out of His destiny at the cross. He was severely rebuked for his presumption. Be careful to listen and keep on listening. Go one step at a time.

### ***Music in the Air?***

Good shepherds sing to their sheep. They play soothing and settling music to calm the sheep when they are disturbed. Did you know that God sings over us like a good shepherd?

*The LORD your God in your midst,  
The Mighty One, will save;  
He will rejoice over you with gladness,  
He will quiet you with His love,  
He will rejoice over you with singing." Zeph 3:17*



God's presence and comfort is felt in an atmosphere of praise and worship. We draw near to Him with our sacrifices and He draws near to us in return. Spiritual songs that are sung under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit reflect God's heart towards us. In effect He sings over us. He uses people yielded and sensitive to His voice to minister His grace to us. When we make a habit of daily praising God, we become sensitive to His voice and encourage His presence in our lives. Our praise builds Him a throne, a place of dominion in our hearts. The Psalms teach that God 'inhabits' the praises of His people. (King James Version)

*But You are holy,  
Enthroned in the praises of Israel. Psalm 22:3*

### ***Steering Us in the Right Direction***

The leading of the Holy Spirit will be one step at a time. Each step will be closer to His fullness for your life and calling. The Holy Spirit led Phillip the evangelist to go to a deserted place in Gaza. Only when he obeyed, did he get the next instruction. He was to join the chariot and witness to the Ethiopian Eunuch. Notice he did not get the full picture all at once. No, it was one step at time. It takes faith to take steps without knowing the full picture. Perhaps God knows that we would probably become overwhelmed and back off if we saw the whole picture all at once! Take some time to read the following account of the step-by-step process of the Holy Spirit's leading.

*Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this:*

*"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth."*

*So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Acts 8:26-38*

## ***My Experience?***

If your experience is nowhere like the examples given, there is hope. Believe that God still speaks today. Practice listening to His voice for wisdom in daily matters. Do not relegate God to a slot on Sunday mornings only. We must allow Him into the rest of the week. He is interested in our everyday affairs, and knows that a 'lifetime' is made up individual days. The decisions we make each day have an effect on our future. He wants to guide us in both the small and large decisions of life.

## ***Develop... the Art of Listening!***

The story of Eli and Samuel shows the young boy learning to hear the voice of God at an early age. God began His training at an early age.

*Then the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation. And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!" So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.) And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

*Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." **1 Sam 3:1-10***

As Samuel lay down on one occasion he heard a voice that to him sounded like the voice of his mentor. It sounded like Eli. Perhaps this speaks of many Christians who only hear the voice of God through their Pastor or favorite TV or tape teacher. That is not bad, but it is not God's best. Anyway, God was persistent, Eli caught on to what was happening, and Samuel was instructed to present himself as a servant to God and listen for himself. All this before he was even 10 years old! Young kids should be encouraged to pray and hear God for themselves. Guide them into a listening and vital relationship with God at the earliest age possible.

I baptized a young kid whose testimony as he came up out of the water was: "This is cool! God just spoke to me." "What did He say?" I asked. "He said he was happy that I was baptized," was his young answer. Amazing! It sounds just like Jesus when He was baptized (remember the voice from heaven) except this occasion was in Washington State, AD 2000, spoken by a young boy with childlike innocence.

The art of listening can and should be encouraged firstly by laying a solid foundation in the Word. Study and meditate in it day and night. Be serious with God. Be active in your hunger for God and avoid a halfhearted approach to God. Halfway to God is no way at all. The vocabulary of the Spirit is God's Word and it sets the boundaries within which we live our lives.

*My son, if you receive my words,  
And treasure my commands within you,  
So that you incline your ear to wisdom,  
And apply your heart to understanding;  
Yes, if you cry out for discernment,  
And lift up your voice for understanding,  
If you seek her as silver,  
And search for her as for hidden treasures;  
Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,  
And find the knowledge of God.  
For the LORD gives wisdom **Prov 2:1-6***

Secondly, adopt a listening posture. Draw near to God to hear what He has to say, not to get approval for decisions you have already made. Avoid presumption and take the needed time to hear His voice.

*Walk prudently when you go to the house of God;  
And draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools,  
For they do not know that they do evil.  
Do not be rash with your mouth,  
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.  
For God is in heaven, and you on earth;  
Therefore let your words be few.  
For a dream comes through much activity,  
And a fool's voice is known by his many words. **Eccl 5:1-3***

Labor to enter the rest of faith. It takes spiritual effort to take wayward thoughts captive to the Word and become still enough to clearly hear God's thoughts.

*Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth! **Ps 46:10***

Third, be a doer of the Word, for it is through obedience to the written word of God that we open ourselves up to hear the Holy Spirit's specific voice leading us in the details and application. Obedience keeps us from deception. People who fall into deception are not doers of the Word they have heard.

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. **James 1:22***

Fourth, 'minister to the Lord' in fasting and prayer. This sensitizes you to His voice. When the disciples did this in Antioch before sending Paul and Silas off on their first missionary journey, they got a clear word from God. The Holy Spirit spoke to them in an atmosphere where their focus was on hearing His voice.

*Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:1-3*

### ***Some Practical Steps to Take***

Draw up a personal growth plan to feed on the Word through books, tapes, and video. Invest in your own development. It pays to invest. It costs to stay the same.

Ask God in prayer for 'ears to hear,' or a listening heart. Be prepared to obey even His smallest promptings. When we learn to hear His voice in the small matters, we become more confident in obeying the big things.

Make the effort to withdraw to your own 'closet' or private place, where you can seek God free from distractions. Develop a lifestyle of regular worship beyond the typical Sunday or Wednesday corporate church expressions. Worship attracts God's presence. I have found that playing praise music on tape or CD helps create an atmosphere of reverence where the voice of the Lord is that much clearer. In short, practice the presence of God on a daily basis.

## Chapter 4

# Knowing the Enemy's Voice

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### *Caution*

When the Lord speaks, His voice is always clear. However we may experience 'spiritual static.' The enemy, the ways of the 'world' system, and our 'fleshly' appetites all serve to create this 'spiritual static,' and we have to learn to 'tune in' to the pure and clear channel on which the Lord is broadcasting.

Furthermore we cannot afford to be ignorant of the enemy's wiles and schemes. Satan takes advantage of ignorance, and even the best intentioned of God's people can be destroyed through a lack of revelation knowledge.

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6*

Satan works in the 'dark' and creates confusion. The Word brings light and where there is no word in a situation you find darkness. Lies are a form of darkness and God's integrity, intentions and way of doing things come under question in temptation. The temptations of Jesus in the wilderness illustrate Satan's misuse of scripture. Lies can only be exposed with truth! You have to know the word to confront lying temptations.

Secondly, Satan is pushy. He will use excess to pressure us into making decisions. He works in the realm of immediate circumstance. Circumstance is important in the short-term, but things always change in the long-term. In God there is always purpose. Satan always plays on our need for immediate relief. It is through faith and patience that God's promises come true, not by haste!

Thirdly Satan takes advantage of man's thirst for the supernatural and spectacular. Just because something appears supernatural, it is not automatically from the right source. Satan is the master counterfeiter and everything must be tested. God actually wants us to be cautious and check things out.

*Test everything, hold onto the good. 1 Thess 5:21*

Fourthly, know that Satan operates in the thought realm. This is the battleground of truth.

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 2 Cor 10:3-6*

With God there are no arguments. Nothing goes above His word, and His leading will always point to Christ and His mission. Satan will have us reason our way out of doing God's precise will, and will be strangely silent about Jesus. He does not like pointing to Jesus except in derision and mockery.

He is a subtle adversary, and will not make his lies obvious. He stimulates arguments in our thinking by planting contrary thoughts in our minds. Know that if an argument is going on in your head, God is not the author of the confusion. God's wisdom ministers peace and is 'willing to yield' to the non-essential.

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James 3:17-18*

### **Case Study: Balaam the 'False Prophet' Hears God's Voice**

*Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.*

*Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. So Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up all that is around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."*

*So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak. And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" So Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out.'" And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with you." And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us."*

*Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they. And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me.'" Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may*

*know what more the LORD will say to me." And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you--that you shall do." So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. Then the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again. **Num 22:1-24***

To set the scene: the Israelites were on the march, defeating everyone in their path. The Moabite King Balak called Balaam to curse them with His words! God was opposed to this and made it plain to Balaam that it was not His will. Balaam did not shut the door at the beginning and so the princes returned with a better offer. Balaam's partial obedience kept this 'door of temptation' open and eventually he yielded, went with the King Balak's representatives and God's anger was justly aroused. Balaam's stubbornness is typified in the ass incident where his madness was restrained by a lesser creation. God's best is to listen to Him directly, and not be subject to rebuke and stopped by circumstance.

Notice that Balaam did hear God's voice. God's word was clear, specific and favored God's people. Yet, his heart was not right and the voice of his selfish flesh with all its ambition, flattery, and greed led to his stubborn rebellion. It was a short step away from the voice of the enemy dominating Balaam with deception and compromise. The outcome became inevitable.

God expects complete and wholehearted obedience, because partial obedience opens the door to deception. *Completely obey* the first word you hear from God. Make *no* provision for selfish flesh, and *resist* the enemy with the Word.

Settle things in your heart before you start out on an endeavor, so that you do not 'nag' God to give permission for your own will to be done. The amazing thing is that He will let you have your own way if you consistently reject Him. Only repentance will clear the air, so that the voice of God can be clearly heard once again.

## Chapter 5

# The Anatomy of a Decision

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### *Decisions ...Decisions*

We are all faced with a multitude of decisions, each with their own set of consequences. Some will be more significant than others, and the leading of the Holy Spirit becomes imperative if we are to fulfill God's plan for our lives. Very often correct choices are not immediately obvious, because we do not have all the facts up front. What may appear to be a good move now may later turn sour. However there is a way to avoid making wrong choices. The Holy Spirit knows all things and will help you make God ordained decisions.

### *The Revelation 'Sieve' or 'Filter'*

All that we read, hear, and think about, needs to be 'filtered' through a 'revelation sieve' to make a wise decision. Any 'leading' you feel you have from the Lord, ought to be confirmed by two or three witnesses.

*"One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. Deut 19:15-16*

Many Christians get excited when something even remotely resembles a word from God. "I have heard from God," they may excitedly say. Then they proceed to rush off half-cocked, later to crash and burn, lamenting that they had "Heard from God!" Yet time was not taken to get confirming witnesses. I know personally of two couples who got married at Bible school on the basis of one 'prophecy', later to get all messed up out of the will of God. They did not stop to check things out and get confirmation.

A house I stayed in as a youngster whilst visiting in the country, had water tanks that caught the rainwater from the roof. The tank had different types of sand to filter the dirty roof water. When you tapped the water at the bottom of the tank, it was clear and drinkable. It had been 'filtered' through the different layers of sand. God's leading through the Holy Spirit will be 'clear and drinkable' when you take the time to filter the impressions and words you get through the 'revelation sieve.'

The Word filter is the first and foremost step in the process of making a decision. The choices you have to make have to fit within the framework of God's already revealed will. His word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Be sure to shine the Word on what you are planning to do. See if there is something in the Word that God can and will 'quicken' to you. It will 'stand out' and minister life to you regarding the decision.

*Your word is a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path. Psalm 119:105*



Be sure to consecrate what you are planning to do to the Lord. Be prepared to back off without stubbornly clinging to what you believed to have been from God. If it was from God He will repeat the message in some way. You have to believe that God has your best interests at heart. He will not withhold any good thing from you if you walk uprightly before Him.

*For the LORD God is a sun and shield;  
The LORD will give grace and glory;  
No good thing will He withhold  
From those who walk uprightly. Psalm 84:11*

However, God will keep you from something that looks good to start with, but which will eventually harm you. He knows the beginning from the end and what we are like, so He puts others in our lives to balance out our excesses and weaknesses.

The second step is to seek the counsel of wise elders in your church. God can and does speak through others who may have an angle on things that you have never thought of. Zeal without wise counsel can be dangerous.

*Plans are established by counsel;  
By wise counsel wage war. Prov 20:18*

The third part of the 'revelation sieve' involves prophecy. If you received a prophecy or some other word from someone that did not know the circumstances, then they may well have heard from God. These utterances should confirm what God has already been speaking to you. Why would He take the time to speak to someone else, and not give it to you first, His own dear child of the faith? Someone else's 'word' must witness with your spirit. Let peace be the umpire and judge. The God kind of peace will be real even in the midst of the pressure of your decision-making circumstances. After all, you do want to please God with your decision! He will allow you time to check things out, and will not be angry if you want to be sure. He is your Father and wants the best for you.

In addition be sure that you have a witness in your spirit and do not step out on someone else's word alone. The decision must sit well with you and agree with what you already know to be the will of God for your life. If you step out on someone else's conviction and not your own, they might move on and you may be left stranded without a sustaining sense of certainty. After all, you have to live your own life, so take the time to filter what you hear through the inner witness of your own heart. Do whatever it takes to develop a confidence in your own ability to hear the voice of God in your own heart.

### ***The Example of Paul and Barnabas***

*Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13:1-3*

Here Saul (Paul) is sent out on his first missionary journey after the Holy Spirit spoke to the group at a special time of fasting. He leaves the local church where he had been serving to fulfill the call on his life. He had been saved and had been told by God through Ananias in Acts 9:15-18 that he was called to bear God's name to the gentiles, even kings! We see that come to pass in the rest of the book of Acts. Paul was trained in the Word under Gamaliel. The apostle Peter confirmed Paul's ministry in the Word, acknowledging that there were things Paul knew that even he Peter found it hard to understand. Remember Peter had sat under Jesus, the Master, for three years!

In short, Paul was well grounded in the Word! He already knew that he had a call from God, yet was faithfully serving alongside other seasoned ministers in the local church in Antioch. His decision to leave the church and head on out in his ministry was no quick thing. It was the product of filtering 'input' from:

- The written Word of God
- What was already in his heart: the inner witness
- A confirming supernatural utterance or prophecy
- Counsel from wise leadership and peers

He became the greatest missionary of the book of Acts. The 'revelation filter or sieve' worked for him and his life provides a safe example for us to follow.

A useful rule of thumb to follow: if the decision is big, take enough time to be sure. Then have courage; it will still take faith to step out with confidence.

*For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Cor 5:7*

## Chapter 6

# Finding the Will of God

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*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rom 12:1-2*

One of the most frequently asked questions is: 'How can I know if I am in the will of God?' If God expects us to prove His will out in our lives it sure helps to know whether we are in it or not! The matter is really quite simple. The above passage teaches a simple truth: to be in the will of God we have to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God and not conform to this world and its ways. The key in this process is to renew our thinking to God's word.

The following pointers should help in proving out the 'general' will of God and providing a 'platform' for the Holy Spirit to lead in the specifics of your life.

God has called all believers everywhere to worship Him, love another and reach out to the lost. This calling needs no special leading of the Holy Spirit as this is already revealed in His word. When we pursue these responsibilities we are in the will of God! Obedience to his general will 'opens us up' to hear His voice in specific, detailed matters.

God expects us to grow in our capacity to do His will. He places 'seed thoughts', 'impressions' or 'promptings' in us that must be worked with and developed as we mature. These ought to be confirmed, and the pathway or manner of fulfilling the leading sought out in prayer and study of the Word. God may get us moving in a direction, but He still expects us to listen as to how to go about fulfilling His instruction. I know of well-intentioned believers striking out on a mission having heard from God as to the 'where' but not the 'how' 'when' and 'with whom' part of His leading. Destiny is revealed and unfolds one step at a time. We need faith and patience to see the intended growth and development.

Storms and difficulties do not necessarily mean that you are out of the will of God. Jesus at one time instructed His disciples to go to the other side of the lake and a storm arose that threatened to swamp the boat. The disciples panicked, and instead of cosseting them, He pointed out their lack of faith. Storms are sent by the enemy to test our faith. Faith is not necessarily based on favorable circumstances, but on the promises of God. Fair weather is no indication of being in the will of God and neither are storms an indication of being out of His will. In the book of Acts 27 there is an account of Paul suffering shipwreck because the centurion was persuaded by the helmsman and owner to set sail at a dangerous time. Paul had heard from the Lord that it was not the time to press ahead, but the favorable winds at the start convinced the others that they should. They set sail and later were shipwrecked in a terrible storm. The lesson: favorable circumstances need not be the leading of the Lord.

God speaks in the stillness of our spirit – it is here that He speaks to us. Our spirit man must be at rest to clearly hear God’s voice. We must labor to enter into rest, even when outward circumstances are chaotic. Enduring peace is a measure of maturity, where circumstance no longer dictates our decision-making from day to day.

*Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10*

God’s leading will always be supernatural, but not necessarily spectacular. Elijah had to learn the value of the still small voice as opposed to the noise and action of the earthquake and the strong wind. **1 Kings 19:12**

Fruit is a good indication of accuracy. If someone claims to have been led by the Holy Spirit and there is no fruit after a period of time, it becomes obvious that the so-called leading was not really from God after all. We must be humble enough to reevaluate things if there is no fruit.

Timing is another important ingredient. God’s order involves time and timing (**Eccles1-11**). When you hear the voice of God, one question to ask is ‘When Lord?’ Sometimes it will be obvious. When it is not, there may be some preparation needed as ‘getting ahead’ of God can be damaging. In cases like this when we go astray because we are ahead of God’s timing we will hear a voice **behind** us saying:

*“This is the way walk in it.” Isaiah 30:21*

God will lovingly correct us even if we are presumptuous in our timing and direction. We must learn to follow, and not rush ahead of God. Planning is never wasted time.

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,  
But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty. Prov 21:5*

It has been said that ‘Where God guides He provides.’ Certainly this is generally so, as God has promised to provide for His covenant people. However Israel enjoyed God’s provision for forty long years, even though they were **out** of God’s will! His great mercy was apparent despite their stubbornness and rebellion. Of course, God’s mercy must not be abused as a license to sin.

It is interesting to note that God at times allows a degree of personal involvement in some levels of decision- making. This latitude is illustrated in the following examples:

*‘...seemed good...to us’ Acts 15:28*

*‘...we thought it good...’ 1 Thess 3:1*

*‘...I have decided...’ Titus 3:12*

It has to do with maturity, consecration, and close fellowship with the Lord where permission was granted to operate in this way. As we mature in the Lord our senses can be trained to know the

difference between good and evil. Spirit led choices can be made in accordance with the nature of God without even having to get a specific word on a matter. The solid food of God's word is 'built into us' and we are 'programmed' to make the right choices!

*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. **Heb 5:13-14***

The renewed mind is prone to do God's will, see things His way and decide accordingly. What a blessing it is to be called to Christ-likeness and have His mind and wisdom in us through His Word!

## Chapter 7

# Last Words

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Know that in order to be saved you have already heard the voice of the Holy Spirit drawing you to Christ. The more time you spend fellowshiping with Him, the more familiar His voice becomes. He is always speaking and we must learn to always be listening. Leave the manner in which He speaks up to Him. He may choose the Word, a prophecy or vision, the quiet inner voice in your spirit. It is His choice. We must be open to any and all means.

Be yielded, and know that the step you are contemplating may not be for the immediate future. Things take time to unfold and patience works with faith. God shows us things in advance, so we can prepare. Trust Him to be specific. We learn from scripture that God gave Moses specific dimensions of the tabernacle. Do not be surprised if you are shown exact details of things to come. God speaks precisely, and we must learn to hear and obey Him precisely.

In conclusion, know that God has promised to draw near to us as we respond and draw near to him. The ball is in our court.

*Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. James 4:8*

## If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord.

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God has made it possible for you to get into right relationship with Him.

He sent His Son Jesus into the world to live, die and rise again from the dead so that you could be forgiven of your sins, live a life that pleases Him, and joined to Him forever in heaven when you die.

God expects you to **acknowledge** your need for His forgiveness, **believe** that He raised Jesus from the dead, and be prepared to **confess** Jesus as Lord before witnesses in the world you live in.

Accept His free gift of eternal life today. Turn away from your sinful past, wholeheartedly put your trust in Him today. Pray this prayer out loud from your heart, you will be giving your life back to him, and He will love, protect and provide for you all the days of your life.

*Dear God in heaven,*

*I accept that I need your forgiveness for my sin.*

*I repent and acknowledge that I cannot save myself.*

*I believe that you raised your only begotten son Jesus from the dead.*

*I ask you to come into my heart right now and be my Lord.*

*I confess you Jesus as the Lord (master) of my life.*

*I promise to serve you all my days.*

*Thank you for saving me. I am now your child, accepted into your family.*

*In Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Friend,*

*Now that you have prayed this prayer, get into a good Bible believing church that focuses on Jesus and His word, read your Bible starting with the gospel of John in the New Testament, and tell someone that you have accepted Jesus as Your Lord. Pray to your new heavenly Father every day, and look to God to help you in every area of your life.*

*God bless you.*