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How Can I Know That I Am Led by the Holy Spirit

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How can I know that I am led
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Answered by

CC Dr. R. A. TORREY,

1954-1955

How can one distinguish between the leading of the Holy Spirit and a mere impulse of our own heart?

The most important condition of being able to distinguish the true leading of the Holy Spirit is that we be *absolutely surrendered to the will of God*. There are many people doing the things that they themselves wish to do and calling it the guidance of the Holy Spirit, simply because there has not been a real and absolute surrender to the will of God. Oftentimes these people fancy that there has been a surrender of the will to God but afterwards discover that the supposed surrender has not been real. It is the privilege of every child of God to have the guidance of the Holy Spirit at every turn of life. The conditions upon which that guidance is obtained are clearly stated, or implied, in James 1:5-7, "If any of you *lack wisdom*, let him *ask of God*, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him *ask in faith, nothing wavering*. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." The conditions here stated, or implied, are:

First. That the one seeking God's guidance shall fully realize his own lack of wisdom, i. e., his inability to decide for himself.

Second. That he really desire to know and do the will of God.

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Third. That he definitely ask God to show him what to do.

Fourth. That without wavering or doubting he confidently expect God to show him.

Fifth. That he go step by step as the Lord leads.

The one who meets these conditions will be guided. Many of us make the mistake of wishing God to show us the whole way before we take the first step, but God leads a step at a time, and when we take the first step He will make the next step clear. But if we wait for remote steps to be made clear before we take the first step they will not be made clear. There are many who tell us that they are seeking God's guidance but can get no light, but when you question them it becomes clear that they have sufficient light for *the next step* and what they are really seeking is light for a step which they do not have to take as yet. Take the next step that God makes clear before you. You do not need to see beyond that.

Another thing that needs to be said upon the subject of guidance is that God's guidance is clear guidance. "God is *light*, and in Him is *no darkness at all*" (1 John 1:5). Oftentimes when one makes a full surrender to God, the Devil seeks to defeat him by suggesting all manner of difficult or even ridiculous things as the will of God, thus getting him into perplexity and not seldom into spiritual agony. When he does not do these absurd things then the Devil suggests to him that he has not obeyed God, and thus timid souls get into all man-

ner of self-condemnation, and are sometimes even led to doubt their salvation, or to wonder whether they have not committed the unpardonable sin. When any suggestion as to duty comes to us if our wills are fully surrendered to God and we really are willing to do His will, we have a right to approach our Father as His children without fear (Rom. 8:15) and say, "Father, I wish to do Thy will and will do it if Thou wilt only make it perfectly clear. Now make what Thou dost want me to do as clear as day," and we have a right to expect that our Father will make it as clear as day if we really desire to do His will. And we are under no obligation to take a step until He does make it as clear as day. We ought to avoid all undue haste in doing what we imagine to be the will of God just as much as we should avoid delaying when that will is made perfectly clear. "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 26:16). Many an honest soul in its eagerness to obey God hurries on ahead of God because he does not fully trust God and thus wait for God to make the way perfectly clear. When one does thus hurry on before God he gets into difficulties and oftentimes has to come back and he finds that the thing that he did at great sacrifice he was not called upon to do.

A Christian should live without worry and anxiety (Phil. 4:6) He should not even be anxious lest he may have disobeyed God in some uncertain thing that he thinks perhaps God wanted him to do but concerning which he is not quite sure that God wanted him to do. We are not slaves but children. We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of placing as sons whereby we cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). The life of

mental torture and self-condemnation that some conscientious souls suffer for fear they may have disobeyed God in not doing something that it was not at all clear that they should do, is not a life of intelligent faith. We should simply trust God absolutely, surrender to Him absolutely, look to Him to guide us day by day, trust Him to guide us and go on gently and trustfully just so fast as He makes the way perfectly clear, and no faster.

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