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Is The Lord Leading You?

By Jared Williams

Many misled and confused people think that in every circumstance the Lord is leading them. People have done, and are doing, many things contrary to the will of God because they think the Lord is leading them. Personal testimonies are given of how the Lord has told or led some people by special revelation, that is, the Lord has told them to do or say something no one else has ever heard or done before. Some have even harmed themselves and others claiming the Lord was leading them. Are such claims true? Certainly not. Today, we can be led either by false teachers, dreamers or the commandments of the Lord. Which have you chosen? Inspiration says, "... believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). How does one try the spirits? By imagination, likes or dislikes, opinion, how do you determine whether or not you are being led by the Lord? We can find the answer to this and all other things that pertain to spiritual matters by looking to God's word.

1. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). Paul says that the Spirit leads God's children, however he does not in this verse tell us how this is done. Paul's theme here is the gospel of Christ, God's power to save. Since the Holy Spirit gave us the Bible and it is God's power to save and in that revelation he tells us how to live, when we follow his commandments, we are led by the Spirit. We are led in no other way.

2. Jesus tried to convince the people of his day, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). The word of God quickens (makes alive). The sinner is dead in his trespasses (Ephesians 2:1) and in need of salvation; and the word of God will do that. Hence, Jesus spoke to the people telling them the truth about themselves and what they needed to do to please

God. When they did this they were led by the Spirit. We have the words of Christ in the New Testament and when we follow his teaching we are led by the Spirit.

3. Peter and the other apostles were filled with the Spirit on Pentecost, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4). The "they" in Acts 2:1, and "them" in verse 3, and "they" again in verse 5 are the twelve apostles. Through the work they did the Spirit convicted many. How was this done? It was done when Peter and the other apostles preached the word of God. Acts 2:37, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Friends, it is clear to see that the Spirit convicted the people through the word of God, which led to some three-thousand obeying the gospel that day.

4. Have you considered the seven churches of Asia, they were rebuked and complimented by the Spirit of God. Now, the important question is how were they rebuked and complimented? This was done when the Spirit through the inspired John gave the Lord's evaluation of them. The Bible says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6). Here is another clear account of the Spirit speaking to the churches through the word.

5. Then, the Bible plainly states that the Spirit speaks through the word. Paul said, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart

from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I Timothy 4:1-3). Here the Spirit warned of departures which would take place within the church. He did this the very same way alien sinners are convicted of their sins and led to obedience. The means by which such was accomplished was the word of God. The same means is used to edify and encourage Christians, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

The Bible is clear on this matter. The only way the Spirit leads, or instructs anyone is through the word of God. Hence, for those who claim to have heard a voice or better felt than told experience are usually false teachers. No one has received special, direct guidance from the Holy Spirit today. If so, you have no need of the Bible and to say you have no need of the Bible is to say you have no need of a knowledge of God, Christ and salvation for all of these are revealed in the Bible. Any claim of direct leading of the Spirit is a mark of apostasy from the truth. Further, it denies that the word of God is our COMPLETE guide and a sufficient source of spiritual information.

FUTURE GROWTH

By Bill Graddy

Private schools are the results of concerned parents. Dedicated individuals have determined to provide a secular education for their children with a spiritual correlation to the extent that they impose upon themselves a dual tax. However, for these people who desire this type of education for their children, the price tag does not seem to alter their enthusiasm for the schools. Their sacrifice exhibits the care and concern they have for their children. continued on page 2

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FUTURE GROWTH

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If parents so willingly form such a consortium for their children to obtain a secular education, how much more must elders and parents form a partnership with God to provide the very best Bible classes at church for their spiritual development? It is a strange and a sad commentary that some Bible classes are so dense and dull. Elders and parents who will allow Bible classes to be careless and haphazard not only in content and curriculum, but in attendance and deportment show their lack of love not only for their children but for the Word of God! (Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 6:33; Luke 2:52; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Our Bible classes should only be overshadowed by the worship services. They should be stimulating, motivating, and above all informative. With the cooperation of the home, the Bible class is the "feeder program" for elders, preachers, teachers, deacons, and faithful members of the Lord's church!

The Bible classes of the church should have been teaching on abortion, drugs, and sex problems all along. Have we just about turned these Bible subjects over to "our schools"?

22 Sugar Creek

North Little Rock, AR 72116

WHAT IS BROTHERLY LOVE?

It's SILENCE when your words would hurt,

It's PATIENCE when your brother is curt,

It's DEAFNESS when some gossip flows,

It's COMPASSION for a brother's woes,

It's COURAGE when misfortune falls,

It's FIRMNESS when ones duty calls,

It's WILLINGNESS to help another,

It's TRUSTING and especially a brother,

It's RESTITUTION made when due,

It's FORGIVING when asked of you.

"Heart Felt Religion"

By Larry D. Mathis

Churches of Christ believe in "heart felt religion." As a matter of fact, "heart felt religion" is the only kind of religion that is acceptable to God. That is to say, everything that we do as Christians must come from the heart if it is to be pleasing to our heavenly Father. However, this does not mean that one loses self-control, "passes out" or becomes rabid during worship.

MAN HAS TWO HEARTS

Each human being is composed of body and spirit and is possessed with two hearts; the fleshly heart and the spiritual heart.

The fleshly heart is the one that is most familiar to the masses. Even small children study about it in school. It is a muscle that is located in the chest and its function is to pump blood, the life principle, to all extremities of the body. This heart undergoes absolutely no change whatsoever in man's conversion or turning to God. It is the same heart after conversion that it was before conversion.

The spiritual heart is another matter. It is not a mere physical muscle located in the chest cavity. The spiritual heart involves a man's intellect, emotions, volition (will), and conscience. It is located within the deepest recesses of his innermost being, in the spiritual or inward man, and from it flows the life giving principles of the inner man. The heart does undergo a change in conversion; it is changed from an "impure" to a "pure" heart through obedience to the gospel of Christ. (Matthew 5:8; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

THE CASE OF ABSALOM

Second Samuel chapter fifteen describes Absalom's act of rebellion against King David. (Note verses 1-6, 13.) In order for Absalom to gain followers it was necessary for him to win the people over. The Bible describes what he did in the following words, "Absalom STOLE the hearts of the men of Israel." It further states that, "The hearts of the men of Israel are after (have gone after or is with) Absalom." Now, what did Absalom steal? Did he, through surgery, remove their physical hearts? Obviously, something more than mere muscle is under consideration here!

In Second Samuel 18:9-14, we read that Absalom was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak tree Absalom's head got

caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair while the mule he was riding kept on going. While hanging in midair, Joab shot (or thrust?) Absalom through the heart with darts (spears? javelins?).

In view of these references is it not reasonable to conclude that Absalom had two hearts?

THE CASE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Because of Nebuchadnezzar's arrogant pride God brought this mighty king down! Read carefully Daniel 4:16, 25, 33-34, 36.

The Bible declares that his heart was CHANGED from man's, and a beast's heart was given to him. That is, his mind was changed. For seven years Nebuchadnezzar did not have a human mind, but the mind of an animal. After the appointed time passed he regained his "sanity" and his understanding and reason returned unto him. Observe that when he returned to his senses he was no longer characterized as having the heart of a brute.

In view of these references is it not reasonable to conclude that King Nebuchadnezzar had two hearts; So far as we know there was nothing wrong with his physical heart throughout all this episode.

THE CASE OF SIMON

This man is best known as "Simon the sorcerer." We read about him in Acts 8:8-24.

Simon wanted the "power" the apostles possessed; power to bestow miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. He wanted this power so badly that he even offered the apostles money for it! (Acts 8:18-20.)

The apostle Peter rebuked Simon for suggesting such a thing and told him his heart was not right in the sight of God. (Acts 8:21). Now, what heart is under consideration in this text? Would anyone be so ill informed as to suggest that Peter meant his physical blood pump?

In view of this text is it not reasonable to conclude that Simon had two hearts?

OF WHAT CONSISTS THE SPIRITUAL HEART?

1. It involves man's intellect. This is easily seen from a few scriptures. Note that it is possible for the heart to doubt (Mark 11:23); to reason (Mark 2:6); to ponder (Luke 2:19); to understand (Matthew 13:15); and to believe (Romans 10:10). It is also possible for one's heart to be blind (Ephesians 4:18-19); to wax gross (Matthew 13:15); and for every imagination of the thoughts of the heart

to be only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). Concerning the heart, Jesus once said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." (Matthew 15:17-20.)

2. It involves man's emotions. The heart can be troubled (John 14:1); it may even be broken (Acts 21:13); it is capable of rejoicing (Psalm 33:21; John 16:22); of burning within us (Luke 24:32); and of loving (Matthew 22:37).

3. It involves man's will. Frequently, man's will is stubborn. The Bible says that man's heart can be hard (Hebrews 4:7; it can be hard and impenitent (Romans 2:5); but on the other hand it has the capacity to obey (Romans 6:17-18); and it can purpose. (2 Corinthians 9:7.)

4. It involves the conscience of man. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). Note that our heart can condemn us (1 John 3:18-21).

THE HEART AND CONVERSION

The heart of man is definitely touched in conversion. There is nothing mysterious about it either! The Holy Spirit operates on the human heart, in conversion through, and only through the word of God.

1. The gospel is to be preached to every creature. (Mark 16:15-16.) The word of God is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), and is to be sown in good and honest hearts that it might bring forth fruit (Luke 8:15).

2. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

3. Some of the Jews, on Pentecost, were pricked in the heart and told to repent (Acts 2:37-38). Repentance involves the heart of man. If the heart can be "impenitent" it can also be "penitent" (Romans 2:5).

4. Christ is the Son of the living God. When an individual believes this, with all his heart, he is to confess it (Acts 8:37-38). The good confession must come from the heart in order to be valid and acceptable.

5. Finally, one obeys from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered. This is a reference to water baptism (Romans 6:3-7, 17-18).

THE HEART AND WORSHIP

It is beyond us to imagine that any Christian could even think that God would accept any act of worship that did not come from the heart. Everything that we do, as Christians, in worship, must come from the heart if it is to be pleasing to Almighty God. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

1. Concerning teaching and preaching the word of God. Shouldn't all of our efforts be motivated from the heart? For one to preach or teach God's word, and urge it upon others, without his own heart being in it would be nothing short of hypocrisy! The gospel (seed) is to be sown in the heart (Luke 8:15), and is supposed to stay there (Luke 8:12; Psalm 119:11; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

2. Concerning the Lord's Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:27-29.) Each individual must examine himself lest he eat and drink damnation to himself. We must partake of the Lord's Supper in the proper manner with the right attitude or frame of mind. This cannot be accomplished unless the heart is in it.

3. Concerning prayer. (Romans 10:1.) "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God."

4. Concerning the collection. (2 Corinthians 9:7.) "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give."

5. Concerning singing. (Ephesians 5:19.) "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."

After seeing the prominent role the heart plays in Christianity, and specifically in worship, how could anyone attempt a defense for mechanical instrumental music in worship? It is high time for men to quit belittling the concept of singing and making melody in the heart! One who really understands what the Bible has to say about the heart would never, not ever, attempt to worship God on a piece of machinery!

CONCLUSION

Churches of Christ do, in fact, believe in "heart felt religion." Should one approach God, in worship, without the heart it would simply amount to vain worship (Matthew 15:8-9).

We have shown in this article that each individual has two hearts, i.e., the fleshly blood pump, and the spiritual heart that consists of the intellect, emotions, will and conscience. And that, Christianity is aimed at man's heart.

Simon's heart was not right in the sight of God. Is yours? Many today are suffering from spiritual heart attacks. Are you? "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the WHOLE HEART." (Psalm 119:2.)

As Real As It Really Gets

"It's real" they sing, "I know it's real"
 "No other reason for the way I feel"
 And oh I know it's real, but yet
 Is this as real as it really gets?

I dare say "No" for liquor leaves
 A trail of broken hearts bereaved
 By a drunken fool perhaps n'er met
 But this is as real as it really gets.

Then take a look at the battered wife
 Who grabs the kids and runs for life
 Because their drunken dad's upset
 This too is as real as it really gets.

Or view the man who lies face down
 Shot by a loaded teenage clown
 Who, under the influence, took a bet
 And THIS is as real as it really gets.

Then catch the man down on "skid row"
 In wrinkled, filthy, smelly clothes
 Who lives a life with no respect
 This too is as real as it really gets.

Witness the man who "shakes" in pain
 And yet can't help but seek again
 This wretched "brew" full of sheer regret
 And this is as real as it really gets.

So if you have the urge to drink
 Please stop and take some time to think
 That beer commercials fail to set
 Out just HOW real it really gets.

Robert Stohldrier

Do not allow your environment to control you. Control your environment. This you can do with the power that God gives. When you open the door of your heart, this power will enter. (Romans 1:16; 12:2.)

The following was taken from Ann Landers column and submitted by a Mountain Home, Arkansas reader.

KILLER, THY NAME IS GOSSIP NOBODY'S FRIEND

My name is gossip. I have no respect for justice.

I maim without killing.

I break hearts and ruin lives.

I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.

The more I am quoted the more I am believed.

I flourish at every level of society.

My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me.

I have no name and no face.

To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become.

I am nobody's friend.

Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.

I topple governments and wreck marriages.

I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartache, and indigestion.

I spawn suspicion and generate grief.

I make innocent people cry in their pillows.

Even my name hisses. I am called gossip. Office gossip, shop gossip, party gossip, telephone gossip, I make headlines and headaches.

Before you repeat a story ask yourself, Is it true? Is it fair? Is it necessary? If not shut up.

* * * * *

If you haven't time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?

It is far better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot.

Nowadays the hand that rocks the cradle usually gets a dollar an hour.

Beware of half-truth, you may have told the wrong end.

How To Become A Christian

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

God's Plan of Salvation

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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