

## Navigational Tools

### Word and Spirit Partnering Together

*A false balance is an abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is His delight. Proverbs 11:1 (KJV)*

Try to imagine what it would be like to take a journey to an unfamiliar country without having some navigational resources as you travel. Not only would you need maps, compass, and a GPS device, you would also want to know about the culture and people. There are lots of things you would need to know because most countries have differing laws, values, and customs. What works for you in your familiar surroundings may not work for you in unfamiliar surroundings.

As Christians, we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son. We now travel as pilgrims in this world, but not of it. We are strangers.<sup>1</sup> Most of us spent a good deal of time wandering around in Satan's domain—some succeeding by falling into his trickery and deceptive ways while others got beat to a pulp because of their innocence and not knowing how to play by his rules. Never-the-less, we were shaped by his domain of darkness. When we came into the kingdom of the Son, the smell of darkness and the wounds we incurred were still on us, which must then be dealt with as the light begins to dispel the darkness within.

*1John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

Adam Clark, in his commentary on this verse, refers to the world as being embraced in the arms of the devil, where it lies fast asleep and carnally secure, deriving its heat and power from that which is nourished by Satan. He goes on to say, the actions, tempers, propensities, opinions and maxims of all worldly men prove and illustrate this. He then quotes John Wesley as saying, *“the horrible state of the world is painted in the most-lively colors; a comment on which we have in the actions, conversations, contracts, quarrels and friendships of worldly men.”* He then concludes by saying, *“Their actions are opposed to the law of God in their deceit while their friendships are hollow, insincere, capricious and fickle. As a result, they become instinct with*

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 1:13

*Satan's own spirit because they are of their father the devil and therefore, his lusts they will do."*<sup>2</sup>

In the world, our senses are being overloaded in every conceivable way. We are experiencing sensory overload! Satan is a master of his domain and knows how to entice us in every conceivable way. He bombards us daily through media, friends, conversations and actions that are in opposition to the law of God.

How do we navigate through this maze of propensities, opinions, and maxims that flow out of a world that lies under Satan's sway?

As you can see, we do need a guide to keep us on the straight and narrow as we attempt to follow the path that is ever before us.<sup>3</sup> We are warned in the Book of Romans to resist the squeeze of the world and not to be conformed to it—a challenge to us as we deal with sensory overload.<sup>4</sup>

You're now in the kingdom realm under the sway of the Lord Jesus Christ and must learn to get along and succeed in His domain. Thankfully, we have been given some useful resources to help us find our way. We have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as guides to help us. The beautiful thing about these two guides is they always work together and never in disagreement. Can you imagine going on an African Safari with two guides that are in disagreement? Not so with God!

Try to imagine going on a safari without a guide. You would never make it. Along the way, there are simply too many dangers and pitfalls. Our world is a jungle in many ways as well. There are all kinds of dangers and pitfalls Christians often get trapped in that have a way of rendering them useless as they try to find their way. We have an enemy who is walking about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.<sup>5</sup> Many lose their way before the journey barely begins because they are on a safari without availing themselves to the guides made available to them.

We serve a God who understands who we are and what is needed as we journey towards a city whose builder and maker is God.<sup>6</sup> Thankfully, God has given us resources that not only keep us from getting lost but assure us of protection from the unforeseen dangers lurking around. The navigational

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<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on 1 John 5:19 paraphrased.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7:13-14

<sup>4</sup> Romans 12:2

<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 11:10

tools we will need for the journey ahead can be found in two vital sources: The Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

Let's take a closer look at the directional resources God has made available to us through His Word and Spirit and how to use them. The Word or the Bible is like a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path as we see in the following passages.

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

*Psalm 119:133 Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.*

As seen in the preceding Scriptures, God's desire is to direct our steps according to His Word. We discover in John's gospel, the Holy Spirit is our guide as well.

*John 16:12-13 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>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.*

With God, we have great security because our two guides—the Word and the Spirit—are designed to work together. However, because God never imposes His will upon us and chooses to give us a free will, it's up to us to make sure they are partnering together.

When the Spirit's revelation enters our spirit, it is first pure and unadulterated. It then must pass through the doorways of our mind and be submitted to God's Word to remain pure. Without the purity of God's Word, His revelation is distilled through our un-sanctified thoughts and emotions and loses its purity. As a result, He is not able to guide us as He would like to.

### **The Word of God—A Lamp unto Our Feet**

Let's take a look at how the Word of God is a lamp unto our feet and how God's Word is to affect our lives. It's important to understand that the Word of God always takes precedence over the Spirit's input into our lives because our experience with the Holy Spirit is subjective in the sense that whatever we receive from Him must be distilled through our imperfect minds, wills and emotions.

Peter, James, and John had an enlightening experience when they were with Jesus on the Mount. Moses and Elijah appeared, and they heard God speak from Heaven. Peter writes about this experience in one of his epistles and says as great an experience as it was, the Word of God is a more sure word of prophecy. Experiences fade over time, but God's Word never fades.

*2Peter 1:18-19 (KJV) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. <sup>19</sup>We also have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day*

**The following Scriptures show the purity of God's Word:**

*Psalms 119:140 Your word is very pure; therefore, Your servant loves it.*

*Psalms 12:6 The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver, tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*

*Proverbs 30:5 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*

*2Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

*Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,*

Unfortunately, many Christians are Bible illiterate and have not discovered for themselves what the Bible has to say concerning their lives. They may hear sermons on a regular basis, but that's not enough. Their journey is based more on subjective experiences with the Holy Spirit rather than the purity of God's Word that continually washes over them and gives them the added direction they need. Spiritual experiences without the aid of the Word of God partnering together with the Holy Spirit will only lead to deception and wandering in the wilderness and vice versa.

As we have seen, the Word of God is to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. How does this happen for you as a believer in Christ, who is trying to find your way through the maze of ungodliness and deceit the enemy of your faith continually throws at you?

## How is God's Word a Lamp unto our Path?

What does it take for God's Word to become a lamp unto us in such a way that it begins to direct our paths more adequately unto Him so we move in the direction that He has for our lives?

First of all, we must spend time each day reading His Word and getting acquainted with it. We need to have a hunger and thirst for it.

When I was a young Christian, I spent hours on end reading and studying God's Word. I was totally mesmerized by it. I had just come out of the hippie culture and was utterly burned out from all the drugs I had been using during those years. I had lost touch with reality. Jesus and His Word became my new reality, which led me to totally immersing myself in it. I fell in love with it. One of the first prophecies I received as a young Christian was that my love for God's Word would bring me into intimacy with Him. To this day, it's the love for His Word that always leads me to a level of intimacy and sets my spirit on fire for Him.

If you want to get to know Jesus, you must get to know the Word of God. If you desire to love Jesus, you must love His Word. The first chapter of John's gospel says it very clearly. Jesus and the Word are one and the same.

*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus was a living epistle because He had spent so much time coming to an understanding of who He was and what His purpose was through the reading of the Scriptures.

When Jesus came to earth, born of a virgin, He gave up His right to act as God even though He never ceased being God. He made Himself of no reputation by taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of man.<sup>7</sup> When Jesus walked on earth, He was not all-knowing with all wisdom. He was dependent upon the Holy Spirit to reveal the wisdom and knowledge of God just as we must. At the age of twelve, He was still growing in wisdom.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Philippians 2:5-8

<sup>8</sup> Luke 2:52

All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding.<sup>9</sup> It was through God's Word that He began to discover who He was at a very early age. The Word of God was a lamp unto His feet just as it must be for us.

Jesus totally immersed Himself in the Scriptures and was very familiar with them. We must do the same if we want the Word of God to be a lamp unto our feet and give us the direction and guidance we need.

### **Where Do We Start? — Reading & Meditating**

There are many reading plans available to us in today's Christianity which are very helpful. However, a good place to begin is with the Gospels and getting to know who Jesus is, especially the Gospel of John. If you do not have an understanding of the Bible, it's better to spend time in the New Testament, Psalm, and Proverbs before trying to tackle the Old Testament.

To immerse ourselves in God's Word, we must not only read it but meditate in it. As Joshua was getting ready to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, Moses charged him to meditate on God's Word. By immersing himself in it through meditation, he would prosper and have success.<sup>10</sup>

King David said something very similar. He said those who meditate on the Word would continually bear fruit and prosper.<sup>11</sup>

How is meditating in God's Word different than reading it? To meditate involves inviting the Holy Spirit to speak as we ponder what we are learning and how it affects our lives. By pondering, we fellowship with the Word and Spirit at the same time. By inviting the Holy Spirit to speak as we read, we allow them to partner together in bringing us into the Promised Land for our lives. It is when we ponder the path of our feet that we will have success in whatever we are doing.<sup>12</sup>

There may be times during your regular devotional time when a particular Scripture jumps out at you. When this happens, it's a divine *Selah*—a time to pause and reflect—so ask the Holy Spirit what He's trying to show you. Take the time to focus and meditate on the Scripture and what the Lord is revealing to you. Once He shows you, make a note of it so you won't forget.

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 2:42-52

<sup>10</sup> Joshua 1:8

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 1:1-3

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 4:26

If you make a habit of doing this—entering it into your journal—you will most likely see a pattern of thought of where the Holy Spirit is leading you. You are now allowing the Word and Spirit to partner together as they lead you into truth and the path that God has for you.

## **Bible Study**

Bible study is another way in which we get to know God and His Word more thoroughly. It is imperative as a Bible believing Christian to understand why you believe what you believe. It will give you an authority in God's Word. It's not enough to just believe something because you heard it in a sermon or when shared by someone you respected. We all have a responsibility to search the Scriptures for ourselves.

I tell my students: "Don't believe it just because I said it. Study it for yourselves so that you own the truth." It's important that you own the truth.

The apostle Paul affirmed this principle when he said the Bereans were more fair-minded than the Thessalonians because they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether the things he was saying were true.<sup>13</sup> He also exhorted us to be diligent to study so that we could rightly divide it.

*2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

When we have a firm grasp of God's Word, especially in the foundational truths and principles, our senses are exercised to discern both good and evil. The writer of the Book of Hebrews refers to those who are unskilled in the Word as babes in Christ, who are still in need of solid food.

*Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. <sup>13</sup>For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup>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.*

If today's Christian is often Bible illiterate, as I suspect, then what we have are churches full of babes in Christ lost in spiritual playgrounds that are

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 17:10-11

nothing more than spiritual nurseries for them to participate in. Obviously, many good Bible believing churches preach and teach the whole counsel of God. If you want to be successful in your walk with the Lord, you need to be involved in a Bible believing church that preaches and teaches the full counsel of God..

Part of the problem in Bible illiteracy is with leaders who are more concerned about sustaining a church growth that looks good on the outward but only serves to feed the consumerism mentality that is rampant in today's world. Paul was very careful to preach and teach the whole counsel of God as we see in the following Scripture:

*Acts 20:26-29 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. <sup>27</sup>For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup>Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

Hebrews goes on to point out what the elementary principles of Christ are and how we must have these truths established in our lives before we can go on to maturity. A proper foundation needs to come forth. The foundational principles listed in Hebrews 6:1-2 are repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.<sup>14</sup> Speaking of going on to maturity or perfection, verse three says, “And this we will do if God permits.”

In other words, God has to issue you a “building permit” before you are allowed to go on to maturity. Obviously, we can continue in our works and build something, but it would be wood, hay, and straw or dead works. Even though saved, our works are burned.

*1Corinthians 3:11-15 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup>If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

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<sup>14</sup> Workbooks with all of these Bible study subjects and more can be found at: <http://kenbirks.com/perspectives-both/>

If you are to fulfill your destiny and purpose in God, it is of vital importance that you have the foundational truths established in your life. It is also important that you learn to endure sound doctrine. One of the characteristics of our times is that people will not be able to endure sound doctrine but will give themselves to false teachers with itching ears.

As you are faithful to give yourself to Bible study, you will be complete, and thoroughly equipped for every good work with the Word of God. You will have the discernment you need to prove and test all things while holding fast to that which is good. Your senses will be exercised to discern the difference between right and wrong and to know the real voice of the Holy Spirit vs. the many other voices that are clamoring for your attention.

*<sup>1</sup>Thessalonians 5:21-22 Test all things; hold fast what is good. <sup>22</sup>Abstain from every form of evil.*

God desires to direct our steps through the purity of His Word. It is as we adhere to the purity of His Word that He does this. Without the purity of God's Word alive and active in our lives, we won't be able to discern what He is saying to us through the Holy Spirit. They must partner together.

One of the most beautiful illustrations we have of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit partnering together to bring about God's purpose and direction was when the Day of Pentecost had fully come as recorded in Acts chapter two.

### **Pentecost Reveals how the Word and Spirit Partner**

Pentecost was the day Jesus had told His disciples about before His ascension into the heavens. They were told to wait in Jerusalem until they received the power of the Holy Spirit. As they waited with expectation, the Holy Spirit came like a rushing mighty wind with tongues of fire. They were all baptized or immersed in the Holy Spirit just as Jesus had prophesied.<sup>15</sup>

As they were experiencing this incredible outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they were all perplexed and filled with confusion. People around them, who saw and heard this happening thought they were all drunk and began to mock them.

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 10:44-46, 11:15-16

*Acts 2:1-13 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. <sup>5</sup>And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup>Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? <sup>9</sup>Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews, and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." <sup>12</sup>So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" <sup>13</sup>Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."*

### **The Scenario of What Took Place on This Historic Day**

- People from all nations were present and heard them speaking in their own languages – Verse 5.
- They were all confused – (mass confusion) – Verse 6.
- They were all amazed and marveled – Verse 6.
- They were perplexed – Verse 12.
- Others mocked – Verse 13.

At this juncture, the Word of God had not yet entered the context of what was happening. The disciples were all naturally excited and amazed at what happened, but confused, bewildered and not sure what to do with it. Peter then begins to preach and quote Scripture from the Book of Joel. He used the Word of God to bring definition and purpose to what was happening. Now filled with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, Peter allows them to partner together to bring forth the God's purpose in this situation.

*Acts 2:14-16 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this*

*be known to you, and heed my words. <sup>15</sup>For these are not drunk, as you suppose since it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup>But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

As Peter speaks with confidence and assurance, he begins to discern from the Word of God the prophetic purpose concerning this situation.

*Acts 2:29-33 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup>Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, <sup>31</sup>he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. <sup>32</sup>This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. <sup>33</sup>Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.*

### **The Results of the Word Partnering with the Spirit**

The results of Peter introducing the Word of God into the scenario are found in the following verses.

- The conviction of the Holy Spirit was released – Vs.37.
- Repentance and deliverance, as well as the call and promise for everyone to be a partaker, came forth – Vs. 38-39.
- A harvest of over 3000 souls was added to the church – Vs. 41.
- They all continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship – Vs. 42.
- They entered into an atmosphere of community with a commitment to body life in Christ – Vs. 44.
- Total Commitment – They totally sold out to the Lord – Vs. 45.
- They continued in one accord praising God and having favor with the people – Vss. 46-47.
- The church was launched into its destiny as were each of the individual members.

Imagine what would've occurred had the Word not been introduced. The purpose of God wouldn't have come forth. It would have been a spiritual playground. This unusual experience in the Holy Spirit would have produced nothing but confusion, fear, bewilderment, and mocking. It would've been a

broken cistern that couldn't contain the outpouring of the Spirit—something God considers as evil.<sup>16</sup> It took the Spirit and the Word partnering together to produce God's glory.

Unfortunately, this is what is happening in many quarters of Charismatic Christianity as various movements of the Spirit move across the Christian landscape. The Lord is not glorified because the Word is not being brought forth as a balancing factor. As a result, we are left in a wake of confusion and misunderstanding about what God's intended purpose may have been.

It is the Word of God that is living and powerful and able to discern what God's intended purpose is just as it did on the Day of Pentecost.

*Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

On the other hand, what would have taken place if it had been only the Word without the experience of the Holy Spirit? They would have been locked into a dry, empty experience void of life and exuberance, which also happens to God's people in today's Christianity.

The following passage correctly describes what happens when the Word and Spirit are not partnering together and what the result is when they do.

*Proverbs 11:1 (KJV) A false balance is an abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.*

### **The Holy Spirit's Role in the Process**

We have seen how God's Word is to be a major part of our navigational resources. Now, let's look at the Holy Spirit's role in the process.

Just as the church and the early disciples exploded into ministry and purpose as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the same can happen for us. The promise of the Holy Spirit is to as many as the Lord our God calls.<sup>17</sup> The exceeding greatness of His power is available to all who believe according to His mighty power.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah 2:13

<sup>17</sup> Acts 2:39

<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 1:19

The early disciples experienced excellent guidance from the Holy Spirit as they went forth infused by His power proclaiming the Gospel. God's desire is to inspire our lives in the same way as we depend on the resources He has granted us through His Word and Spirit.

Many areas in our lives are in need of the guidance that comes when the balance of the Holy Spirit's input and the Word are in agreement with each other. Two major areas are in our wholeness and destiny of which I will discuss in later chapters. In this section, however, our purpose is to see how it is that the Holy Spirit guides and directs our lives.

### **How the Holy Spirit Guides Us**

The Holy Spirit speaks and guides us in many ways such as dreams, visions, prophecy, the still small voice, our thoughts, intuition, spiritual impressions, circumstances, and even with an audible voice at times. These are all subjective experiences because they are all distilled through our carnal minds. The ability to accurately discern dreams, visions, prophecies, etc. comes when we bring every thought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ and His Word.<sup>19</sup>

### **Guidance through Dreams and Visions**

When Peter began to preach on the Day of Pentecost, he quoted the prophetic passage of Scripture from the prophet, Joel where it spoke of dreams and visions.

*Joel 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.*

The implication of this passage is that dreams and visions are to be a common occurrence in the life of believers during the era in which the Holy Spirit was to be poured out upon all flesh. The passage from Joel introduces the era that began on the Day of Pentecost and will continue until the Day of the Lord in which Jesus returns at His Second Coming.<sup>20</sup>

God's desire is to fill all of us with the Holy Spirit, which includes an expectation of Him leading us in all that we do. Peter's interpretation of the passage in Joel reveals what we can expect. He mentions spiritual dreams

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<sup>19</sup> 1Corinthians 13:12, 2Corinthians 10:5

<sup>20</sup> 1Corinthians 1:7

and visions as a source of strength and guidance as we navigate our way through the corruption of the world. Jesus left us with the following promise concerning being led by the Spirit.

*John 16:12-13 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 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.”*

One of the ways in which He tells us things to come is through visions and dreams. Throughout the Bible, we see that men and women had dreams and visions of what was to come. Joseph, in particular, had dreams that were a source of encouragement and guidance to him as he came into the fulfillment of all that God had purposed for his life.<sup>21</sup> Moses had the vision of the burning bush.<sup>22</sup> Daniel had many dreams that revealed things that would take place at the end of the age.<sup>23</sup> The apostle Paul spoke of being caught up to the third heaven and hearing inexpressible words—a vision that launched him into his ministry to the Gentiles.<sup>24</sup> As Steven, one of the seven deacons, was being martyred, he had a vision of the heavens being opened with Jesus standing at the right hand of God.<sup>25</sup> John, the revelator, also had a vision of the Lord Jesus appearing to him and showing him what would take place at the end of the age.<sup>26</sup>

All of the above examples are of people who were very committed to God’s intended purposes in the earth. The more faithful we are to what God is doing by seeking first the kingdom, the more we can expect to have visions and dreams. They not only solidify us in our calling and purpose but also move God’s plans and purpose forward. God always moves with purpose as seen in the above examples. When He gave these individuals a vision or a dream, it was a part of His overall purpose for humanity.

A good example of this is the story of Cornelius and the vision Peter had while in Joppa. Cornelius was a Gentile man who feared God but not yet a Christian, who had heard about Jesus. God in his mercy gave him the vision to send for Peter, who was in Joppa.<sup>27</sup> As the men, who were sent to get Peter, were on their journey, Peter received a vision from the Lord about

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<sup>21</sup> Genesis 37:1-11

<sup>22</sup> Exodus 3:1-4

<sup>23</sup> Daniel 7-9

<sup>24</sup> 2Corinthians 12:2-4

<sup>25</sup> Acts 7:55-57

<sup>26</sup> Revelation 1:9-11

<sup>27</sup> Acts 10:1-8

eating things that were common or unclean—things the Jews were not allowed to eat according to the Law of Moses. God was about to bring the Gentiles into the church for the first time by giving these two men visions with very explicit instructions as to how this would take place. In the vision, Peter was told to arise and go with them.<sup>28</sup>

Another example is when Paul and Silas went to minister to the churches Paul and Barnabas had planted on their first missionary journey. As they were going through the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia but received a vision from the Lord to come over to Macedonia.<sup>29</sup> As a result, God launched the Church in those parts of the world. The Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

As I think back over my life, there were a few occasions in which I've received a vision and several dreams. They've always proven to be very pivotal while being guided by the Holy Spirit into my destiny and purpose.

The only vision I ever had changed the course of my life and woke me up to the spiritual reality I now walk in. It was while serving in the Army in Vietnam during a time in which I had become heavily involved in drugs, including marijuana, LSD, and even heroin. I had to go to the dispensary one day to get a shot of penicillin and went into violent convulsions while experiencing a major flashback from LSD. Evidently, all of the drugs I was using at the time reacted to the penicillin. It was during a time when I had just started using heroin and had been for a couple of weeks.

Later in the evening of that same day, I felt I was going to go through convulsions again and became terribly frightened and had the orderly clerk drive me back to the dispensary in hopes of getting something to calm me down. On the way, I began to pray and ask God to help me. I was afraid I was going to die. Much later, while lying in my bunk, I was still feeling terrified and afraid I was going to die. I, once again, began to pray. As I was praying, I started to have a vision from the Lord. I saw my whole life flash before my eyes while God showed me the details of my life from my earliest memories—awakening memories I didn't even know existed. He was showing me how He had been with me at every critical stage of my life and directing me to where I was at that moment. He then took me into the future and indelibly stamped His calling on me. It had a profound effect on me.

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<sup>28</sup> Acts 10:9-22

<sup>29</sup> Acts 16:6-10

I spent the next three years or so trying to fit the vision into everything except what God had intended for it to accomplish in my life. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't shake it. In the end, I finally surrendered to God and Jesus Christ and have been walking in all that He showed me ever since.

Over the years, I have had a few spiritual dreams that have been very instrumental at pivotal times in my life. The dreams have either helped to confirm what God was doing in my life or have given me the explicit direction that I needed concerning my destiny and purpose.

One of the most crucial dreams I have ever experienced was during the mid-70s while living in Anchorage, Alaska. I was attending a large church that had a two-year Bible College. It was a church that was responsible for sending out church planting teams all over the United States, Mexico, the Philippines and other places around the world. In a period of 15 years, they sent out close to 100 church planting teams. I had a sense that God was leading me to be a part of one of these teams but wasn't quite sure. I had already completed the two-year program, had graduated and was trying to determine what the next phase in my life would be. I had been very involved in outreach ministry, ministering in the local jail, rescue missions and street evangelism while working at a warehouse.

It was during this season that I had a dream. In the dream, I was driving a forklift and placing a pallet of toys on top of this mezzanine where we stored the toys until needed. *(This was one of the jobs that I did in the warehouse.)* The pallet came loose and spilled to the ground 15 feet or so below. As the pallet of toys came crashing down, the toys were spread all over, injuring a couple of workers who were standing around. The Lord quickly revealed to me the interpretation to the dream. I felt a distinct impression that I was supposed to leave and join the newly established church planting team in Chico, California. I sensed that if I didn't respond, there would be accidents happening around me. The dream was the sign that I needed to step out in faith into the ministry God was calling me to—another defining moment.

I had made a trip to Chico about six months before to gain a feel for the place and to see if it would be where the Lord was leading me. As a result of the dream, I decided to discuss it to those who were over me in the Lord. Our church believed in the five-fold ministry as taught in Ephesians 4:11 and had apostles, prophets, and pastors on staff. The first person I went to see was the senior leader, who was an apostle. I shared the dream with him and how the Lord had been putting it on my heart to join the team in Chico.

He felt good about it and said, “You should go and share with Tom Edmondson and see what he thinks.”

Tom was the resident prophet on staff. I shared with him the details of the dream and what I thought the interpretation was. He fully agreed and gave me the green light. I then shared with another pastor and my Bible School career counselor. They all agreed to have an official sending out service at which time I would share my testimony with the congregation and have the elders lay hands on me and send me forth with their blessing. Within a few weeks, I was on my way to Chico to join the team. As it turned out, this was an intense kairos moment in the journey towards my destiny and purpose in God.

### **The Audible Voice of God**

There are times when God speaks through an audible voice as well, but they are very few and far in between. I can think of at least three instances in the New Testament. At the baptism of Jesus, God spoke from heaven that He was well pleased with His Son, Jesus.<sup>30</sup> Another instance was when Jesus allowed Peter, James and John to accompany Him to the Mount of Transfiguration where Moses and Elijah appeared; and the voice of God from heaven spoke once again, saying He was well pleased with His Son.<sup>31</sup> Another example is when Saul (later named Paul) was on the road to Damascus to persecute the saints when a light suddenly shone around him from heaven.

Jesus spoke to him in an audible voice and said, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*”<sup>32</sup>

In Saul’s case, the audible voice was used to get his attention and change the course of his life. It was a primary source of direction for his life.

I have heard the Lord’s audible voice on only one occasion. It was audible to my spirit, but not to anyone around me. It was while I was living in Anchorage, Alaska as a young Bible School student. I was riding my bicycle one day on one of the many bicycle trails throughout the city when I heard the Lord yell out my name.

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew 3:17

<sup>31</sup> John 17:5

<sup>32</sup> Acts 9:3-7

He said, “Kenny!” (*That’s what my family members always called me.*)

He then said, “What about him?”

He was drawing my attention to a drunk who was passed out, with his bottle lying next to him, in the park I was riding through.

Following that incident, within the next few weeks, I found myself teaching a Bible Study on a weekly basis at the local rescue mission where many were in the same condition as the man I saw passed out in the park. Prior to that, I had spent my Saturday afternoons, for the last couple of years, ministering at the city jail in Anchorage with another individual as my outreach assignment from the Bible College I was attending. As that season came to a close, I was seeking the Lord for another ministry. The experience with the audible voice was very instrumental in pointing me in the direction of the Rescue Mission.

The opportunity to teach the weekly Bible Studies for several months would prove to be very beneficial in the days ahead. The pastor of the church plant I would be joining in Chico would eventually ask me to preach during the weekly Wednesday evening services. Had I not had that experience, I don’t think I would have been sufficiently prepared to accept the task.

Because we serve a God who sees into the future, He can set up the experiences, yet to be revealed for future purposes.

### **The Prophetic Word and Gift of Prophecy**

The Scripture in Joel that Peter quoted also mentioned, when the Spirit was to be poured out on all flesh, God’s sons and daughters would prophesy.<sup>33</sup> Prophecy is a vital aspect when it comes to being led by the Holy Spirit.

The importance of prophecy comes through strongly throughout the Old and New Testaments. There were many prophets in the Old Testament who were very instrumental in bringing directive and confirming words from the Lord at critical times in the history of Israel. After the Children of Israel arrived in the Promised Land because of Moses and Joshua, there were people like Deborah, Gideon, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha and others who were very instrumental in guiding the nation of Israel into God’s purposes. It was

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<sup>33</sup> Joel 2:28

Samuel who prophesied to David that he would be King one day. Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel were major prophets who not only spoke to Israel's purposes during their day but also spoke futuristically concerning God's plans and purposes for all ages, including times right up until the second coming of Christ. All that God has done and is going to do will have been spoken through His prophets as the following passage indicates.

*Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*

We are now living in the New Testament era under the New Covenant that God has made with humanity through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ which Isaiah the Prophet prophesied.<sup>34</sup> The outpouring of the Holy Spirit that catapulted the New Testament Church into existence was foretold by the prophet Joel as we have already seen.

Throughout the New Testament, we see how the prophetic word comes forth under the New Covenant. The apostle Paul points out in the Book of Ephesians that prophets will be a part of God's plan until we come to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ.<sup>35</sup> He also tells the Corinthian Church that they're not to come short in any gift while waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup> He then goes on to encourage them all to prophesy for the encouragement, edification, comfort and exhortation of believers.<sup>37</sup>

It's important to understand there are different levels of the prophetic gift in the New Testament. In the Book of Romans, Paul exhorts the believers to prophesy in the proportion of their degree of faith.<sup>38</sup> We see in the New Testament that there were prophets, and there were believers used in the gift of prophecy.

Prophets are used very well in the gift of prophecy because of their diligence in allowing God to use them.<sup>39</sup> They've had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil and have been set in the body as ordained prophets by those who have observed their gift in operation. They are recognized as operating at a higher level of faith and accuracy in the prophetic gift. It is the prophet who speaks "Thus says the Holy Spirit" in

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<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 53

<sup>35</sup> Ephesians 4:11-13

<sup>36</sup> 1Corinthians 1:7

<sup>37</sup> 1Corinthians 14:1-3, 31

<sup>38</sup> Romans 12:6

<sup>39</sup> Hebrews 5:14

more of a directive way with confidence. We see this in the instance of the prophet Agabus when he prophesied to Paul concerning what would happen to him when we went to Jerusalem.

*Acts 21:10-11 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. <sup>11</sup>When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "*

Before the prophet, Agabus', coming, other disciples spoke through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup> They did not prophesy in the specific, directive terms that Agabus spoke. In their spirits, they were sensing he shouldn't go because there would be trouble. It took the prophet to speak with authority what would happen to him if he were to go.

Rather than being blindsided, the gift of prophecy spoken through the above sources just mentioned helped Paul to prepare and respond appropriately to what was about to happen upon his return to Jerusalem.

Most people, who operate in the gift of prophecy, speak in the realm of edification, exhortation and comfort to other believers rather than a more directive manner.

*1Corinthians 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*

Paul exhorts us in this same chapter that the gifts of the Spirit are to be done decently and in order. Operating according to our level of faith until our local elders have released us is all a part of allowing the gifts of the Spirit to come forth in a decently and orderly manner. None of us are a law unto ourselves, but must be connected to the other members of the body and covered by local elders.

*1Corinthians 14:39-40 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. <sup>40</sup>Let all things be done decently and in order.*

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<sup>40</sup> Acts 21:4

*There has been much confusion and abuse of the gift of prophecy throughout the body of Christ because the church has not followed this exhortation by Paul.*

God's desire towards us, in prophecy, is that we would all press into the gift and allow it to work according to our level of faith. It is equally important that we not despise prophecy, but rather embrace it and receive it for the extraordinary gift it is.<sup>41</sup> The gift of prophecy is designed to encourage and strengthen us in the faith. Many times, it confirms what God is already doing and saying, which gives us the confidence and assurance that He has been speaking and directing our lives unto Him in a greater way. As a result, we begin to grow from faith to faith.<sup>42</sup> It helps us to fight the good fight of faith as Paul told Timothy. His exhortation to Timothy was to wage a good warfare by the prophecies he had received.<sup>43</sup>

I have had quite a few prophecies given to me over the years. They have been very instrumental in the overall direction of my life. Some were kairos moments that solidified me in my calling and purpose while others were merely encouraging words that added to my faith and helped to keep me moving forward.

During my send-out service I received prophecies. One, in particular, stood out, which was given to me by the prophet on staff. He said my time with the church planting team would be for a short season, intimating I wouldn't be there long. At the time, I just filed it away, because as far as I was concerned I was going there to be fully committed. He said my season there was for the purpose of training for what God was calling me to do.

As it turned out, within a couple of months, I was assigned to preach the Wednesday night services. I did this on a weekly basis for two and half years. At the end of this time, our pastor and his family decided to move back to Anchorage and close the doors of the church. My wife and I decided to move to the Sacramento area where there was another church in existence, which had been sent from the church in Alaska several years prior.

After being with our new church for about three years and preaching on several occasions, along with teaching in our Bible School, an unfortunate situation happened; and I was asked to take the role of Senior Pastor. The

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<sup>41</sup> 1Thessalonians 5:20, 1Corinthians 14:5

<sup>42</sup> Romans 1:17

<sup>43</sup> 1Timothy 1:18

prophecy given to me by the prophet had come to pass and was now giving me the confidence and assurance I was where I was supposed to be. I was able to do as Paul had exhorted young Timothy—to wage a good warfare by the prophecies that had been given to me.

A few months after I had been set in as the Senior Pastor, we were visited by a proven prophet from New Zealand. Another pastor from our fellowship of churches, who had been mentoring me, suggested we invite this man for a time of ministry as he had been very effective in his church while ministering in the prophetic realm. Our church was still in a period of upheaval as a result of our pastor resigning and leaving me in charge. Even though I had been set in by our apostle, I had sensed I wasn't fully received as the new pastor yet.

When the prophet arrived, he requested to have no communication with me or anyone else in the body until he had delivered the prophetic word to our church. On his first evening with us, he spoke a prophetic word to my wife and me. He spoke directly to our situation, affirming me in taking a new role as Senior Pastor, without having any prior knowledge, whatsoever. The pastor who had been mentoring me, assured me that he had not told him anything about our situation. As a result, I was confirmed in the church's eyes and was very well received from then on.

As you can see, prophecy can be a very encouraging source of faith to us as we move forward in God's calling and purpose.

### **Prophecy Can Be Confusing at Times**

Prophecy can also be very confusing because no one is perfect in the gift nor has complete faith as Jesus did.

Most of the prophecies I have received over the years have hit the mark though some did not witness to my spirit whatsoever. I have also had some in which part of the prophecy hit the mark while other portions were totally off. How do we respond when that happens?

1Thessalonians tells us that we are not to despise prophecies but to test all things and hold fast to what is good.<sup>44</sup> The fact that we are to test prophecy indicates to us that there is room for error. If I'm receiving a prophecy that doesn't witness to my spirit, I'm not going to act upon it. We shouldn't be

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<sup>44</sup> 1Thessalonians 5:20-21

blown away by the mistake, but rather simply discard it and hold fast to the portion that witnessed to our spirit. It may also be that it is for a later time in your life. For instance, when I heard the word from the prophet that my time with the church planting team was going to be for a short season, I just filed it away. It was very helpful and encouraged to me when it did come to pass in that it helped me to process what God was doing in my life during a time of transition.

Prophecy, for the most part, is designed to be more of an encouragement to our faith rather than directional. However, when confirmed, it can be directional by other sources from which we hear from God into our spirits. For instance, when Paul received the directive word from Agabus, it confirmed what he already heard through the Spirit.

Prophecy can be very helpful as we move forward in the purpose and destiny that God has called to as we experience authentic Christianity.

### **The Primary Means of Navigation**

Prophecy and visions are important to us, but the reality is that they are not the primary means of navigation as we move forward on the path of life. I have found them to be very instrumental at pivotal moments. They help to establish the overall direction and purpose we are going, but on a daily basis God gently prods us on as we are obedient to His Word and Spirit.

A significant passage of Scripture in Proverbs says, *“The mind of man plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps, as we commit our works to the Lord.”* Notice the progression of thought in the Scriptures below.

*Proverbs 16:1-3 The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. <sup>2</sup>All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits. <sup>3</sup>Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.*

*Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.*

The principle found in these verses is that as we are faithful to commit our lives and works to the Lord, He will be faithful to direct our steps. Proverbs 16 goes along with Proverbs 3:5-6 where we are exhorted not to lean on our understanding.

*Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup>in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

As we are faithful to commit our ways to the Lord, He will establish our thoughts, enabling Him to direct our steps. It's a total reliance on the Holy Spirit's expertise in our lives to be our guide. In the process, the Lord weighs our motives and convicts us if we have impure motives. By allowing the Lord to convict and challenge our motives, it keeps our thoughts pure so that He can lead us in the direction He has charted out for our lives.

Have you ever wondered how people who prophesy can do it so effectively to the degree they are speaking into the window of your soul? It's as simple as committing their works to the Lord so that God can establish the thoughts that are coming forth and then trusting they are really from God. As they are faithful to speak with pure motives, there is a confirmation in their spirits that releases the prophetic flow coming forth. If there are impure motives such as envy and self-seeking, it will affect the prophetic word because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

God uses this principle on a daily basis to direct our lives as we continually acknowledge Him in all of our ways. He does this through spiritual impressions, our intuition, and through His still small voice. It's when we shut out all the other voices that are clamoring for our attention that we can hear what God is speaking to our spirits. I'm convinced He's always speaking in one form or another, but we are much too busy to quiet our souls before Him.

### **God Never Speaks in an Anxious Way**

It's important to understand, God always speaks in a peaceable and gentle way, never with confusion or in an anxious way as we see in the following passage.

*James 3:17-18 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. <sup>18</sup>Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

### **God Never Speaks Contrary to His Word**

It's also important to understand that God never speaks contrary to His Word. If we are hearing something that is in contradiction to God's Word,

then His Word takes precedence over what we may be hearing. Keep in mind, none of us are perfect in our understanding, but must always process what we hear through the purity of His Word.

As we are faithful to adhere to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit by putting into practice what they say, we will discover more and more what God has in store for us as at each interval in the path ahead.

The bottom line is, God's Word and Spirit are designed to partner together as they lead us along this path that holds the keys to our destiny and purpose in Him. As we take on the responsibility of making sure, the Word and Spirit are partnering together it keeps us on track as we pursue our destiny and purpose in God. As a result, we don't fall into deception or error.