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THE SPIRIT LED LIFE

Greetings saints!

We pray that this, our **100th edition** of these Living Logos newsletters, finds you firm, established and always abounding in the work of our Lord and Savior! Amen.

Wow, 99 newsletters later; here we are! And what a wonderful journey the past 8-plus years have been! Shannon and I have seen the Lord open glorious doors for Living Logos Ministries and we know we have only scratched the surface of all that God has planned for our family and ministry. To God be the glory!

Most of you are not aware of this, but the reason I began writing these monthly teachings close to a decade ago was because I just simply needed an outlet to proclaim the truths that God had given me. No, I did not have God speak to me in an audible voice or Him send an angel to give me this directive. I just acted on the idea that bore witness in my heart.

When Shannon and I met in Athens, GA a little over 9 years ago, I was regularly teaching, leading Bible Studies and ministering in various capacities. So when we got married in July of 2006 and moved to Colorado Springs just a couple of months later for me to attend Charis Bible College, I no longer had that outlet. And all the preachers out there will "amen" this, but one thing preachers need is a people to preach to! So I just decided to begin writing a monthly teaching newsletter to, number one, fill that void, and number two, to keep people updated on what was happening with us in Colorado.

Well, lo and behold, it turned out to be a very God-inspired and significant decision... First of all, I discovered something very important as I began writing these newsletters. I found out that writing was something God had gifted me to do because as I would write these newsletters, the Word would just flow out of me. I found it was so easy for me to convey the truths that I was presenting through this written format. The only way to describe it is I felt like I could somewhat relate to how those like the Apostle Paul must have felt as they were being moved to write the Scriptures that God inspired them to pen. It just felt like God was giving me thought after thought of what to say.

So this is how this all got started and we have been writing these Living Logos teaching newsletters ever since. Glory to God! In this time frame, they have gotten into the hands of some very prominent people and are now being sent into several different nations. We have even made books out of some of these teachings and have distributed them all around the world. God is good!

Well, as I pondered what would be a good subject matter for this milestone edition of our Living Logos newsletters, it seemed good to me to teach on the subject that certainly applies to this testimony you just read- How to be Led by the Holy Spirit!

Saints, during my relatively short period of time of being a born again Christian, this has been one of the most important lessons I have ever learned. I can honestly say that during these past 15 years, I have never had the Lord lead me by any spectacular means. No, I have never once been led to do anything of significance through a dream, vision, audible voice from God, etc.

Now I certainly do believe that God uses these more spectacular forms of communication to lead, guide and direct His children today. Yes, dreams, visions and prophecies are absolutely still relevant to God's church. Please do not misunderstand me. But what we need to understand is that these are the exception and not the rule. You will not have a dream, a vision, or a prophecy to guide you in every solitary decision you are to make. In fact, with most of us, these gifts of the Spirit will occur rather rarely- meaning, they will not be a regular occurrence that we can count on having day in and day out.

But, saints, God wants to direct your path daily and regularly order your steps. We need to hear from the Holy Spirit on the little things like when to turn or when to speak. And we cannot expect some spectacular form of communication to guide us in all of these decisions. This is when we must learn to be led by the Holy Spirit in the more regular and subtle way that He communicates with us- the inward witness.

Saints, these internal promptings of the Holy Spirit are the primary way that the Lord will lead and guide His children. Yes, this regular form of guidance from the Lord will come from within and not from without. But the vast majority of Spirit-filled Christians think otherwise. Most of us “charismaniacs” are looking for a “word” or some other spectacular form of God’s guidance for every decision we are to make.

Now I have received many “words” over my Christian life and many of them have been spot-on, but my life has not been built on these words. They have simply been confirmations of what God had either already spoken to my heart or they played a part in building God’s vision within me.

Friends, here me on this: We are not to be led by other people. Why? Because people are fallible. Even the most accurate Christians in the arena of prophecy, word of knowledge, etc. can miss it. And let me say this at the risk of offending someone... If you receive a “word” from someone and you act on it and it ruins your life, it is *your* fault. Let me say that again this way- If someone gives you some form of guidance through prophecy and you go out and do what they told you to do, you have no one to blame but yourself. Someone will say, “But they missed it by giving me that word!” Yeah, it is still your fault though. Why? Because if you have the Holy Spirit within you, you are to be led by Him and not by some prophecy that came through someone else.

No, what we are supposed to do when we receive a “word” is judge it (see 1 Thessalonians 5:21). Judge it by what? Judge it by the more sure Word of Prophecy- the Word of God (see 2 Peter 1:19) and judge it by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit within you. In other words, the first thing you do is make sure that “word” measures up to God’s Word- not conflicting with the truth of God’s Word in any shape, form or fashion. Number two, you check it by your heart. Does it seem good in your spirit? Do you sense the Holy Spirit is giving you a check in your heart regarding that word in any way? But what you *never* do is just trust a “word” you receive as automatically being “Thus saith the Lord” and act on it. No, saints, put it on the shelf, pray about it, but never just blindly act on it-especially if you are getting a check in your spirit about any of the things spoken over you.

Friends, the Holy Spirit is there to guide you and confirm all of these external forms of guidance and direction. We are never- I said, never- to override what He leads us to do on the inside no matter how reputable or spectacular any experience you have is.

But the main point I want to get across to you this month is that the primary way that God is going to lead a Christian is *not* through special words and other spectacular means; the primary way He is going to lead us is through that still small voice in our hearts and through that inward witness in our spirits.

Let me give you an excellent example of this from the Scriptures...

IT SEEMED GOOD

In Luke 1:1-4 we are told by Dr. Luke- *“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”*

So notice what Luke was saying here... He said in verses 1&2 that there had been many who had taken it upon themselves to write about the life and ministry of Jesus- some of them being actual eyewitnesses to the things that Jesus said and did. But in verse 3, Luke said that in spite of all that had already been recorded by others, “it seemed good” to him also to write an orderly account of Jesus’ life and ministry because he had a perfect understanding of all things from the very first. Now we know that he had this “perfect understanding” from the beginning of Jesus’ life because of how Luke’s gospel has more details of the birth of Jesus than all of the other three gospels.

But I want to draw your attention to those three little words he used in verse 3- “it seemed good” - because they are extremely important regarding the subject at hand...

Now we know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and the writings and prophecies

of the Bible were written by men who were “moved” by the Holy Spirit, correct (2 Peter 1:21)? Therefore, we should know that the Gospel of Luke was inspired by God as well, down to the very last jot and tittle. So it would be a gross understatement to say that Luke was “led by the Holy Spirit” to write this book that would be canonized as Holy Scripture, correct?

Well, one would think that if Luke were going to be chosen to write one of the four most important books that would ever be written, God might have instructed him to do so through a dream, an open vision, an audible voice, etc., but he did not! You would have to add to the Bible to say that God led Luke to write this gospel through any of these spectacular forms of guidance. In fact, there is actually no indication that Luke even knew what he was writing was going to be passed down for 2,000 years and considered part of the Holy Scriptures.

So this is pretty amazing to think that God led him to write one of the most important books ever written- one of the four Gospels that have been passed down for 2,000 years declaring the truth about our Savior- simply by the fact that it just seemed like a good idea. You would think that God would either have spoken to him in an audible voice saying- “Luuuuuke, I am your Father (notice the Star Wars undertone to this☺)! Write the things which I will tell you” or maybe God would have sent an angel with the message- “Thus saith the Lord, thou art to writest a book that wilt be canonizeth as Scripture and read by billions of people!” No, God led this man to write one of the most important books ever written simply by bearing witness with his spirit which manifested itself as it just seeming like a good thing to do! That is amazing!

Now here is the point we should learn from this: If God led Luke to write his gospel by just simply dropping an idea in his heart, how much more will He lead us in the same way!?! Let me say it this way: **If the Lord led Luke to do something of such super-significance by this unspectacular inner witness, how much more will He lead us to do things of less significance by an unspectacular inner witness!?!** That’s a powerful truth, my friends!

SILAS- AT THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Let’s turn over to Acts chapter 15 because I believe it is a chapter that illustrates this same principle even further...

The background to this chapter is this: There was a revival among the Gentiles at this time and Jewish believers were instructing Gentiles to be circumcised. Of course, this upset the Apostles- Paul and Barnabas. So they all went before the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem and presented this issue to them. So after much discussion and debate, the leaders came to the conclusion that circumcision as well as many other parts of the Law of Moses did not need to be observed by the Gentiles. As a result, these leaders of the early church decided to write an extremely important letter to these new Gentile converts explaining their decision.

Now we know that their decision was God inspired or else it would not have been recorded for us in this chapter. So how did they come to this decision? How was God’s will manifested in and through them?

Well, it is important to note that this chapter uses this same phrase from Luke 1:3- “it seemed good”- three times...

First of all, verses 25 & 28 both say that they made two major decisions based on the fact that it simply just seemed good to them and to the Holy Ghost...

Specifically, verse 25 said, “*it seemed good to us, being assembled in one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.*” Now back up to verse 22 because I want you to notice who these chosen men were. Of course, there was Barnabas and Paul, but we are told that they also sent Judas (i.e. Barsabas) and Silas. (Remember this name Silas because he is a significant part of this chapter).

Then down in verse 28, we are told- “*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.*” So they also concluded that their decision to send them this letter and not heap their convictions upon them was not just what seemed good to them, but it also seemed good to the Holy Spirit as well. Amen!

So I want you to get this point right here: The church leaders were “led by the Holy Spirit” to both send chosen men along with Barnabas and Paul and also to make an extremely important decision in the time of the early church. So how were they led? By what seemed good to them and what seemed good to the Holy Spirit!

Now after this group of men were sent to Antioch to deliver this message to their Gentile brethren, they stayed there for a time exhorting and strengthening the disciples (see verses 30-33). But, this is another important point: After these chosen men decided to return to Jerusalem, we are told that it “seemed good” (again) to Silas to remain there (verse 34). Now it is important to note that Paul and Barnabas also stayed because they had already been called to that area before returning to Jerusalem earlier in the chapter with the prior issue.

Now a situation happened beginning in verse 36 where a contention arose between Paul and Barnabas: The background to this contention was that Paul suggested that they depart and return to every city where they had preached and see how these churches were doing. So Barnabas agreed, but he wanted to bring John (called Mark) along with them. Now Paul did not want to bring Mark because of how he departed from them on a prior mission. Well, the contention became so intense that Barnabas took Mark and departed from Paul. This, of course, left Paul alone. Who was he going to minister side by side with now? You got it! Silas- the one who had stayed in the area just because it seemed like the right thing to do!

So let's back up for a second... Why was Silas even sent to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to begin with? Verses 22&25 tell us he was one that was chosen to go because it seemed good to the leadership. And why was he still in Antioch even when the others had returned? Verse 34 tells us that it was because it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Amen!

So, what was the ultimate fruit of all of these decisions? Silas was in the right place at the right time to get hooked up with the great Apostle Paul and to find the opportunity of a lifetime to travel and minister alongside of him! And he was put on the path God willed for him because, first, his leadership was led by the Spirit of God and, second, he was led by the Spirit of God. And again, saints, both parties were simply led by it just seeming like the right thing to do. So we could say it this way... **Silas was in a good place, at a good time, because it just seemed good.** That is so powerful to me!

BEING MULISH VERSUS BEING REIN TRAINED

So I wonder how many believers have missed God's purpose and destiny for their lives because they did not properly identify this self-same witness? Saints, I have traveled in enough circles to see that this kind of subtle prompting would not have been enough to move many Christians to obedience. I have heard believers make statements like, “If God wants me to do that, He is going to have to speak to me through a burning bush!” or “God is going to have to write in the clouds what He wants me to do!” But the truth is, when Christians have that kind of attitude, they are really just being “mulish.”

What do I mean by “mulish?” Well, when you think of a mule, what do you think of? Stubbornness! You think of a mule as being stubborn and hard to move. Oftentimes, the only way to motivate a mule to move is by yanking on them or beating them. My brothers and sisters, this is NOT how God wants His children to be led.

In Psalm 32:8-9 the Lord says, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. So do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they would not come near you.” Here God is telling us that He will lead and guide us but that we should not be like a horse or a mule that has no understanding of what its master is leading it to do unless it gets its head jerked around by a bit and bridle.

In Psalm 16:7, King David says, “I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; My heart (KJV “reins”) also instructs me in the night seasons.” It is interesting to me that the original King James Version would use this word “reins” here. It is as if David were saying that he was like a horse and God was steering him through the “reins of his heart.”

And, saints, this is exactly how God desires us to be led! He wants us to be “rein-trained.” He doesn't want us to require an audible voice or some other spectacular experience before we will do what He is leading us to do.

He wants us to be willing to move in the direction that His slightest tug on the reins of our heart is directing us to go. And if that was His perfect will for the Old Testament believer; how much more will it be His will for the New Testament believer who has the Holy Spirit abiding on the inside of us!?!

You see, God wants us to be like the “rein-trained” race horse which does not need to be forced to turn this way and that, but will, with just the slightest nudge of the reins, turn in the direction that its rider desires. And these subtle and slight nudges perfectly describe the way the Lord leads us through the inner witness.

My brothers and sisters, until we learn to detect and act on these inner-impressions, we will miss much of the things that God is leading us to do. In fact, God does not want us to sit around and wait on Him to spell out everything He wants us to do. I know this to be true from personal experience and through the examples of others. I have seen many well-meaning and sincere Christians who have sat for years, waiting on God to tell them where to go and what to do and are still waiting today.

How many of you know that when your children come to a certain age, you do not want them asking you if they should do this or do that. No, you want your children to grow up and start making wise decisions for themselves. Now I am not saying that we should never seek the Lord's will regarding decisions we are to make and paths we are to take, but my point is, we need to also avoid over-spiritualizing everything and not simply following the impressions the Spirit drops in our heart.

A good example of this is picking your life-long mate... You know, in the majority of marriages that were God-ordained in the Bible, there is no indication that God told these men who they were to marry. No, these godly men just pursued the woman they desired to marry, and in almost all of those cases, they ended up marrying the one God had purposed for them to marry. So I believe that God gives us the choice and leads us who to marry by the desires of our heart as well.

How do I know this, you ask? Well, this is my testimony as well! When Shannon and I were dating, I had a little stretch where I was unsure if it was God's will. So as I prayed about whether it was God's will or not, the Lord told me- “My will is your will.” Friends, that speaks volumes! What I knew the Lord was telling me was that if I desire to marry Shannon, He will bless it. He was telling me to follow the desires of my heart and not over-spiritualize the whole thing. Then He showed me this truth in His Word of how all of the patriarchs were led to the spouse that He had ordained for them but there was no indication that He spoke to them, telling them that these women were to be their wives.

So my point is- if you are a child of God, filled with the Holy Spirit and are delighting yourself in God, you can trust the desires of your heart. Begin to move and act on those desires- trusting the Lord that even if you make a bad decision, the Lord will still accomplish His purpose for your life. Sure, acknowledge the Lord in all your ways by asking Him what He would have you to do but then don't just sit there and wait forever for Him to write it on the wall. Trust that He put those desires in your heart and then do those things that you purpose in your heart to do (see 2 Corinthians 9:7).

Now, again, don't misunderstand me: I absolutely agree that we need to do our best to hear from God concerning the decisions we have to make in our life, but not at the risk of sitting on the bench and doing nothing until the Lord writes His directions in the clouds. I have seen this happen time and time again, and usually many well-meaning Christians do this out of the fear of missing it. Friends, fear is not of God and most definitely is not to be a motivation in why we do or don't do something.

RED LIGHT – GREEN LIGHT

So, in conclusion, what is the common denominator with all of these manifestations of the inward witness? They all require action and movement on our part!

This is verified in John 16:13 when Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. Well, you cannot guide something that is not already moving, can you? Saints, you can sit on a boat and try to turn the rudder to the left and to the right but if the boat is sitting idle, it's not going to turn. But if you take that same

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boat and get it moving a bit and then turn that same rudder ever so slightly, you will begin to turn the boat. But, with this example, all you are essentially doing is guiding the boat.

So for the Holy Spirit to “guide” you, then the assumption is that you are already moving. Moving where? Moving in the direction that is already laid out to you in God’s Word! For example, this principle is well-illustrated throughout the Book of Acts where the Holy Spirit guided them as they went...

You see, they had taken the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus seriously and were actively going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature- thus making disciples. They had this word from God and they ran with it! Of course, there were times when the Holy Spirit had to stop them from going into certain areas and/or redirect them. But this is the pattern which God desires us to follow as well: He wants us to act on what He has already said and what is written in His Word and then He will redirect us or change our course as needed.

But, like I said, the mistake so many people make is that they are waiting for God to tell them what to do and doing nothing in the meantime. You could say they believe God is the “God of the Red Light.” What I mean is that they believe that they need to ask the Lord for His direction and then they sit there waiting for the light to turn green before they start moving.

Friends, again, this is not God’s plan for us. He wants us to act on the principles and admonitions found in His Word and then expect Him to give us more specific direction as we are moving. Here is a good truth: **In order to get God’s specific direction, you first need to be doing His general direction** (i.e. His Word).

Now, on the other hand, there are Christians who have no clue that God actually wants to lead and direct them. They just do whatever they want expecting things to work together for their good. That, of course, is the other ditch that we want to avoid as well because we cannot expect the fruit of the wrong decisions we make to be the will of God for our lives. God has a good, acceptable, and perfect will, and it is up to us to understand what His will is (Ephesians 5:17).

So here is my point today: God wants you to first act on His Word- the More Sure Word of prophecy! Make sure you are following His will for the church in general- going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature. Speak words of edification, exhortation and comfort into your neighbor and, by all means, heal the sick, cast out demons, and bring His kingdom with you wherever you go. And if the Lord tells you to slow down, turn this way, or gives you clear direction in how to accomplish this, by all means, obey what seems good in your heart. Know that He will keep you on the path He has for you and He will guide you into all truth. But again, in order to be guided, you have to be moving.

He is the God of the green light, saints. So, go therefore! Walk on the path God has for you and if He prompts you to turn to the left or the right, know that He is directing your path and ordering your steps. Trust the Lord’s directions within your heart and at the same time, trust Him with all your heart. Selah!

Until next month... Maranatha!

Victoriously,

