

**Being Led by the Spirit to do God’s Will (Acts 16:6-10)**

This text has been one of the single most important texts in my adult Christian life

* It is regularly in the forefront of my thoughts, and has been with me in every big moment of adulthood
  + **Because**: It holds out to us the hope of being led by God’s Spirit to do God’s Will **(recap text)**
  + **Depth**: (1) I want to do God’s will (2) I don't always know the way that I should go
* But, this text reminds me that God loves me, and being His child, He wants to lead me in the way I should go

**The Father loves you.**

* “The Father Himself loves you dearly…”(John 16:27, Jesus speaking)
* You are precious to Him and your life counts—you (Christian) are His son or His daughter
* See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God… (1 John 3:1)

“The most precious **gift of the Father’s love** **in Christ** is **the gift of the Holy Spirit** to dwell in us **and lead us**.” —Andrew Murray[[1]](#footnote--1)

He cares about every detail of your life and He wants to **lead you** in paths of righteousness **for His name’s sake**

The agent of the Father’s loving work is the Spirit—Because the Father loves us, we can expect to be led by the Spirit

* John 16:13-15, NLT
* Galatians 5 teaches us that:

The Holy Spirit **guides** us (v. 16)

The Holy Spirit **gives** us good desires (v. 17)

The Holy Spirit **directs** us (v. 18)

The Holy Spirit **produces** good things in us (v. 22)

The Holy Spirit **leads** us (v. 25)

* Romans 8:14, NLT

**This is the clear testimony of Scripture: That your Heavenly Father wants to lead you by His Spirit**

* To not believe this is to believe in a strange God who is divorced from the God of Scripture
* E.g. To see how God works through His Spirit, we can look at the life and ministry of Jesus

Jesus’ life and ministry and the work of the Spirit

* At the start of Jesus’ ministry the Holy Spirit came **upon** Him (E.g. Luke 3:22)
* The results were He was **filled** with the Spirit and returned to Galilee in the **power** of the Spirit (E.g. Luke 4:1,14)
* Jesus was also **anointed** with the Spirit to do the work of God (E.g. Luke 4:18-19)
* And, importantly, Jesus was also **led** **by the Spirit**
* “Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. **He was led by the Spirit…**”(Luke 4:1)

We see the Spirit working in the same way in and through Jesus’ followers in the Book of Acts

* The same progression as in the life of Jesus (Upon—filled—power/anointing—led)
* Acts 8:26-29 (Philip—**individual**); 13:1-4a (The Church in Antioch—**corporate**);16:6-10 (Paul, Timothy, Luke, Silas—**group**)

So, if we take Scripture seriously at all, we would have to conclude (joyfully) that this is the way the Spirit wants to work in our lives as well!

* The question is not, whether or not the Spirit wants to do this, **but why** the Spirit wants to do this! **(the key)**
* Think again of the life of Jesus:

Jesus only **did what** the Father wanted Him to do (E.g. John 5:19)

Jesus only **said** **what** the Father wanted Him to say (E.g. John 12:49)

Jesus only **did and said** things **when** the Father told Him to (E.g. John 16:12)

**Jesus was led by the Spirit to do the will of the Father** (again, this is a love thing—God’s will always is)

* “For **the Father loves the Son**, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing… I **do not seek My own** will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” (John 5:20 & 30, Jesus speaking)
* Because of love, the Father shows the Son—and because of love, **the Son does the will of the Father** (the pattern)

By necessity—if you are saying, “I want to be led by the Spirit” then you are saying, “I want to do the will of God.”

* Because… the Father loves you and you love Him
* = Doing the will of God for **the glory of God** (Honest reflection: Is that what you want?)

Guidance is a most important element in Christian experience; it is essential to a life in the will of God. –John F. Walvoord4

Difficulty: We aren’t always told exactly how this happens (recap text—kept by the Spirit and not allowed)

**Audible? Thoughts? Impressions? Feelings?**

* Acts 8:29 = the Spirit **said** to Philip
* Acts 10:19 = the Spirit **said** to Peter
* Acts 11:12 = the Spirit **told me** (Peter)
* Acts 13:2 = the Holy Spirit **said** (The church)
* Acts 16:6 = **forbidden by** the Holy Spirit
* Acts 16:7 = the Spirit of Jesus **did not permit** them
* Acts 16:9 = a **vision** (Paul)
* Acts 16:10 = God **had called** us
* Acts 20:22 = **bound** in the Spirit
* Acts 20:23 = the Spirit **solemnly testifies** to me

**How does this work out?**

* The way God communicates to us is almost as **unique** as each person…
* Obviously there are **constants:** The Word, Community[[2]](#footnote-0), Accountable Relationships, Circumstances
* But as far as the question: Is it audible? A feeling? An impression? A sense? A thought? …ummm
* **Make it practical!?! (I don’t know how)**

But, there are a couple of helpful practicalities:

1. The Holy Spirit not only leads us, **but He teaches us**, and in many ways this precedes specific leading

* John 14:26, NASB
* Teaching is making clear the Word of God - "Scripture is the royal scepter by which King Jesus rules his church." -Stott
* Whereas **leading** and **guiding** may be more application of the truth of God’s word to a **particular situations** of our lives
* When the Spirit of truth comes, **He will guide you into all truth… He will tell you about the future** (John 16:13)
* May lead us by teaching us to live a godly life out of which right purposes and decisions come forth
* Which means… It is **not always** esoteric and mysterious (wisdom)

2. To be led by the Spirit requires **surrender to His will** and a **willingness to be convicted** of sin

* Philippians 2:12c-16a (NASB)
* Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)
* He leads us in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake (E.g. Psalm 23:3) (I lost some of you there…)

**The leading of the Spirit is inseparable from the sanctifying work of the Spirit**

* “Let each one **who would be led by the Spirit begin by** giving his or her self **to be led of the Word of God** as far as they know it. Begin at the beginning: obey the commandments.” –Andrew Murray[[3]](#footnote-1)

Requires a **teachable servant’s heart and mind**—this is at the very core a denying of the flesh and giving up of our life

* Dealing with selfishness; coping mechanisms; strategic distractions; mindless endeavors
* **God is more willing to speak to us and lead us than we are willing to listen and be led**

“The task of every generation is to discover in which direction the Sovereign Redeemer is moving, then move in that direction.” –Jonathan Edwards

**Confidence:** The Holy Spirit is in you and is doing His work

* The Spirit will **lead and guide you in the particulars** of your life
* Often times by just **knowing the Word and applying it**
* Often by the **wisdom** He gives us for particular situations
* Often through the **church** **community and loving guidance and accountability**
* Other times through some more **esoteric experiences**

How might the Spirit be leading you now? What does listening look like for you?

* Keeping you from? Not allowing you to do? (The negatives to Paul were a big positive—Gospel to Europe)
* Giving you vision for? What can you conclude as being God’s will for you at this time?

The evidence of The Father’s love and care is the Cross…

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Ro 8:32)

1. Andrew Murray, *The Spirit of Christ* (Minneapolis, Minn., Bethany House, 1979), 6. [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. The verb “concluded” in Acts 16:10 denotes rational reflection and reasoning. Its plural form indicates the involvement of others. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. Murray, 130.

   4 John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954), 221. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)