

Counsel

As we continue our study of guidance, let's briefly recap what we discussed in our last issue. We pointed out that knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are facets of the seven ministries of the Holy Spirit. If you will remember, knowledge is the taking in of God's Word. Understanding is arranging the facts. Wisdom which is the correct application of knowledge, puts the Word back out.

We also discussed the fact that we do not have to depend upon our natural senses for guidance because the Holy Spirit has given us the ability to understand the Word and to receive guidance from it. This means that believers do not need to rely on the world's system, or anything the world has to offer, because they have God's Word to guide them. In fact, if the world were to strip you, a believer, of all your possessions, you would get them back again with the Word of God because the Word makes you rich in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Material possessions are secondary to the riches of the Lord, but you can have both.

We find a type of this in Hebrew law. In Luke 4:19, Jesus said that He came, *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord*. This refers to the Jewish year of Jubilee. According to Jewish law, the possession which had been taken from you or sold by you during the previous forty-nine years had to be returned in the fiftieth year which was the year of the Jubilee. The good news for us believers is that when we were born again, we walked into our year of Jubilee! Just as under Hebrew law, everything has been turned back over to its rightful owner. The Word of God gives the ability to claim what is yours.

Before we continue, let me clarify one thing. As we refer to the Holy Spirit in this teaching, I am not talking about the Spirit that comes on you when you are filled with the Spirit. Rather, I am talking about the indwelling Spirit you received the moment you were born again. In other words, these seven manifestations of the Holy Spirit are not just for those filled with the Spirit; they are available to *a//* born again believers. It stands to follow then that guidance is not the monopoly of the Spirit-filled believer. Instead, God's guidance is for every born again Christian. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you from the new birth. As He dwells in you, He not only

quickens your mortal body, He also quickens your knowledge, your understanding, and your wisdom.

One of the areas the Holy Spirit offers us is the spirit of counsel. Proverbs 3:5 exhorts us to, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to your own understanding.* Trusting in the Lord with all your heart means getting your soul in line with your spirit. Another way of saying this is, getting your mind listening to the Holy Spirit that dwells in you.

Let's examine why we are exhorted to lean not on our own understanding. In the natural, our understanding is fed from the five senses. It looks at what it sees. It listens to what it hears, and it reacts to what it feels. But, we have to remember that our natural eyes were not designed to lead us spiritually. Also, our natural ears were made to hear with, not to believe with. God doesn't guide us through the sight of our eyes or through the hearing of our ears. Thus, the essence of this verse is that when we need guidance, we are not to go to the outside, we are to go *inside*. We are sufficient from within when we are guided by the Holy Spirit. When you turn inward to the Spirit of the living God, you turn to the source of all counsel, the source of all wisdom, the source of all guidance. The Holy Spirit is the sum total of all counsel.

Proverbs 5:3 continues *In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.* This is a simple principle to follow in order to receive guidance. Notice that we are not told to fast, intercede, or agonize. We are simply to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways. Just say, "Lord, I choose to acknowledge you in all my ways today. You said that if I will do this, you will direct my paths; therefore, I accept it by faith that everything I do today is led by you."

Let's take a simple example of this working in your life. Suppose you need a new shirt. True, you can buy it yourself, but you have already acknowledged the Lord and expect Him to direct your paths, so why buy the shirt yourself? With God's guidance you could walk into a store that "just happens" to have the shirts you wanted on sale at one-third the regular price. I know that some of you are thinking, "Well, God can afford the best." Sure, He can, but why not pay less for the shirt and put the rest

into the ministry? If you put your money into a shirt, all you get is a shirt. On the other hand, anything you put into the ministry you get back good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Think of all the shirts you can buy with a running over return.

As we have been emphasizing, believers have the Holy Spirit to guide them. In addition, God's guidance comes in two ways, general and specific. General guidance constitutes 95% of the guidance you will receive, so don't expect specific guidance very often. There are times when we receive specific guidance such as God speaking in an audible voice, or our feeling a distinct pull of the Spirit of God in a certain direction so that we know with a surety what we are supposed to do. But, the other 5% of the time we will receive general guidance and have to rely upon the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

Although often quoted as a salvation scripture, Isaiah 12:2-3 actually concerns guidance and is directed to those who are born again but who have never tapped into the source of counsel. Let's look at the principle put forth in these verses,

2) Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust; and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He is also become my salvation.

3) Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Salvation is a well of water you can continually draw from with joy. Remember, Jesus told the woman at the well that she would never again thirst if she accepted the water He had to give her. This is because the water Jesus gives actually lives in us; it is the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, this Holy Spirit which lives in us, is the well of water mentioned in Isaiah 12:3 springing up into everlasting life. The trouble is, many of us who are born again have never taken the time to dip into the well and draw out the waters of counsel. Instead, for years we have been taking our buckets and throwing them into the world when we should be dropping them down into our spirit where we can draw from the waters of salvation. From our salvation the Holy Spirit wants to lead us in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge as well as in counsel.

In Proverbs 20:5 we are told where to find counsel, *Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.* Where is counsel? It's in you. The Holy Spirit in you continually produced counsel so that no matter how often you draw from the well, you can never exhaust it.

Let's look at some scriptures which seem to contradict the point we just made. Proverbs 11:14 is one of these scriptures because it says, *"Where no counsel is the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.* This scripture indicates that if you make plans without first getting counsel from others, your plans will fail.

Proverbs 15:22 says basically the same thing, *Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.*

Then again, Proverbs 24:6 tells us, *For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war; and in multitude of counselors there is safety.* Don't think that because you are walking in counsel everything will go smoothly. The devil is always ready to attack and you will have to make war.

The key word in these scriptures is "counselors." While it is good to get counsel from others, you should make sure that the people you go to truly are counselors. If they aren't, all you'll get is five opinions. Counselors are those people who will get into the Word to find answers and who are led by the Holy Spirit within them.

While seeking counsel from several sources is ideal, many people are in situations which make it impractical to seek a multitude of counselors. What is their alternative? We'll find the answer in Psalm 119. As I quote verses from this Psalm, I am going to indicate synonyms which are used for "the Word" by inserting [the Word] thusly after each synonym.

1) *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law [the Word] of the Lord.*

2) *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies [the Word], and that seek him*

with the whole heart.

3) *They also do no iniquity; they walk in his ways [the Word].*

4) *Thou has commanded us to keep thy precepts [the Word] diligently.*

23) *Princes also did sit and speak against me; but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes [the Word].*

24) *Thy testimonies [the Word] also are my delight and my counselors.*

Verse 24 is telling us that the Word is also a counselor; therefore, just as there is safety in a multitude of counselors, there is safety in a multitude of scripture. Thus, if you are in a situation where you cannot turn to people as counselors, you can still receive counseling by surrounding yourself with the Word. The point for these scriptures from Proverbs are not contradictory, because we can receive God's counsel from others as well as from the Holy Spirit within us.

When we go to the world for counsel, we may get wisdom from a person who read about it in a book or got it from someone else who read it in a book and so on down the line. But, why get secondhand advice when we can turn to the Holy Spirit who is the sum total of all wisdom? Isaiah 40:13 asks, *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord or who being his counselor, hath taught him?* The answer is, no one gives the Holy Spirit direction. He doesn't need it. Counsel begins with Him.

Verse 14 then asks, *With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge and shewed to him the way of understanding?* Again, the answer is, no one, because the Holy Spirit is the ultimate counselor.

As we apply these scriptures to ourselves, we realize that as we are led by the Word, we do not need to rely upon guidance from the outside because we have the Spirit of the living God, the ultimate source of all counsel on the inside of us.

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