

The “Misleading” of the Holy Spirit?

“For as many as are **led by the Spirit** of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

Spirit-Led Projects

- Jim Bakker, Oral Roberts, Jimmy Swaggart—what do these men have in common?
- Well known televangelists in the 1980s who embarked on a number of what they described as “Spirit-led” projects.
- Many of these projects went completely awry—completely collapsed.

Fast forward to the present

- Frequently we hear people claim that the Holy Spirit is leading them to do this or that.
- What's curious about many of these claims is that the activities into which the Holy Spirit is supposedly leading them are contrary to the teaching of the Spirit-inspired Scriptures.

Six Observations from Scripture

1. The Spirit on occasions did directly lead men of the first century into specific fields of labor.
 - The **Spirit** told Philip to join the eunuch in his chariot (Acts 8:29). He then caught Philip away after he had baptized the eunuch (Acts 8:39).
 - The **Spirit** told Peter to go with the messengers Cornelius had sent (Acts 10:19–20).
 - The **Spirit** gave orders to begin the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–4).
 - The **Spirit** forbade Paul to preach in Asia and Bithynia on his second journey, and then directed him toward Macedonia (Acts 16:6–10).

Six Observations from Scripture

2. Whenever the Spirit did directly lead men in the first century, the results were ALWAYS favorable.
 - The eunuch was baptized and went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:38–39).
 - Cornelius and those with him were converted and became the first fruits among the Gentiles (Acts 10:44–48).
 - Paul's first missionary journey bore much fruit and when directed into Macedonia on his second journey, the result was strong churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16–17).

Six Observations from Scripture

3. These men in the first century—not every move made by them was “Spirit-led.”
 - Acts 15:36–40.
 - Later, Paul made his own plans to go to Rome and Spain after he completed his third journey, asking the Romans to pray that he could come to them “with joy by the will of God” (Romans 15:23–33).

Six Observations from Scripture

4. The failure of “Spirit-led” projects in our day is PROOF that they were not truly instigated by the Holy Spirit.
 - If led by the Spirit, they would have been successful.
 - “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).
 - “He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us” (1 John 4:6).

Six Observations from Scripture

5. The Spirit does lead us into various fields and activities through the **revealed word**, leading us through the directions he gave to inspired men of the first century.
 - **Spirit's directions to Peter:** Go to people of all races without prejudice.
 - **Spirit directing Paul to Macedonia:** Go wherever the fields are ripe, wherever doors may be opening.
 - Acts 18:9–10.

Six Observations from Scripture

6. God does work providentially in our lives—through other people, through circumstances He may bring to bear, etc. And these may help direct us in some measure, even change our course in some areas. But this is not to be confused with direct leading of the Spirit in the first century.
 - Speak of what God “perhaps” has done (Philemon 1:15).
 - “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

Proud Visionaries

“Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God” (Colossians 2:18–19).

The Final Word

- The Spirit leads through the word He has revealed.
- Whenever we read the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is speaking to us, teaching us, and leading us.
- A firm grasp of this fact alone will clear up a lot of confusion about the Holy Spirit.