

Two Phrases

Led by
the Spirit

~~by the Spirit~~

“Led by the Spirit”

- Used of Jesus Christ in two different passages, both of which refer to the same event (Matt. 4:1; Lk. 4:1).
- Used in reference to Christians in only two passages:
 - “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).
 - “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18).

“Felt led by the Spirit” (not in N.T.)

- When contemplating an action, or a choice between different actions...
 - “I haven’t felt led yet.”
 - “I’m just waiting to see where the Spirit leads me.”
- When defending an action already taken.
 - “I just feel like the Holy Spirit led me here.”
 - “God laid this on my heart through the Holy Spirit.”
 - “The assurance I feel must be from the Holy Spirit.”

Problem #1

- Many use this to defend all manner of false doctrine, things which contradict what the Spirit actually says in the N.T.
 - All these subjective claims of Spirit guidance have produced a lot of confusion and division.
 - If we feel justified in claiming some special leading by the Holy Spirit, because of the way we feel, why can't they do the same?

Problem #2

- Feelings are notoriously unreliable and even deceptive.
 - “There is a way that **seems** right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12).
 - “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered” (Prov. 28:26).
 - Jeremiah warned his brethren repeatedly about “following the dictates of their own heart” (e.g., 9:14; 13:10; 23:17).

Problem #3



- Feelings are often happiness-based, not truth based.
 - Easy to fall into the trap of thinking that all God wants for me is to be happy.
 - I then decide what makes me happy, and convince myself that the Spirit has led me to this point.

Questions to Consider

- Should we rely on a feeling we **think** comes from the Spirit, when the Spirit nowhere substantiates that feeling?
- Is there a more objective, sure fire way to **KNOW** the Spirit is leading us?

The Holy Spirit's Vital Role

- “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...” (John 16:13).
- What the Holy Spirit revealed to the apostles and inspired prophets (all truth), they wrote down for us to read and understand (Eph. 3:1–5).
- What the Holy Spirit inspired these men to write “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

The Holy Spirit's Vital Role

- We still need to address what “led by the Spirit” means in Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18, but is the following an accurate statement?
 - Whenever we read the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is speaking to us, teaching us, correcting us, reproofing us, and so in effect, **leading** us.
 - “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” (Heb. 4:12).

Parallel Texts

Romans 8

v. 4: WALK according to the Spirit,
not the flesh

v. 14: Led by the Spirit

v. 13: If you LIVE according to the
flesh you will die

v. 13: Put to death the deeds of
the body

Galatians 5

v. 16: WALK in the Spirit, not
the lusts of the flesh

v. 18: Led by the Spirit

v. 21: They who DO such things
will not inherit the kingdom

v. 25: Crucify the flesh with its
passions and desires

In Galatians 5, does the Spirit reveal an objective way to know whether we're walking in the flesh, or in the Spirit?

Key Verse in Romans 8

- “For those who live according to the flesh **set their minds** on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (v. 5).
- What is the only way to know the mind of the Spirit, or the things of the Spirit?
 - 1 Corinthians 2:9–13.
- And so it comes down to a choice **we** make, not a feeling we have.

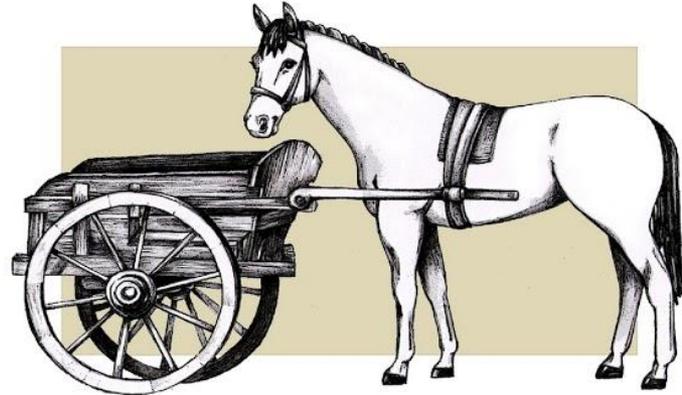
Another fruit bearing passage

- “Giving all diligence, add whatever you feel led to add”? (2 Pet. 1:5ff).
- “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control...” (2 Pet. 1:5ff.).
 - Make a conscious decision to add these things to your life.

“Blessed Assurance”

- “Now by this we KNOW that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we KNOW that we are in Him” (1 John 2:3–5).
- “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:24).

Dead, Lifeless Religion?



- We do the same when we let feelings “drive” our religion.
- Truth, properly understood and applied, will produce all kinds of feelings and emotions—fear, sorrow, joy, compassion, gratitude, peace, etc.
- Truth first, then feelings!