



Listening to the Holy Spirit

Learn to follow as you lead.

- 2** INTRODUCTION
Following the Holy Spirit
One word that made the difference.
by Karen Arneson
- 4** THE HEART OF THE ISSUE
The Accompanying Presence
His voice is still small, but you'll hear him if you listen.
an Interview with Bill Hybels
- 10** PRACTICALLY SPEAKING
God's Talking to You!
Can you hear him?
by Virelle Kidder
- 16** GETTING DEEPER
Soul Health
You can't be fruitful if you neglect the Source.
by Mindy Caliguire
- 19** BIBLICALLY SPEAKING
How Does Your Garden Grow?
Lessons from a backyard flower bed.
by Susan M. Smith
- 24** BRINGING IT HOME
A Better Fit
One size doesn't fit all or even most—or me.
by Jonalyn Grace Fincher
- 28** LEADERSHIP TOOLS
Ensuring "Quality of Soul"
An examination of the needs and motivations of a spiritual leader.
by Gordon MacDonald
- 40** **Additional Resources**
More places for more help.





Following the Holy Spirit

One word that made the difference.

by Karen Arneson

I became a member of my church during what I refer to as my “daycare years.” Home with three children of my own, I needed to contribute to our family’s income; so I took in other children.

It was a hectic, crazy time and had my pastor peeked in unannounced, he may not have been so quick to think of me when the need arose for someone to lead the preschool ministry. But, he did, and I (only heaven knew why) agreed.

It didn’t take many weeks for me to realize I was in over my head. Tired from a week’s worth of little ones, the last thing I needed was to fill Sunday morning with more of the same. Yet, God used this ministry to teach me a very important lesson—I couldn’t do it in my own strength because by Sunday morning, I had none.

Of course, I had to flounder around a while before I realized how desperately I needed his help. God used one particularly difficult child to get my attention—let’s call him Jordan. Jordan wanted





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Following the Holy Spirit

3

nothing to do with me, and told me every Sunday that he hated me. He was disruptive and had the ability to drive me to the point of despair. To my shame, I found myself thinking that his feeling for me was mutual!

If I didn't literally hate the child, I sure disliked being with him. Finally, after a horribly stressful class, I fell to my knees and asked for help. I began to pray regularly, daily, for wisdom to know how to minister to Jordan. The Spirit spoke one word: love.

I abandoned asking for wisdom and began asking for the love of Jesus to fill my heart for this child.

Following that one-word directive from the Spirit, I began to practice acting in love toward Jordan. With time, Jordan began to return that love, and God planted in my heart the knowledge of the difference between ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit and ministering out of self.

This download contains articles that illustrate what it means to lead in the power of the Holy Spirit. It invites us to examine ourselves to see if we are using the gifts the Spirit gives us as he directs. At the end of the articles, you'll find additional resources to help you go deeper in your quest for powerful leadership—the kind that is only available through the Holy Spirit.

Blessings!

Karen Arneson
Contributing Editor, Gifted For Leadership
Christianity Today International

Introduction





Listening to the Holy Spirit

The Accompanying Presence

4



THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

The Accompanying Presence

His voice is still small, but you'll hear him if you listen.

an interview with Bill Hybels

Pastors talk about preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. Bill Hybels, who preaches to about 20,000 people most weekends, says he senses the Lord's presence when he's in the pulpit, but even more so in the study (or on his boat) when he's preparing the message.

Do you recall a time when you felt you preached in the power of the Spirit?

Bill Hybels: For me, being moved by the Holy Spirit in preaching is often more dramatic when I'm preparing a sermon than when I'm in the pulpit delivering it.

I can think of a time recently when I was anchored out on a boat, and I had been praying and studying a text and the ideas began to flow. I grabbed pen and paper, and I wrote as fast as my hand would allow me to write for probably an hour and a half.

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

The Accompanying Presence

5

In one setting I put an entire message together, got down on my knees on the deck of the boat, and said, “The greatest miracle of this sermon has already taken place.” This was a gift I didn’t deserve—the spiritual gift of preaching and teaching deposited in my life—and the Holy Spirit energized that gift that afternoon. That it worked as mysteriously and supernaturally as it did still overwhelms me.

What suggests to you that you are preaching in the power of the Spirit?

Thoughts come into my mind that I know were deposited there by a power other than my own. Sometimes I’ll be reading a text, and I’ll be prompted by the Holy Spirit: *Hang with this text, Bill. Read it again. Read it slower.* And while I’m ruminating on it, reading and rereading it, it’s like something comes off the page or drops from heaven and intersects in my mind. A thought comes that I quickly try to put on paper, and then that leads to a next thought and a next.

When additional thoughts begin to flow, I know that’s not just the work of the flesh. I’m not that good. That’s a supernatural thing.

One way to know you have the preaching and teaching gift is that this supernatural dynamic occurs, and you learn how to go with the flow. You learn how to prepare your heart for that flow to occur and to capture it when it does.

What have you had to unlearn about preaching and the power of the Spirit?

A lot of men and women can read a text, formulate a few thoughts, and speak off the top of their heads, but in 30 years I’ve never been able to do that. Certainly I’ve had to unlearn the idea that preparation is always going to be easy, as though you’re going to sit down and God’s going to appear and it’s always going to flow and be mysterious.

Like your experience on the boat.

Yes. Probably the reason that came to mind as vividly as it did is because of how unusual that is. Usually I have to invest a lot more in research and preparation of my spirit. I make progress in 30-minute increments. My administrative assistant would assure you that my study sounds more like a dentist’s office than some great artistic revelation happening.

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

The Accompanying Presence

6

This is a factory not the symphony center.

Most certainly. My average weekly preparation is taxing and requires more discipline than I thought was going to be required when I started many decades ago. Once you get accustomed to that, you settle into the routine. That becomes the norm, and you thank God like crazy when it goes easier or flows more dynamically than that.

Regarding the Holy Spirit, do the terms presence or manifest presence describe what you experience when you preach?

I refer to an accompanying presence. When I'm in the flow of the Spirit as best I can yield myself to be so, it's as though I have an awareness of the accompanying presence of the Spirit saying, *You're doing it just right, Bill. You're saying it just the way I gave it to you. You're being true to yourself, true to the Word, true to my promptings. Just keep going. Way to go.*

And when I feel that, it's like time stands still, and you go, *This is a great thing to be doing right now.*

Of course, there are other times when, for whatever reasons, I don't feel that accompanying presence as strongly. I've laid awake nights wondering about that. It's greatly appreciated when it's there.

Would you describe that sense of God's accompanying presence as rare, or frequent?

I would say it's frequent. Again, if you're living a yielded life, and if you have the preaching and teaching gift, and you're yielding that to God on a continual basis, that's one of the signs that you're in the right place doing the right thing for the right reasons.

If you're doing something in the kingdom, and you rarely feel that, that's a red flag. Something needs to be looked at. Are you using the right gift? Are you using it in the right way? For the right reasons? At the right time? In the right context? If I didn't feel it consistently, that would be quite troubling to me.

Scripture portrays two sides to our experience of the Spirit. Ephesians says, "Be filled with the Spirit" and "Pray in the Spirit," suggesting there are things we can do that put us in a place where God's Spirit can be manifest in us. Then again, Jesus says, "The wind blows wherever it pleases."

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

The Accompanying Presence

7

Which is your experience?

Every great communicator I know could tell you how they “get in the zone.” Michael Jordan had a strict regimen before every big game to get himself in a prepared state to do his best. I’ve been fascinated by this. When I’m with other speakers, I ask them, “What do you do to get in the preparation zone? How do you pray? When do you prepare? Do you prepare in the same place? Do you listen to music? How do you prepare yourself just before you deliver your message?” Great communicators can say precisely how they up the probability that the Spirit will be strong in their life.

Having done all of that, then, the wind blows where it will. Sometimes it blows stronger than others. I can only do the part that depends on me. I can fast and pray and kneel before God and invite others to pray with me.

Sometimes the messages get lifted to fifteen thousand feet. Sometimes they get lifted to twenty thousand, sometimes to twenty-five thousand. Why there are those altitude differences, I don’t know.

What have you learned from Scripture about preaching in the power of the Spirit?

It has a lot to do with courage. Look at the great messages delivered in Scripture. Joshua stands before the people and says, “Choose this day what you’re going to do. Here’s what I’m going to do.” Peter stands up in Acts 2 and says, “Here’s what you did to the One who was sent from God.”

Preaching involves an inordinate amount of courage. You have to be willing to take heat and backlash if you’re going to say the words God gave you to say in the spirit he gave you to deliver it.

In my own experience, the messages that turned certain corners at Willow and the messages that were greatly used in conference settings were ones that I walked toward the lectern with knees knocking, thinking, *There is no way I’m going to be able to say these words to these people.* God says, Here we go, and you say them.

You feel alone in the moment, and you have to die to audience response, realizing they are probably not going to carry your picture

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

The Accompanying Presence

8

in their wallet anymore. But you know, this is precisely what God wants me to say. That's a refining, character-building, intensely spiritual process. Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 12 about the power of Christ resting on him when he was weak.

How have you experienced that?

Some of the best preaching I've done came out of times when I was desperately needy. One message I've probably given five hundred times around the world came to me in the slums outside of Soweto in South Africa when I was supposed to speak to several thousand illiterate people about the nature of the church of Jesus Christ. I realized this was an impossible task.

How could I communicate such theology to people who have probably never seen what I'm trying to describe?

I woke up at four o'clock in the morning and prayed, "God, I'm going to stay humbly in this kneeling position until you give me a way to talk about your church in a fashion that these folks can understand." I put together a unique message in which I brought people up on the stage and posed them in certain stances to give listeners pictures of the church. When I delivered the message that day, I knew I had that Accompanying Presence.

People got it. It changed their understanding of what a church could be. That message came out of a desperate situation where unless God had moved, I was done for.

*Bill Hybels is pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. This interview first appeared in the **April 2004 issue** of LEADERSHIP JOURNAL.*

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

The Accompanying Presence

9

Thought Provokers

- *Although this article speaks specifically to the Accompanying Presence in preaching, the Holy Spirit certainly gives and supports other gifts. Do you know your spiritual gifts? If not, consider times when you have felt moved by the Spirit to act. What was required?*
- *How might we prepare for the Spirit to manifest himself in the administration of our gifts?*
- *How might Pastors Hybels's comment: "If you are doing something for the kingdom and you rarely feel that [Accompanying Presence], that's a red flag," help in determining if we are using our specific gifts?*
- *It takes courage to follow the Spirit's leading. Share a time you stepped out in courage. What was the end result?*

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

God's Talking to You!

10



PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

God's Talking to You!

Can you hear him?

by Virelle Kidder

I locked the upstairs bathroom door as the happy voices of our visiting kids and grandkids rang out from the kitchen below. Tears outlined the strangely fallen features on the right side of my face as I studied myself in the mirror. Bell's palsy, a paralysis that distorts expressions on one side of the face, was in its second swipe since my teen years—and it had returned with a vengeance. Painful swelling exploded behind my right ear, an exhausting business schedule loomed ahead, and I couldn't speak, smile, or even eat without drooling.

"What are you trying to tell me, Lord? You've got my attention," I sniffed at the red-nosed, pathetic face staring back at me. Wiping away my tears on the sleeve of my robe, I asked him point-blank, "What is it you want me to hear?"

Features



Listening to the Holy Spirit

God's Talking to You!

11

It's taken me years to recognize God's voice: those whispered words of encouragement when I'm down; that sudden sense of caution when I'm ready to launch a testy zinger at someone; those much-needed directions at the street corners of my life; tender words of love when I least deserve them; even humor at odd moments. Why is it so surprising that the Living Word, the Author of Life, wants his children to know his thoughts? I've found God sends us his messages in a variety of ways. Here are four ways to hear his voice.

1. God's life-changing Word. I haven't always heard God speak to me. In fact, there was a time when God seemed silent. Even distant. The busyness of caring for four children and fulfilling church commitments conspired to dull any sense of God's voice. Boredom and its cousins, crabbiness and depression, left my soul to dry rot. I wasn't much fun to live with, and I knew it. Each time I yelled a sharp word, I thought, *Steve and the kids will just have to understand. I'm having a bad day today.* I hoped God wasn't paying much attention.

Then one morning I awoke with a start. Was one of our kids awake early? No, it was just me. Or was it? I felt compelled to go downstairs without even grabbing a robe. Shivering from the early morning chill, I spread an afghan around me and settled on the couch. There was my Bible, untouched for weeks, beside the couch. Picking it up with a twinge of guilt, I looked for an easy place to open and read something ... safe. I chose the Book of Proverbs and the day's date, the 29th. The first verse froze me: "A man (or woman) who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy."

Was this for me? Was God telling me something about my lousy attitude? Tears welled quickly, as they often do when God speaks. Who can listen casually to something he says? I cried buckets and poured out honest words for the first time in months, telling God how sorry I was for ignoring him, for not bringing him all my needs, all my hunger. Having gorged myself on self-pity, I'd starved my soul. I begged forgiveness for all the miserable words I'd spoken or even thought. The relief was immediate.

Jesus gained victory over temptation in his wilderness and told us how: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

God's Talking to You!

12

comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Without listening to God’s voice in his Word, I soon would starve to death, and that death would affect everyone around me. I became hungry again to hear God in every circumstance of life, beginning with the first moments of every day.

Many years later, I still curl up every morning on the couch with a cup of coffee, my favorite afghan, and my Bible. Opening it, I enter his presence quietly, ready to listen. I marvel at the unplumbed depth of God’s love, the treasures that wait to be discovered in knowing him.

Life passes remarkably fast. I know God has said many things to me I’ve missed. I’m listening harder now, more delighted with his voice, just like the prophet Jeremiah, who exclaimed, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight” (Jeremiah 15:16).

2. God’s breathtaking world. Even after 20 years of crossing the lake in our 14-foot boat to get to our wilderness camp in the Adirondack mountains, I still say, “Wow! Look at Whiteface today!” whenever the towering mountain comes into view. But I expect it; I’m ready to be amazed before I get into the boat. It’s the “wows!” I never expect that leave me breathless, such as the stunning gift of a double rainbow at the ocean shore this past summer, or the nose-to-nose meeting with a hummingbird on my deck—gifts of love along my path. Even his little creatures show me a humorous side of our Creator.

One hot afternoon while on vacation in the Caribbean, my husband, Steve, and I sat at an outdoor café cooling off with a large lemonade. Suddenly a bright green lizard about ten inches tall appeared under an empty table next to us. At first it looked like a cartoon lizard. Then it scared me.

“Steve! Look at that!” I gasped, gripping the table. “Do you think it’s dangerous?”

“I don’t think so. Just stay still and see what it does,” Steve answered in his calm, I-have-everything-under-control voice. That’s when the lizard cocked his head and winked at us, as though he knew something we didn’t know. And for the next 20 minutes, he engaged our full attention. We photographed him, laughed and talked to him like two





Listening to the Holy Spirit

God's Talking to You!

13

kids. Soon a large crowd of onlookers gathered, some belly-down on the pavement, snapping photos. Instantly, the lizard winked good-bye and disappeared up a nearby palm tree.

Just when I think I've got God's world thoroughly appreciated and somewhat discovered, he stuns me with a message from a lizard: *You haven't even brushed the surface of my glory yet, Virelle. I have more, far more in this world to show you. Just wait!*

3. God's voice through others' mouths. Far more often than the rebuke I deserve, God has used others to speak words of affirmation and encouragement into my life when I least expect it. Imagine my shock when a woman rushed up to me after a speaking engagement to say, "You have such a gentle, quiet spirit!" I felt completely the opposite. Was God telling me he was pleased with my efforts to keep my mouth shut more often until I was sure of what he wanted me to say? Imagine that! I felt as though I'd received a hug from God and that he'd encouraged me to keep listening and trying to obey what I heard.

Others are usually the first to sense our spiritual gifts, the abilities God's given us supernaturally when we first began to place our faith in him. Has more than one person told you what a good teacher you are? God's telling you he's given you the gift of teaching. Are you the first to notice what others need, the significant little things that make their lives easier? Then thank God for the gift of help and encouragement and ask him to show you ways to exercise it. If you're not sure what your gifts are, ask him. God will waste no time sending someone to tell you.

When our pastor wrote me a note in bold handwriting one day, "Virelle, God wired you up to be a speaker. Never doubt that," I believed him. In fact, I taped his note to my wall, and on days when I feel overwhelmed and tired, when nothing I say seems worth listening to, I read that note and thank God for telling my pastor to write it.

4. God's quiet whispers. That morning when I stared into the mirror at my lopsided face, I decided to stay put until I heard God speak. I knew he would, but I wasn't sure how, or when, or through whom. Waiting is what I least like about following God. It's unnatural for someone whose planner is full. *Virelle*, came a soft whisper to my heart, *I was wondering, will you still praise me with only half a mouth?* God's





Listening to the Holy Spirit

God's Talking to You!

14

question cut deep through every thread of vanity left in my over-50 frame. Would I be willing to carry God's love to others when I looked strange, drooling and garbling words? Could I be his funny little messenger—just because he sent me?

“Yes, Lord,” I said reluctantly, knowing I might be saying “yes” to long-term paralysis.

Then, Virelle, will you remember that I never give you more than I equip you to do? In my office, a mammoth wall calendar filled with daily “must do’s” spoke of my doubt that I ever could complete all God seemed to require of me. My face hot with shame, I whispered, “Yes, Lord.”

Then, Virelle, will you follow me a little more quietly now?

“Yes, Lord. But just one thing. I can't smile at my family, my children, and my grandchildren.” Tears flowed freely at the thought.

Then smile at me, he added gently. *I always see your smile, and I think it's beautiful.*

Sometimes, when God speaks, he gives us nothing we ask for and everything we need. Just days before leaving on a business trip, my speech returned. About eight weeks later, a tingling sensation began in the corner of my mouth, then gradually liberated the rest of my face in the weeks that followed. Today, a mild paralysis remains as it did from my earlier bout as a teenager.

I'm grateful now for funny things, for the way one side of my mouth curves slightly downward when I'm tired. It tells me I need to rest. And for my one stationery eyebrow. Raising only one looks exotic. These things remind me that when God speaks, it's always best to listen. When he directs, it's best to obey. When he corrects, don't hesitate to change. And when he tells you something wonderful, it's a good idea to believe him.

*Virelle Kidder, a TCW regular contributor, author, and conference speaker, lives with her husband in New York. This article first appeared in the **January/February 2003 issue** of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

God's Talking to You!

15

Thought Provokers

- *What is the one thing we can do to assure we will hear God speak?*
- *Why is listening more important than planning in the execution of our spiritual gifts?*
- *Has God used others to confirm your gifts? Share an example.*
- *Sometimes it takes real discipline to listen to God. Sometimes we are afraid of what he'll say. What assurances has he given us to trust his directions over our own plans?*

Features





GETTING DEEPER

Soul Health

You can't be fruitful if you neglect the Source.

by Mindy Caliguire

Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5 NLT).

I recently stood in front of a ministry team and asked: “What tends to emerge in the life of a person who neglects his or her soul? What symptoms creep in?”

I explained that no one ever sets out to trash the condition of his or her soul, and particularly not those of us involved in ministry. Yet we often find ourselves in a spiritual death spiral—facing ever-increasing ministry loads yielding ever-diminishing returns. But we march dutifully onward, assuming that our spiritual state, a neglected soul, is somehow part of the “deal” in a life devoted to ministry.

So I asked, “What are the signs of soul neglect?” At first the room was silent. Then somebody ventured, “Anxiety,” and I knew they got it (not every group does). Once started, their answers came so fast I couldn't write them on the flip chart fast enough.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Soul Health

17

“Self-absorption,” they called out. “Shame,” “apathy,” “toxic anger,” “chronic fatigue,” “lack of confidence,” “isolation,” “sin looks more appealing,” “no compassion,” “self-oriented,” “driveness,” “loss of vision,” and “no desire for God.” Soon every inch of the page was crammed.

Then, with much relief, we turned the page, and I asked: “What emerges in your life when you’re deeply connected with God, when your soul is healthy?”

This page also filled up quickly: “love,” “joy,” “compassion,” “giving and receiving grace,” “generosity of spirit,” “peace” (at this point, some bright bulb usually suggests the entire list of the fruit of the Spirit!), “ability to trust,” “discernment.”

Heads nod in acknowledgement as individuals recall times when this was their experience, too. “Boundlessness,” “work coming out of the overflow of my life with God,” “creativity,” “vision,” “balance,” “focus.” All in all, a pretty desirable list.

The truth is, even as Christian leaders, we can neglect the care of our own souls in our attempt to care for the souls of others.

What makes a soul healthy? Quite simply, a soul is healthy to the extent that it experiences a strong connection to and receptivity to God. Under those conditions, the soul is most alive, most receptive to divine breathings, divine promptings, divine power in the face of joy or pain or opposition.

Most Christian leaders would agree that certain practices help us “grow” or attain spiritual health. Prayer and Bible study make the top of almost any list. In addition, these four practices are emphasized in our church’s efforts towards spiritual formation in leaders:

Spiritual friendship. This is the intentional pursuit of friends who help you remain open to God. Spiritual friends help each other pay attention to where God’s at work in their lives and help each other respond.

Centering prayer. Great healing and fueling power is released from God to us in prayer. In centering prayer, there are no more words, no more agenda, no more striving. This is an open, surrendered, peaceful

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Soul Health

18

way of resting in the presence of God. Centering prayer is not an absenting of the soul, as in eastern mysticism, but very much with God. Try centering prayer for about 20 minutes once a day for a week. Be prepared for the onslaught of ideas and images that will invade you inside. No matter, you can gently release them and return to the quietness of soul (100 times per minute if your mind is like mine was when I started!).

Solitude. This is time alone, with God. Most leaders love solitude. They know it helps them stay sane. They realize it causes their souls to flourish. They just don't do it. Go figure.

Simplicity. For a follower of Christ, the enemy of simplicity is not complexity. It's duplicity. Double-mindedness. Simplicity rests on single-mindedness. Simplicity is bringing one's whole self into union with God's purposes.

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Thought Provokers

- *As you have worked to lead from your strengths, how might you have neglected your soul's health?*
- *In addition to prayer and Bible study, how are the four additional practices mentioned in the article useful to you?*
- *How can you incorporate these practices into your daily routine? Which one will be the toughest to incorporate?*





BIBLICALLY SPEAKING

How Does Your Garden Grow?

Lessons from a backyard flower bed.

by Susan M. Smith

For years, I tried to make myself a better Christian by signing up for more Bible studies or taking seminars. But it wasn't until I took a lesson from my garden that I realized I was trying to make myself grow instead of letting God do the work. Here are some spiritual lessons I found lurking in my backyard flower bed.

Cultivate What's Right for Your Soil

How many times have I thrown myself into a worthy project that spread its roots and choked the life out of me? I'm slowly learning that just because something's a "flower" doesn't mean it's meant for my garden.

The apostle Paul teaches that each person has different spiritual gifts, such as teaching, serving, encouragement, administration, healing, and miracles. These special, God-given abilities equip you to perform certain tasks better than someone else.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

How Does Your Garden Grow?

20

If your gift is administration but you keep taking teaching assignments because “flowers of teaching” look so good in someone else’s life, you’re in for frustration. Not only will teaching not grow well in your soil, your true garden of administration will be too neglected to produce substantial fruit. Just because a teaching job is available doesn’t mean you need to plant it in your garden.

Don’t Be Afraid of Pruning

My azalea bush was struggling. Colorless leaves hung on limp branches with sparse flowers. I tenderly cut back every branch, assuring myself how lopping off lifeless branches would pave the way for new flowers next spring.

Suddenly, I realized how lovingly and gingerly God removes old branches from my life so I can sprout new growth. I wasn’t punishing the azalea because it hadn’t yielded enough flowers; I was doing everything I could to help it grow because I’m fond of the little bush and want it to do well.

My friend Terri was in love with Max and intended to marry him. Terri had never been happier. Because Max wasn’t a Christian, Terri and I prayed for him daily, asking God to draw him in. But when Max abruptly ended the relationship, Terri was devastated. How could God let this happen? Was he punishing her for falling in love with someone who wasn’t a Christian?

On the contrary, God was trimming Max out of Terri’s life so she’d be free to grow. It’s because God loves Terri that he freed her to later marry Brian, a godly man who encourages rather than hinders her spiritual development.

God doesn’t prune to vent anger. Instead, he trims our lives to help us improve because he loves us and wants to perfect us. “God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:10–11).





Listening to the Holy Spirit

How Does Your Garden Grow?

21

Weed Every Day

If I weeded every day, it would take ten minutes. But when I say, “Those weeds aren’t so bad. I’ll get them tomorrow,” I wind up spending an entire afternoon on my knees in the flower bed. Establish right now your practice of getting rid of the weeds every day by recognizing the sins you’ve already committed and confessing them to God, who “is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9).

Realize Fertilizer Helps Us Grow

Christians quote Romans 8:28 so carelessly, it’s almost become a cliché: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” But, clichés aside, the skillful hands of God can coax rich fruit out of a garden buried in the smelly fertilizer of disaster.

Several years ago I suffered clinical depression when an important relationship blew apart with the force of an explosion. I stopped eating, cried uncontrollably, and rarely slept. Never had I known the debilitating hopelessness and worthlessness that came with depression. In desperation, I began seeing a Christian counselor.

Today, I thank God for that disaster, because he used it to change my life. The counselor and I tackled misconceptions about God, myself, and my faith I’d carried most of my life. As a result, I found a relationship with God I’d only dreamed of.

God didn’t desire me to be part of an ill-chosen relationship just so he could change me. But in his grace, he used that desperate situation—a whole truckload of fertilizer—to nurture growth in me that might not have happened otherwise.

Water When a Drought Comes

Last year, when a lack of rain made hearty flowers shrivel into sad-looking sticks, my weeds flourished. Likewise, when I get into a spiritually dry place, I wither while my weeds—be they bad habits, sorry attitudes, or a blatant disregard for God’s direction—grow like, well, weeds. We all have seasons when our walk with God isn’t

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

How Does Your Garden Grow?

22

as fresh as it has been. That's normal. But we can keep a dry spell from becoming a drought with regular prayer, Bible reading, and meaningful relationships with other Christians.

Ironically, it's during the dry spells we're most tempted to stop reading the Bible or praying. But that's when a garden needs water more than ever! Put yourself in a position to receive encouragement by soaking up the rain God's already given you—his Word, his Spirit, his communion, and his people.

Let God Be the Gardener

Often I try to give plants room to breathe only to accidentally pull them up with the weeds. Sometimes when I try to give azaleas more of the acid-rich plant food they love, I spill liquid on the geraniums, stunting if not killing them.

That's the kind of gardener I am, well-meaning but full of flaws. But God is the perfect gardener.

God doesn't wonder how to care for us; he created us and calls us by name (Isa. 43:1). God never leaves a flower bed half-weeded, but finishes the good work he started in us (Phil. 1:6). God waters us when we're thirsty (John 4:14) and feeds us when we're hungry (John 6:35). God gives us the faith to fight off the pests that would eat our fruit and stunt our growth (Eph. 6:16). When we fail to take advantage of his pesticides, he even restores what the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25). God protects us as his own children with a blanketing mulch of adoption (1 John 3:1), and covers us with the prayers of Jesus on our behalf (Rom. 8:34).

In John 15:1, Jesus says he's the true vine and God's the gardener. According to John 15:5, we're the branches the gardener's grafted onto the true vine. Our only responsibility is to stay put (John 15:5–7) and respond to the gardener. He'll till the ground, prune the old growth, send the rain and, ultimately, inhale the sweet aroma of the flowers. We'll cling to the true vine and grow.

As John 15:4–5 says, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me ... Apart from me, you can do nothing.”





Listening to the Holy Spirit

How Does Your Garden Grow?

23

How much simpler and richer life would be if we'd stop trying to create our own rain and plant our own seeds, and cling instead to the true vine and its only gardener with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37)!

*Susan M. Smith is a freelance writer living in Kentucky. This article first appeared in the **July/August 1997 issue** of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

Thought Provokers

- *What tasks has God given us the ability to perform well?*
- *What practical steps might we take to cultivate our spiritual gifts?*
- *What pruning, weeding, or fertilizing has been necessary in our lives to develop our gifts to their fullest?*
- *What practices maintain healthy fruit in our lives?*

Features





BRINGING IT HOME

A Better Fit

One size doesn't fit all or even most—or me.

by Jonalyn Grace Fincher

When I got married, I received something I'd wanted for a long time: a beautiful KitchenAid mixer. But after setting up house, I realized I had no idea how to use the bulky contraption. It looked professional and impressive, but I already had a simpler electric hand mixer. So I found myself owning a gift I was now unsure I wanted. I'd heard its uses were amazing, but I hadn't experienced them.

Sometimes a spiritual gift feels like an expensive KitchenAid mixer; we want to have one, but we're not sure what it does and even less sure how to use it.

Life Without Limits

As a teenager, I heard that we should discover our gifts by taking a spiritual gifts test. It sounded accessible and easy. A natural test-taker, I discovered a smattering of gifts that matched my personality and seemed to make sense. Some of my friends didn't seem to fare as well, feeling their tests came back all "vanilla." In the end, many lost confidence in this whole spiritual-gift thing. But God gives regardless of our manmade inventories.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

A Better Fit

25

The lists gleaned from New Testament passages are more like starter kits, designed to get our creative juices flowing. The rest of Scripture doesn't give tidy, predictable ways for understanding the Spirit's work, so why would we expect the "gifts inventory" to be so neat and tidy? When the Spirit first fills people in the New Testament, he's like a violent wind, uncontrollable and life altering. The Spirit's gifts range from speech to a donkey to prison breaks (Numbers 22:28, Judges 15:14). He's hardly limited by our list.

The Pink or Blue Question

Often I've mused how much more practical and comfortable it would be to have the gift of serving instead of my gifts of teaching and exhortation. If I had the gift of serving, I could imagine myself happily on the sidelines supporting my husband's ministry, preparing sustenance (healthy snacks for the road) and encouragement (sweet notes tucked in his suitcase) without the distraction of my own busy schedule.

But our gifts are a lot alike—mine and his—and I sometimes find others don't welcome or know what to do with a female working alongside her husband. Frankly, I puzzle over finding a fit for my spiritual gifts both in my family and in outside outlets.

At rare times it feels like a man should have gotten my bundle, not a woman who loves kids and homemaking. But I don't see support for the argument that the Spirit reserves some gifts just for men. The Spirit of God has the power, the freedom, and the joy to distribute his gifts "to each one, just as he determines" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

In both complementarian (ministry roles differentiated by gender) and egalitarian (equal ministry roles for both genders) camps, there are theologians who believe God gives to both men and women all formal spiritual gifts listed in Scripture. In the book *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, New Testament professor (and complementarian) Craig Blomberg writes, "Virtually every Bible student today agrees that when these terms (teachers, administrators, leaders, evangelists, and pastor-teachers) are used as spiritual gifts, women may receive and exercise them just as powerfully as men may."





Listening to the Holy Spirit

A Better Fit

26

I don't believe the Spirit doles out his gifts in pink and blue wrappings: A man may have the gift of helps or service (Samuel helps Eli in 1 Sam. 2:11). A woman may have the gift of teaching (Priscilla, alongside her husband, corrects and teaches Apollos in Acts 18:26) or leading (Deborah guides Israel in difficult times in Judges 4–5) or prophesying (Josiah consults Huldah, the prophetess, in 2 Kings 22:14).

The only pattern I've noticed in God's gift-giving strategy is that he gives to fill the gaping holes in his people, his church. So his gifts are ready-to-use, powerful, customized abilities we'll want to use because they're needed right now.

Like my KitchenAid with its many amazing features.

I stuck to the hand mixer for years. For cakes and pancakes, it's handy. But for really big batches of cookies or double batches of banana bread, the KitchenAid with its big stainless bowl is just the thing. Given time and the need, I may yet use its many capabilities.

As well as the ones God has given me.

Recently I joined a church where I was invited to help with women and children. So I volunteered for the nursery and taught women's groups. But this summer my husband and I came up with a new idea: We open our home for a weekly Bible study that's available to everyone. Families attend together, young teens ask questions, their parents give input alongside their children; church leaders, pastors, elders, presidents of local nonprofits share in a context that also allows us to teach as a husband-wife team. Our church's elder board is excited about the work we're doing.

And in the process, I'm finding a better fit for my gifts—teaching, along with the opportunity to serve. If the opportunity to use our gifts doesn't already exist, we have to pray so God will show us how to create one. At this intersection of my gifts (including teaching) and my passion (helping people know Jesus), I'm finding the right fit.

Jonalyn Grace Fincher, an apologist and speaker, is author of Ruby Slippers: How the Soul of a Woman Brings Her Home (Zondervan).

www.soulation.org This article first appeared in the **September/October 2008 issue** of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

A Better Fit

27

Thought Provokers

- *How does living reveal our gifts in a way spiritual inventories might not?*
- *Do you believe spiritual gifts are gender-specific? Why? Or why not?*
- *How did God show you where to use your spiritual gifts?*

Features





LEADERSHIP TOOLS

Ensuring “Quality of Soul”

An examination of the needs and motivations of a spiritual leader.

by Gordon MacDonald

It was a Saturday morning almost 25 years ago, and I had officiated in the burial of two homeless men during the past week. In both cases, I felt, their lives had been meaningless and wasted. I was overwhelmed with the sadness and emptiness of the experience.

Combined with several nights of inadequate sleep, no recent spiritual refreshment, and lots of nonstop ministry activity, their deaths left me in a state of emotional overload.

When I came to the breakfast table that morning, I had no clue I was on the brink of a crisis. Life had not yet prepared me for the fact that everyone has a breaking point. There at the table my point came, triggered by one innocent comment.

“You haven’t spent much time with the children lately,” said my wife, Gail.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring "Quality of Soul"

29

She was correct. I hadn't. She had kindly avoided noting that I hadn't spent adequate time with her, either. And I hadn't done any better with my heavenly Father. Add to this that work was piling up, my sermon for the next day was unprepared, and I needed to make several hospital calls.

Suddenly I was engulfed with a sense of futility, and I began to cry. I lost control and wept steadily for four hours. That had never happened before. It was one of a limited number of "breaking experiences" in my life, which—more than any of the so-called successes—have been most responsible for whatever growth toward quality of soul I can claim.

What happened that day forced me to face up to something I'd either ignored or wasn't smart enough to realize: I had been engaging in ministry, supposedly in the name of Jesus, largely based on natural giftedness—my ability with words, my social skills, and my desire and energy to work for long periods of time.

That Saturday morning I saw the first unavoidable results of a soul that lacked quality. Priorities were askew; key relationships were being neglected; spiritual life was a joke; work was out of control. And—I mean no silliness—ministry had ceased to be fun.

When the tears dried and I had time to assess what had happened, I saw that if I was going to persevere in ministry, I was going to have to tap deeper motivations and wellsprings of strength.

Quality of soul became the first priority. That was probably the first time I became interested in what I would later call the ordering of my private world.

Other watershed experiences have come since then—some even more difficult to face—but this was the one that pressed me to ask the questions of motivation (what was driving me?) and maintenance (what would keep me going?).

That morning at the breakfast table caused me to get serious about issues of the spirit that I'd put on the shelf for too long. In the weeks that followed, I searched my inner world. It became a rebuilding effort, a reconstruction of my base for serving God in the church.

But sometimes when you begin to rebuild, you have to first clear away some rubble. Habits, motives, illusions, ambitions, and forms of pride





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring “Quality of Soul”

30

have to be named and renounced. This activity is called repentance. I suspect it’s the most powerful exercise of the inner spirit that God has given us. It’s God’s weapon against deceit, which, in turn, is the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the Evil One.

I wish I could say the personal cleanup that stemmed from the Saturday morning catharsis occurred in a short time and never had to be re-addressed. But I’d speak as a fool. All that really happened was that I went on full alert to what might be the core problem of most men and women who have a heart to serve God.

Searching the Motivation-Base

What I began to see in those earliest days of private-world activity was that I had to be ruthless in dealing with the motivation-base for following and serving Jesus Christ.

I’m not sure I’d ever given the root motivations in my life the attention they needed. My days in college and seminary, and even the first years in the pastorate ministry, had been colored with a sense of idealism, even glamour, about ministry. The pastor’s life, I thought with a mixture of naiveté and unbounded enthusiasm, would be one of changing history, building a great church, making a difference in everyone’s life, preaching with fervor to people eager to hear, and enjoying a revered position as everyone’s spiritual director and mentor. And if that’s what the pastor’s life was, then I wanted in.

But *why* did I want in?

Few questions ascend in importance above that one. But only a sharp dose of reality—usually painful reality—will force us to look deeply at our motivations. The story of Simon the magician in Acts 8 is instructive. When this man saw Peter and others act in the power of the Holy Spirit, he was prepared to pay good money to have that ability.

I see a little of Simon’s spirit in me. While I wouldn’t be so brash as to pay money for the giftedness that makes ministry possible, at times I’ve succumbed to the temptation of paying for greater popularity and effectiveness by jeopardizing my health, sacrificing relationships, and otherwise burning myself out. I suspect that possibility exists in each of us.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring “Quality of Soul”

31

Peter instantly challenged Simon’s motivation-base: “You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin” (Acts 8:21–23).

When I search my menu of motives, I find several that are not made by God. And when I’ve gotten into the private worlds of other colleagues, I’ve discovered that I’m not alone. A partial list of substandard motives might look like this:

- **The need for approval.** Paul talks a lot about our need for approval. He is unashamed to admit his desire for the approval of the “righteous judge.” He is definitely out to hear God’s “well done.” But I’m impressed by his note to the Corinthians telling them that their approval and even his own self-approval are of no consequence to him. Only God’s approval counts.

I compare myself with that standard and grow uneasy. Until I was 18, I can’t remember ever considering any other profession but ministry. But the need for a wrong kind of approval may have been a major factor.

“There is no higher calling than to preach the gospel,” my mother would say to me as a child. She would add, “Now, I’m not pressuring you to do that, of course. I’d never want you to preach unless God called you to do so.”

Despite her disclaimers, I interpreted the message as “Mother will be most proud and will love me most if I’m a preacher of the gospel.”

Add to that a story or two I heard regularly about my days as an infant—stories about miraculous ways in which my life had been spared at several points where it could have easily been lost. These stories had a powerful effect upon my sense of direction. “God has protected you for a purpose,” was the message mediated to me. “Find out what that intention is, and don’t defy it.”

I want to be respectful about the notion of God’s special calling. But perhaps you can see why these experiences could become twisted into another process. Obeying God is one thing. Trying to please a mother,





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring “Quality of Soul”

32

or wanting a father to be proud of you, is another. These motivations can get interwoven in the soul early in life. Then they get woven into the fabric of a sense of call, and it is very difficult to separate the two.

I came to see the obvious: approval from a parent or significant other can never navigate us through the often stormy waters of ministry. If we are driven by the need to hear the “well done” from human beings, even parents, we get maneuvered into something like an addiction. A certain amount of approval needed this year will, like a drug, need to be increased next year. We wind up needing more and more approval as time passes to keep up the same drive.

And since people’s approval inevitably comes and goes, increases and evaporates, motivation through approval becomes a yo-yo of emotions. It’s one of the first reasons men and women quit spiritual leadership. No one’s clapping anymore.

Want a contrast to Simon and his evil motives? It’s John the Baptist, who one day watched a formerly approving crowd leave him to follow Jesus. His reaction? “I must decrease.” Only a person free of the need for approval could talk like that.

- **The validation from achievement.** Most of us have grown up in a system highly influenced by the ethic of achievement. And the message seems clear: those who are successful have been clearly visited with the hand of God. The corollary is likewise clear: those who are wildly successful—more so than others—have been visited with the special hand of God.

Success is usually measured in the founding or the developing of great institutions or large followings. In evangelism, it means drawing the largest crowds. In church leadership, it means heading the largest church in the region. In other ministries, it means leading the fastest growing organization (in terms of income, staff, and influence). In the publishing world, it means producing the best sellers.

When we hear Christians praise these “winners,” many of us are tempted to hear that “my value” will be substantiated only when I am equally successful. And if I am not hearing this kind of praise, then perhaps I am not as valuable to God as I was meant to be.

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring “Quality of Soul”

33

Perhaps the most dramatic statement of achievement motivation was what reputedly was said to evangelist D. L. Moody (and countless others): “The world has yet to see what God can do with one man who is totally yielded to his will.”

I know many bewildered men and women who have tried their hardest to fulfill the spirit of that statement. They set out to serve God believing they are totally “yielded.” But neither they nor the world ever saw any great results. They thus live in perpetual disillusionment, wondering why their faith, their labor, their commitment was not good enough to produce the results others have gained.

I recall the words of a chapel speaker during my seminary days who confused us by saying, “Don’t aspire to high leadership unless it is thrust upon you.” At the time that didn’t make sense to me, especially since we students were constantly being told in subtle (and not so subtle) ways that the successful leader is clearly a person upon whom God’s pleasure rests.

So I, like others, fantasized about leading a large church. And by the time I was in my mid-30s, I’d been “blessed” with the fulfillment of that dream. But then I knew what the chapel speaker meant: there is little joy or prolonged satisfaction in high leadership if achievement is your motivation.

I discovered in those days that leadership made physical, spiritual, and emotional demands that I’d never anticipated. And without a disciplined spirit, I simply wouldn’t have the reserves to go the distance. It’s possible that our seminary professors told us that, but if they did, a lot of us didn’t get the message. Apparently every generation has to learn the lesson the same way—the hard way.

The Bible gives us a lot of disproportionate insights. Think, for example, of all the pages devoted to the championship performances of Paul and Daniel and Moses and Esther. One evangelized his world; another served three kings with honor and bravery; a third built a nation; a fourth rescued her generation from a holocaust.

Then one reads of another, Enoch, of whom it is simply said, “(He) walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring "Quality of Soul"

34

Not much detail; no accolades; no achievements of record. But one nevertheless gets the feeling that Enoch is the equal of all the others, if not their superior.

- **The longing for intimacy.** Those who study temperament styles of people know that a certain percentage of the population is driven by intimacy: the desire to connect closely with people.

There are some who love to make things or draw things or throw things or think about things. But men and women in ministry are usually disinterested in things. They're drawn to people. They want to understand them, motivate them, encourage them, and probably, change them.

If one has entered the ministry simply because it is a wonderful place to meet one's need for people-connection, the results are likely to be disastrous.

I've heard more than a few midlife men talk about leaving their careers in the marketplace to enter ministry. They're prepared to shelve a work history of 20 years to go to seminary. Why? Because most of the time they're disillusioned making and selling widgets; they hate the depersonalization of the marketplace; they long to stop being so lonely and to get close to people. They observe pastors, who appear to spend all day talking with folks, solving problems, leading and motivating, and it looks good to them.

Scan the motive-base and you usually see that the primary caller to ministry may not be Christ but rather a need to assuage the sense of isolation and alienation that careerism has created.

Timothy could have been driven by this desire for intimacy. You get the feeling he liked to make people feel good. And that's why Paul has to push him to preach, to confront, to prod, to stay the course: "Remember the gift that's in you." Without Paul's challenges, Timothy possibly would have settled down to being an awfully nice guy.

- **The power of idealism.** I grew up in a highly idealistic tradition. I was immersed in triumphal language. We were going to "convert the nations" and "win the world for Christ." My early heroes were spiritual giants (at least their biographers depicted them as giants) such as Hudson Taylor and

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring “Quality of Soul”

35

George Mueller. And my generation of Christian leaders attached an almost mystical dimension to their calling. Paul’s words—“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel”—rested heavily upon us. More than once I heard, “If God has given you a call and you forsake that call for anything else, you’re going to live in life-long judgment.”

When I first entered ministry as a youth pastor, I was filled with that idealism. I remember my first sermon and how Gail hugged me so tightly at the end of the evening. She was proud of me; I was proud of me. We saw only a wonderful future of doing God’s work.

Then a few months later the sky began to fall. The father of one of the young people became disaffected by how I handled his son. He wrote me a letter saying I should go into the army; it would make a man out of me. My idealism crashed that day. It was one of the first times I realized that doing God’s work, even with my best intentions, wasn’t always going to be pleasant.

A few months later, I picked up a crumpled piece of paper and read a note one teenager had written to another: “If MacDonald doesn’t leave here pretty soon, this whole program is going to die.”

I was so discouraged that I wrote my letter of resignation and quit. I spent the next year working nights, typing bills for a trucking company. All the dreams and expectations were gone. There was no idealism during those months.

What I had to learn was that ministry is hard work—a noble work but hard. And it is marked with failures and disappointments, with opposition and misunderstanding. No one had succeeded in acquainting me with Paul’s momentary crashes: “We were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.”

There is probably no such thing as a pure motivation. Frankly, our hearts have too much evil embedded in them. And I suspect that even the motivations originating somewhere near purity are likely to be perverted as time goes by.

Many find it easy to write off high-profile Christians who have experienced stunning failures of one kind or another. There may be some





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring "Quality of Soul"

36

exceptions, but I am convinced that almost every one of those who have built reputations and have collapsed started with the best of motivations. They really wanted to serve God. But the best of motivations are exchangeable for less-than-best.

Only the man or woman who baptizes his or her motivations every day will have any hope that things will not turn sour down the road.

I don't know why anyone ever wanted the job of an Old Testament prophet—indeed many of those who got the job weren't seeking it. Jeremiah is a case in point. He fights the call when it comes: "I can't speak; I'm a child." Later on he confesses that he'd like to run from the city and seclude himself in the countryside (I can identify with that). Jeremiah and others prompt me to think that there is some safety when you find yourself kicking against God's call every once in a while. When you do kick, the motive-base gets a retesting.

These sample motivations that I've tried to list and describe are fairly typical of the things likely to drive us in our younger years. But time and struggle are likely to force impurities to the surface. And each time that happens, we have to decide all over again if we will purify our motives before God and other people, or, as an alternative, grow increasingly cynical about why we entered ministry in the first place.

Many men and women reach their midlife and discover their motivations for ministry are inadequate. They think it's too late to change. And so they continue on. They work their hardest to fulfill the expectations of their jobs. But that's all they're likely to be doing: jobs—nice jobs, helpful jobs, honorable jobs, but jobs.

By the time you reach your 50s, you may have had a number of rebuilding efforts. They usually come as a result of setbacks. Here perhaps is the one place I can safely boast (as Paul did in his weaknesses). I have known several of the classic setbacks. And, as a result, I've come to learn something about restorative grace and the process of rebuilding.

Are there great and noble motives? Of course. Moses became absorbed in the suffering of his people, and God's sensitivity to suffering and bondage became his. Samuel came to understand that the people of Israel were unable to hear God's voice through the present religious establishment.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring "Quality of Soul"

37

He made his voice available to God. Mary, the mother of the Lord, was clearly driven by the principle of obedience and allowed herself to be the mother of the Lamb of God.

These are the motives we can nourish in our own lives.

Motives Are Never Fixed

Is it healthy to be concerned about our motive-base? Well, Peter did it with Simon the magician; I see the prophets wrestling with it. And I see Jesus reflecting upon his motive-base every time he reiterates his sense of call from the Father.

Perhaps it's a function of the older years that makes one more and more wary. I now realize that the best of motives and attitudes can be twisted even after we think we've gotten them straight.

In 1981 I went to Thailand to attend a congress of evangelical leaders. I was given the honor of delivering one of the plenary addresses. I remember thinking, Wow! Here are hundreds of Christian leaders from scores of countries, and I am one of the very, very few asked to give a talk to the whole assembly.

It started as a heady time, and I remember having to rethink my motives with regularity. The drive to achieve (hadn't I proved myself?), to find approval (wouldn't my mother be proud?), to connect (these people must like me), and to realize leadership goals (being a part of a world leadership was sort of an objective) were all at work. I had a lot of soul scanning and confessing to do.

Then three days into the conference, one of the most well-known leaders chartered a boat and invited about 40 of the conferees for an afternoon of quiet consultation out on the Gulf of Siam. They were going to talk about the future of evangelical Christianity in the world. I was not among the 40.

Suddenly being one of the speakers at the conference meant nothing. I was devastated. Not being invited to that meeting on the boat left me feeling empty. And God taught me one of the most important lessons of my life: no matter how far you go or how high you think you've climbed, there will always be 40 (and probably many, many more) above and beyond you.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring “Quality of Soul”

38

The moment you think of the kingdom as a place to achieve, to become valuable, to connect, or to be a major player, you will quickly discover that this was never what Jesus had in mind when he called, “Follow me.”

In my book *Rebuilding Your Broken World*, I recount the story of Alexander Whyte, the great Scottish preacher, who was told that an American evangelist had accused a close friend of his of not being a converted man. Whyte was instantly outraged. His speech was barely restrained as he vented his fury on his friend’s accuser.

But then, when Whyte quieted down, he was told that the same evangelist had also questioned Whyte’s conversion. Instantly, Whyte fell silent. Now there was no rebuttal, just an awful quietness as he buried his face in his hands. Then he looked up at the one who had brought these reports and said, “Leave me. Leave me, my friend. I must examine my heart.”

I don’t think there’s a person in this world who remembers what I said in my speech in Thailand. It wasn’t that good anyway. But I will always value that trip. There I, like Whyte, learned an important lesson: Examine your heart. Make sure you know which motivations are in control, and don’t dare step into public until you’ve got the answer.

Gordon MacDonald is pastor emeritus of Grace Chapel in Lexington, Massachusetts and editor-at-large of LEADERSHIP JOURNAL. Copyright © 1992 by Christianity Today International. Originally appeared in Mastering Personal Growth.

Features





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Ensuring "Quality of Soul"

39

Where Do You Stand?

In order to guard against off-base motivations, assess yourself in the four areas that MacDonald outlined. Which are you particularly susceptible to these days? Which have you dealt with in the past?

Using the assessment below, reconsider each of the four deceitful motivations described above, and place a check mark to note where you stand in a struggle against that motivator. Since motivations change over time, revisit this article and assessment periodically and consider how your motivations are changing.

	Current Struggle	Past Struggle	Not Yet a Struggle
Need for approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Validation for achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Longing for intimacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Power of idealism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Resources

40

Additional Resources

More places for more information.



A Spirit Fit to Lead, this downloadable resource prompts us to examine the condition of our souls and whether it's time to provide some nourishment. Available from **Today's Christian Woman Store** under Gifted for Leadership.

Spiritual Gifts, this downloadable packet from **Gifted for Leadership** offers ways to learn more about the spiritual gifts, how to grow in them, and how to guard against their misuse.

Finding Your Center, a downloadable resource from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com** reminds leaders of the source and strength of their vocation.

Leading or Responding? An article by Paul Cedar takes a look at the difference between leading in response to the Holy Spirit as opposed to being reactive to the situations surrounding us.

Ordering Your Private World by Gordon MacDonald, Thomas Nelson, 2007. We have schedule planners, computerized calendars, and self-stick notes to help us organize our business and social lives every day. But what about organizing the other side of our lives—the spiritual side?

RESOURCES





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Resources

41

One of the great battlegrounds of the new century is within the private world of the individual. The values of our Western culture incline us to believe that the busy, publicly active person in ministry is also the most spiritual. Tempted to give imbalanced attention to the public world at the expense of the private, we become involved in more programs, more meetings. Our massive responsibilities at home, work, and church have resulted in a lot of good people on the verge of collapse. Includes study guide.

The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer, Wingspread Publishers. In the muddle of day-to-day life, have you somehow forgotten that Christianity is a living, vibrant relationship with a personal God? In this classic bestseller and recipient of both the ECPA Gold and Platinum Book Awards, *The Pursuit of God* reminds and challenges you to renew your relationship with your loving God. In each of the 10 chapters, Tozer explains one aspect of hungering for God and ends with a prayer.

The Holy Spirit in You by Derek Prince, Whitaker House Publishers. Derek Prince clearly explains the ways of the Holy Spirit and how he works in the lives of Christians. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer can: experience the continual presence of Jesus; become a bold witness for Christ; acquire revelation of the Word of God; be led by the Spirit; pray according to God's will; receive physical and emotional healing; understand the plans of God.





Listening to the Holy Spirit

Resources

42



Do You Feel **Alone** as a Woman Leader?

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