

Lessons From a Seeing-Eye Dog

Anyone who has been a Christian for even a short period of time knows the battle we face. There is a war going on inside as Paul declares in Romans 7. One side is that old self-life which wants its own way, wants to indulge in its own pleasures, wants to be recognized, even worshipped. It is like a leftover of our crucified old sinful nature – the Bible calls it's the flesh. It fights against the other nature or Person present in us – the Spirit. The Holy Spirit Himself dwells inside the body of a Christian (I Corinthians 6:19) The Holy Spirit is dedicated to glorifying Jesus. He never seeks worship for Himself – He always points people to Christ. His role is to reproduce Jesus Christ in a believer. So you can imagine what happens when these two meet – one dedicated to glorifying self and the other to glorifying Christ. As Paul says they are contrary one to the other. The two cannot be indulged or obeyed at the same time. As Jesus put it, you cannot serve masters. At any point you are either serving or loving self or serving and loving Jesus.

What is the solution? Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16 “*This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

What does that mean?

Well, as I was in a mall recently, I saw an amazing sight. I watched a blind lady being led by a seeing-eye dog. Now, no illustration is perfect, and neither is this one. I'm going to compare the Holy Spirit's work with us to a seeing-eye dog and by that I obviously don't mean the Holy Spirit is subservient to us. He is God, and we submit to Him. We can use the illustration for as far as it goes. So how does a blind person being led by a seeing-eye dog illustrate this principle of 'walk in the Spirit'?

I. To Walk In the Spirit is to Depend on Him

As I watched this visually impaired lady walk, I marveled at this dog. She clung to his leash or handle and he was literally her eyes. He guided her past obstacles, avoiding people, intelligently and perfectly leading her.

Now think for a moment what would happen if she let go of the handle. She would have no way of handling the bustle of the mall. She could proceed under her own power and guidance – but she would no doubt have a pretty nasty accident before long. She is completely dependent on the dog. She submits to its leading, trusting that it will not lead her astray.

So with walking in the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit is to admit that we cannot live life in our own strength or wisdom. Moreover, we don't want to. We desire God's Lordship over us. We want to do things His way, not our own way. Being filled or controlled by the Spirit is not like ringing for extra help for a selfish task. It is saying, I am blind to see my own way. I am totally helpless. I need You, Holy Spirit to control, lead and enable me. I lean totally on You.

The world was not made user-friendly to a blind person. So the world is not user friendly to one living life apart from God's guidance and control.

You are refusing to stumble around blindly in your own wisdom – you are humbling yourself - submitting to Him and firmly grasping His hand. The blind lady had to choose

to hold her dog's handle and refuse to trust anything else. If she doubts his leading – she messes up the relationship. She gives up on self-control, and relies on Him. So with us. James says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God” “Humble thyself in the sight of the lord – and He will lift you up” In short – empty yourself – so that He can fill.

II. To Walk In the Spirit is to have God's Word Before Us.

As I watched the lady being led by the dog, I realized something else. In order for the guidance to take place, the leash must be tight. The blind person doesn't hold onto the dog itself, she holds onto a leash or a handle attached to the dog. Consider what would happen if the leash were not tight. If it were loose and dragging on the ground, though the dog may be leading correctly, the blind person will not feel that leading. Unless the leash is tight – they will not feel the tug, pull and push of the dog. It is imperative that the connection between dog and person be a close and tight one.

That leash is like the Word of God. The Bible is the 'leash' that connects us to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum : He leads us, controls us, prompts us with the Word of God. He wrote it, He teaches it and He reminds us of it. He leads us with the Word of God.

Now, if the Word of God is not 'tight' in our minds like that leash – the same situation will happen spiritually. God the Spirit may be leading, but we do not feel His prompting, pulling and convicting because the leash is loose. The Word of God is not 'tight' in our minds. What does that mean? It means we are not retaining, remembering and meditating on the Word of God. Our minds must be filled with it, renewed by it and transformed by it. Often we do a casual scan of a passage once a day and expect God to lead us. That is like preparing a breakfast, licking the surface of it, and hoping for energy to last you for hours. No, the Bible tells us we are to meditate on Scripture. *Meditate* has the idea of a chewing cow – that chews, and then regurgitates what it has chewed to chew it some more.

Do you take time each day to really explore the Bible? To allow God to show you Himself and show you the contrast between Himself and yourself? Do you write down changes you need to make? Do you memorise the verse which jumps out at you and meditate on it throughout your day? “I'm not good at memorizing” you say. Do you remember your name? Your telephone number? Your birthday? We tend to remember what is important to us! Take time each day to make God's leash tight in your mind.

III. To Walk in the Spirit Is to Obey God's Word

As I watched the guide dog and the blind lady, I saw a remarkable thing. They were approaching an obstacle in the middle of the path. The dog began gently nudging her leg. She responded by walking in the direction he was nudging. They easily cleared the obstacle.

That then is how it works together. She must hold the leash – be dependent. The leash must be tight enough to feel the dog's leading. But then she must respond when he leads. We surrender to God's leading. We memorise the Word of God. But when the Holy Spirit uses the Word to nudge us, lead us, convict us – we must obey. If that lady had got angry with the dog and pushed it away, she would have had an accident. So it is when we resist God's gentle leading: we will have spiritual accidents. There must be a gentle, sensitive relationship: listening for prompts and quickly obeying. And realize, she has to

do the walking. It's not a guide-horse. She can't ride the dog. So with us. We too often think that depending on the Spirit means He will do the obeying for us. No, He empowers and enables the obedience, but we must do the obeying.

There is no substitute for simple childlike faith that obeys. God says it, I'll do it. All three work together: You must yield to the Spirit, we must meditate on God's Word, and you must obey when He leads.