

Spirit Led

By David Feddes

We've been looking at some major themes in the Book of Acts. First of all, Jesus is the only way of salvation. Jesus is preached all through the Book of Acts as the only Savior. Then we were thinking about being Spirit-filled in a previous message. Today we're going to focus on being Spirit-led. Then I hope in future messages to look again at the Book of Acts on being Spirit-gifted and Spirit-transformed.

Today we want to think about what it means to be led by the Spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit whom the Lord has given us. We're going to begin by reading Acts 13:1–4.

"Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus" (Acts 13:1–4).

That was the launching of the first great missionary journey of the apostle Paul.

Spirit led

- Signs
- Voices
- Visions
- Angels
- Prophecies

When we read the Book of Acts and think about being Spirit-led, one of the things that is very striking is all the times that miraculous, very striking, amazing forms of guidance come to lead God's people on their way. That comes in a variety of ways: through signs and very visible things that are happening, through voices that they hear, visions that they see, angels who come and communicate with them, and sometimes through prophecies that are spoken.

Signs

On the day of Pentecost, there was the sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire on their heads, and they're speaking in tongues. Nobody has to wonder, "Is something happening here?" They all knew something big was happening because the Holy Spirit was showing himself through signs (Acts 2:1–4).

When the apostles were given power from the Holy Spirit to do miracles, these were signs that God was at work in them, that the Lord was speaking through them. Over and over, the apostles' teaching and activities are accompanied by these signs.

When the Holy Spirit comes on some other people who weren't expected to become believers, the Holy Spirit would sometimes send the gift of tongues to them as a sign. For instance, when Peter spoke to Cornelius, a Roman army officer, and his household, while he was speaking the Holy Spirit came on them and they started speaking in tongues. That sign help guide Peter to accept Gentiles into the church. He said, "I know now that God doesn't show favoritism, that God is welcoming Romans and Gentiles just like he's welcomed us Jews" (Acts 10:44–48; Acts 11:15–18). Peter had no doubt in his mind because of that sign God had sent in filling those Gentiles with the Holy Spirit.

Voices

Sometimes God's people in Acts were guided voices that they would hear. An angel tells Philip, "Go south to the desert road" (Acts 8:26). Then, when he goes where the angel tells him, the Holy Spirit tells Philip, "Now go to that chariot and stay near it" (Acts 8:29). A voice guides Phillip to that chariot. So he goes to that chariot and witnesses to that particular person, who happens to be an official of the queen of Ethiopia, and is going to be converted by the Lord.

Sometimes God would send a voice not just to guide in a new direction but to say, "You're exactly where I want you to be." The apostle Paul is in a situation where he's in deep trouble. He thinks that the Lord wants him to go to Rome, but he's sitting in a Jerusalem jail. The Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11). A voice tells him what's going on and what's going to eventually happen.

Guidance by a voice is what we noticed in the Scripture we started with. The voice of the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). They heard a voice, and that voice directed them.

Visions

Along with voices directing, sometimes there were visions. The really big vision in the Book of Acts is when Saul is still a murderer and hunting down Christians. Jesus Christ appears to him in a blinding vision and calls Saul out of being a persecutor and into being a missionary (Acts 9:3–6). He gives Saul that vision.

He also gives a vision to another person named Ananias. Ananias has a vision that he is supposed to go to Saul and pray over him so that he can get his sight back and be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's a vision from the Lord Jesus Christ that tells Ananias to do that (Acts 9:10–12). So Ananias goes and calls him "Brother Saul," even though he's been a killer. He lays his hands on him. Saul receives his sight back, is filled with the Holy Spirit, and is ready begin his mission (Acts 9:17–18). Visions play a very important role in all of this.

Cornelius, a Roman army officer, was praying one day. He wasn't yet a believer in Jesus, but he believed in the one God of the Jews and was praying. God had made him a seeker of God and somebody who also was becoming generous in sharing money. One day, while he's praying, an angel appears to Cornelius in Caesarea and says, "Send some people to Joppa, a town not that far

away. Ask for a man named Peter. Get him to come to your household” (Acts 10:1–6). Guided by a vision—in this case, an angel communicating through a vision—Cornelius sends three men to go get Peter.

Meanwhile in Joppa, Peter is having a strange vision of a sheet let down from heaven, full of animals that Jews were not supposed to eat. A voice says, “Kill and eat.” Peter says, “I’ve never done that. I never will.” And the voice says, “Don’t call unclean what God has called clean” (Acts 10:9–16). That happens three times. Peter is scratching his head and pondering, “What in the world is that vision about?”

Right while Peter is wondering, the Holy Spirit tells him that three men are outside. The Spirit says, “Go with those three men, and you’ll understand what the vision is all about” (Acts 10:19–20). He goes with them, meets this Roman army officer Cornelius, and preaches the gospel to him and his family. They are all filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter then understands: “I used to think of all those people as unclean, but God is welcoming them and sending the gospel to them” (Acts 10:34–48).

One of the big visions that is another turning point in the Book of Acts comes in Acts chapter 16. “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas” (Acts 16:6–8).

That sounds strange—you’re itching to preach somewhere, and the Holy Spirit won’t let you. You’re wanting to go somewhere else, and God won’t let you. They’re on this missionary journey where they’ve been to various towns, and they were going to try to go up further into that province of Asia, but they couldn’t do it. They’re stuck in Troas wondering, “Okay, now what?”

“During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:9–10).

This vision that Paul has of the Macedonian asking him to come is how the gospel goes into Europe. A lot of us who are of European ancestry can be very thankful for that vision, because God launched the gospel into yet another area of the world through that vision. Just as he sent an Ethiopian in the direction of Africa, he sends Paul in the direction of Europe—and he guides Paul through this vision of a man urging him.

Sometimes the Lord gives a vision: “You’ve got to move. Here’s where you’ve got to go next.” Other times he sends a vision and says, “Here’s where you’ve got to stay.” He speaks to Paul in the town of Corinth. “One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city’” (Acts 18:9–10).

Paul hasn’t won them over yet. They aren’t even converted yet. But God says, “I have them. You’re going to get them, even though you haven’t had much success thus far.” So Paul spends

the next year and a half in Corinth evangelizing and bringing the gospel to people and teaching them. This vision guided him to stay put, because God knows which people he plans to save, even before they are actually saved.

Angels

Angels play a big part in communicating the Holy Spirit's guidance. Early in Acts, when the apostles get locked up, "an angel of the Lord came during the night, opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 'Go, stand in the temple courts,' he said, 'and tell the people all about this new life'" (Acts 5:19–20). Following the angel's direction, they leave the prison, and then they go back to the temple and resume preaching.

We've already seen how an angel's voice guided Phillip to the Ethiopian official, and how an angel guided Cornelius to summon Peter.

Here's another example of angel guidance. Peter gets locked up in prison and is scheduled for execution. God sends an angel. Peter thinks he's having a vision, but this isn't a vision. This is an angel showing up, taking off his handcuffs, leading him right out of the jail and out the outer gate. He tells Peter what to do in that whole process. It's time for Peter to get out of town. He's rescued by an angel and guided by an angel.

An angel comes to Paul in a very dicey situation. He's on the open sea in the middle of a two-week-long horrible storm. Paul has been through three shipwrecks already in his various journeys, and now he's about to have a fourth one. His fellow travelers are terrified, but Paul tells them, "I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you'" (Acts 27:22–24). Paul tells everybody, "Let's all eat some food. Let's get ready because we're going to have a wreck, but we're all going to make it." The Holy Spirit communicates with Paul through an angel.

Prophecies

Guidance also comes through prophets. The prophets don't always give encouraging news. Sometimes it's tough news. Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, and some prophets say, "Don't go." The Bible says they're speaking through the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit isn't actually saying Paul shouldn't go. The Spirit is letting Paul know what's going to happen. He lets those prophets know what's going to happen, and they conclude Paul shouldn't go because bad things are going to happen. But the Holy Spirit has told Paul, "Bad things are going to happen, and you need to go anyway" (Acts 20:22–23). Sometimes knowing from prophets about what's going to happen doesn't necessarily mean, "Therefore make a U-turn so the bad stuff doesn't happen." Sometimes it's just to confirm, "You know what you're getting into. Be prepared."

There's a prophet named Agabus who is very dramatic. Earlier in the Book of Acts, Agabus predicts a famine, so the churches take a big offering for the famine victims—who aren't yet famine victims. The offering is ready before the famine even hits because Agabus has told them

it's coming (Acts 11:27–30). It's like when Joseph in the Old Testament foresaw a famine in Egypt, so they were ready for it when it happened.

Later in Acts, Agabus again appears. He takes Paul's belt and ties himself up with it and says, "This is what's going to happen to you when you get to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:10–11). All Paul's friends react by saying, "Oh, please don't go. Please don't go." And Paul says, "Why are you crying and breaking my heart? I've got to go. The Holy Spirit tells me in every town I go, I'm going to run into trouble. Why would this trip be any different?" (Acts 21:12–14). So Paul makes a beeline for Jerusalem anyway, knowing that trouble is waiting.

Prophecies were an important form of guidance. Recall what we read about that prayer group in Acts 13. Some of them were prophets, and they received a message from the Holy Spirit about what to do next: send Barnabas and Saul on a mission journey. That was part of the Holy Spirit's supernatural guidance for them.

As we think about being Spirit-led, there are these striking cases in the Book of Acts of signs, voices, visions, angels, and prophecies. These are very interesting and dramatic forms of guidance. When we think about guidance, we may say, "That's how the Spirit guides." And it's true that the Spirit sometimes guides people with very striking, miraculous, supernatural way of guiding. But we'll see a bit later that the Spirit also has other, more ordinary ways leading believers.

Now let's consider some frequently asked questions.

Spirit led: FAQ

- Should I always find out God's detailed, individual will before I make a decision?
- If someone claims miraculous leading today, are they mentally unstable?
- Should I expect the Spirit to lead me by all the same methods he used in Acts?

Should I always find out God's detailed individual will before I make a decision?

Over time, some Christians have turned stories into a system. The system assumes that, because God gave specific guidance at times in the Book of Acts, you should never make a decision unless you've got the nudge and the go-ahead and the clear leading of the Lord. In this view, God has an entire map laid out for your life, and your job is to find out the next step on the map and take that step as it's revealed to you.

Is that how it works? The short answer is no.

God does not promise that you will always know what's coming next, or that you should never do anything unless you have direct supernatural guidance. It's not true that you will only get God's second best or third best if you haven't figured out the next step of God's perfect plan for you. The Bible is very plain that we usually can't know the future. "You do not even know what

will happen tomorrow” (James 4:14). Scripture doesn’t say, “Try really hard to figure out what’s going to happen tomorrow and then make your decisions accordingly.” So we do not have to figure out the exact map of the future or the next step and then wait to do anything until the Holy Spirit directly tells us what step to take.

If someone claims miraculous leading today, are they mentally unstable?

Although we don't always have to receive direct divine guidance to tell us God's detailed, individual will for us, there may be times of very striking, miraculous leading. If somebody claims miraculous leading today, are they mentally unstable?

Not necessarily. The Holy Spirit who guides his people may still guide in quite extraordinary ways. We shouldn't be too quick to dismiss extraordinary leadings from the Holy Spirit.

Should I expect the Spirit to lead me by all the same methods he used in Acts?

Should I expect the Spirit to lead me by signs, voices, visions, angels, and prophecy? Yes and no. There are other, less spectacular, less miraculous ways that the Holy Spirit leads people. We're going to see some of those in the Book of Acts. You can be Spirit-led even when the leading is comes in a less striking form. So no, you shouldn't expect the Spirit always to lead in miraculous ways; but yes, you should be open to the Spirit guiding you by such methods if he chooses to do so.

Is being Spirit-led today like being Spirit-led in Acts? In order to answer that question, it helps to first answer another questions: What is the Book of Acts?

What is Acts?

First, it's a history of the church's foundational period. It is a unique time that ended after the apostles died and the New Testament was finished.

Some people take that fact and turn it into a system. They say, “That was a unique age, and therefore we should not expect very much to be similar in the age we live in. Those signs and miracles and wonders were done to accompany the apostles and their close associates, and we ought not to assume that everybody who’s not an apostle, not an associate, not living in that special age of the church before the New Testament was finally written down completely, is going to need the same kind of guidance that they got back then, when they didn’t yet have the full New Testament.”

There’s a lot to be said for that position. The Book of Acts is describing a unique period of laying the foundation for the church in the centuries to follow. There are no apostles today in the same sense that those apostles were eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ and directly taught by the Holy Spirit to speak infallibly, without error, and to write without error the books of the New Testament. That was a unique age. The foundation is not going to get laid all over again.

But Acts is doing more than just telling us about that unique, foundational period. It is describing the launching of a new age. A second thing that we need to know is this: Acts is a portrait of what a lively church and mission looks like in the new covenant age of the Holy Spirit. That new covenant age, launched by the Spirit, is still ongoing. It hasn't ended. It continues until Jesus Christ returns.

Both of these facts need to be kept in mind when we're thinking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and also when we're thinking about the guidance of the Holy Spirit and being Spirit-led.

Maybe you're not very involved in God's mission, but you would like direct leading on an important decision so that it doesn't turn out badly. You wouldn't want to buy a house in a neighborhood where property values are going to go down a lot in the next five years. So you pray, "Lord, please, send me guidance like Paul had when he saw the vision of a man from Macedonia. I want a vision to show me where to buy a house so that my new purchase doesn't bomb." It's fine to pray about a house purchase, but that's not the same as being on the pioneer edge of mission, with people attacking you and God sending reassurances and specific directions on where to go next to carry on his mission. The kind of guidance that God gives in Acts is guidance to lead his people in his mission.

If you pray about buying a specific house in a particular place, you might want God to help you choose a beautiful home that will skyrocket in value in the years to come. But he might put you in that neighborhood, not for your own sake, but for the sake of others who live there. He might lead you to that place because there are people he wants you to meet there, people who need the gospel and who need loving encouragement. His leading may not have much to do with your financial standing at all. He may want you there, but for reasons quite different than the ones you weigh when you make your purchase.

At any rate, what is Acts? It's unique and foundational. But at the same time, it portrays the launch of the new covenant age of the Spirit, which continues now and will continue until Jesus returns. So I believe we should read the Book of Acts with a view toward understanding the work of the Holy Spirit, believing that many—if not all—of the Spirit's activities described there are still going on today.

Now let's think about *where* the Spirit leads, and then we'll go into more detail about *how* the Spirit leads.

Where Holy Spirit leads

- Led to know, trust, and love Jesus
- Led to relate to God as your Father
- Led to understand and relish God's truth
- Led to reject sin and pursue holiness
- Led to long for God and heaven on earth
- Led to heartfelt prayer connection
- Led to God's unique purposes for you

The Holy Spirit leads you to know, love, and trust Jesus. He's called the Spirit of Christ. He's called the Spirit of Jesus. Jesus said, "I'm going to send you the Counselor, and he's going to bear witness to me. He's going to take from what is mine and make it known to you" (John 15:26; John 16:14). The Holy Spirit is always leading you to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit leads you to relate to God as your Father. "The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15). The Spirit moves us to cry out "Abba, Father" and know that our Father loves us.

He's called the Spirit of truth, and one of his major works is simply to help us understand and relish the truth of God that he reveals (John 16:13).

He's the *Holy* Spirit, which means he leads us out of sin and into holiness. He convicts us of sin, leads us out of sin, makes us reject it, repent of it, and pursue holiness instead (John 16:8–11).

The Bible calls the Holy Spirit the down payment, the first installment, the guarantee of our inheritance in the age to come. He leads us to long for God and for heaven on earth, when everything is made new (Ephesians 1:13–14; Romans 8:23).

He's the Spirit who intercedes for us. "The Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Romans 8:26). He's the Spirit who helps us to relate to God and have a heartfelt prayer connection with God.

And yes, he's also the Spirit who directs our steps into the unique purposes that God has for us as individuals. He does have plans for your life, and he will reveal some elements of those plans or give you some guidance as needed to lead you along the path of those plans.

I want to think with you now about *how* he leads you into the unique purposes that he has for you. That's what I want to focus on for the remainder of the message: how the Spirit leads.

How Holy Spirit leads

- Applies Scriptures to our lives
- Speaks amid prayer and worship
- Directs through leadership body
- Arranges events for his purposes
- Speaks to and through our spirit
- Grows wise, mature mind of Christ
- Guides "miraculously" as needed

We've looked at the last one in the first part of this message—he guides miraculously—and I'm not going to say a lot more about it. There are other ways that he leads people in the Book of Acts, and I want us to be very alert to those.

The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the Bible, and then he helps us to know what the Bible means and what it means for us.

He speaks, he leads people, but often he does that in the context when they're praying and worshiping in his presence. When they're open to him and delighting in him, they're a lot more likely to hear from him.

He directs through a leadership body—we'll see that in Acts.

He arranges events for his purpose. Some of his guidance is experienced when we say, "Okay, this stuff happened, and it plunks me in a certain situation, and now I work from there."

Sometimes he speaks to our spirit and through our spirit, and we have thoughts and a sense of what he wants. It's like an inner voice. You might not hear a voice with your ears, but he gives you certain thoughts that seem to have the quality of coming from God.

Even more important than specific thoughts, he gives you the mind of Christ—what the Bible also calls the mind of the Spirit—to make you a wise, mature person whose very instincts and way of thinking are so in tune with Christ that you don't need lots of specific guidance. You just think and feel and react the way Christ would. As J. I. Packer says, you almost develop a "Christ instinct." That's what is involved in the mind of Christ.

Also, there's miraculous guidance. The Holy Spirit guided by signs, voices, visions, angels, and prophecies in the book of Acts, and he may still guide in these ways today as needed.

Applies Scriptures to our lives

When I list seven aspects of how the Spirit guides us, the first is Scripture. This is foundational. I would say to ignore all the other six that come after it if you're not listening to Scripture. If you're not listening to the Bible, you're wasting your time hoping for God's guidance. He may give it anyway, but don't count on it, because the main way in which God makes himself known and communicates his guidance is through the writings of the Bible.

When you look at the Book of Acts, that might be easy to overlook if you're struck by the visions and the angels and other miraculous leadings. But notice how the apostles and evangelists preach. Peter gets up on Pentecost, and what does he do? He says, "All this stuff that's happening—this is what the prophet Joel talked about" (Acts 2:16–21). And, "In the Psalms of David, here's what David had to say about the future Messiah" (Acts 2:25–28). So Peter is preaching from the Scriptures.

The new Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). The fullness of the apostles' teaching is what we now have in our New Testament. The apostles' teaching is God's guidance for all of us.

When Stephen preaches, he gives an overview of Old Testament history and then applies it to them right then and there and says, "This Christ was the one that it was all leading up to, and you've crucified him" (Acts 7). So he's preaching from Old Testament history.

When you look at what Philip does, Philip is talking to that Ethiopian official in his chariot. Earlier we saw that an angel and a voice from the Holy Spirit guided him there. You might think, "That would be great if I just had an angel and a voice telling me what to do." But when Philip gets to the chariot, what does he do? The Ethiopian is reading Scripture from Isaiah 53, and he doesn't quite know what Isaiah is talking about. So Philip explains that Jesus is the one Isaiah prophesied about when he wrote, "He was despised and rejected by men... he bore our griefs... carried our sorrows..." (Isaiah 53:3–4). So he's basically just giving a Bible explanation. After all that extraordinary guidance that got him to the Ethiopian, Philip says the Scripture is about Jesus (Acts 8:26–35).

At the great Council of Jerusalem, the church leaders discussed how to deal with Gentile converts. There James quoted a Bible passage from the prophet Amos to prove inclusion of Gentiles. (Acts 15:15–18).

When you read about Paul's mission journeys, it says that he would reason with people from the Scriptures (Acts 17:2–3). Apollos would preach from the Scriptures and demonstrate from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 18:28). And so the leading of the Holy Spirit is, above all, a leading into the Scriptures.

We sometimes look at the miraculous ways the Spirit led the apostles and think, "I'm going to be led in that way." Maybe so, but put yourself in the position of the audience of the apostles—because that's really what you are. And the audience of the apostles is constantly being told what the Scriptures say about Jesus.

So if you want to have the Holy Spirit's leading, be ready to listen to the Scriptures. The Bereans were considered nobler people than those in some of the other towns, because when they heard Paul preach, they said, "He might be right. We're going to check and see whether it matches up with the Scriptures that we already have." And they would consult those Scriptures and say, "Yes, he's right. What he's saying matches the Scriptures." And they came to believe in Jesus because of consulting the Scriptures (Acts 17:10–12).

Speaks amid prayer and worship

Another way that the Spirit leads is in a context of prayer and worship. We've already seen that the men in Antioch—Paul and Barnabas and the others who were prophets and teachers—were fasting and worshipping when the Holy Spirit came to them and spoke to them (Acts 13:1–2). And that happens in other situations too.

Before Pentecost, what's going on? Those early believers are meeting, and they're praying, and they're praying, and they're praying. And it is in the context of their prayer meetings that the Holy Spirit comes on them in such power and communicates with them and launches the gospel mission to the world (Acts 1:14; Acts 2:1–4).

Cornelius had an angel appear to him, but don't forget that he was praying at the time the angel came to him (Acts 10:1–4). Peter had a vision from heaven, but don't forget that he was praying when he fell into the trance that brought about that vision (Acts 10:9–11).

The Spirit helps us in prayer (Romans 8:26). If you want to hear from the Spirit, be much in prayer. You might say, “I want the cool stuff where I’m getting all that amazing guidance from the angels and the visions.” But read your Bible and pray a lot, and there will be a lot of guidance coming to you.

Maybe you’ve seen the cartoon where some guy is sitting there saying, “I wish God would speak to me.” Meanwhile, he’s got an open Bible right in front of him. Well dude—God is speaking! Perk up and listen to what he is saying in the Bible.

Acts tells about various prayer meetings where the Spirit gave guidance. Christians are to pray in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 1:20). The Holy Spirit often guides in a setting of prayer and worship.

Directs through leadership body

The Spirit also directs through leaders. Sometimes when we think about Spirit guidance, we want to think about individual Spirit guidance. But as individuals, we receive a lot of guidance from the leaders that God raises up—and that’s a part of the Book of Acts as well. The Holy Spirit used various leaders in Acts to guide Christians: apostles, elders, deacons, prophets, and teachers.

The apostles told the Christians in Jerusalem to appoint deacons: “Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). Those are the guys who are going to administer the program for helping widows and people in need. Still today, God has people whose main calling is to look after the financial affairs and the material well-being of people in the church—and we call them deacons.

Paul and Barnabas, on their missionary journeys, appointed elders in every church. That was standard procedure. Elders are called by God and lead on God’s behalf (Acts 14:23).

There was a great council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. The apostles and elders gathered together. Again and again, Acts refers to the apostles and the elders. At that gathering, there was a great need for the Spirit’s leading because Paul and Barnabas had a lot of success in their mission journeys. Some people said, “Gentile converts must become Jews. Get them circumcised. Get them observing the diet laws. Make sure they’re doing everything that Moses told us Jews to do. Then they may be acceptable church members” (Acts 15:1,5). And so Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem and met with the apostles and the elders there.

First of all, some Christians who had been Pharisees—or still were Pharisees—stood up and said, “You’ve got to be circumcised. You’ve got to do everything Moses said or you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:5). Peter responded, “What are you guys talking about? Didn’t the Lord reveal to me that he accepts everybody? While I was still speaking to them, the Holy Spirit came on them” (Acts 15:7–9; referencing Acts 10:44–47). “If God gave his Holy Spirit to them without requiring them to become Jews, he’s already accepted them. It’s by the grace of God in Jesus Christ that we’re saved,” says Peter (Acts 15:11).

Peter sits down. Paul and Barnabas stand up and say, “We've been traveling. We've been in a lot of different towns. We've been preaching the gospel. You want to know what God is doing? He's leading all kinds of people to faith in Christ. They're receiving the Holy Spirit, and they're not getting circumcised or observing all those other laws. It looks to us like God is accepting them without requiring all that” (Acts 15:12).

Then Jesus' half-brother James stands up and says, “I've got a Bible passage here. It says in the Book of Amos that God is going to restore his fallen tent, and when he does, the Gentiles are going to come to the Lord” (Acts 15:16–17, quoting Amos 9:11–12). “And I don't think we ought to make it hard for them.”

After discussing things, the leaders come to one mind. They write a letter to the church in Antioch and to other Gentiles, and they say, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28). So the Holy Spirit has worked through their gathering—through their meeting and their discussion as apostles and elders. “Now, it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us that we're not going to lay a bunch of burdens on you, and here's how we're going to proceed.” And that letter was received with great joy (Acts 15:30–31).

This meeting of church leaders was just as much the leading of the Holy Spirit as the visions and other supernatural guidance. Indeed, this Council of leaders provided guidance for the public life of the church and for how they were going to move forward into the future. It wasn't enough just to have a vision here or there. They had the Bible, they had the teaching of the apostles and the elders, and they had guidance on what they needed to do.

By the way, “elders” is plural. “Apostles” is plural. If you're looking for one grand potentate of the church who alone receives wisdom, visions from the Lord, and tells you all what to do, forget it. Because “elders” and “apostles” is always plural. There is not one vicar of Christ on earth, one pope who settles everything. There is not one vicar of Christ in your congregation who knows it all so that nobody else needs to be consulted with.

The Holy Spirit leads his people through a body of leaders.

Arranges events for his purposes

God also leads us by arranging events for his purposes—and not always in the ways that we would have liked him to or would have expected in advance.

What is one of the great missionary moments in the Book of Acts? Stephen's murder! He gets killed, and all the Christians except the apostles flee Jerusalem. It seems like disaster and chaos. "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). What a tragedy. But read further. "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4). This persecution seems like a calamity—except now, all of a sudden, it scattered the gospel all over the place. The early Christians had been told by Christ to go to all nations, but they hadn't been doing that yet. They were enjoying the fabulous growth of the church and the blessings on it in

Jerusalem. But it was when things got messy that they actually were spread out to preach the gospel elsewhere.

"Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there" (Acts 8:5). So the Samaritans got to know Jesus Christ in part because of the persecution that arose after Stephen. A whole new people group has come to salvation because of the persecution.

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:19–20). They're not just talking to Jewish people about Jesus; they're talking to Gentiles. This is one of the big moments in the history of the church, and it doesn't happen because of the fun, exciting, supernatural leading of the Holy Spirit. It is the "get out of here or we're going to kill you" kind of leading.

When you read about Paul's journeys, how is Paul led by the Holy Spirit? One time he has the vision of the man from Macedonia: "Here's where you need to go next" (Acts 16:9–10). But often he has the leading: "There's a posse behind me wanting to hurt or kill me. I am getting out of here fast—on to the next town." This happens again and again and again in the Book of Acts: "Oh, it's time to hightail it out of town now." And so the gospel would spread to the next town he showed up in.

Not always does Paul leave town when there's opposition. Sometimes the Holy Spirit told him to stay in town longer (Acts 18:9–11). Sometimes he knew opposition was coming even before he went, and he went anyway (Acts 20:22–23). But very often, circumstances dictated what Paul decided to do next.

Sometimes Paul even needed a little help to know what to do. You read about a riot of a bunch of idol worshipers screaming: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" They have a whole stadium packed with people screaming their lungs out: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:28–29, 34). Paul says, "I should go in there and preach to them." The brothers dissuaded him. They said, "Paul, preaching is often a great idea—but not today. Go into a stadium full of bloodthirsty rioters? Maybe a different day is a better time for the sermon."

Circumstances often dictated where the apostles and Christian witnesses need to go next. It wasn't a voice or a vision or an angel; it was events that God used to lead them elsewhere.

Do you ever have that? When we're looking for the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives, we need prayer and Scripture. We also need to ask, "Why am I in this situation?"—and not as a way to beat yourself up. Sometimes when something bad happens, you say, "What did I do wrong?" Maybe nothing. Maybe God just wanted to guide you onto a new path, and he used a change of circumstances to do it.

There have been a few times in my life where I made a big change because of events and feeling forced out by people. Even though I thought those people mishandled the situation and

mistreated me, my task is not to be mad at them. It's to say, "Maybe they're right; maybe they're wrong—but now it's time for a new phase in my life and ministry."

Years ago I was planning to move to Michigan to work with prison ministry. What could be wrong with that? It seemed a good thing to do. But we couldn't sell our house in Illinois. I ended up being offered a position as Provost of Christian Leaders Institute, and I remained here in Illinois as pastor of Family of Faith. Circumstances affected the path I followed, and I believe it was the Holy Spirit putting me where he wanted me to be.

With Paul, circumstances often guided him. Often he'd get hounded from one town to the next to the next, and he covered a lot of towns in the process. His missionary journeys carried him to many different places.

Sometimes the circumstances involve wicked people: bad rulers hoping to get a bribe. Paul won't pay the bribe, so he sits in jail a while longer. Another ruler knows Paul is innocent, but he thinks it will make powerful people happy if he keeps Paul in jail (Acts 24:26–27). Does that ruin Paul's life and ministry? No, since he's not free to travel and see churches in person, he writes letters to them. Those letters are now in the Bible, and people are still reading them two thousand years later. Circumstances of imprisonment led Paul to write.

Then there were those four shipwrecks and a variety of other things Paul endured. In all of that, the Holy Spirit was working and leading. Eventually Paul ends up in Rome. It wasn't the trip he planned. He didn't get there in the timing he planned. A lot of things went differently. But he got there.

You'll find this in your life too. Sometimes only looking back can you say, "Now I can see what the Lord was up to." But in the middle of it, it may seem like just one thing after another. However, if at every step of the journey you're saying, "What is the Holy Spirit putting me in this situation for? What is he directing me towards?"—then you can live a life led by the Spirit, rather than saying, "My life is just one event after another and it makes no sense."

Speaks to and through our spirit

The Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit and through our spirit. The Holy Spirit lives inside people who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the one who led us to faith in the first place. And as he dwells in us, he teaches us. He communicates to us through our spirit, through our mind, through our heart and emotions, through the desires, the instincts that we develop.

The Bible says that "the spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord" (Proverbs 20:27). The Lord works in your spirit, and that's even more true when his Holy Spirit is living inside you and testifying to your spirit. "Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). "You received the Spirit of sonship, and by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' **The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit** that we are God's children" (Romans 8:15–16). So one way that he's speaking to our spirit is giving us assurance—telling us that we're loved. "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:5).

One of the great ways of receiving the leading of the Holy Spirit is knowing that, in some way mysterious beyond our explanation, our spirit and his Spirit intermingle. You have thoughts that aren't just your thoughts. You learn to recognize the quality of a thought that comes from beyond you, a thought that the Holy Spirit puts into your mind. It may be an idea, something that I need to do. It wasn't on my to-do list, but the thought came to me, and all of a sudden I know. I know I need to do that. The more you live the Christian life, the more you're going to be recognizing that you're not just thinking your own thoughts—there are thoughts coming from him. Such thoughts don't always come in the form of an audible voice or vision, but the Holy Spirit is communicating through your own thinking in such a way that your thoughts almost become his inner voice.

The Spirit can also lead you by the feelings that you have in your spirit and mind. Sometimes the mind of Christ is just having a mind of humility or having a particular feeling. When you're walking by the Spirit, you still need to evaluate. You can't assume that every thought or feeling comes from the Spirit. Often you'll know right away: some feelings are not coming from him. They're just not. But with other ones, you're going to say, "I don't think I would feel this way if it weren't the Holy Spirit causing me to feel grief for somebody who's perishing, or to feel a great concern for the homeless, or to feel outraged by a certain injustice. That's coming to me from the Holy Spirit."

Above all, when God's Spirit testifies with your spirit that you're a child of God, don't ever just say, "Well, that's just wishful thinking on my part." The Holy Spirit is giving you that trust, that faith and assurance, and imprinting it on your mind and your heart and your desires.

This is the great mystery of the Holy Spirit's work within us. I don't think that we've grasped fully what the Book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament is saying to us if all we're looking for is guidance from outside ourselves, such as visions, signs, and angels. According to the Bible itself, the most intimate work and leading and blessing of the Holy Spirit isn't the fact that he's out there sending signals, but that he's in here, dwelling in your heart and communicating from inside you. You're thinking his thoughts, feeling his feelings. Your spirit has been filled with his Spirit, and your heart is now a heart for God.

I can't explain everything about that, because I'm only a baby in walking in the Spirit. But I present it to you because I think it's what the Bible calls us to, what many Christians of the past can testify to.

I know for myself there are times when I have thoughts that do guide my decisions. For instance, I knew what I was going to preach about a few weeks ago, and then it all got changed. I knew I had to preach several messages from acts on the Holy Spirit's ministry. It would have been easier by a lot for me to preach what I had been planning on, but I thought, "I think I'm supposed to shift gears."

Here's another example, involving a big life decision for me. I've told you before that I was a math and computer science major in college. I was getting A's in all those classes. Speech was my worst grade. But I had this sense, this thought that kept growing stronger: "I've got to be a preacher of the gospel." What do I do with that? It goes beyond rational analysis—because I'm

not good at speech, I'm good at math. And sometimes the Lord wants people to be in math or accounting or other occupations—but not me. I sensed inside that I was supposed to be a preacher.

There are times when the Holy Spirit will give you thoughts that are so strong you can't get rid of them. Or thoughts that keep coming to you again and again and again. That doesn't mean it's automatically for sure a divine communication, but if there is something that comes to your mind over and over that you think is of God—or might be—take it very seriously. Pay close attention if God keeps impressing similar things on your heart over and over again.

And then, beyond what I might call the Lord implanting thoughts or feelings, there is the way the Lord shapes your entire mind. It's very closely related, but it's different. He grows you into a mature, wise person where it can be said, not just that you're having thoughts from the Spirit or feelings or leadings from the Spirit, but that you have the mind of the Spirit, the mind of Christ. “We have received the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. We have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:12, 16). The apostle says, “I keep on praying that God will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you'll know him better. And I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened” (Ephesians 1:17–18). He prays that people will be able to be filled with the Spirit so they can understand what God's will is. “The mind of the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). “He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit” (Romans 8:27).

Just think about those phrases: mind of Christ, mind of Spirit. You can read large volumes on it, but let it be impressed on you that you can have a mind shaped by who Jesus is—a mind that's in tune with him, the mind of the Holy Spirit. These are tender and very precious mysteries. Some people have a hard time even talking about this to fellow believers because they say, “People will think I'm weird.” But these are some of the most precious things that can happen to you by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Guides “miraculously” as needed

Acts tells how the Spirit led the early Christians through signs, voices, visions, angels, prophecies, supernatural interventions. Don't be too quick to think that's the normal way the Holy Spirit always communicates with everybody, but don't dismiss it either. Miraculous guidance is sometimes given, but it is not promised or ordinary. Although the Spirit usually guides in "ordinary" ways, the Spirit will intervene in more striking, "miraculous" ways when the Spirit decides that such guidance is needed.

We read about Paul's vision of a man from Macedonia calling him to come there, and we shouldn't assume such things stopped happening after the Bible was completed. Centuries after Paul, there was a boy named Patricius who got kidnapped by pirates and was made a slave in Ireland. While he was in slavery, he began to pray to the God that he'd heard about growing up that he didn't take very seriously. And he came to have a living faith in Christ while he was being held and enslaved. But finally, he escaped and went back to his native England. Then one night Patricius had a vision: “I had a dream of a man who seemed to come from Ireland, and he carried countless letters, one of which he handed over to me. I read aloud where that letter began:

‘The voice of the Irish.’” As he read that “voice of the Irish,” he heard voices like men from the Irish forest where he had been, and the voices were saying in unison, “We appeal to you, boy—come and walk among us once more.” So Patricius went back to Ireland to evangelize the slaveholders and the pagans whom he had been so relieved to escape from. He became known to history as Saint Patrick. He would not have done that without a great intervention and a very forceful vision from the Lord.

There are other situations where the Holy Spirit will intervene in our lives and move us in a direction that we might not have considered without it. We should be open to miraculous leadings if they come. But we probably don’t need to go looking for them. When an angel shows up, you’ll know it. When the Holy Spirit gives you a vision, or if Christ does come in an extraordinary way, you’ll know it. He still does this today, sometimes in converting people. One of the most common forms of conversion among Muslims is having a vision of Jesus Christ. They have a vision, and that impresses them that Christ is really who he is said to be.

So again, miraculous leading is not the only way the Spirit leads, or the most common, but it does happen. Let’s not say, “Those things happened back in the Book of Acts, but we’re in a totally different era.” We’re still in the era of the Holy Spirit. It’s not the era of the apostles. It’s not the foundation-laying era. I’m not going to claim to be an apostle, where I have some of the mighty gifts of healing and so on that they had to attest the gospel message that God gave them. But the Holy Spirit does intervene. And when he does, you’re not going to have to go seeking and wondering whether this little hunch was the same as the vision from Macedonia. You may have to think about your hunches, but it’s not the same thing as the vision of the man from Macedonia or the angel who spoke to you very clearly and unmistakably.

How Spirit leads

- Applies Scriptures to our lives
- Speaks amid prayer and worship
- Directs through leadership body
- Arranges events for his purposes
- Speaks to and through our spirit
- Grows wise, mature mind of Christ
- Guides “miraculously” as needed

As we think about being Spirit led, we want a fully rounded view of how the Spirit leads from the Book of Acts and the rest of the Scriptures. As I said before, just forget all the other forms of leading if you’re not reading the Bible. To be Bible-saturated is the first step in getting the mind of Christ. He applies the Scriptures to our life, so be in the Scriptures. If you haven’t been reading the Bible, read it.

And then, be a person of prayer and worship.

Find leaders, a body of leaders, that set an example that’s worth following and that follow the Bible’s teaching accurately.

Look at the events of your life, and don't just resent the people who made life miserable for you. Say, "What is God doing? Is he moving me on to a different phase or into something different here? And what are the opportunities that he's giving me?" Remember the persecution in Acts. Did they say, "Oh, Stephen's dead. All is lost. We're ruined. Now we're in a different town. We're far from home"? They said, "Why are we here? Oh yeah, we have a gospel. Let's start talking." And so they preached the gospel wherever they went (Acts 8:1, 4). When God puts you somewhere, he's got purposes. So seize the purposes with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Be aware of what he's doing in your own spirit and mind. Some of us are too rushed or preoccupied. You're not going to hear the Spirit speaking in your mind quite so readily if it's wall-to-wall noise all day, where you're either watching the TV or consulting your phone. Listen to your own spirit long enough to hear God's Spirit as well.

Then keep on praying, keep on seeking to grow an entire mind—not just a leading here or a nudge there, but a mind that thinks like Jesus and chooses like Jesus. Because you know what? When you read in the Book of Acts, you'll read that God directed in those amazing ways. But when he gives you that mind of Christ, then you start saying things like Paul did. In Philippians: "I think it's necessary." In Thessalonians: "We thought it best." He writes the Corinthians: "It seems advisable" (Philippians 2:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 16:4). He's not always saying, "I had a vision of this." We're thinking Christian people. He's given us the mind of Christ, and so we're thinking and we're making decisions that flow from his mind.

We're not going to wait around and say, "I'm never going to make a decision unless I have that extraordinary vision or angel." Say, "I'm going to keep on growing and making decisions in a godly way. If God wants a different decision, he can intervene." I've said that many times: "I like the ministry that I'm doing at Christian Leaders. I like the ministry that I'm doing here at Family of Faith. If God doesn't want me to do it and wants me somewhere else, he'd better make it clear. Otherwise, I'm going to keep going here." I'm not going to say, "Every day I have to have a new sign." I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing until he gives me a reason to do something different. And I think you can take that approach too, where you say, "I'm a Spirit-filled person. God guides me. My decisions are shaped by his presence within me. But I am open to change if he wants me to take a different direction."

I can't end without simply saying what a blessing it is to have the Holy Spirit living in you, to be led, to know that you're not your own. You've got somebody with you, and he's in front of you, he's behind you, he's all around you. He's going to take you where he wants you to be, and he's going to achieve amazing purposes through you. Even the little things you do can turn into really big things, because somebody really big is at work in those little things.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We pray for your wisdom and for your guidance, and not to be misled by false spirits or other ways that Satan would try to confuse us, but instead to be deeply grounded in your Word, in a life of prayer, in godly leadership, in trust in your providence and in how you arrange all events to accomplish your purposes in us. And then, Lord, give us a sensitivity in our spirit to be quiet and listen to what's going on inside us and what

you're saying and moving inside us. And we pray, Lord, that the mind of Christ our Savior will live in us every day. And then, Lord, where you choose to send us other kinds of leading that you've decided we need, help us to be open to the miraculous, but also to be open to every form of leading that you're already giving us. We pray, Lord, that this church may be led by you. We pray that your entire church worldwide may be empowered and guided and revived to accomplish your purposes in our world. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

Spirit Led

By David Feddes

Slide Contents

^{13:1} Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

Spirit led

- Signs
- Voices
- Visions
- Angels
- Prophecies

Signs

Wind, fire, speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-4)

Tongues sometimes validate outpourings.

Healings and miracles confirm apostles.

Voices

An angel told Philip, “Go south to the desert road.” (Acts 8:26)

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” (Acts 8:29)

The Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2)

The Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.” (Acts 23:11)

Visions

Jesus appeared to Saul in blazing light and spoke in an audible voice. (Acts 9:3-6)

Jesus spoke to Ananias in a vision and told him to go pray for Saul so that his sight could be restored and he could receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:10-16)

Cornelius had a vision of an angel. (Acts 10:3-6)

Peter had a vision of a sheet filled with unclean animals. God used this vision to lead Peter to bring the gospel to non-Jesus. (Acts 10:9-20)

Paul had a vision calling him to Macedonia. (Acts 16:6-10)

Saul had a vision in the temple in which the Lord told him to leave Jerusalem and preach to Gentiles. (Acts 23:17-18)

Angels

Freed apostles from jail and told them to preach (Acts 5:18-20)

Led Peter out of jail (Acts 12:7-10)

Guided Philip to Ethiopian (Acts 8:26, 29)

Guided Cornelius to call for Peter (Acts 10:3-6)

Spoke to Paul aboard ship in a terrible storm (Acts 27:23-24)

Prophecies

Prophets in Antioch (Acts 13:1)

Agabus predicted famine, prompting offering in advance (Acts 11:28-30)

Christians in Tyre predicted trouble for Paul in Jerusalem. (Acts 21:4)

Daughters of Philip prophesied. (Acts 21:8-9)

Agabus predicted Paul's arrest. (Acts 21:10-11)

Spirit led

- Signs
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Spirit led: FAQ

- Should I always find out God's detailed, individual will before I make a decision?
- If someone claims miraculous leading today, are they mentally unstable?
- Should I expect the Spirit to lead me by all the same methods he used in Acts?

What is Acts?

- History of church's foundational period, a unique time that ended after apostles died and New Testament was finished.
- Portrait of lively church and mission in the new covenant age of the Spirit, which continues until Jesus returns.

Where Spirit leads

- Led to know, trust, and love Jesus
- Led to relate to God as your Father
- Led to understand and relish God's truth
- Led to reject sin and pursue holiness
- Led to long for God and heaven on earth
- Led to heartfelt prayer connection
- Led to God's unique purposes for you

How Holy Spirit leads

- Applies Scriptures to our lives
- Speaks amid prayer and worship
- Directs through leadership body
- Arranges events for his purposes
- Speaks to and through our spirit
- Grows wise, mature mind of Christ
- Guides “miraculously” as needed

Applies Scriptures to our lives

- Peter's Pentecost sermon quoted Joel and Psalms. (Acts 2:16-21; 25-35)
- New Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. (Acts 2:42) The fullness of the apostles' teaching is what we now have in our New Testament.
- Stephen's sermon expounded on OT history. (Acts 7:1-50)
- Philip explained Isaiah passage to the Ethiopian official. (Acts 8:32-25)
- James quoted a passage from Amos at the Jerusalem Council to prove inclusion of Gentiles. (Acts 15:15-18).
- Bereans examined Scriptures to verify Paul's preaching. (Acts 17:11)
- Paul reasoned from the Scriptures. (Acts 17:2)
- Apollos proved from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 18:28)

Speaks amid prayer and worship

- Before Pentecost, disciples were praying for the Spirit's outpouring. (Acts 1:14, 2:1)
- Disciples in Antioch were worshiping and fasting when the Spirit spoke. (Acts 13:2)
- Cornelius prayed to God regularly before hearing an angel. (Acts 10:2-3)
- Peter was praying before receiving a vision. (Acts 10:9)
- The Spirit helps us in prayer. (Romans 8:26).
- Christians pray in the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 1:20)

Directs through leadership body

- The Holy Spirit used various leaders in Acts to guide Christians: apostles, elders, deacons, prophets, and teachers.
- Deacons: "Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom." (Acts 6:3)
- Paul and Barnabas appointed elders to lead in each church. (Acts 14:23)
- Christians counted on “the apostles and elders” for guidance from the Spirit. (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4)
- The Jerusalem Council of apostles and elders issued a decision to include Gentiles without burdening them: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” (Acts 15:28)

Arranges events for his purposes

- Persecution scattered Christians to witness in new places: On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. (Acts 8:1-5) Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some, however, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. (11:19-20)
- Painful division between Paul and Barnabas resulted in more mission endeavors. (Acts 15:39-41)
- Holy Spirit led into witnessing opportunities through jail (Acts 16:25-34), bad rulers (Acts 22-26), and even shipwrecks (Acts 27-28).

Speaks to and through our spirit

- The Holy Spirit prompts thoughts, feelings, and instincts in our spirit.
- Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God... you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (Romans 8:14-16)
- The Spirit enlightens the eyes of our heart. (Ephesians 1:18)
- The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord. (Proverbs 20:27)

Grows wise, mature mind of Christ

- We have received the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us... we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2)
- The mind of the Spirit is life and peace... He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit. (Romans 8)
- Often the Spirit wants us to use our minds and follow a sensible plan. Paul usually traveled to cities based on plans he made. Once in a while, God sent a vision to redirect Paul somewhere Paul hadn't planned to go.
- Paul made many decisions based on good sense: "I think it is necessary." (Philippinas 2:25) "We thought it best." (1 Thessalonians 3:1) "If it seems advisable." (1 Corinthians 16:4)

Guides "miraculously" as needed

- Miraculous guidance is sometimes given, but it is not promised or ordinary.
- Although the Spirit usually guides in "ordinary" ways, the Spirit will intervene in more striking, "miraculous" ways when the Spirit decides that such guidance is needed.

Miraculous

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