

HOW TO KNOW THE LORD'S LEADING

By Titus Chu

THE LORD'S LEADING COMPARED TO DISPOSITION, ENVIRONMENT, AND ADVICE

How do we know whether or not the Lord has led us? This is not easy. As human beings, we usually do not live by the union and communion with the Lord. Our life is usually decided by our disposition, our environment, or by the advice that we receive. Most of our decisions are made this way. Many times we think the Lord has led us, but it is actually our disposition which has led us. We like something because it fits who we are, but we say, "The Lord has led me." And many times it's our environment that leads us. For example, to decide to serve full-time should not be based on what everyone else is doing. We should not let the environment lead us. If we serve full-time, it should be because the Lord has called us. We must be responsible to Christ. The environment should only confirm the Lord's leading. We must learn how to say, "The Lord has told me so."

These three things - our disposition, our environment, and the confirmation and advice from the brothers - can help us. For example, we cannot deny disposition. In a certain way, even God's leading is related to disposition. God let Peter be the one to open the door to the Gentiles, because his disposition was always that of a pioneer, whether he was right or wrong. In a similar way, God let Paul take the lead in the work because he had an extremely aggressive disposition. And then God let John be the "mender" of the church, because of his affectionate disposition. John was the one lying on Jesus' bosom, which shows that he was a tender person. So in his epistles there is such a rich affection. However, disposition should not be what leads us. Disposition should only stand with the Lord's leading.

Environment can also help. Many times an environment comes which tells us to reconsider. For example, if Paul desired to go to a certain place, or stay at a certain place, on one hand the Lord's leading was there. But even in Paul's labor, an environment was often raised up which forced him in a certain way. As with disposition, environment can work with the Lord's leading, but the environment itself is not the Lord's leading. In the same way, confirmation and advice from the brothers is for our help. This is especially true after we have the leading. The brother's confirmation then becomes crucial. But again, it cannot replace the Lord's leading. Our disposition, the environment, and the confirmation and advice from the brothers can all be a help to us. But no matter how crucial these three things are, they can not replace the direct leading of the Lord. If the Lord has not led us, then nothing else works.

THE NEED FOR THE UNION AND COMMUNION WITH THE LORD

The question remains, how do we know that the Lord has led us? Knowing whether or not the Lord has led us is related to the matter of union and communion. We must abide in the communion with the Lord to substantiate our union with Him. We must abide in the communion to apply the reality of our union. How do we do this practically in making a decision? Firstly, we should be restful. We should not consider too much. If we are always praying, "Lord, should I be a full-timer? Should I be a full-timer?" then our prayer will bring us into trouble. If we are considering full-time, we only need to pray once, "Lord, do You want me to be a full-timer?" This is good enough. Then we don't need to do a thing. We should learn to be restful. Our responsibility is not to ask, "Lord, what should I do? Should I get a job? Should I serve full-time?" Our responsibility is to be restful. We don't need to pray or worry so much. We should tell the Lord, "Lord, I'm very restful. I'm happy with wherever You put me."

Then secondly, in our restfulness, we should seek the Lord's presence, not His leading. We should desire to have the Lord's presence. Many times we tell the Lord, "Lord, please lead me." The Lord would say, "How can I lead you? You think too much. In whatever way I lead you, you will analyze it too much. 'Is this right? Is this proper?' I just want you to rest. If you can rest, I can lead. If you can learn to be quiet, I will tell you what I want you to do." Then at the proper time, the leading will come.

Then thirdly, while we are learning to be in the Lord's presence, we should have a ready spirit. When our spirit is ready, then the Lord can speak to us at a particular time. Maybe it will be in the Lord's Table, while we are very much in the Lord's presence. Maybe it will be while we are reading the Bible or having a morning watch. When we are strongly in the Lord's presence, and we have a ready spirit, then the Lord can lead us.

WHEN THERE IS NO LEADING FROM THE LORD

However, even when our spirit is so ready, there may be no speaking from the Lord. If there is no speaking from the Lord, it means that the Lord doesn't have to lead us. If the Lord desires to lead us, then in His presence, there will be His speaking. If there is no leading from the Lord, it may be because we already know. Or it may mean that He wants us to remain in our situation. He wants us to continue as we are with no changes, so there is no need for Him to lead us.

Sometimes we don't need the Lord's leading because we already know. Balaam the prophet was like this. He knew already what the Lord's answer would be, but he kept praying anyway. He was very clear what the Lord wanted him to do, but he still prayed as if he didn't know. When he was told to curse the Israelites, he should have said, "Jehovah will never curse the Israelites. Just forget about it." Instead he was "spiritual" and acted as if he would do whatever Jehovah wanted him to do. In our experience, many times we are already clear, but we refuse to be clear. We seek the Lord's leading, but actually we know already. This is why the Lord will not speak.

We should also realize that the Lord may not tell us anything because He wants us to remain as we are. If there needs to be a change in our lives, the Lord will speak. If He does not desire a change, then there is no need for His speaking. But if we pray every day, “Do You want me to serve full-time or not? Do You want me to get this job or not?” then we will become a mental case. If we already have a job, we should just work until the Lord tells us otherwise. If we are already serving full-time, we should just be full-time until the Lord tells us to get a job.

HOW TO RESPOND TO THE LORD'S LEADING

If the Lord does want to lead us, then His speaking will come while we are in His presence. When the Lord's speaking comes, we should learn to answer, “Lord, thank You for leading me. But please forgive me. I am very subjective. I can often make decisions for myself, and think that it is You. So Lord, if this leading is of You, then I am willing to follow. If this is truly of You, then please speak to me again.” When we learn to speak to Him this way, we can live a restful and peaceful life before the Lord.

Then after we hear the first speaking, at another time, when we are very much in the Lord's presence, the same speaking will come again. If the same speaking comes again, then we have to say, “Lord, I've heard this speaking twice. If this is of You, I'd like to follow Your leading.” Then we will have a real peacefulness and restfulness. Setting our mind on the spirit is life and peace. We will have an assurance that this is what the Lord has told us to do. Then we are not living by our disposition. We can tell the Lord, “This may be against my disposition, this may be against my view, but Lord, I want to follow Your leading.”

When we have a strong drive to do something, we shouldn't overly trust it. It could just be very emotional. We shouldn't have so much strife when we make a decision. Rather, we should learn to be in spirit, learn to be in the Lord's presence, and learn not to seek for any leading. While we are in the Lord's presence,

while we are enjoying and touching the Lord, there may be a certain leading. Then we should just respond. We should learn how to say, "Lord, if this is of You, I would like to follow. But please speak to me again." Then we should learn how to put it aside. We shouldn't quickly go to a brother and say, "I feel this now. How do you feel?" There is no need for us to be so quick. Just put it aside. If it is of the Lord, the Lord will tell us again. Then we will have the clarity. If the Lord has told us to serve full-time, or if the Lord has told us to get a job, we will say, "This is really from the Lord. I know!"

When we are at a crossroads, we should just consecrate ourselves and be restful. "Lord, I give myself to You. I am Yours. Nothing else occupies me. My only consideration is what makes You the most satisfied. Whatever makes You the most satisfied, that is how I would like to live my life." Then just let it go. Live a restful life. Our responsibility is to be in His presence. It is up to Him how He leads us. And if we must make a decision, and we don't feel led one way or the other, we should make our decision based on the sense of peace. For example, do we have more peace to work? Or do we have more peace to serve full-time? We should make this decision based on where there is the most peace.

SEEKING THE INTEREST OF GOD'S ECONOMY

There is another aspect in our making these kinds of decisions. That is the interest of God's economy. We should always have the interest of God's economy in view. This means that anything which is against this interest, we will not do it. We don't always need to seek the Lord's leading. Even if we don't sense anything from the Lord, we should not take what is against God's economy. If there is a job that requires us to work too much and frustrates our ability to meet with the church, we should say, "No!" If there is a job which causes us to travel too often, we should say, "No!" For this we don't even need the Lord's leading, because we know the answer already. We should learn how to say "No!" to whatever is against the interest of God's economy.

We have previously seen that out of our enjoyment of the divine life, our appreciation of God's economy, and our union and communion with the Lord, there is a receiving of what is healthy and a rejecting of what is unhealthy. So when we are deciding whether to get a certain job, there may be no direct leading. But there will be a spontaneous rejecting of whatever is against God's interest. "I can't do this, because it will take me away from the church life." There will also be a spontaneous receiving. We will receive whatever is the most profitable to God's interest.

WHEN THE LORD'S LEADING SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE

Another question is, what should we do when the Lord's leading seems like an impossibility? For example, the Lord is leading us to go full-time, but we still have too many loans and debts, or we have too many children who need to be cared for. The Lord has clearly told us to be full-time, but it's impossible. How should we handle these situations? We need to learn to say, "Lord, if You are leading me this way, You are responsible for my needs. If You are leading me this way, You are responsible for solving the situation." We must still learn to follow Him, and trust in His wisdom and care. This often goes beyond common sense or human reasoning. If the Lord has led us to serve full-time, then He must provide for our needs. The Lord can provide for us beyond our imagination. If we only use our logic to make these decisions, our ability to trust in the Lord will be gone. We must learn to put the Lord in the place where He must prove how trustworthy He is. We should learn to tell the Lord, "Lord, humanly speaking this is impossible, but if You have led me this way, then I will follow You." Once we know that we are led by the Lord, then we can put our complete trust in Him.

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