

HOW TO BE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT SERIES

GUIDANCE BY COUNSEL

Leading by counsel is in regard to the counsel of godly men. We want to see all the aspects that are involved in the leading of the Holy Spirit. There is one aspect of leading that the bible does recommend. It's also together with the leading of the Spirit because its godly men who could hear what God's Spirit is saying and they are able to give counsel. One of the titles of our Lord Jesus is that He is our Counselor and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace and Mighty God. So one of His titles is Counselor. One of the titles of the Holy Spirit is also Counselor and Comforter. So, we want to see how godly counsel can lead us. There are two types of counsel that the bible talks about. The reason why we are touching on getting counsel from godly people is because it is part and parcel of the leadings of the Spirit in our Christian life.

Let read Gal. 1 Paul writing here in regard to the revelation that he received and how he received it not from men in verse 12. Then he tells us after he received revelations of God in his life. Verse 15-17 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.* In verse 16 Paul says he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.

I believe that it was either Jerry Seville or Kenneth Copeland when they were fellowshipping one time with Oral Roberts in his early days. And he says, "What would you say to a young minister who is just beginning his ministry?" Oral Roberts looked right into his eyes and said, "Confer not with flesh and blood."

There is a truth in that.

When we have a revelation from God, we have some of the things that God called us to do. We need to really hear it from God and know that God said and do it because God said it. And be willing to face opposition, misunderstanding that may come because God has spoken to you. All through the bible everyone to whom God spoke to was never fully understood. So there is a truth in that. But we want to see carefully what the Paul said in Galatians chapter one. He says, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood." When he said he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, it does not mean that he did not confer with flesh and blood later on. If I say I am not immediately going to East Malaysia, I am not saying I am not going at all. I may go later. I am saying I am not immediately going. When Paul says he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood he does not mean that it is wrong to confer nor did he say that he is not going to confer at all. But he says he is at the present moment not going to confer yet.

Later on in the book of Galatians 2: 2, *I went up by revelation and communicated to them that gospel which I preached among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run in vain.* So, in the end Paul did confer with them privately. So, the question of conferring with flesh and blood is not a question of whether we should confer. For we should since no man is an island and no man functions by himself. No minister stands alone separated by God and isolated from fellowship of other men. But they need to be built up by the Body of Christ. Sometimes what we received from God may be a little bit imbalanced and we need to hear what the other side is saying to balance us a little bit and get the right perspective of what God is saying. So, Paul here did confer with the apostles. The question is not whether its right or wrong to confer but the question is, is the timing right or wrong. So, Paul says that when you want to receive a revelation from God, you need to get alone with God. Get the revelation established in your life. Get the Spirit of truth to reveal all the fullness of the revelation and then later in God's time you confer with godly men and women who can hear from their inward witness and the Holy Spirit.

With that in mind lets look at two seemingly opposing scriptures. Apparently, they are not opposing but outwardly, they seem to be. First of all in Proverbs 11:14 *Where*

there is no counsel the people fail; but in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. There is a safety net in a multitude of counselors. In other words, it is good to seek counsel. And its important for us to fellowship with other members of the body of Christ who could relate to us in the realm of revelation that you move in, in order for us to be balanced. For every joint supplies to the edifying to the whole body, Eph. 4. In Proverbs 11:14 it says there is safety in the multitude of counselors.

Over in Psalms 1:1 *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Nor stands in the path of sinners; nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight in the law of the Lord.* Psalms 1:1 is opposite from Proverbs 11:14. There is a counsel that is not of God. If we walk in it there is a path that leads to destruction. On the opposite side, there is a safety in the multitude of counselors. So on one side its says its good to have counsel but on the other side it says there is a wrong counsel. The problem is not whether we should have counsel or not. We should watch and be led by the Spirit even in obtaining counsel. Most of the time, when people seek counsel they are just seeking to confirm what they want to do. If that's of God no problem. But sometimes all people are asking for is not counsel but for permission. They want to carry out what their hearts have purposed but they want somebody else to be on their side so that when they make a mistake they could put the blame on somebody else. So what they are seeking for is not counsel. They are seeking for permission. Can I do it? Do you think its right? Actually, they already intended to do what they want. But what they want to do is for somebody else to just give him or her the permission or to say amen to what they want to do. If it's of God no problem. If it's not of God there is a problem. So how do we discern counsel? How does counsel guide us? We have to draw principles in that area.

First of all, let's see some of the wrong counsel that was given in the bible that really caused great destruction. I Kg. 12 you see how counsel is so important it can mean the making or the breaking of a man or woman and the ministry or your life. In I Kg. 12, Solomon has died and his son Rehoboam took over a very prestigious position, a very prestigious nation, and a very prestigious inheritance. Gold and silver were so common. The bible says silver was valueless in Solomon's time since they were plentiful like stones. Imagine inheriting such a kingdom and Rehoboam in I Kg. 12 met with the people of Israel who came to him and told him their grievances.

In verse 4, *Your father made our yoke heavy, now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you. So he said to them, "Depart for three days, then come back to me." And the people departed. Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon. It was a major decision. Its good to have counsel but look at the point here that he is going to make a decision and he doesn't want to make it himself because its dangerous. In all the societies of men, in the whole history of mankind, in the rise and fall of nations and in all the achievements of men, a lot of counsel is involved, some good and some bad. Here is a making of a nation. Rehoboam asked for people to come back in three days' time while he seeks counsel.*

Verse 6 *Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, "How do you advise me to answer these people" These are the seasoned counselors. And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."* That was good advice. Sometimes the Holy Spirit leads you through counsel. He leads you to godly men. And here Rehoboam was given instruction by godly men but he rejected the counsel, which the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him. These are his buddies. And he asked them in verse 9 what counsel do you give. How shall we answer the people? Verse 10 *Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him saying, "Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us – thus you shall say to them: My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist. And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges.'" That's a different counsel.*

Here is king Rehoboam. On one side was a godly counsel and it said go along with these people, lighten the yoke and you will keep the whole nation. His buddies and pals on one side said make it harder for them; tell them that your little finger is as fat as your father's waist. And king Rehoboam was torn in between the two counsels - one ungodly and one godly. Sad to say he chose the ungodly. As a result of that, ten nations pulled out and he lost a great part of the empire. All because he was led by the wrong counsel.

The other guy who led the break away was Jeroboam. Jeroboam pulled out ten tribes, gathered them and formed what we call the Northern Kingdom. King Rehoboam was only left with two tribes the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin and they formed the Southern Kingdom. Israel was split into two because of the wrong counsel.

Now king Jeroboam meanwhile has moved up north to form his own kingdom and establish his capital. It was the custom for the Israelites to travel to Jerusalem and do all the sacrifices there. That was in the book of Moses. It was the command of God. It is commanded of God that they must go down to Jerusalem to make all the sacrifices there. Can you imagine the threat that can be to his new kingdom? Jerusalem was in the Southern Kingdom and if his people from the Northern Kingdom were to keep going down to Jerusalem to make sacrifices, king Jeroboam may very soon lose his own people.

And there were some who told Jeroboam what to do about that. Verse 28 *Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt."* So Jeroboam also followed the wrong counsel and he built two golden calves and told the people that they don't have to go to Jerusalem any more for these calves are their gods. He should have trusted in the Lord. It was God who gave him the kingdom, which was prophesied earlier to him in Solomon's time. If we don't see what we received as from God then we will try to keep it with our own strength. But if we don't understand that, what we received whether it is a blessing, prosperity or your position is from God, then there is no way you could keep it to yourself. You can only keep it as long as you rely on God. If you receive it by your own hand by the hand of flesh there is no doubt you got to fight and protect that. But if it came from God by His grace as long as you dwell in God and are dependent on Him and His grace you will always keep it. There is no fear or insecurity.

Here the wrong counsel led Jeroboam. He started the golden calf worship all over again. So, because of wrong counsel Israel began its road of backsliding away from

God. How dangerous wrong counsel can be. *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Nor stands in the path of sinners. Nor sits in the seat of the scornful.*

But the right counsel has sometimes preserved godly people. Turn with me to the book of I Sam. 25 the background of this story is David and Nabal. David was running away from king Saul and when Saul was pursuing him, David used to hide in a cave with all his mighty men. And it was nearby Nabal's shepherds. So, David's people used to protect Nabal and his entire shepherds. One day since it was a feast day, David asked Nabal if he could help his men. Nabal sort of scorned David and the news got back to David. This was what David said in I Sam. 25:13 *Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword," So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.* I tell you David had one thing in mind. He was going to make mince meat out of Nabal. He was hot. When David got angry that was dangerous, he got his mighty men.

When they came down, the news spread. Somehow, Nabal was a very terrible fellow, hard taskmaster and ungodly man. When his servants heard how David's men have been rejected they were very frightened. They came to tell Nabal's wife, Abigail and said, "Look at what the master had said to David." So when David was coming down Abigail quickly got all the provisions and in verse 18 *Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. And she said to her servants, "Go on before me, see, I am coming after you."* She went as fast as she could. On the way, they met this mighty army of David coming down with his four hundred men.

When Abigail saw David in verse 23 *Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. So, she fell at his feet and said, "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be."* The gist of what she said here is in verse 28 *Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God: and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out as from the pocket of a*

sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself.

What she was saying was this. Here was David with his sword drawn and his men were coming all ready for battle to make mince meat out of Nabal. Here comes Nabal's wife Abigail; she fell at his feet and she said, "O lord," and she started giving him counsel. She said, "A day would come when you will be king. And one day when you are king, you may regret what you do now." This is a bold woman. She has her way to give counsel. Ladies you learn from her its tremendous. She approached in a humble way but her advice was very powerful. She said, "David what you are going through is unjust and one day when you are established as king, you may regret what you have done." That was encouraging. She gave an encouraging word. There are not many people who believed in David. He was not popular. He was regarded as an official outlaw although he was not in the wrong. But here comes a woman who believes in David. Before you can really give counsel, you must see someone's potential. You cannot give counsel by just seeing the faults of people. There are a lot of people who are unofficial counselors and they don't see the potential - all they see is the fault. And they say, "Brother let me give you counsel. The next time you don't do this, don't do that." That's not counsel.

Abigail came and said, "God has appointed you. One day you are going to be king." That was an encouraging word. It was like water given in a hard dry thirsty desert. Then Abigail said, "David, one day when you are king you may regret that you shed blood innocently or in revenge." So she was counseling and said, "David, don't do it." Notice she didn't just say, "Don't do it." She also explained why David shouldn't do it. Its important when you tell people that you must also tell the reason. That's the art of leadership. A lot of leaders are only good at telling, "Don't do this don't do that." But they don't tell you the reason. This is why many times when I tell people who give instructions that they must also explain why. Understanding is the key to fellowship.

There was this girl who always pull the curtain down. The mother said, "Don't

pull," and she runs away. The next day she was back at it again. Sometimes the mother would cane her and she cries. Then again, sometimes she would do it. This brother in Christ was wondering why she must keep doing it. This brother asked her, "Do you know why you should not pull the curtain?" The girl said, "I don't know. All I know is that people don't want me to pull it." But she doesn't know why she should not pull the curtain. So, he said, "Because if you keep pulling the curtain, it may drop on you. The whole thing may fall and you will be injured. That's why mama doesn't want you to pull the curtain." And she never pulls the curtain again. See training and discipline is not just whacking somebody just because they are wrong. Two whacks don't make one right. But the key is to communicate the reason.

So Abigail told David not to do it. Just think about what would your reaction be in the future. She gives him vision. There he is king and she said he would regret it. Because when he looks back at his past there will be this black dot there because of his hastiness of wanting to take action. And David was a very teachable man. In I Sam. 25:32 *Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed is the lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal.* Because of one woman who gave counsel, they were preserved and David was preserved.

We are talking about being led by the Spirit. You look at David's life and you will see that he was led by the Spirit all the time. But there are times when God uses people to give counsel to him especially in a time when he did not seek the Lord. This is one time he didn't ask God, "God shall I go or not?" He just went. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. He had a good heart and God blocked his way with godly counsel just to cause him to think again of his action. And he says to Abigail, "You are right."

Now the essence of godly counsel is not so much hearing the audible voice of the Holy Spirit or receiving spectacular leadings. The essence of godly counsel is this: most of the time, every one of us has to be led by the inward witness of what God is

saying to us inwardly. And the essence of godly counsel is if five of us have our inward witness, we could check ourselves better. It's checking the common inward witness within the group of us.

Turn to I Co. 7:10 *Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord.* He says this is the Lord saying. And he gives certain counsel. That is *thus says the Lord*. Counsel is not *thus says the Lord*. *Thus says the Lord* is a prophecy. I want you to see the difference. You do not give counsel by saying, "Hi brother thus says the Lord." That is not counsel that is prophecy. Counsel is not the Lord said but it is the next two verses in I Cor. 7:12 *But to the rest I, not the Lord, say.* He was giving advice and this was his counsel. See counsel cannot be given with *thus says the Lord*. In giving counsel, you are saying this is what I sensed to be the right thing to do. Counsel is hearing your inward witness. Prophecy is hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. In a multitude of counselors, there is safety. Being led by counsel is where you got four or five sensitive people who could sense in their inward witness together with you on a course of action. It is still not *thus says the Lord*. Anybody who tries to give counsel with *thus says the Lord* is doing it the wrong way. Neither is counsel manipulation where the counselor says, "I want you to do what I want you to do. What I think you should do." Counsel is not giving everybody a piece of your mind. Counsel is your inward witness sensing what God is saying. But the difference is instead of one person being led by the inward witness with the inward voice you have four or five to let the inward witness sense the same thing. That is the safety that it provides. So, counsel is not just good advice. Counsel is your spirit man sensing. And it must be sensitive enough to pick up direction. It is not with your mind. It's sensing with your spirit man what is the right direction.

There are some cautions in seeking counsel. Even if four, five, or ten people said, "All ten of us have agreed that this is what we feel you should do." And you don't have an inward witness you don't have to go along. The essence of counsel lies in the inward witness.

I want you to see some difference here. In the book of Acts 21 Paul was on his way to Jerusalem and in verse 4 *And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days, they told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.* They sensed something in the Spirit.

They sensed it correctly but they interpreted it wrongly. So, they gave a wrong counsel. Paul did not follow their counsel although there were many of them because he didn't have a witness. His spirit tells him he should go. In Acts 21, there comes a prophecy through Agabus the prophet in verse 11. Agabus says thus says the Lord and he gave a prophecy about how Paul would be in prison. And in verse 12 everybody told Paul not to go. The prophecy has been delivered. It didn't say to go or not to go. It just says there will be danger. Paul was in the minority and all of them were saying, "Please don't do." They were not just saying it - they were begging. Tears were in their eyes. They also love Paul. It doesn't mean that when you love somebody automatically everything you tell the person is good. They were sincere, their motives were right. Just because their motives were right doesn't justify every word that you say or every action that you do. And Paul said, "Why are you all doing this? I am not only prepared to go I am prepared to die." Why, because in Acts 20 Paul already knew it in himself. He already had a confirmation in verse 22, "*And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*"

The essence of counsel lies with the inward witness. That is powerful when you have people who are sensitive to the inward witness. Therefore, before you could be a counselor the inward witness must lead you yourself. If you yourself are not sensitive to your inward witness and your inward voice, you are in no position to counsel another because counsel is not thus says the Lord. Counsel is sensing and saying, "I, and not the Lord say this." If I don't see somebody who is being led by his own inward witness and who accurately picks his own inward witness I don't want counsel from that person. If they cannot be led by their inward witness, how can they help me with their inward witness? *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Nor stands in the path of sinners. Nor sits in the seat of the scornful.*

But there is safety in the multitude of counselors. So what do we do? We need to fellowship and know that when people who are sensitive to the inward witness and then when they get together what do they sense? See this is a safety net. They may not get the *thus says the Lord*. There are many occasions when God does not give the *thus says the Lord*. He expects you to be led by the inward witness. That is the safety net of the inward witness. However if its your life that is involved you have to make the final decision. So, the safety net of counsel needs to be guided by these

three points.

In the book of Acts 15 when they had to settle a doctrinal issue in the church, they based it on three points here. They didn't settle the matter by praying and fasting and then God gives the *thus says the Lord* and this is the right thing to do. There are some things you got to bring a multitude of counselors to decide. In Acts 15, the apostles had to decide whether Gentiles should become a Jew and keep Jewish custom or not. In chapter 15:12 *Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.* There was a lot of debate and dissension that was going on. Finally, Paul and Barnabas stood up and gave testimony. No. 1 there was good testimony. If something is right, it produces fruit. If God is telling us that Gentiles don't have to keep Jewish custom then God would show us that He is already working among them whether they keep the Jewish laws or not. Paul and Barnabas gave testimony of God's mighty workings among the Gentiles and that was the fruit of the truth. Verse 14 *Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles.* Verse 15 *And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written.* No. 2 counsel cannot go against the written Word. If somebody counsels you to do something against the written Word, it is wrong. It is ungodly counsel that leads to destruction. If you want to be a good counselor, there is no doubt you have to be very deep in the Word. Because counsel has to be in line with the written Word. You can have one hundred fellows counsel you in something but if I could show you one verse just one verse that what you are being counseled is unscriptural the whole hundred counselors are rejected because scriptures stands above all. God exalts His Word above His Name. The Word of God is still important.

No. 3 at the conclusion they said in verse 28 *For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.* It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, inward witness. All of them have their inward witness bearing witness to their spirits. That's the essence of good counsel; it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us. You sensed the green light in you. Everyone checked their traffic lights and they say, "Its green light and this is the right thing to do." So, you never bypass these three points in good counsel. With all those as a guidance we should in God's time seek guidance and seek good counsel. We should throw out to some godly men and women what the Lord is saying to you. Sometimes the Lord says something and I have a *thus says the Lord* and I would just throw it out just to

see how people are reacting to it. Just sensing the counsel of people and what the Lord is saying. You always have a lot of people saying amen to everything without even checking the inward witness. We need to be balanced here. On one side, we should not be like the stubborn mule that cannot be counseled and is un-teachable. Yet, on the other side you must not be like a jellyfish where every Tom, Dick and Harry comes and tells you anything you go along without checking your inward witness. We must be balanced. We must understand the value of counsel for there are some areas where God's Spirit will lead godly man and woman into our lives to give counsel. Perhaps we missed God in some areas or at other times, we missed God in timing. And the counsel sort of put us back into correct gear and position. Then we could walk right with God.

There are times in the bible where Paul himself has given advice and counsel to others and he has been involved in the work of God in other people's life just as his life was. In Acts 11, it was Barnabas who took him to go to Antioch. Then he himself in Acts 16:1 took Timothy and in verse three Paul wanted him to go on with him. He didn't say thus says the Lord. That's a major decision to leave for full time ministry. Look at verse 3 Paul wanted him to go along. He didn't say, "Thus says the Lord." It was Paul sensing it as a right thing to do. We need to be balanced on both ends. On the end of receiving counsel you must not be like jelly fish neither like a stubborn old mule.

On the other side, if you are the one giving counsel you must be aware you are not using manipulation. It is easy to manipulate people's life when you are in the position to do so. Because what you say is taken very seriously. At the same time, you cannot play God to people. When there is no *thus says the Lord*, no inward witness, you are playing God if you are giving direction over people's life. There is only one Almighty God and you shall have no other god.

Yet, at the same time neither must you just sit around when a lot of things are happening and you should say something, yet you are dumb. You do not warn the sinner. Like Ezekiel, God told Ezekiel if you don't warn them their blood is on you. That's the other extreme. You are just Mr. Dumbbell sitting down and you are not saying something that should be said. But there are times when God will lead you to give a word to somebody.

God will lead you to fellowship with some people. If it's in the building of the body of Christ, God will lead you to do it. We have to be sensitive to that. God will lead you to fellowship for no man is an island. We need to be sensitive to God to realize that God has given His gifts, different instruments and all of them work together in harmony in God. The basic fact is that those who give counsel should not be authoritarian and say, "You either follow my counsel or you are out." That's a wrong attitude.

The right attitude is Gal. 6:1 you must approach with the spirit of meekness. You are not Mr. Know All giving counsel. You are just a small part in the body of Christ being requested to give your counsel in those areas. Be like what Abigail did. In other words, when you give counsel No. 1 you must love and you see the will of God in people's life. You must believe in them. Then No. 2 you must approach with a spirit of meekness, as Abigail did who didn't just say what to do or what not to do. She says why it should not be done. And David took the good counsel and he was preserved.

Good counsel leads us, the Holy Spirit will bring godly men across our paths and there will be safety in the multitude of counselors. Don't just run and ask for counsel - there is timing. Paul says, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood." You must confer with God first. If your relationship is not established with God forget about human beings yet. The only way you can really relate to human beings is when your relationship with God is right. So, you must confer with God first. Maybe you need to go to Arabia like Paul. Maybe to a resort somewhere and just keep quiet with the Lord. Be still before God searching what God is speaking to you and understanding what God is saying and then later in God's timing. Paul says in Gal. 2 he says he went up by revelation. In other words, God told him its time to seek counsel. So, those who give counsel needs to be led by the Spirit to give it. Those who seek counsel needs to be led by the Spirit to seek it. If the leading of the Spirit is not involved, forget it. There must be a leading of the Spirit on both ends. And when all flow with the Spirit that is the part and plan of God's leading for His people.

