Kenneth E. Hagin

The Human Spirit

Volume 2
of the Spirit, Soul, and Body Series

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By Kenneth E. Hagin

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The Spirit, Soul, and Body Series:

Volume 1— *Man on Three Dimensions*

Volume 2— *The Human Spirit*

Chapter 1

How To Develop Your Spirit Nature

Science has spent millions of dollars to develop the physical *body* of man. Additional millions have been spent developing man's intellectual processes, which are a part of his *soul.* But we know so little and have done so little about developing the spirit of man.

However, man's spirit can be educated and improved just as his mind can be educated and improved. The spirit can be trained and built up just as the body can be built up. How? Through the study of God's Word.

We cannot understand spiritual things with our natural minds. Our minds must be changed—renewed by God's power—for us to fully understand the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul said, *"But the natural man receiveth not* [does not understand]

the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned [understood]" (1 Cor. 2:14).

The Word of God was given by the Spirit of God, because "... *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2* Peter 1:21). This is why the natural mind cannot understand God's Word. The Bible can only be understood with the heart. We must get the revelation of it in our spirit.

Once a man is born again and becomes a child of God, he can understand the Bible and can learn spiritual things. As Paul said, he has become a new creature in Christ Jesus: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17).

This process of training the spirit—of building it up in spiritual things—is a daily task: "... *though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day"* (2 Cor. 4:16).

In our previous volume on this subject, we established the *The Human Spirit*

fact that the "inward man" is the real man, the real you. When the body dies, the inward man still lives. Paul, writing to the Philippians, said, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21).

This does away with the theory that when a man is dead that is the end of him; he is dead just as a dog is dead. There certainly wouldn't be any *gain* to dying if man perishes and death is the end of everything.

It does away with the theory of "soul sleep," which holds that when a person dies he just floats around like a cloud in the sky. There would be no *gain* in that.

It also does away with the theory of reincarnation, which teaches that after death a person can be born again into the world as a cow, a fly, a horse, a cat, etc. This could not be true, because there would be no *gain* in coming back as some lower form of animal life. We need to stay with God's Word and not get off into foolish theories.

Why did Paul say that to die is gain? It surely is no gain to those of us who have lost loved ones, but it is gain for them. Paul went on to say, *"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you"* (Phil. 1:23,24). The

reason Paul said it was gain to die was because he would be with Christ!

Some people think that eternal life is the life they will have when they get to heaven. Eternal life, however, is something we have right now! Eternal life is the life of God. It is the God-kind of life.

Eternal life is the nature of God, which comes into our spirit to recreate us and make us a new creature; to change our nature.

Then we have within us the nature of God, which is love: *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13:35).

When we have been born again and have the nature of God abiding within us, we can develop our spirit to higher levels of worship and service to God.

Before going further, let us review what we learned in the previous volume on the subject of the threefold nature of man, which is spirit, soul, and body.

Briefly, man's threefold nature is this: (1) spirit—the part of man which deals with the spiritual realm; (2) soul—the part of man which deals with the mental realm: his reasoning and intellectual powers; (3) body—the part of man which deals with the physical realm.

First, it is necessary to differentiate between the three. Paul made a distinction between them in First Thessalonians 5:23: "...

I pray God your whole SPIRIT and SOUL and BODY be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. "

Some have mistakenly thought that man's spirit and soul are the same thing. However, the Bible says, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of SOUL and SPIRIT.. .."*

(Heb. 4:12). If the spirit and the soul were one and the same, they could not be divided.

Many find it difficult to differentiate between the spirit and the soul. It is easier to differentiate between the body and the other two dimensions of man than it is to distinguish between the spirit and the soul. The only authority you can go to to

understand the difference is the Word of God; primarily the New Testament. The Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew, and one word has been translated as twelve different things, including: spirit, wind, whirlwind, blast, mildew, breath, etc.

I once picked up a book distributed by one of the false cults.

On the cover it said that when a man is dead, he is dead like a dog. As I read through the book, I found their argument was that the Old Testament speaks of the soul of animals, yet Christianity speaks of a soul that will live forever.

Both statements are correct, but they require an explanation.

It is true that in the original Hebrew the Bible does speak of the souls of animals. Animals do have souls, because they have limited reasoning faculties, and these faculties are of the soul.

Animals also display affection, and this, too, is part of the soul.

When the spirit of an animal is mentioned in the Old Testament, as in Ecclesiastes 3:21, the breath of an animal is meant. Animals are not spirits; they are merely soul and body.

When animals die, that is the end.

Man, however, is a spirit. He has a threefold nature: He is a *spirit;* he possesses a *soul;* and he lives in a *body.* Death is not the end for man, because he is an eternal spirit.

The book from the false cult also claimed that the *spirit* and the *breath* of man are the same thing. If this were true, when Paul said, *"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit. ..."* (Rom. 1:9), he was saying, "I serve God with my breath."

And when he said, "*... if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth"* (1 Cor. 14:14), he was saying, "I pray with my breath." This doesn't make much sense, does it?

Again Paul said, *"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God ... to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect"*

(Heb. 12:22,23). If "spirit" means "breath," then what Paul actually said was, "We are come unto the breath of just men made perfect."

This would mean that Jesus died to make our breaths perfect! This sounds ridiculous, but if we assume the two words mean the same thing, this is the logical pattern we would have to follow.

Sometimes we hear a preacher announce that "souls" were saved. However, it is not the *soul* of man that is saved at that moment; it is the *spirit* of man that is born again.

James discusses the soul in his epistle, which was not written to sinners, but to believers. Over and over again James says, "My beloved brethren...."

JAMES 1:21-25

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. [Did James mean to say "which is able to save your spirits"? No, he meant just what he said.]

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

James was telling believers if they want to get their soul (mind) saved, they must be a doer of the Word, not just a hearer only.

Paul, also writing to believers, said, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world:*

but be ye transformed by the RENEWING of your MIND, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2).

Paul was saying what James said. Paul said to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind," and James said to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." Both apostles were talking about renewing, restoring, and saving the mind, or soul.

We also see this in the 23rd Psalm: *"He restoreth my soul"* (v. 3). This doesn't say, "He restores my *spirit."*

When something is restored, we take what is already there and redo it. The Hebrew word translated "restore" means identically the same thing as the Greek word for "renew." Today we use the words "restore" and "renew" interchangeably. For example, an old piece of furniture can be renewed or restored. It is saved by renewing or restoring it.

This is what James was saying: As believers who have become new creatures in Christ Jesus, we are spiritually saved, and we have received eternal life. We should then receive the engrafted Word, which will renew, restore, and save our mind, or soul. This is something believers must do for themselves.

How? Through the Word.

Why is it so essential that the mind be renewed?

Even if your spirit is born again and has the Holy Spirit abiding within, if your mind isn't renewed (or as James said, the soul saved) with the Word, then the *mind* (which has been educated through the body and the physical senses) will side in with the *body* against your *spirit* to keep you a baby Christian.

Immature Christians are carnal, or body-ruled, Christians.

Paul told the Corinthians, *"For ye are yet carnal*..." (1 Cor. 3:3).

One translation of this verse reads, "You are body-ruled." In other words, their *bodies,* through their unrenewed *minds,* were ruling their *spirits*— even though they were new creatures in Christ. They never had developed spiritually.

Many Christians live and die as spiritual babies. The faith life always is obscure

to them. They never understand faith. Yet we cannot fully live the Christian life unless we walk by faith, because the Bible says that we are to walk by faith, not by sight.

Those who are living in the flesh are living in unbelief, and always are engaged in warfare. Life is a battle for them. Their minds never have been renewed with the Word of God, and they don't know that Jesus already has won the battle. They don't know the devil is a defeated foe. They still are trying to fight him in their own power, and some have fought until they are totally exhausted and depleted.

But when the mind has been renewed with the Word of God, the *spirit* through the renewed *mind* can control the *body.* The soul (mind) will then take sides with the spirit, because it knows the Word. It is renewed with the Word. It will allow the spirit to dominate. Then God's Spirit will dominate through man's spirit.

Chapter 2

Meditate in the Word of God

As we stated in the previous chapter, it is possible to train and educate the human spirit, just as it is possible to train and educate the human mind, or soul.

In seminars I have conducted across North America on the subject "Man on Three Dimensions," I have used a four-part formula to help believers develop their spirit lives.

Any formula we might use must, first of all, be based on God's Word. Jesus said, "... *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4). God's Word is "spirit food." It will build up our spirits.

God is a Spirit. Man, who is made in the likeness and image of God, also is a spirit creature. He is in the same class of being as God. Notice, I did not say man is divine. He is, however, able to commune with God because he is a spirit being. Man is a *spirit* who possesses a *soul* and lives in a *body.*

At the creation of man, God placed within him a yearning—a heart hunger—for fellowship with Him. But when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he fell, and his spirit became estranged from God.

However, because of this yearning and heart hunger for fellowship with his Creator, man's spirit never is satisfied apart from God. This is what drives him out into the world seeking pleasure and material things: He is trying to find satisfaction for the heart hunger inside him.

This hunger has driven many, in ignorance, to false cults and has given birth to many of the religions of the world. But it cannot be satisfied until we become acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ and receive eternal life. When we become born again, we become a child of God and we are restored to fellowship with Him.

The spirit is the part of man which contacts God.

In the New Birth, the spirit of man is made a new creature, as we see in Second Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. ..."* One modern translation of this verse reads, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, there is a new self." We are not the same old self we used to be; there is a new self.

This new man we have become in Christ Jesus should dominate our thinking processes and our body. Yet many who are born again and even are filled with the Holy Spirit still are baby Christians who have not developed spiritually.

The Corinthian church was like this. They had received the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit were operating among them. Paul said, "... *ye come behind in no gift"* (1 Cor. 1:7), yet he reproved them for being baby Christians.

Some believe that because certain people operate in spiritual gifts they are mature Christians. However, baby Christians also can have spiritual gifts operating in their lives. I have heard miraculous things come out of the mouths of spiritual babes. But operating spiritual gifts doesn't by itself develop mature Christians; all still must train their human spirit in order to grow up spiritually.*

* For more teaching on this vital subject, see Rev. Kenneth E. Hagin's book *Growing Up, Spiritually.*

Furthermore, the fact that these gifts sometimes are manifested through immature Christians doesn't mean that the gifts are not genuine. If God had to wait until we were perfect before He could use us, He never could use any of us! (In fact, He couldn't have used the apostles, either, for they weren't perfect.)

Believers are baby Christians as long as their salvation experience and their experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit have not yet affected their *bodies* and their *minds.*

As we mentioned earlier, the Bible tells us that we ourselves must do something with our bodies and our minds: ". . .*PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, holy, Meditate in the Word of God acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Rom. 12:1,2).

When we are born of God and have the life of God in us, the Holy Spirit comes in to fill us and to help us. He is our Helper.

He will help us present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice.

The Word of God was given to us by the Holy Spirit to develop our spirit nature —the new man on the inside. If we want to educate and train our spirit, the first step in our four-part formula is: *Meditate in the Word of God.*

To make clear what we mean by "meditate," let us look in the book of Joshua. When God appointed Joshua to be Moses' successor and lead the children of Israel, He told Joshua: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but THOU SHALT MEDITATE THEREIN day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"* (Josh. 1:8).

Do you want to be prosperous? God tells us how in this verse. He says if His Word fills our hearts to the extent that we "meditate therein day and night," we will find prosperity. It goes without saying that a man filled with God's Word will prosper spiritually. But the point I want to emphasize here is God's promise of physical as well as spiritual prosperity.

Often we pray, "God prosper us." But praying this prayer without following God's formula won't work. God's formula is through His Word.

God promised success in this life. Another translation of this verse reads, "... For then you shall be able to deal wisely in the affairs of this life."

Most of us have made some mistakes in our lives. We have erred in business

matters, perhaps losing money, or we have spent beyond our means. We haven't dealt wisely in the affairs of this life.

However, if we follow God's plan—His instructions for a successful life—we needn't make these mistakes. We can deal wisely in the affairs of life. We can become successful and prosperous. If we don't, we have no one to blame but ourselves, for God has provided the way whereby we can succeed.

God does it, but we have our part to play. Too often we think we can ignore God's Word and accomplish the job simply by praying. We think if we can pray loudly enough and long enough, and get enough people praying, it will work. But it won't.

Prayer has its place—and I certainly would be the last to disparage the importance of prayer—but if we are not going to do what God's Word says to do, we can pray forever for God to prosper us, and we can persuade all the preachers we know to pray for us, but when they all get through praying, we will be no better off than we were when we started.

For example, if someone were to ask me how to go from Tulsa to Oklahoma City, I would tell him the quickest route would be to take the turnpike. Then if he were to ask how to get to the turnpike, I would tell him exactly how to get there.

Suppose he requested prayer several times later in a prayer meeting, saying, "Now, Brother Hagin told me the other day to take the turnpike to get to Oklahoma City. He also told me exactly how to get to the turnpike. But I want you all to pray that I'll get there. I think I'll have to fast a little. Maybe you could fast and pray with me that I'll get there." We all could fast and pray that he would get there, but until he acted on the directions given to him, he never would get there.

We do the same thing. Instead of paying attention to the directions God has given us in His Word, we pray, "God bless us. Make us a success. Give us the victory. Prosper us." If we would ever get quiet enough so He could get through to us, we would hear His Spirit within our spirit sending us right back to His Word.

Jesus said, "... *the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). He also said, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35). The Bible tells us that God has magnified

His Word above His Name (Ps. 138:2).

Therefore, the first step in developing our spirit is to take time to meditate in the Word. The New Testament contains outstanding teaching regarding development of the spirit life.

Living in this dispensation of grace, we are at an advantage, because we have a better covenant based upon better promises.

If believers living in Old Testament times could make their way prosperous and have good success, what can we expect with a better covenant based on better promises? We should have super-prosperity and super-success!

Jesus said, *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter* [or Helper, as it reads in the Greek], *that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"* (John 14:16,17).

What is the Holy Spirit going to do when He dwells in you?

John wrote, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"* (John 16:13,14).

Most Spirit-filled people don't realize what they have, and thus are not walking in the light of their rights and privileges in Christ. Why has the spiritual development they should have had as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit slipped by them? The devil will keep us from getting the truth if he can. He will try to sidetrack us and get us into some other realm.

I have heard people testify that they are filled with the Holy Spirit, then five minutes later they are down at the altar praying, "Lord, give me power." If you have the Holy Spirit, you have the Powerhouse within you! Just learn to cooperate with Him, know what He is going to do in you, and learn to listen to Him. He is in there and He will guide you into all truth.

You also need to realize that the Holy Spirit is a gentleman.

He will not come in if we don't want or ask Him to. He will not take over. He can help us only as we respond to Him. *The power of God is passive until faith is exercised* Often before going out to minister I say to myself, *Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world. The Greater One is in me.*

When I have to do a job for which I feel inadequate, I remind myself that the Holy Spirit is within me. I think, *Greater is He that is in me. He is greater than the devil that is in the world. He is greater than the hatred that is in the world. The Greater One is in me.*

When I say that, I notice His power rising up in me, giving illumination to my mind and direction to my spirit. I am able to emerge a conqueror and walk right over the top of the devil and all his cohorts. I learned early that the Greater One is in me, and greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.

So let us take time to meditate in the Word; especially in the New Covenant, or New Testament. It will help develop our spirit nature.

Chapter 3

Practice the Word of God

The second point in our four-point plan for developing the human spirit is: *Practice the Word.*

In the last chapter we saw the importance of meditating in God's Word. Once we have God's Word firmly abiding in our hearts and minds, it is equally important that we put it to use.

James wrote, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only. ..."* (James 1:22).

Earlier we referred to the passage in James which says, "*...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...*

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was " (James 1:21-24).

James said that once we receive the Word, we should act on it; we should put it into practice. We can meditate on God's Word and come to know what it says, but until we put it into practice, it will do us no good.

When God told Joshua to meditate in the Word "day and night," He went on to say *"that thou mayest observe to DO. ..."* In other words, after reading and meditating on the Word, *do* it!

A doer of the Word is one who practices the Word. We have too many hearers and not enough practicers. People hear the Word and nod their heads in agreement, saying, "Amen, brother, that's the truth"—but they don't go out and practice it. Yet the Word can't affect our lives until we apply it in our lives.

How does one "practice the Word"? What did James mean when he said we were to be doers of the Word? Did he mean we were to keep the Ten Commandments?

No, that isn't what he was talking about. Actually, the Ten Commandments were given for spiritually dead people; they are not for spiritually alive people.

"Then we aren't supposed to keep the Ten Commandments?" someone will ask.

Under the New Covenant (or New Testament) we have a *new* commandment. Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34).

When we obey this new commandment of love, it takes the place of all the other commandments. Because if we have the love of God in our hearts, we will not steal from our fellowman; we will not murder our brother; we will not hate. Love gives, it does not steal. God so loved us that He *gave* His Son to die for us that we might live.

James also said that a person who is a hearer of the Word but not a doer deceives or deludes himself. There are many self-deluded people in the world. The devil didn't deceive or delude them; they deceived or deluded themselves!

When James said we were to be a doer of the Word, he was telling us to practice this Word of God; to put it into action in our daily lives. We are to walk in the light of the New Covenant.

I learned this principle when I was a bedfast teenager 50 years ago. But I had

trouble practicing it at first, because I had been a chronic worrier all my life.

When I read the Scripture, "... *Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things"* (Matt. 6:25,32), there was a footnote in my Bible which referred me to Philippians 4:6. It reads, *"Be careful for nothing. ..."* Another translation of this reads, "Do not be anxious about anything." In other words, don't worry about anything. Place everything in God's hands.

I said, "Lord, how can I live like that? I can't live without worrying!" My mother and grandmother were champion worriers, and they had taught me to worry. I was nearly dead with heart trouble, and I had just about worried myself the rest of the way into the grave.

Another footnote in my Bible referred me to First Peter 5:7, *"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.* "

God had told me in His Word what to do, so I did it. I *practiced* His Word. I began to cast all my worries, my cares, upon Him.

Then I read where James said, *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience"* (James 1:2,3). The Greek word which is translated here as "temptations" means "tests" or "trials."

James didn't say to count it all joy when everything is going well—when we have money in our pockets—when our bills are all paid and our children are all well. He said to count it joy when we meet tests and trials along the way. Why? Because out of tribulation comes victory.

Are you counting your trials a joy? You should. Try it.

You'll find it makes all the difference in the world.

I found it true when I started counting it joy even though I was an invalid. We can thank God for every hard place. We can thank God for every test and trial.

This is what James is talking about when he said to be a doer of the Word. And this is something we must do for ourselves. I cannot be a doer of the Word for

you; I can only be a doer of the Word for me, although we can assist one another temporarily with our faith and prayers.

I am so glad God has something better for us than an occasional blessing. *This faith life is an entire way of life.*

We have seen that to develop our spirit life, we begin by meditating in the Word; then we practice the Word in our daily lives. This will develop the inner man. Then the inner man will dominate the outer man.

Worry from the outside cannot dominate us when our mind is renewed with the Word of God.

Chapter 4

Give First Place to the Word of God

The two points we have given thus far for cultivating the spirit of man are centered on the Word. Jesus said, "... *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4). On another occasion He said, "...

the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

The Bible also tells us, *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. ...*" (1 Peter 1:24,25).

The Bible says concerning Jesus that He is the "surety of a better testament" (Heb. 7:22). The New Testament is the better covenant. Jesus is the surety of this better covenant. This means that Jesus stands behind every word from Matthew through Revelation to make it good.

Jeremiah 1:12 says, "... I *will hasten my Word to perform it.* "

Another translation says, "I watch over my word to perform it."

In other words, the Lord watches over His Word to do it; to make it good. If we don't act on God's Word—if we don't practice God's Word—He doesn't have anything to make good in our lives. He doesn't have anything to watch over or

hasten to fulfill if we are not acting on His Word and being a doer of His Word. But if we will stand by God's Word, He will stand by us.

Thus, our spiritual development hinges on the Word of God, because the Word has been given to build our spirit nature.

The third point, then, in this four-point formula is: *Give the Word first place in your life.*

As we have pointed out in a previous chapter, we first must meditate in the Word of God. We wouldn't be able to practice or be a doer of the Word if we didn't know it. The Word doesn't become real to us until we know what it says and act on it.

Next, we should put God's Word first in our lives. We can become so Word-conscious that no matter what happens—no matter what we may face—the first thing we think is: *What does God's Word say?*

Too few Christians are like that, however. When emergencies arise, most react from a natural standpoint because they haven't soaked their spirit with the Word of God; they haven't built God's Word into their spirit. Therefore, something natural comes to their mind, and they rush to do something other than what God's Word says.

We can feed upon God's Word until it becomes a part of our inward nature, and in any situation or emergency, the first thing we think of is what God's Word says. The Word will rise up in us, giving illumination to our minds and direction to our spirits.

Christians often try to get advice from other people instead of listening to what God has said about the subject. If people—

even preachers—cannot advise you from the Word of God, their advice is very poor. Sometimes we can get into real trouble by following the well-intentioned advice of fellow Christians who are not carefully attuned to God's Word. I did once, and almost died.

After having pastored churches for a number of years, I felt called of the Lord into a field ministry. This was the Lord's choice, not mine. I would rather have gone on pastoring.

There are rewards in pastoring which a field ministry does not offer, including a certain amount of security. More important, our children were small, and I would have liked to have stayed at home with my family. But I sensed God speaking to my spirit, and I finally obeyed and went out on the evangelistic field.

When we set out to do something God has called us to do, we needn't think that things are always going to run smoothly.

Furthermore, we can't judge if we are in the will of God by whether or not things are going well.

If that were the case—if circumstances alone determined the will of God—then Paul *never* was in the will of God and missed God from beginning to end!

No, the devil is the god of this world, and we will have him to contend with when we make a decision to go on with God.

After seven months on the evangelistic field—months of meeting the devil at every turn and facing severe financial battles—I decided to return to pastoring. (Notice I said "I decided," not "the Lord decided.")

A rather large, prosperous church in East Texas called me to come preach for them and consider being their pastor. They paid their pastor between $750 and $1100 a month—and this was in 1949, when money was worth more than it is now! The church also furnished a parsonage.

From the natural standpoint, it was an attractive offer. I had preached in this church before. I liked the people and they liked me. They believed in the moving of the Spirit with the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in their midst. Miracles were a common occurrence.

If God had led me in this direction, there was nothing I would have liked better than to pastor this church. Without even considering God's wishes, I thought, I'm *going to accept their invitation and at least go preach for them.*

Soon afterwards, I had a Sunday free and my wife and I drove to a neighboring church. We arrived in time for Sunday School. As I sat in the class, I was struck by how much the lesson applied to me.

The subject was Moses and how he had disobeyed God by striking the rock

when God had told him to speak to the rock.

The teacher also brought out how the children of Israel had become discouraged because of difficulties along the way. I squirmed in my seat as I thought of how much this seemed to fit my circumstances.

Suddenly my heart stopped beating and I fell from my chair to the floor! Then my heart started beating erratically with a rapid pulse—it was running like a trip hammer. It seemed to me as if it were racing two hundred or three hundred beats a minute.

It was going so fast there was no way to time it.

Some ministers who were present felt my pulse and said, "We cannot distinguish a beat—all we can feel is a flutter."

I became as cold as ice all over my body. I had been dead twice when I suffered with heart trouble at the age of 16, so I knew when death came over me this time.

They carried me to the parsonage and summoned my wife from the women's Sunday School class. As soon as she came into the room she knelt beside my bed and wept, saying, "I feel this is all my fault."

Then she told me she had been grumbling and complaining to the Lord about my long absences from home. She never had mentioned a word of it to me, however. She said one day as she was washing dishes she had heard a voice saying, "I could take him away where he could never come back." She was startled, but dismissed it as her imagination playing tricks on her.

Kneeling beside the bed she prayed this prayer of submission: "Lord, if You will just spare my husband, I don't care how long he is gone or where he goes in your will. I will not complain about it again."

Then the Lord showed me where I had missed it, too. When each of us had made a new consecration to the Lord to do His will, whatever it might be, I was instantly healed. I jumped out of that bed completely well.

How did I get into that predicament? Instead of listening to God and putting His Word first, I had asked the advice of various pastors. All they could give me was

natural advice. They had said, "Your first obligation is to your family. You have small children, and you should be home with them. You shouldn't be out on the field."

One preacher after another told me that, so I took their advice. I tried to do what they suggested—what I wanted to do in the natural—and I nearly died. I finally learned that a man can fulfill his obligation to his family and still obey God.

Ephesians 4:11 says, *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.* " Obviously, God didn't call only pastors to work for Him, yet many people act as if the ministry of a pastor is the only ministry of importance. If it were, why did God put these other ministry gifts in the Church? Didn't He intend for them to function and be supported?

We can find direction in God's Word. If we will listen to the Holy Spirit, He will open the Word of God and direct us. We already have direction from God's Word for many of the affairs of life; we only need to act on it.

Are you facing some problem in your life? Find out what God's Word has to say about it. Meditate on the Word. Then practice it. Put that promise into action. Put God's Word first—

not circumstances, not the well-meaning advice of friends and loved ones, not your own personal feelings or desires.

Make it a habit to ask yourself regarding situations that arise in your life, "What does God's Word have to say about this?"

Become so Word-conscious that you automatically check every thought and deed against the Word to make sure you are in His will. We will find the answer for every situation of life in the Word of God.

One promise in the Word says, "... *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). No matter what you may face, He who is in you is greater than your problem.

Believing this, you can face life fearlessly with the spirit of a conqueror, no matter what the circumstances.

If you gripe, complain, fuss, and fret, you're not going to get answers. (That may be the reason your answer hasn't come yet—

perhaps you are fretting about it.) The Bible tells us to "be careful for nothing"; or, as *The Amplified Bible* says, "Do not fret about anything" (Phil. 4:6).

Are you fretting about anything? Are you anxious about anything? We worry and fret about things and then wonder why God doesn't do something about them. The reason is because we won't let Him! We are holding onto the problem ourselves instead of turning it over to Him. He *wants* to do something about it, but He *can't* as long as we hang onto it.

Chapter 5

Obey the Voice of Your Spirit

The fourth point in the development of our spirits is this: *Instantly obey the voice of your spirit.* Remember, God speaks to our spirit; He doesn't speak to our head or reasoning faculties.

Proverbs 20:27 tells us, *"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. ..."* God informs our spirit, and our spirit passes the information on to our mind.

The human spirit has a voice. We call it guidance, intuition, the inward voice, or conscience. The conscience of an unsaved man is an unsafe guide, because if he has had any "religious"

training, he often will be dominated by it. And if he hasn't, his conscience will permit him to do many things that are wrong.

On the other hand, if a man is born again, his spirit has been made new, with the life and nature of God in it. If his born-again spirit then has the privilege of feeding and meditating on God's Word—if the person practices God's Word, putting it first in his life—then his conscience, the voice of his spirit, will be a safe guide and will become the voice of God speaking to him.

I believe if we walk in fellowship with God through His Word and prayer, and if we train our spirit through the Word to obey the voice of our spirit instantly, after a while we can know the will of God even in minor details of life.

Jesus said, *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"* (John 14:16,17). Then He said, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...."* (John 16:13).

I do not believe Jesus was referring here only to the revelation that was to be given to the Apostle Paul concerning God's great plan of redemption. I believe it also means the Spirit of God will guide each of us in the affairs of life.

We should begin our day with the consciousness that we have the Holy Spirit as a Guide in us. We were not left without guidance or direction. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, *"He will guide you into all truth ... he will shew you things to come"* (v. 13).

By this Jesus did not mean that the Spirit of God would only show the apostles future events which they recorded in the epistles and the book of Revelation.

Certainly that was a part of it, but I believe this verse also means that the Spirit of God will show us things to come in our personal lives. He will show us these things in the future so we can be ready for them; we won't be caught unawares.

He also will show us some things we can change. For example, God, through His Spirit, told the prophet Isaiah to say to King Hezekiah, "... *Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (2* Kings 20:1). Under those circumstances—the way things were then—Hezekiah was going to die.

But after Isaiah left Hezekiah's bedchamber, the king turned his face to the wall, wept, repented, and prayed. Before Isaiah got out of the courtyard, God told him to return to Hezekiah with a further prophetic message, saying, "... *Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee... I will add unto thy days fifteen years...*" (2 Kings 20:5,6).

We can see here that God sometimes will show us things that can be changed by changing our attitudes or by prayer. He may show us things about ourselves or our loved ones that can be changed. However, there are some things we cannot change.

They will come in the future, and we can be prepared for them.

I appreciate so much this wonderful Guide, the Holy Spirit, who is dwelling in our spirit to guide us and show us things to come.

Since I was filled with the Spirit many years ago, no death has occurred in my family that I haven't known about—sometimes as far as two years in advance. (When we know in advance that our loved ones are going to die, we can do a great deal to get them ready and to make the necessary preparations.) In some instances, I have been able to reverse the situation, and those relatives are still alive today; otherwise, they would be dead.

Because of this work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are not left alone in this world. Jesus, speaking to His disciples, said, "... *It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you* ...." (John 16:7).

Jesus promised, *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless* . . . ." (John 14:16-18).

The Amplified Bible reads, "I will not leave you orphans—comfortless, desolate, bereaved, forlorn, helpless—I will come [back] to you."

We do not need to feel like orphans in this world. There is no need for us to be desolate or forlorn. We can know the strength of God's Spirit in our spirit. We can have the power of God in our lives. We can rise up like a strong man and do the works of God.

As we put the enemy to flight, the powers of darkness will flee before us. Even the devil will run from us. When he sees us coming, he will flee in the other direction, because we are God's man of power.

Get thrilled with the Word of God. Walk in the light of it. Claim what the Word promises and you will reap its benefits. When you become a doer of the Word, not a hearer only, you will become a recipient of all the provisions God has made for you in His Word.

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