

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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Responding to the Prompting of God

by Dan Trygg

“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ...¹²So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For *all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.*”
Romans 8:5,12-14

Being led by the Spirit is presented in the NT as a *normative experience* for Christians. It is something that is available to *every* child of God (Acts 2:38,39; Rom. 8:9-17; Gal. 4:4-7; 5:16-25). **The early Christians *expected* it.** If believers were *not* experiencing the Holy Spirit, they sought God about it (Acts 8:14-17). **Being able to *hear from* and *respond* to the Spirit is the key to victory over sin and self (Gal. 5:16-25), and the basis for power and effectiveness in ministry (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:19).** It is the way Jesus lived, and the method He modeled to His disciples (Lk. 4:1,14-21; 5:17; Jn. 5:19,20; 7:16; 8:28). If we are not hearing from, and being led by the Spirit, we are missing what is our *inheritance* in Christ (Eph. 1:13,14; Gal. 4:6,7). **It is *essential* that we *pray* to know the reality of God in our lives (Eph. 1:15-20; Psal. 143:10), and that we *dedicate ourselves* to receiving the opening of this relationship in our experience.**

This has been very much on my mind in recent days because **it was 40 years ago this month that God first spoke to me** in a clear, recognizable way that I could not ignore. I was 17 years old, a senior in high school. I already had believed in Jesus, having grown up going to Sunday school and having the encouragement of some adults in my life who talked to me about Him. At this time I was already reading the Bible to some minimal degree, and was memorizing some hymns, singing them around the house. I “said my prayers” at night before I went to sleep. I would get into bed, and then talk with God in my mind, asking Him to “bless” certain people or “be with” them. That day, I had heard that a teenage foster daughter of my aunt and uncle had been hit by a car. Both of her legs were broken, and she was quite seriously hurt. So, as I made my list of requests that night, I asked God to “be with” Fran, to comfort her in the hospital, and to help her through this horrific experience. As I finished, God clearly spoke to me. It was not an audible voice, ...but it may have well been, it was so clear in my mind. It didn’t *sound* any different than my own inner voice. It wasn’t like it was different in the *sound* in my head, ...but it *was* very different in *how it spoke*, and *what it said*. First of all, **the Voice addressed me**, “Dan, get up and write a letter to your uncle...” It wasn’t some wanderings of my mind. **It was very direct and clear.** “...ask him if you can come up to work on the farm this summer. You can help Fran.” Well, I can tell you this came as a complete surprise. I had no desire to work on my uncle’s farm, or any particular interest in Fran, either. She was an acquaintance, like a cousin that I would only occasionally see. It was not like I had ever said more than two words to her in my life. Furthermore, I had a girlfriend of my own. We had been dating pretty steadily for nearly a year. I had no interest in being gone for the summer! **I began to argue with the Voice, “I don’t want to...”** I don’t remember this part of the conversation so well as that first statement, but I remember that **He was very insistent.** I needed to do this. Finally, I said, “Ok, I’ll write to my uncle in the morning.” “No,” said the Voice, **“you need to do it now.”** Exasperated, I cried out (in my mind) “I just want to go to sleep!” The Voice came back, “I am not going to let you sleep until you write the letter.” At this, I gave in, “Ok.” **As soon as I agreed, it was like I was filled with energy.** I hopped up out of bed, got dressed, bounded up the stairs, found a sheet of paper, and sat down to write. I am not generally quick in composing letters, but this night **the words just came.** I jotted them down as fast as I could, found an envelope, addressed it, stamped it, put the letter in it, and walked down to the mail box at the end of the drive way, stuck it in and put the flag up. I went back to bed, fell promptly asleep, and forgot all about it, ...until my uncle wrote back at the end of April (some two months later!), and told me I could come, if I still wanted to. **I did follow through, and God used me for the family on the farm, and used them for me, as well.** The day before I came, my uncle was hospitalized with bleeding ulcers. He was not able to work until about four days before I left. *That* was how I was a help *to them*, I was cheap labor during that month I was there. They, however, had a deep, spiritual impact on me. They had a relationship with God I had never witnessed before. God used them to challenge and encourage me to seek for more in my relationship with Him.

I think my experience had all the ingredients that many people report to me, when they recognize that God has been talking to them. Usually, **a thought is interjected into our stream of consciousness.** It doesn’t *sound* noticeably different, but it is not what we would typically think, or it is suggesting something that we would not normally do. **Often, the suggestion is directed toward us, “Do this, or that”, not “I should....”,** although sometimes we do just find ourselves prompted to do something we would not ordinarily do. **If we recoil from the suggestion,**

we will find it coming back to our minds. It doesn't just go away. **Sometimes it grows in insistency** until we act, or we move past the opportunity. **Opportunities are limited, like windows in time.** If we put off the leading long enough, we may lose the opportunity. I have done that. Many times. **When the Voice comes, we don't necessarily feel like we are equipped to handle what we are being asked.** We don't *feel* especially empowered, and we often can't anticipate what we might say, or can't see how things will work out. **This is a test of faith.** We have to make a decision to obey the Voice, or cave in to the fear, uncertainty or inner resistance we may feel. **When we obey, then God shows Himself.** He will either show us more to encourage us to go farther, or we will experience the ability to do what He asked. He will give us the words to say, or we will see how He has prepared the opportunity ahead of time. **When we obey God, we will become a blessing to others, and He will also use that in our lives to benefit us.**

When you read the call of Moses in Exodus 3 & 4, you easily recognize many of these same principles. **God interjected Himself into Moses' life.** It was *not* part of Moses' life plan. "Come now, and I will send you..." (3:10). **God had a very direct word for Moses.** It was not only a departure from his daily life, it was a total "game changer", a radical change of direction for him. **Moses recoiled from the message from the Lord.** His excuses sound very familiar, don't they? "Who am I?" "What should I tell people?" "What if they will not listen", or "What if they reject me?" "I'm not good at *that* (talking, serving, helping, approaching people I don't know, ...whatever)." "I *don't feel any different*, even since You started talking with me." "How about You *get someone else* to do that?" (3:11,13-17; 4:1,10,13) Sound familiar? **God answered every objection, and was very insistent.** He warned Moses that there would be difficulties, but **when Moses obeyed Him, God showed up in power!** In the end, **because Moses obeyed, an entire nation was freed from slavery, and Moses became a man of great influence, both with God and people.**

I was just talking with a woman from church other day. She reported a similar story. She has been going to a food shelf, and was bringing some food to a few other family members and friends. As she was getting ready to leave her house one day, **the thought came**, "Make up a box of food for the neighbor." **She recoiled at the thought. She was uncomfortable about doing this.** She didn't want to risk embarrassing her neighbor, or in any way "disrespecting her" by implying that she was poor, if she didn't need the help. **She pushed the thought out of her mind, but it kept coming back during the day.** Finally, that evening she made up a box, including a gallon of milk, and brought it over. The lady was *deeply touched*. She *was* in desperate need of food, especially milk. That very morning one of her kids went without cereal because there was no milk! She was *so* grateful! **When my friend obeyed, she saw how God had specifically prepared the situation for her to see His hand at work.** She told her neighbor about the food shelf, and asked if she would like to come next time. The lady said, "Yes!" When that evening came, and my friend was going to go next door to tell her neighbor, the woman was *already* in her van waiting! She followed my friend to the food shelf. The next week, not only did *she* come, but she also brought people from two other households! By obeying God, not only did my friend find God had prepared the way, but **her obedience provided food for three other families in need! Furthermore, she herself was greatly encouraged in her walk with God.**

The text at the top of this study says that "those who are being according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are being according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit." **A fleshly mind is hostile to the things of God.** This may sound too strong, but it is true. **The word for "hostile" means it is "discordant with, opposed to, hating and despising" the things of God. It is at enmity with God's ways.** Because of this, it does not appreciate, value or yield to God and His ways. The mind set on fleshly things produces death (Rom. 8:6,7). **The mind set on the flesh is focused on obtaining comfort and pleasures. It wants to be in control. This is the very antithesis of living by faith. Faith requires giving God the right to direct your life.** Since He is trying to build your spiritual inner person, **He will expect you to put spiritual things before creature comforts.** That means you will invest time in studying the Bible, seeking God in prayer, going to church and deepening your spiritual life, even if it means getting up in the morning, or giving up some pleasurable time in front of the TV or a video game. Getting high or getting intoxicated is counter-productive, yet how many people pursue such mindless distractions? God wants people who are walking *in reality*, not some mood-altered state. **He wants us to be alert and ready to hear and respond to His voice. He is looking for people who want Him and His will above all else.** An inordinate focus on jewelry, fine clothes, and other material goods and entertainment can be distractions that pull our attention and resources away from God and His Kingdom. A spiritually-minded person begins to focus more on the things of God than these other things. **As God becomes more important, other things fall away, and he or she begins to recognize the inner voice of the Spirit.** Inevitably, the Voice will suggest something that is challenging to us in some way. Trust God. Step out. **Be prompt in responding to His prompting, and a whole new world will open up to you.**