

CHAPTER 22

HEARING THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BUSINESS (e³)

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

The twenty-first century world financial system is very interrelated and unstable; a massive terrorist attack, a war in the Middle East, a major earthquake, a hurricane, or Asian currency speculation can cause the world's stock markets to fluctuate wildly. The threat of inflation can change the national monetary policy and raise the long-term interest rates, which in turn depresses the housing market, which in turn depresses a myriad of building material suppliers and eventually the industries that supply them the raw materials. Then follows high unemployment, a series of bankruptcies among those companies and individuals that have over-extended themselves, and a reduction in consumer spending which initiates another round of economic reductions among those who manufacture and sell consumer goods.

The only way that a businessperson can be entirely confident in making good long term decisions is when they have received direction from the Holy Spirit. Only God, who knows the future, can guide us to buy property that will appreciate, even in an economic downturn. He can tell us when to increase production and when to reduce our staff; He can warn us of market fluctuations before they occur. The Holy Spirit will guide us in all the affairs of life if we will take the time to train our spirits to hear His voice. The hallmark of a son or daughter of God is "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). But unfortunately, only a few of us are willing to take the time to meditate on His Word and to spend the time with Him in prayer—both of which are required to hear His voice.

Jesus is the revealed Word of God, (the Logos): "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:14). The Creator's Handbook, the Bible, is the written word of God (the logos). It is the sum of God's utterances; it is the expression of His thoughts. As we meditate upon (think upon and confess) the written Word of God, we are spending time with Jesus, the revealed word of God. We are getting to know his voice and establishing His Word in our spirit. Then when difficulties develop in our lives, the Holy Spirit is able to bring that Word, which we have stored in our spirit, to our remembrance to teach us and guide us as to the way we should go (John 14:26 & 16:13). The Apostle Paul exhorts the believer to take "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit..." (Ephesians 6:17). The "Word of God" in this verse is the Greek word *rhema*; it is a specific word which the Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance to guide you when problems arise in your life. **However, the Holy Spirit cannot bring to your remembrance a word which you have not first stored in your spirit.**

GOD SPEAKS TO THE BELIEVER'S SPIRIT

When a man is born again, the Spirit of God moves into his spirit; and his inner man (his spirit) becomes a brand new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore we do not hear the voice of God in our minds; we hear the voice of God on the inside of us, in our spirits. "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart" (Proverbs 20:27). The writer of Proverbs is explaining that the Lord has sent His Spirit into our spirits to give us light, to give us direction. If God dwells in our spirits, then common sense tells us that is where He will speak to us.

THE PRIMARY WAY JESUS LEADS HIS PEOPLE

Years ago, when I was first baptized in the Holy Spirit, I found by experience that by praying in the Spirit (praying in tongues) for an hour or so, my spirit would become active and my mind and body would become inactive, thereby allowing me to get a leading or a sense of the direction as to the way I should go.

Several years later my wife Barbara and I attended a three-day faith seminar in Honolulu, Hawaii, the first such seminar we had ever attended. One of the speakers in that seminar was the Reverend Kenneth Hagin, founder of Rhema Bible training School. The subject on which he

taught was "How to Hear the Voice of God." Subsequent to that seminar, he has published a book entitled *How You Can Be Led by the Spirit of God* (1). I would highly recommend that you obtain a copy and study this book.

In that seminar in Hawaii, Kenneth Hagin related a vision in which Jesus had appeared to him in February of 1959 in El Paso, Texas. During that vision, Jesus explained the ministry of the prophet to the Reverend Hagin. He explained that under the Old Covenant, only the prophet, priest and king were anointed by the Holy Spirit. The common people did not have the Spirit of God either on them or in them. Therefore under the Old Covenant, the people would seek guidance through the prophet because he had the anointing of the Holy Spirit. But under the New Covenant, all believers have the Holy Spirit in them; therefore we should not seek guidance from a prophet, but from the Holy Spirit who dwells within our spirits. It is okay to receive guidance from a prophet, but that guidance should be used to only confirm what God has already revealed to us in our spirits. In the vision Jesus said to Hagin, "Under the New Covenant, it does not say, 'As many as are led by prophets, they are the sons of God.' The New Testament says, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God'" (Romans 8:14).

Then Jesus said, "*The number one way, the primary way, that I lead all My children is by the inner witness.*" The inner witness is a sense that you have in your spirit concerning a matter. Perhaps you sense that you should move ahead on a situation; you feel good about it—you have a green light, so to speak, concerning the matter. On the other hand you may sense that you shouldn't move ahead; you have a check in your spirit about it—you may have a red light, so to speak. Perhaps you have had an occasion to sit down write a letter or make a phone call, but you had a check in your spirit concerning the matter. For instance there have been times when making a proposal on a project that I have had a check in my spirit. I would sense that it would be a problematic job and that we shouldn't pursue it.

When I first heard these principles in Hagin's seminar, my spirit jumped because it confirmed my own experience, and it explained why I seemed to get a leading—an inner witness—when I would pray in the Spirit about a decision and get quiet before the Lord. Hearing Brother Hagin share these principles gave me greater confidence in my ability to hear the Holy Spirit guide me in the way that I should go. Now we are not to accept any vision unless it lines up with the Word of God; therefore, I suggest that you should check out this revelation against the following scriptures: Romans 8:14, 16; Proverbs 20:27; John 14:23, 26, 16:13; 1 Corinthians 3:16; and 2 Corinthians 6:16. In his Hawaii convention, Kenneth Hagin used the Paul's experience when sailing for Rome by way of Crete (Acts 27) to verify the biblical accuracy of the vision. Paul said, "*Men, I perceive that this voyage will end in disaster and much loss....*" Paul perceived in his spirit that they shouldn't sail for Crete. You might say he had a check—a red light in his spirit; he had a caution that they would be in danger if they sailed for Crete. The primary way that God leads us is the inner witness; it is a gentle inner leading.

In the above vision, Jesus made the following statement to Kenneth Hagin; it is a statement that is particularly important for a business person!

"If you will learn to follow that inward witness, I will make you rich. I will guide you in all the affairs of life, financial as well as spiritual. I am not opposed to My children being rich; I am opposed to their being covetous" (1).

I am so glad that my wife Barbara and I heard this teaching early in our Christian walk, for as we have followed the inner witness, the Lord has prospered us abundantly.

HOW THE INNER WITNESS LED US TO BUY AN OFFICE BUILDING

In the winter of 1989, the lease for my consulting firm's office space was coming up for renewal. For ten or more years I had wanted to own my own office building. In fact I had looked at a number of buildings in the south end of our city, but I had never found a building that really met all our requirements. They were either too old, too large, too small, wrong location, etc. But with the decision to sign another five-year lease, I determined that I would

once again look for an office building that I could purchase. Actually I hadn't even shared with my wife Barbara that I was looking for a building, but she was aware that the lease on our office building was coming up for renewal. One Sunday afternoon in February of 1999, Barbara blurted out a **word of wisdom** from the Lord. At the time, neither Barbara nor I recognized it as a word from the Lord. She said, "Bob, we should purchase an office building with a penthouse on top!" I laughed and shook my head. I thought, *Penthouse on top? That is really ridiculous! How many office buildings have a penthouse on top?* Early Monday morning of the following week, I drove to Portland, Oregon, on business. As I was returning to my office on Wednesday, I decided to drive through Tukwila, a city near my office, to look at an office building on which I had received a mail advertisement the previous week. After searching for that building for nearly a half hour and not being able to find it, I decided to return to my office by a different route than I normally take. As I drove toward my office I saw a three-story office building that was for sale. My spirit jumped. **I had an inner witness that this was our building.** Actually I had seen this building being constructed several years earlier. At the time I remember saying to myself, "That's the kind of office building I would like to own." It had an attractive design, was in a good location, and was about the right size.

When I got back to my office, I immediately called the real estate agent. He said that it would be a great building for an architectural and engineering firm, as it had been designed and constructed for use by an engineering firm. He pointed out that it had a concrete (fire resistant) basement for storage of our drawings, and it had a penthouse apartment on top. When he said there was a penthouse apartment on the fourth floor of the building my spirit jumped again—now I **knew** that this was our building. At the time I spoke with the realtor, approximately half of the building was vacant. (There was an office building vacancy rate of nearly forty percent in the area where this particular building was located.) This made the building very unattractive to other buyers, but it was great for my company, because when we moved into the building it would bring the building's occupancy to one hundred percent.

Because Barbara and I have always given a large percentage of our income to missions, we didn't have the surplus cash required for the twenty percent down payment. In addition, the banks had lost considerable money on commercial office building loans early in the 80's, and they would only offer a five-year mortgage on the building. From the natural financial standpoint, everything was against our buying that office building, but nine months later we moved in! And better yet, God has blessed us with stable renters which have given us a very low vacancy rate for nearly two decades.

THE SECOND WAY GOD LEADS US

Have you ever had your conscience convict you when you said or did something that was wrong? Have you ever had what we refer to as a "hunch" concerning a decision you had to make? Even a natural man, because he is a spiritual being, can know things in his spirit, his inner man. This inner man has a voice; we call it our conscience or intuition. We have all experienced that small inner voice, our conscience, attempting to give guidance to our minds. Your conscience is the "voice of your spirit." Before a person is born again, his conscience will let him do many things that it won't let him do after he is born again. But when one becomes born again, the Holy Spirit moves into his spirit and begins to guide him according to the will of God. Paul said he always obeyed his conscience (Acts 23:1 and 2 Timothy 1:3). Often as I get quiet and seek the Holy Spirit concerning a business problem or a decision that I must make, He will bring a word or a scripture to my spirit to guide and direct me. My spirit man then attempts to pass the information he receives from the Holy Spirit on to my mind. Your spirit man speaks to you by a still small voice within you (your conscience), but you have to get your mind quiet in order to hear him. I have found that the best time for me to hear my spirit is right after I awake from sleep, while my mind is still quiet.

HOW GOD LED ME TO SELECT A BUSINESS ASSOCIATE

In 1995, I decided to sell my business to a long time employee. This employee had been with our firm for some twenty-one years and I had promised her on several occasions that I would give her the first option to purchase the company. Frankly, when it came time to sell the business I didn't feel very comfortable with the above arrangement—you might say I had a

check in my spirit. But because I had given her my word, I knew that I had to keep my promise. This is an important principle: God's Word cautions us that "He honors those who keep their promises, even a promise that turns into a deficit (Psalms 16:4). I hired a business-consulting firm to value the business, handle the negotiations with the employee, prepare the ownership transfer contracts, and administer the ownership transfer. As the deal was about to be consummated, the firm who was handling the transfer called me and warned me that something was not right with the employee. They had discovered that the employee was double-crossing me. She apparently had been collecting information on our clients and past projects. She was planning on going into partnership with a former employee and starting her own business. That way, she reasoned, she would not have to pay me for the business. I obviously did not end up selling the business to her, and her new business partnership lasted for about one and a half years before going out of business. I subsequently learned that either the woman or her partner had threatened a lawsuit against the other in some kind of a business disagreement. You see, if we belong to Christ, we are Abraham's seed and therefore heirs, according to the promise that God made to Abraham (Galatians 3:29). And one of those promises is "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you." (Genesis 12:3).

The business consulting firm, which I had hired to develop the ownership transfer, wanted me to sell the business to another firm, but I didn't feel right about doing that. I sensed in my spirit that God said He would "bring me a Joseph." This "Joseph" would be an individual who was skilled my profession and would take over the business and purchase it from me. You might wonder how I knew that. I just had a "knowing" in my spirit; I had no natural evidence.

Well, I waited a year, but there was no Joseph! One Sunday afternoon I got down on my knees in my living room and prayed, "Father, are you going to bring me a Joseph or not?" Immediately the Holy Spirit spoke a scripture into my spirit. On the inside of me, I heard the words "Genesis 48:2." I did not hear it with my physical ears; it was just, as best that I can describe it, a strong knowing on the inside of me. I grabbed my Bible and turned to Genesis 48:2 and read "**...and Jacob was told, 'Look, your son Joseph is coming to you.'**" What an answer!! That word from God became my faith. It told me what would happen in advance. I, of course, wanted a Joseph now, but it was a good thing I received such a direct word from God, because it was another four years before "Joseph" arrived at my business. Through that experience, I learned that it is through "faith and patience" that we inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12).

Now you have already read in the chapter entitled "Fighting the Good Fight of Faith" that Joseph did not work out, and when it looked like the company was going to go bankrupt he found another job and left the company. He left just two weeks before the financial breakthrough came. You may be wondering, "If God told you to wait five years for this man to come to your company, then why didn't he work out? Didn't God know what would happen?" Of course He did! Now let me ask you a question: when God told Samuel to anoint Saul king over Israel (1 Samuel 9 & 10), didn't God know that Saul wouldn't work out? Yes! God knows the beginning from the end, but He gives each of us the opportunity to succeed or fail because he has given us a free will. Because Saul was disobedient to the Word of the Lord, he failed (1 Samuel 15). It is the same with you or me. God has plans to prosper us, but if we are not willing and obedient, we can nullify His plans.

God gave the biblical Joseph a dream concerning a future time when his father and his brothers would bow down and be subservient to him. But Joseph was willing and obedient; and even though he went through a number of trials and tests in his life before the dream came to pass, God eventually promoted him to the second highest office in Egypt. The only evidence that he had that his dream would come to pass was the information that he received from God in the dream. The psalmist says, "Until the time that his word came to pass, the Word of the Lord tested him" (Psalm 105:19).

The only evidence I had that God would bring me a "Joseph" was the word of Genesis 48:2, which God had spoken into my spirit. Walking with God requires that we exercise faith in His Word, until the Word He has given us has come to pass. Even though the first man that God

brought to me did not work out, He had another man waiting in the wings, and within a month of Joseph leaving the firm, he brought me a man who bought my firm at the price which I named.

If you are born again, you can trust the voice of your spirit because the Spirit of God dwells in your spirit. Therefore your spirit is a safe guide. Let me give you an example. Before I was born again, I would curse habitually as a normal part of my daily vocabulary. I would curse to express anger or just to make a strong point. My conscience never once convicted me. As soon as I became born again, I don't believe a curse word has come out of my mouth more than half a dozen times, and each time my conscience immediately convicted me.

Paul says that "...in latter times some will depart from the faith...having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1-2). If you immediately obey the voice of your spirit (your conscience), it will keep your spirit tender toward the Spirit of God. But if you ignore your spirit (your conscience), it will become hardened and cease to speak to you.

A THIRD WAY GOD LEADS US

God also leads us by the voice of the Holy Spirit. You might ask, "How can I determine the difference between my spirit and the Holy Spirit?" When the Holy Spirit within you speaks, it is with a more authoritative voice. It is so real that it might sound like someone said it to you in a human voice.

Young Samuel heard the Holy Spirit speak and thought that it was the priest Eli calling him. He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am." But Eli said, "No, I didn't call you; go back to bed." After the voice spoke to Samuel a third time, Eli counseled young Samuel to answer and say, "Speak, your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3: 1-20). Samuel could hear an audible voice but Eli couldn't. Why? Because the Holy Spirit on the **inside** of Samuel spoke to him, there was no audible voice; therefore, Eli couldn't hear the voice.

HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD

To my knowledge I have personally heard the authoritative voice of the Holy Spirit on only two or three occasions. One occasion was in April of 2000, as I was about to make a sizable investment in the stock market. On Sunday afternoon, I made a list of stocks that I intended to buy the following morning. I woke up on Monday morning and was just lying in bed, only about half awake, when suddenly the Holy Spirit spoke the following words to me very authoritatively: "**STAY OUT OF THE MARKET.**" Frankly, it startled me, but I followed His advice and stayed out of the market. Several days later, the market (the NASDAQ composite) dropped thirty-five percent. Praise the Lord! God will help you in the business world if you will be open to Him. Unfortunately, however, I must confess that I have often made decisions without seeking the Lord! Three months after the Lord told me to stay out of the market, the market appeared to stabilize and started to rise, so without seeking God, I invested in the very market that the Holy Spirit had told me to stay out of. Several months later, I went to Russia on a mission trip and while I was out of the country the market fell again. As I write this some eight years later, I have still not recovered the money I lost. Needless to say, I lost a substantial amount of money, but I gained some very expensive understanding: ***don't make major financial decisions without seeking a green light from the Holy Spirit.***

WE ARE NOT TO SEEK VISIONS OR ANGELS

The Creator's Handbook reveals that on certain occasions God would lead His people through visions or angels. But such supernatural guidance did not occur every day in the lives of these individuals. Supernatural guidance, if it occurred at all, occurred only once or twice in their lifetimes. And in most instances, it occurred to give direction to these believers either when they were in great danger or if God's purpose for them would be foiled if they did not receive supernatural help. Knowing this, we may not be quite so anxious to receive such supernatural guidance, as it might indicate that we have a difficult road ahead.

God may or may not give you a vision or dream. He may or may not send an angel to guide you. But we are not to seek visions or angels or voices; we are to seek the Holy Spirit.

WE DO NOT TAKE TIME TO ASK GOD

In my own experience, I have found that praying in tongues is one of the best ways to get my body quiet and my mind in "neutral," so I can hear what my spirit is saying. You see, if your mind is constantly bombarding you with a problem concerning a family difficulty, your job, or a payment which is due at the bank then you are not going to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying. That's why it's easier to hear from God when you first wake up in the morning; your mind is usually quiet, and it hasn't yet started to think about the problems of the day.

As I have sought God's guidance about major decisions in my life, sometimes I have had to pray night after night over a period of several days or weeks before I get an answer. Many times God speaks to me just as I wake up, while my mind is quiet. The problem with most of us, including myself sometimes, is that we are simply not willing to take the time or pay the price to hear God's direction for our lives, our businesses, or our families. **If we want God's plan, we must be willing to spend time with Him to obtain it.**

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