

# 4 Ways to Test if You're Led by the Spirit or Your Emotions

I was puzzled. During the months of training, Jane had faithfully attended classes, completing her courses with passing grades. Yet as I began to compare her spiritual growth and maturity with others in the class, I realized something was missing.

What could it be that had so retarded her spiritual growth? Could there be something in her past—a need for healing perhaps? Or a person to whom she needed to extend forgiveness?

“Lord,” I prayed, “show me the clue to praying for and counseling her.”

Over a period of time the clue I had been searching for began to be revealed. Jane was not in control of her emotions!

I began to see that she was seeking one emotional “high” after another by attending various meetings and other spiritual events. It was affecting her, as any addiction would.

She made statements about how tired she was and talked about problems at work, problems at home and with her children. In her “sphere of influence” both the saved and the unsaved were seeing inconsistencies in her walk with God. Enthusiasm was present, yes, but friends began to avoid her because of the drastic changes they had seen in her life.

Jane noticed the exodus of friends and family, but her reasoning was that they were not as “spiritually minded” as she. Her friends, on the other hand, were saying, “Jane is so heavenly minded that she is no earthly good. She’s spacey!”

Still, the need for the “emotional fix” continued—one more

meeting, one more prayer group, one more conference. Jane became a person who made all her life's decisions, spiritually and otherwise, based entirely on how it "felt." If it felt good, it had to be God!

### **Who's in Control?**

God created us with emotions that have a powerful effect on our lives. We cannot, however, allow these emotions to control us.

When we are controlled by our emotions—by how we feel—we are settling for so much less than what God has planned for us. We begin to judge the value of things by the nature of our response to them. The world says, "If it feels good, do it." But that is not God's way.

One of the greatest problems with being led by our emotions and judging our daily walk based on how we feel is that feelings cannot be trusted! They will deceive us. People who deliberately walk into situations applying the "How does it feel?" method rather than God's truth often suffer dire consequences!

This is especially true in making decisions about important life issues such as choosing a mate, changing jobs or spending money. But it is also true in deciding how much time we spend with God. If we spend time with Him only on the days that we feel like it, we will have inconsistent lives. If we apply the Word of God only when it agrees with our feelings, we will not be walking in the wholeness God intends for us.

Our personalities are uniquely different. Some of us, as my friend Babe says, "cry even when the mail comes or when the flag goes by." She feels her ministry is "crying."

However, personality type cannot be used as an excuse for being ruled and governed by our emotions. Yes, many of us are more emotional and seem to have stronger feelings than others.

But the Word of God says we are to be “led by the Spirit,” not by our emotions.

“For those who are according to the flesh and controlled by its unholy desires set their minds on and pursue those things which gratify the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit and are controlled by the desires of the Spirit set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the [Holy] Spirit.

“Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever].

“So then those who are living the life of the flesh [catering to the appetites and impulses of their carnal nature] cannot please or satisfy God, or be acceptable to Him.

“But you are not living the life of the flesh, you are living the life of the Spirit, if the [Holy] Spirit of God [really] dwells within you [directs and controls you]. But if anyone does not possess the [Holy] Spirit of Christ, he is none of His [he does not belong to Christ, is not truly a child of God]” (Rom. 8:5-6, 8-9, AMP).

How we are led will make a difference in our level of spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity requires that in every area of our lives, including our emotions, we be led by the Spirit of God. We cannot be effective in showing forth the light and life of Christianity if we are controlled by how we are feeling on a particular day at a particular time.

God forbid that we should ever be known as one of those “silly” women described in the Scriptures:

“For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion),

they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it [their conduct belies the genuineness of their profession]. Avoid [all] such people [turn away from them].

“For among them are those who worm their way into homes and captivate silly and weak-natured and spiritually dwarfed women, loaded down with [the burden of their] sins [and easily] swayed and led away by various evil desires and seductive impulses.

“[These weak women will listen to anybody who will teach them]; they are forever inquiring and getting information, but are never able to arrive at a recognition and knowledge of the Truth” (2 Tim. 3:5-7).

### **Led by the Spirit**

I have a picture of the woman of God I desire all of us to be. She is mature in her walk with God. She is balanced and trustworthy. She has a powerful testimony. She is guided by the Spirit of God and is an effective minister for these end times.

God trusts her and gives her assignments that she fulfills with confidence. She hears the voice of God and is turned neither to the left nor to the right but stays focused on the job assigned her. She is a blessing and not a curse to her pastor and church family.

So many times a woman who is ruled and governed by her emotions instead of the Spirit of God causes havoc in her church. She is one who pulls others aside to give them an unauthorized “word.” Usually the “word” has the spiritual depth of a Chinese fortune cookie, but, oh, how good it makes her “feel”!

The conversations she has with her friends and church family are sprinkled with all the right “spiritual” words. However, there is no depth in her daily walk, and she is unstable and

lacking in wisdom.

How do you know if you are a Spirit-led or an emotion-led woman? Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I make the decisions of my daily life based on how I feel, or on the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
2. Do I consistently spend time with the Lord in prayer, in reading the Bible and in listening for His direction? Do I recognize His voice?
3. Do I spend time justifying a decision I have made that I was positive was God's leading but that turned out to be wrong?
4. Am I an emotional shopper or emotional eater?

Your answers will help you determine if you have a problem.

Why is it so important for each of us to be led by the Spirit of God in this hour? Because we've been told that in the last days deception will be prevalent. We must be spiritually aware and able to discern what is of God and what is not.

How do we break the cycle?

**1. Slow down!** Don't rush into making decisions. Most emotional decisions are made quickly without any real thought or analysis. Evaluate: Does this have to be done at this exact minute? Is this wise? What is the Spirit of God saying? What could the repercussions of this decision be?

**2. Cultivate stillness in your inner man.** The Word of God says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10, NKJV). Our spirit-man should always be at peace. When it is not, we are not being led by the Spirit. Our lives should be governed by the peace of God in the inner man.

An example in my own life illustrates this point. Recently I was scheduled to teach one of our weekend seminars in Virginia. Every time I thought about the trip I felt a lack of peace in my spirit (not my emotions). My desire was to go to Virginia, so my flesh said, "Just do it!"

But I have found that ignoring that lack of peace in my spirit does not pay. As soon as I scheduled someone else for the trip my peace returned. We can be led and governed by peace or the lack of it.

**3. Verify decisions by the Word of God whenever possible.** The Bible does not give us specific answers for each decision we must make. In other words, the Word will not tell you if you should go to a meeting or not. It will not tell you whether you should take a particular job. It will, however, give you guidelines for your daily life.

Make a conscious decision not to be led by emotions but to be led by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit will help you.

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority; but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13).

We have been given the tools to become spiritually mature women. God is desiring an army of women for these days that will hold a place in history none have ever held. For they will be the ones who are full of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit and obedient to His call.

Are you going to be one of them?

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