

Pay Attention to Your Heart, but Be Led by the Spirit

It was lunchtime. He was hungry. But instead of eating, he went up on the housetop to pray. Why? Because he had a burden. Those who know of this account in Acts 1, know we are speaking of the apostle Peter.

“The next day as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour” (Acts 10:9).

As Peter began praying, he fell into a trance and received a marvelous vision of the purposes of God to open the door of the gospel to the Gentile world. This vision changed the course and the entire landscape of Christianity in the early church and beyond. What if Peter had not been paying attention to his heart? What if he had not taken time to pull aside and wait on the Lord? He would have missed the plan of God and probably not received the messengers that Cornelius sent who were on their way to the house.

Peter paid attention to what was going on in his heart. He pulled away from the distraction of food and eating and the Spirit of God met him. What a great lesson we can learn from this! Often the Lord is trying to get our attention, but we are distracted by too many things. All the time He is endeavoring to speak to us, to lead us and to impart some needed wisdom to us, but we are too busy to stop, wait and listen. Our hearts are callous and insensitive.

Then when bad things happen to us, or we experience the awful consequences of poor decision-making or we make a false step, we blame God. But all the time God was trying to alert us and secure our attention, but our minds were on other things.

God’s Spirit works with the one whose mind is set on Him (Isa.

26:3). He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit (Rom. 8:27). We must learn to use our minds to pay attention and search out the activity in our hearts. That's what Peter did.

We live in two worlds—the physical and the spiritual world. The Lord wants to train our physical senses to perceive what is happening in our spirits. While processing physical information we need to learn to perceive what is going on spiritually in us and around us.

Jesus did this in His earthly walk.

But Jesus said, "Someone touched Me, for I perceive that power has gone out from Me" (Luke 8:46).

When the crowd was thronging Jesus and pressing against Him He perceived that virtue or power had gone out of Him (Luke 8:46). The woman with the issue of blood touched Him with her faith and He knew it. Jesus was receiving information with His physical senses while keeping His mind on what was going on spiritually.

The apostle Paul did this.

"In Lystra there sat a man, crippled in his feet, who had never walked and was lame from birth. He heard Paul speaking, who looked intently at him and perceived that he had faith to be healed and said with a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And he jumped up and walked" (Acts 14:8-10).

While Paul was speaking to a crowd and very aware of his physical surroundings his eyes became fixated on this crippled man. He was sensitive to his spirit and perceived this man had faith to be healed, and he commanded him to rise to his feet. The man was healed and leaped and walked.

Here is another excellent example of Paul paying attention to his heart and the activity in his spirit.

“They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they came near Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not allow them. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night a vision appeared to Paul: A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’” (Acts 16:6-9).

After being forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel in two different places, Paul was searching for direction of where to go. His mind was on the Lord, scanning His heart for direction. A vision containing direction from the Lord was given to him, and off he went.

Cultivating Sensitivity

Visions and direction are often given in prayer. Many times, any vision or direction you receive has to do with the gospel, with helping and ministering to people and advancing the kingdom of God. If you are engaged in God’s purposes, He will include you in His plan. But if your mind is constantly on the world and other things, you will disqualify yourself from receiving guidance, wisdom and direction.

Here is a Holy Spirit-inspired utterance given to my wife and me recently in prayer that speaks to the heart of this matter.

“Who’s in front of you? Who’s in your life? Pay attention to My heart for them.”

So much is missed because we’re not sensitive and paying attention. For if you look at people in the natural and you see them in the condition they are in, you will miss so much. Look at them through the Lord’s eyes, hear them through the Lord’s heart and you will spiritually discern them.

People who are caught up in the logistics of a meeting or the routine affairs of life miss opportunities multiple times every day to touch someone. Look into the heart of God for a

person, because the Lord has never had a negative thought toward anyone. Instead, He sees them through His redemptive work on the cross. Be sensitive to the Lord and to others.