

Intuition & Guidance

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I'd like to just talk for the last time about intuition. And I'd just remind you of where it fits into the scheme of things. And I tried to work out all the variations on this that I can. I thought, "Well, we'll start backwards this time." But really, the bulk of mankind live like that [showing diagram on board]. They have a spirit, a soul, and a body. Really they live primarily from the body inwards and they live to get their happiness through the thrills that they can get through their body.

And we know that alcohol is an obvious one to get your emotions at peace or exhilarated but sex is another one. And then after that there's all the satisfaction that many of us get when we're worried or anxious from just eating, eating, eating. And we eat to try and get some kind of peace in the old emotions. And there's the kind of happiness we get from having a nice swim in the morning, or there's the happiness that we get from going out on a boat, or going on a motorbike. And much of the world is utterly enslaved to that kind of thing and that's why they get very irritated if you take the toys away from them. And maybe so are we a little, because when we get irritated it is always because someone has taken away the external things that we depend on for happiness and that give us our sense of significance in the same way. The most obvious way of course is dressing up nicely so that people notice you, and praise you, and say how wonderful you look, and how beautiful you are but really, there are all kinds of other ways that we force our colleagues at work, and our friends to praise us.

I used the example in Britain -- and English people are just the same as us in America, how we bring up certain conversations that will bring up a subject that we're very good at so that we can have kind of compliments that we prompt from other people. So we bring up singing if we're very good at singing, or we bring up sport if we're very good at sport. And so we use all kinds of methods to drag significance for ourselves out of our relationships with people.

Normally, we try to get happiness from circumstances, from right circumstances. Normally we try to get significance from people, and then we try to get our security from things. And most of us have been involved at some time or another in thinking that we could beat Howard Hughes [a billionaire], and that we could actually get to a point where we had so many things, and so much money, and so many shares in so many stocks that we would have security at last. And of course examples of people like Hughes who had everything and yet are miserable bring home to us that it doesn't matter how many houses you get, it doesn't matter how much clothes you get, it doesn't matter what kind of job you have, you cannot get security in this world from things.

But loved ones, the bulk of people live that way. Their spirits are dead and they live from their bodies inward. And most of them become aware not that they're doing that but most of them become aware of the sins that occur in their lives because they live that way. So they get up some morning and they were looking forward to going out swimming, or going out boating, or sailing, or going out playing some sports and it's a bad day and they're just bears for the rest of the day. And they become aware there's something wrong in here, "I'm being irritable, I'm being resentful. There's something wrong."

Or, it's the same with security. They lose their job, or their bank balance goes down, or their salary is reduced and suddenly they get worried and anxious and the more worried and anxious they get the more insensitive to their loved ones they become, the less time they have to love their friends. And the more their vision becomes tunnel vision that is built just on, "How do I get this money that I need?" And it's that that they become aware of. It's the lack of love that they become aware of, the sin of greed or avarice, or of worry, or of anxiety.

And it's the same with significance. Most of us are not aware that we're trying to draw significance from other people but we are aware of the resentment, and jealousy, and pride we feel when other people do not obviously think we're as important as them. And it's normally the sins that we become aware of. And you know that most of us have come through that. We've sensed that there is sin in us; we're not the way our Creator wants us to be.

Then comes the great message that he has done something on Calvary that enables him to forgive us and many of us at that moment confess our sins and say that we will give our lives to you, Lord. We're not really fully aware of what it means but we sense that in some way we should depend on him and not depend on the world. Then our spirits come alive and then you know that many of us are faced with that carnal life where we're drawing something from God, but not everything. We're getting some security from God and from his love. Some sense of significance from the fact that he knows us by name, some sense of happiness from times of prayer and Bible study, but it's a two way operation.

We're still drawing some of it from the world and we're trying to draw some of it from God and that's where we get into that conflict you remember where the lust of the flesh in that way fights against the desires of the spirit to prevent us from doing what we will, and we find that conflict within where we cry "the good that I would I cannot and the evil I hate is the very thing that I do." (Romans 7:18) And it's then that we see we have to sooner or later settle this. Sooner or later we have to stop living off the world completely and live only from God. And that's a big moment in a child of God's life when they at last determine that.

When they deal with the security, significance, and the happiness that they're getting from things, and from people, and from circumstances -- and they determine to join Jesus on the cross. Really, it's where they were all the time -- but they just agree to stay in Jesus on the cross and be crucified with him. And, that's what baptism into Jesus means and that's what it meant for the early Christians when they went under the water. The water covered them and cut them off. And I'm not selling water baptism, I'm just saying this is part of the meaning of it. The water covered them and they had no more interaction with the outside world you see, and that's what it means. It means you die to what you used to get from the outside world from people, and from circumstances, and from things.

The water covered them and the only life they could depend on was the life within or the life they had under the water. The only person under the water with them was Jesus and they were buried with him by baptism into death and then they rose with him into this life that comes from God and that's when you begin to walk in the Spirit. And why I just went over that again was the abilities of our spirits only begin to be exercised if you've really determined to live that way and that way alone.

So you'll have no understanding of intuition, loved ones, if you're still involved in this inward life from the outside in, you really won't. And tonight I'll talk about intuition and you'll be

like that dear man who was healed, you remember, and Jesus said, "Can you see?" And he said, "Well, I see men as trees walking" -- just vague. And that's what it'll be like with you. If you've only been touched once by God's Spirit and been born of God but not been baptized with the Spirit, then all the things we share tonight will be kind of vague.

Oh, did I ever tell you about the Indian brother at our training school? He was at his first Greek class and he has some of those English phrases that were passed on to him by his British education I suppose and I think it was Dan Schafer who was teaching him the Greek and Dan said, "Okay, do you understand that Kush?" And he said, "Well, it's still a big foggy." And you know, some of us are like that in spiritual matters where we see it but it's still a bit foggy, we don't quite see it clearly.

Now loved ones, if you don't see it clearly it's always because you have not settled this once and for all, you see. You have not once and for all accepted, "Lord Jesus, I was with you when you were cut off from this world and when the world was crucified to you and you were crucified to it. I was in you. And Lord, thank you that I was in you. I gladly accept my position with you, I gladly accept that I am crucified as far as what my friends can do to me or for me. I thank you for that Lord." Only when you settle that loved ones, only when you've really turned your will away from what you can get from the outside world will you begin to see things clearly and will you be able to have that second touch of God's spirit, and will you have eyes that have all the scales off them, and you can see clearly, and you can exercise your intuition. Truly, really.

Now, what we've been talking about, loved ones, in regard to intuition is that it's through the intuition of the spirit that God tells us what to do in our lives. And what I'd like to share a little bit about before we talk about guidance is discernment. One of the abilities that the Holy Spirit can give you through intuition is the ability to discern different spirits. And you get that teaching if you'd like to look at it in 1 John 2:20. It's inherent in that verse that we read before. 1 John 2:20, "But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know." And then down to Verse 26, "I write this to you about those who would deceive you; but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him."

And you see the anointing which you receive from him abides in you and you've no need that anyone should teach you because his Spirit will show you what is true and what is untrue. And that ties up with, you see, the first verse of Chapter 4 there across the page, 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world." Now, intuition is an ability of your spirit to discern those who are true and those who are false.

So Watchman Nee tells the story and I've shared it with you before how in one house away in a remote part of China he had only time to teach the bare facts about Jesus' death and their death with him. And it was a man and his wife who lived alone and Nee told them that and they entered into it and then he had to go off. He could leave them no other information. And he came back months later to that house and that area and he was visiting with the husband and wife and he asked them how they had been doing and they said, "Oh great, we've been growing in Jesus."

And then he saw some books, because there were very few books in that area at all and certainly none in that house, but there were some very new looking books up on the shelf. And he said to them,

“What are those?” And the man looked at them as if he had never bothered much with them and he said, “Oh, a man came by and gave us these books and I started to read one but the boss inside wouldn’t let me read them.” And the “boss inside” was the Holy Spirit. He called him the boss inside.

And Nee of course said, “Oh, let me see the books.” And of course they were Watch Tower productions of Jehovah’s Witnesses. And the dear man didn’t know anything about Jehovah’s Witnesses and didn’t know anything about their teachings but the spirit inside had given him discernment that this was not of God, that this was not pure and true. Now loved ones, that’s part of the value of discernment that is a gift of the Holy Spirit and that comes to all of us who submit to the Holy Spirit.

Now, you may say, “Well now, brother you said that we would have to be baptized with the spirit in order to experience that.” Well of course, the strange thing is that while you walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit even in a carnal state the Holy Spirit graciously keeps you safe. The dangerous time is when you begin to disobey the Holy Spirit and that’s the real time of carnality, you know. At the beginning you remember, when we first know Jesus we just walk after him with joy, and delight, and with a full surrender. But then there comes a time when we begin to think about our reputation, we begin to think about our own comfort, and it’s then that we begin to disobey the Spirit. It’s then that the Holy Spirit is unable to give us that constant discernment. And yet loved ones, it’s vital to have that if we are to be protected.

Now, you see that also, you remember, in the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. It is one of the gifts that Paul mentions and it’s 1 Corinthians 12:10. “To another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits.” And that is one of the gifts that the Holy Spirit ministers through your intuition.

Now, many of us do not lean on the Holy Spirit in our day-to-day life. And, many of us think, “No, no that’s what our mind is for. Our mind is given to us to discern truth from error.” Now, the fact is loved ones, your mind is given to read and study God’s word and to understand his word. Your mind itself is actually neutral and it’s just vital that you realize that. You know that you have as enthusiastically defended a certain point of view months ago that you now just as enthusiastically oppose. And you know that brilliant little mind of yours can gather up as many arguments against it now as it gathered up formerly for it.

The mind can defend whatever the will gives itself to and so the mind is not a final arbiter in what is true and untrue. And what happens with those of us that depend on the mind to keep us free from false teaching, is that we get involved in false teaching. That’s why so many highly intelligent clever people get off into the sects, into Mormonism, and into Jehovah’s Witnesses, and into Christian Science. They have good minds but it is not a matter of the mind. The mind defends whatever the will, which depends on the spirit, chooses.

And the only way really to be safe from false spirits in these last days is by the Holy Spirit himself and by an absolute obedience to him. And oh, many of us here have been just burned really because there are many loved ones who look very like Jesus. There are. And I would encourage you to see that. Would you stop this silly idea of thinking that every spirit of antichrist will have horns, and a big tail, and a big fork in his hands. He won’t. The very spirit of antichrist, the very name antichrist means yes that he’s against Christ but that he’s against Christ in very Christ-like ways and that he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. And the Bible always describes false

prophets and spirits of antichrist as being in sheep's clothing, as being angels of light, people that will look like Jesus.

So I know a group that operate really all over the nation and perhaps still hold summer camps up in the north of Minnesota and their chief doctrine is that there is a hell but it will come to an end. And they ignore the verses like "you are cast into the fire whose worm dieth not and whose fire is not quenched." They ignore those verses and they say, "No, no, no. Hell will be "aion-aionios" -- which is "the ages of the ages" which is an idiomatic Greek phrase for "forever". Every Greek scholar knows it means forever.

"Unto the ages of the ages" is just an idiomatic phrase -- but these loved ones aren't deep Greek scholars and they say, "Oh no, it's to the ages of the ages and eventually the ages will end and the fire of hell will be put out and we'll all end up back in the Father's heart." And that's their doctrine. It's not scriptural, it doesn't follow what Jesus has taught. He describes everywhere that the fire is eternal and that we'll burn forever in our own selfishness. But these loved ones have an incredible appearance of love in their community, really. And I had a dear friend, she was a doctor in the university and she got drawn into this thing. Why? Because she said, "You should see how loving they are. They really love. There's really a spirit of Jesus' love about them."

Now loved ones, I would encourage you to see that when you come up against heresy or the spirit of antichrist, it will not be something that you can discern by analyzing it with your mind. Normally, it will be something that your mind will not discern and it will only be something that your spirit will discern. That's because the Holy Spirit is a person. He knows what Jesus is like, he's out to glorify Jesus and he can spot a person who glorifies himself in a moment and he can transmit that knowledge to you. But only if you lean on him. Really, you do have to come to the place that Jacob came to in Peniel - you remember up in Peniel where he eventually had his hip put out of joint and he limped for the rest of his life and had to hold on to the spirit of God. (Genesis 32:24-32)

Now, only when you walk like that will you be saved, truly. If you're uppity, and you're proud, and you think, "Sure I know it all and I don't need the Spirit to keep me safe, I can use my mind" -- loved ones, you'll never keep free from heresy by using your mind. Your mind is finally a neutral instrument that is used by God's Spirit. It's only the intuition of the Holy Spirit that will keep you clear. And it's the same with all those sects.

You know the one, "You'll be baptized in Jesus' name." Well loved ones, unless you really know scripture, and you understand the whole teaching of the trinity in Matthew 28:18, "Go and preach the gospel to all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." When these loved ones get a hold of you and they point to other verses that are summaries and say they baptized them in the name of Jesus and then they start saying, "See, you ought to be baptized just in the name of Jesus. That's the way you'll get into heaven."

You won't realize that you're dealing with that old corner-on-truth heresy and that's what most heresies are built on, do you understand that? Most heresies take the approach of the old agnostics in the first century. They say, "Oh yeah, Jesus; well that's good, it's good to have Jesus but you'll be really sure if you have this particular understanding that God has given us." So it's always Jesus plus our particular little bit of knowledge. And yet loved ones, you'll be drawn into that unless you walk humbly with the Holy Spirit. And he is the one who will show these loved ones, certainly they do seem to love Jesus but they love their extra little special mark more even than they love their Lord. And only the Holy Spirit can show you those things.

And it's the same with people you know, reading people. You know the way children are great, and dogs are excellent you know, oh because they're so uncomplicated and they still in a sense go with the gift that God gave them at the very beginning and children know immediately, don't they? They know whether a person can be trusted or not and we did as children, didn't we? We just had a sense, "Yeah, I like that guy," or, "I like that woman," or, "I know he loves me," or, "I know she loves me." And children are like that and little dogs are like that, they can spot you a mile away and that's the inner gift of intuition that the Holy Spirit anoints of course, and changes, and renews, and brings alongside Jesus himself and enables you to sense where people are.

Now, the reason for that is so that you don't judge people. If you don't trust the Holy Spirit and lean heavily upon him in your relationships with people you end up judging people. That's right. Because you say to yourself, "Unless I know where this person is I can't minister to him." And it always sounds so good, you know, "Unless I know just whether they're born of the spirit, or filled with the spirit, or walking with the spirit, unless I know exactly what they believe about this, exactly what they believe about that, I can't minister to them." So you end up judging people.

You end up deciding what a person's destiny will be and of course, that's not your responsibility at all and indeed by doing that, you usurp and grieve the Holy Spirit because he is the one who judges. When the Holy Spirit comes he will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. (John 16:8-11) In fact, he's the one who points out sin. He doesn't even judge, he just points out sin. It's Jesus who in the last day will judge us and so what you do is you usurp the place of the Holy Spirit in conviction of sin and you usurp the place of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, in judging a person.

And of course, if you've ever done that you know what it results in. It results in negativism in your life, a critical spirit towards people, a superior attitude towards them, and pride -- pride that swells and swells and makes you feel, "Well, they're alright but I have this x-ray insight into them." And it means that you can't love them truly. And of course it's a dreadful burden, it means you can't be free with people. It means if you do happen to be a little further spiritually than they are you're feeling that. You can't enjoy yourself with them, you're thinking, "Oh, what must I give to these poor souls?"

And of course the beauty of the discernment of the Holy Spirit in people is you just trust the Holy Spirit to show you what this person next needs; really. And so you're like a doctor or a surgeon is a specialist in a certain part of the body and he sees that part of the body and he sees, "Ah, I can do something to fix that part of the body." And he gets to work on it and he works on that particular part about which he's a specialist. He doesn't judge the whole body, he doesn't say, "Ah, that body is not worth saving at all; it's dying on its feet." No, he just does his best with the part of the body he's dealing with. And it's beautiful, he doesn't have to decide whether the person's dying, dead, or alive -- he just deals with the part of the body about which he's a specialist.

Now, that's what happens when you work as a servant of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit discerns in a person something that you can do or give them, some spiritual gift that you can share with them, some light that you can share and then you just share that and you go on your merry way. And it is beautiful, it's beautiful. It frees you from any need to judge people, from any need to take them under your control because you cannot. It frees you from any need to be God over them, from any need to be their judge on the last day, and you just can be their friend and you walk with a light heart

down life's way like that. And it is, it's a beautiful way to be and a beautiful way to go. And it enables them to receive something from you without coming under enslavement to you.

Now loved ones, only the gift of discernment will enable you to be that with people. Otherwise, really you know how it goes, you'll be involved all the time in judging your brothers and your sisters and I don't think you have any right to do that. So a brother came to me at the end of the service this morning and we were talking for some time and he was talking a little about the intellectual view points of C. S. Lewis and so forth. And then he said, "Oh well, I suppose you've sized up where I am already?" And I said, "No, no I haven't. No I haven't." I used to do that. I used to love to think, I can just nail them right there, and that's him -- and the Holy Spirit taught me that that is nothing but death.

And no, it's great because you can enjoy your friends, and you can enjoy your brothers and sisters, and you can have a good time even with loved ones who maybe aren't in the perfect place spiritually but you can enjoy yourself with them knowing that the blessed Holy Spirit will give you discernment as to what you should share with them. You share that and you go. It takes away from you of course the big burden of having to convert people. That's the biggest burden, you know.

We go to witnessing and we think, "We have to convert them, we have to bring them right through." And we go to everyone and we spoil lots of beautiful situations at work because we feel we have to convert them, bring them the whole way through. Argue them into believing there's a God, argue them into believing that the Bible is true, that Jesus is divine, that he died for them, get them to deal with their sins, confess and repent, get them to give their life to God and then arrange which missionary society they should go out under. And it's really a burden that is unbearable. None of us can bear it and that's why so many of us back off from witnessing because we think that witnessing is converting people, it isn't. Witnessing is being what the Holy Spirit wants us to be to them at the time that we meet them at that point in their life. And it's a free experience and a freeing experience.

Now, that's what the Holy Spirit does through the intuition of the spirit. Now loved ones, I'd just like to share with you just briefly on guidance and then maybe we could close. Some of us think that getting guidance from God is obtained the same way as we got guidance before we met God. The way we received guidance before we met God was we fed in this way of course, we fed in from outside. We did the SAT test and any other test that we could find and we concluded that undoubtedly we were mechanically inclined, or undoubtedly we were fitted to be another Milton, or another Shakespeare.

And then we decided, yes that's the way we should go and then we talked to other people who were experts in that subject and we discussed with them how we should set about getting training for ourselves. And then we put ourselves under the training of some professor, or some school and we did three or four years training in that. And then when we came out we looked up the newspapers and the lists of jobs and we went to see whether this one paid this amount, or if we weren't concerned about money we found out, did we like the campus that we would have to work on, or did we like the job environment in which we were going to operate? Did we like the people that they had there? And were there prospects?

And all of it was based on the whole world principle that your job is to fulfill yourself, to make yourself bigger, and bigger, and more satisfied. And that's the way we operated in guidance. And so every time we would ask about things with our mind, and with our tongue we would be inquiring, "How can we get ourselves into a better, more comfortable, more influential, more prosperous

position?” And that’s the way I think we operated.

Now loved ones, that’s not the method of guidance that God wants us to follow. God says, “I will guide you with my eye. I will guide you with my eye.” This afternoon I looked up and there’s this miserable little creature that I own, this little Yorkshire terrier. And he’s looking at me like that because he wants to go out and he has his eyes set upon me. And I look at him again and he’s glaring and so I look back to the sermon and started to read it and I felt his eyes on me and I look and he’s looking. And then I just look towards the door and he’s through the door in a moment and that’s what God means, “I will guide you with my eye. But that means that your eyes have to be on mine every moment.”

And so those silly little dogs, you know, are just a great example of how God guides through the intuition of the spirit. He guides you with his eye. Loved ones, you may hope that he will have a big hammer like that, clunk you over the head, throw some chains around you and pull you in. He won’t, he will not. And some of us really hope that he will keep slamming doors. You know, that’s the way we talk about, “Slam the door. Oh well, I keep going through this door until it closes.” And really, with some of us, we keep going whether it closes or not, we just go.

Loved ones, God guides you with his eye. He guides you when you’re looking at him and when you want desperately to know what he wants for your life. You have to want to know what he wants for your life and you have to walk day-by-day in obedience to him. Some of us think that God will guide us whether we obey him day-by-day or not and we hope, you know, that we can side step obedience in all kinds of little ways during the days and when it comes to the big moment of guidance somehow we’ll be able to follow God. It’s illogical.

We hope that we’ll be able to disobey him just at our own discretion and convenience day-after-day and then suddenly for some unknown reason he’ll make us obey him at the critical time of guidance. He doesn’t work that way. God requires us to have our eyes upon him and to be anxious to please him in every little instance as we go through life and then when it comes to guidance we’ll be so used to having our eyes upon his, and we’ll be so used to submitting our wills to his, and we’ll be so used to submitting our spirits to his Spirit that we’ll just walk on gently into his way.

Now, that’s his will. And loved ones, if you say, “Well, brother doesn’t God at times use closed doors?” Yes, but honestly it’s what he uses with those of us who have not yet depended upon him, really. And it’s often a very unsatisfactory method because depending on the stubbornness or the independence of your own spirit you will at times think a door is open when it is actually closed. And so God at times has great trouble getting through to us which door is closed and which is open.

Normally, God’s way is a way of guiding you with his eye. You’re so intent to do his will, you’re so intent to love him and to delight in him that he gives you the desires of your heart because, the desires of your heart are his will. And really in a way, that’s the only way to seek guidance. It’s just a natural guidance that is unsought that just comes from your normal relationship with the Father and that’s the way he wants you to go. He doesn’t want you to go taking polls of all your friends, he doesn’t want you to go to all kinds of advisors – I should say for the benefit of the counselors here that counselors are good to confirm God’s guidance but it’s not God’s plan that we should get our initial guidance from counselors.

Our initial guidance should come from him and then we should go to loved ones that we trust, either

older brothers and sisters in Jesus who are spiritually mature, or people who understand the way God deals with us, or we should go to our elders, or our pastors and we should say, "Well, brother or sister I feel that God is guiding me this way. Now, would you pray about this and would you let me know what you think?" And that's what is called the confirmation of the brethren and that's the place of true counselors in the guidance of a Christian.

The child of God should get it first from the Father and then should go to someone older in the faith. And what is the point of that? To make sure that they're not listening to some erroneous spirit. If you say to me, "Oh, now an erroneous spirit wouldn't give you guidance certainly." Certainly he would, sure. And if you say to me, "Oh, well an erroneous spirit wouldn't prompt me to say, 'I think the Lord wants me to do that.'" Of course he would, yes; because all of us -- we're no fools -- we know the way to get agreement from any of us, don't we? I just come to you and say, "I believe the Lord wants me to do this." "Okay."

Really, if you want the confirmation of other people you just say, "I believe the Lord wants me to do that." Loved ones, we're little children, we all know that trick but what we need is older brothers and sisters who love us and who will honestly seek Jesus for us and will either confirm the guidance or deny it. Now, if you don't do that you are open to all kinds of erroneous spirits that can make you sense all kinds of things are coming from God. And you'll use the Lord's name in connection with them. You'll say, "I believe the Lord wants me to do this."

Now loved ones, I'll tell you a sure way of telling whether you're guided by God's Spirit or not. Those who are guided by God's Spirit move with a gentle spirit. That's a fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness. A gentle spirit is one that is easily turned in God's hands. Do you remember the pieces of scripture that say, "Don't be like a mule or an ox that cannot be turned but be a person with a gentle spirit that is easily turned in God's hand." And that's the mark of a person who is receiving guidance from God's Spirit.

They'll come to an elder, or a pastor, or an older brother or sister in Christ and they'll say, "Brother, I think God is guiding me this way. Will you pray about it and will you let me know what you think?" And up to that moment they don't commit themselves in any way. They don't move out in unscriptural guidance by settling the job, or by arranging their future, they keep their hearts open. And then when the other person comes back and says, "Sure, I think that's great if you just go. I believe that's the right step for you." Then they go forward. But, if the other person says, "God's Spirit seems to be checking me. I don't think you should move. I think you should stay just as you are." Then there's nothing built up in that person's spirit. Their spirit is gentle, it just sinks gently under God's hand and says, "Thank you, brother. Thank you for freeing me from some mistake that I would have made." And they just stay where they are and they move the way they're moving.

Now loved ones, that's a help, I think, to some of you who have had problems with this and wonder, "Is the Lord telling me to do this or telling me to do that?" Loved ones, go to someone whom you can trust and let them pray about it and then if you refuse to go by their confirmation, loved ones there is no hope of moving with God. I mean, you will move into all kinds of wilderness paths if you move without scriptural guidance. So that's God's plan for us.

Now, that's the normal way of guidance. At times there has to be sought guidance, guidance that is sought. In other words, you suddenly come to certain forks in the road. You didn't realize, the company closes up, or you lose your job, or something happens that moves you into a place where you

have to make a decision and you haven't naturally walked one way or the other and you come to a place where you have to seek definite guidance from God.

Loved ones, the most difficult thing to do and the most essential thing to do is to commit your present situation into God's hands and to stop being preoccupied with the issue. Really, that's the most difficult thing to do. And yet, if you don't do that, your mind will twist and turn -- should I go this way or should I go that way? Should I go this way or should I go that way? The advantage of this way is this; the advantage of that way is that. And you'll go back and forward on the thing until your head is spinning.

The most vital thing to do when you're seeking definite guidance from God is to forget the thing completely. To commit it to God and delight yourself in God; really. And in every situation where guidance is needed the most difficult thing to do is to die to the problem or the issue that you're facing and yet it's vital to do that. If you don't do that your mind will churn around and will overcome and compress your spirit completely and you'll get nothing from God.

The first thing is to be preoccupied with God. I'd just point out that famous verse again, if you would just keep it in mind in connection with everything regarding the intuition of the Spirit but especially this one of guidance. It's Acts 13:12. It concerns the big important moves that had to be made in evangelism you remember, in the early church, "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" And that was of course God's confirmation to Barnabas and Saul that came through the prophets and teachers that are mentioned in the previous verse. But when did they come? Verse 2, "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting."

That's the most vital thing to do in seeking guidance. Worship God, love him, praise him, pray to him and then do what comes naturally. Do what comes naturally. Don't wait for visions, don't wait for subtle messages from other people, don't wait all the time for outside circumstances to change. Come into a place where the Spirit witnesses that you're really at peace. Now, that's important. It's not just pray a little prayer and then you say, "Okay, I've worshiped the Lord. Fast? Okay, I won't have lunch. I fasted. Now, I'll just do what comes naturally." No, it's really seeking God.

It's seeking God and delighting yourself in him and coming to that place where the Holy Spirit witnesses with you, "You are at peace. You're settled and quiet before God." And it's out of that peace and quiet that will come God's natural guidance and then just go the way that is natural, go gently. That is what I have done. Go gently, don't go like a bull right down that way because you're sure that's the way to go. Go gently down, watching for God confirming with a little step, or confirming with a little circumstance.

So go gently forward, don't go down that path as if, "Yes, I can't be wrong, I can't be wrong." What I've shared often with you is that one of the things that I've found, as I've tried to walk on with Jesus, is that now I'm surer than ever what God wants us to do. Surer than ever but, I'm more ready than ever before to say I was wrong. And it's interesting that it's a paradox; the more you walk with Jesus the surer you get of what he wants you to do, the less problems you have with guidance, and yet the more ready you are to say, "Lord I was wrong."

And that's the way to go. Go gently forward, watching for confirming circumstances or confirming comments and trust the Holy Spirit to enable you to discern those circumstances and those comments.

You see, don't try then to judge those comments or those circumstances by your mind, no say, "Holy Spirit will you show me?" Because often God allows obstacles to come into your path to see whether you're determined to go his way or not. And at other times, he allows obstacles to come into your path to show you, "This is not the way at all. There's no flow of my Spirit in this direction."

And normally of course, if you find God's way for your life there'll be a generally right flow. There'll be some difficulties to strengthen you and give you spiritual muscles, but there will be a gentle flow about the guidance. I'm going to stop there on purpose. Any questions loved ones so that you are real about it? Does he want you to go at times in faith? Certainly, certainly, often to go in faith -- not quite sure, but believing that this is the way to go.

Question from Audience:

Haven't you to be careful about the authorities that you trust for confirmation to you?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

And I don't know Mike what you're putting your finger on but I certainly have been repelled by some of the spirit filled bodies as they call themselves who have a very strong authoritarian eldership whereby you almost have to be told by your elder if you're to go downtown or not to go downtown. Now, it seems to me that has nothing in common with the kind of operation of the body of Jesus in the New Testament.

And I agree with you fully that it seems to me in certain so-called spiritual circles, though I can't see how they're the Spirit of Jesus circles, but there are certain groups that emphasize the authority of the eldership in an unscriptural way. And Mike, the way I would determine it would be that they tend to say, "Every initiative of everybody in the body should come from the eldership and from the pastor." In other words, the first guidance should come from the authority that God has placed over you.

I would say that if the teaching of scripture is that the first guidance should come from God's Spirit within you and then you should go to the spiritual authority over you, or your parents if they are your spiritual authority, or your husband, or your wife, or your mother, and you should ask them, or the elders, or the pastor. But it seems to me Mike, you should be in a position where you have submitted yourself to the pastors, the elders of a certain body because the Spirit of God has already witnessed that they are trustworthy.

And I think you're mad to submit yourself to anybody whom you don't trust. But I do think that many of us come into real problems because we don't belong to any body and we don't trust anyone particularly, and we aren't obedient to anyone, and we're just freelancers who really do what we want to do and we just move where we want to move, and we move away from where we want to move just as we please. And it seems that we're not under God's guidance at all. So that's what I would say would be the difference.

Question from Audience:

Isn't it true that perhaps God does witness gently and with a gentle spirit, but isn't it true that at times the apostles went out with boldness and they preached in very hostile environments and received all kinds of opposition?

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

Yes, I am with you completely, Clyde. I do believe as God's Spirit gets hold of us we are more and more fitted to say the right thing even though it will bring back opposition and rejection. The important thing is that we would be mature enough to have only the offense of the cross in our lives. And it seems to me that many of us who are just new Christians have a rawness about us that has an offense besides that of the cross and we have an offensiveness in the way we approach people, and button hole them, and it really is not the beauty of Jesus that people see but they rather see an ideologist that is trying to persuade them of their point of view.

And it seems that that rawness and that offensiveness is not the boldness of Peter and Paul in their mature spiritual life. So that would be my approach, that in the early days it's just very important to be sure that you're saying what the Spirit of Jesus is guiding you to say and not what often our own self justifying will is trying to do. Because often we're preoccupied with trying to convert people almost to prove to ourselves that we're Christians.

Question from Audience:

They were evangelists and came against a hostile world.

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

And yet brother so are we in a sense you know, but I do agree with you that there were special conditions in those days. But so there will be for us and that's why we have to mature in God and mature in the Spirit so that we can come with that boldness -- because loved ones we are going to face it. If you and I will go out into the world to preach the gospel to all nations then we are going to find ourselves in streets in Calcutta, streets in Sydney, Australia where there will be no children of God at all and where nobody will understand what we're sharing and there will be then often rebuke and often rebuff and we do need to be sure and confident enough to bear it.

Question from Audience (inaudible)

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

It is true what Jim is saying, that there is a difference in a sense, even in this situation here, because you loved ones aren't corralled into here. And loved ones that come on Sunday morning, they aren't forced into here. They come because they want to hear and so there is, in a sense, a power and an opportunity for a preacher that is very different from the opportunity that I have when I deal with business men through the week, or that you have when you deal with your colleagues through the week.

In a sense our work colleagues are a captive audience because we work with them. Here at church, in a sense, no they've come in and they've said, "We want to hear truth as you want to share it." So there is a difference, yes.

Well, shall we pray loved ones?

Dear Father, we thank you that there is a sure way to travel especially in regard to guidance. And we thank you that you have taught it plainly in scripture that first we are to have our eyes upon you, our Father, because you are going to guide us with your eye and we need to be continually

preoccupied with you and with what pleases you. And then through the intuition of our spirit you will give us an impression as to which way we should go and then it is our responsibility to go to some other person, older than ourselves, some authority in God, and receive confirmation or denial from them.

Lord, thank you for such a plain way. Thank you Lord that it is a plain and a holy way where the wayfaring man will not lose his way and thank you Lord, that each one of us can have that. And I pray especially Lord Jesus, for loved ones even here tonight who may be seeking guidance. I pray Lord that you take from them all that is sheer restlessness or their own discontentment and that you'd make them first of all content with you, and with where they are at present.

Lord, thank you for showing us that there'll be no guidance unless we have learned in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content. And so Lord, I would pray for everyone here that we be first of all in that position where the voice of the Holy Spirit could come to us, a place of peace where we are content to be here or be wherever we are for the rest of our lives if that's your will. And then Lord, into that quiet contented spirit you can place your own voice and then when we hear that voice Lord, we'll go to someone else for checking and confirming.

Thank you, Lord. I pray that you'll use each one of us in the place that you have appointed for us for your glory and that you'll use us this week to bring the same confidence and certainty to our friends and to our colleagues. Now, the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and throughout this coming week. Amen.