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Following the Spirit

By A K Whitehead

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Frank Sinatra made famous the song "I Did It My Way". It has become so famous that sometimes one even hears it played at funerals – even Christian funerals. It is as though people are so loose in their knowledge about what God wants of us that they see having "done it" their own way as a real testament to the quality of their lives.

But the principle on which this song is founded is anathema to the Christian trying to follow Christ. It is the last thing we should want as a summary of our lives – that we did everything in our own way!

We are called to live as Jesus lived. One crucial aspect of his life was that it was led by the Holy Spirit. This was at least from the start of his public ministry when, after his baptism in the Jordan, Luke 4. 1 tells us that he was driven into the desert by the Spirit.

There are other scriptures which one could quote also if space allowed. But the lesson is that, to live as Jesus lived, we also need to be led by the Spirit. Easy to say. But how do we do it?

First Essential

The first essential is to know that this is really what God requires of us. We all "know" it in an academic way. We know it as a principle. But what we also need to have is the conviction of it!

If we do not have that already, there is only one way to get it: by prayer. Preferably by prayer based on the scriptures.

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meditate on selected, relevant passages, especially from the New Testament, and preferably from the gospels. (This is discussed in detail by a book on our site: "The keys to Christian Meditation"). For example, read the gospels carefully explicitly looking for passages which have especial reference to Jesus being led by the Spirit. **You** need to find them. They are not always overt, so look with care and take your time.

Meditate on these passages allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you. Search for the realisation that we are to imitate the example set for us by Jesus.

The conviction may come in various ways: all at once, or as a gradual

process of a growing conviction which no one can give you the details for in advance.

Second Essential;

Once we really know that this is really what God wants of us, the second essential is to integrate it into our lives. Easy to say. But how do we start?

We start with the determination not to take decisions "off our own bat", not to live as we want but as God wants. We want to end up saying "I did it his way", not "I did it my way".

You can begin in either of two ways. Start with the really important decisions and work down to the daily ones; or start with the small ones and work up to the big ones. This is a matter of personal choice – but also of opportunity

What the big ones? Changing job, changing house, changing church and so forth. Maybe we are not facing major decisions like this. So we then have no alternative but to start with less important ones: joining a new club, where to go on holiday, take up some new pastime.

In all these matters it is not what we want but what he wants. And any apparently small matter could turn out to be extremely important because we never know where a decision will lead. Still less where it will lead when God makes it for us! That is one of the things that makes being a (Spirit led) Christian really exciting.

So pray and ask for direction in all these things. The Holy Spirit lives within **every** Christian. If we have the conviction of this, then we ought to have little difficulty in turning to ask the Spirit's direction. But...

Third Essential

The greatest problem we have in seeking God's will is our own will. It repeatedly gets in the way. It is like trying to push a ball down under the water. Every time we relax the pressure it shoots back to the surface. So the third essential is that we **must be sure** we are following God's will and not our own. We do not want to be looking for confirmations which merely confirm our own preferences.

One excellent method is given by Ignatius of Loyola. He recommends that, whatever our own preference is in a given decision, we should pray for the grace to want the opposite. If you have a desire to move house, pray for the desire stay in your present house. As the grace comes from God over a period, we shall eventually arrive at a kind of equilibrium position where we are indifferent as to whether we stay or move. **The** we are in a position to hear God speaking to us.

Following Is Forsaking

Following God's will is forsaking our own. That is rarely easy, especially in the world we live in today. The media, not least TV, constantly tells us in all manner of ways that we need to fulfil all our own desires if we are to be happy. One current advert tells us that, whatever we want, "You are worth it".

But can you honestly say that, however much you have responded to such adverts, you have actually been truly happier as a result of buying the product? Most likely not, because happiness is God-shaped and only doing his will, in big and in small things, can really bring us happiness.

850 words

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What Do You Want This Year?

By Angie Dixon

Christmas is all around us, and many people are making up wish lists. Those who aren't doing that are busy setting down their New Year's Resolutions already. But this is a good time to sit down and do some serious introspection.

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What do you want from the holidays this year? Do you want to rush around, spend a lot of money you don't have, and yell at the kids for not playing with all twenty of the toys they asked for—at the same time? Is that really how you want to spend Christmas?

We talk about "Christmas spirit," and mostly we mean giving. Giving of ourselves, giving to people who need it. That's great, that's Christmas spirit.

But I think there's another aspect to "Christmas spirit." I think it's spiritual. And don't close your screen on me because I said spiritual. I didn't say religious, because it's not. I think it comes from our souls.

I think deep down, each of us has a spirit that wants to be expressed. And I think at Christmas, when we're naturally thinking of others, that spirit is more easily expressed. I think if you want to, you can have a spiritual Christmas. You can feel loving, caring, generous. You can feel like a kid at Christmas, just by opening up to your spirit.

So what do you want this year?

Angie Dixon helps small business owners get their acts together. She is a personal development coach specializing in helping people integrate their home and work lives so they feel less stretched and more balanced. Get her FREE EBOOK on balance at

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to discover how coaching can change your life, contact Angie at

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