

“Follow your heart” is the unspoken motto today, even in some popular religious circles. Rob Bell says, “Your job is the relentless pursuit of who God made you to be” (114). Bell makes it sound that self-realization is all God primarily cares about, and that somehow God will somehow mysteriously lead you to happiness by following your heart.

We would do well to listen to an important warning in Ezekiel that is just as important for God’s people today as it was for God’s people 26 centuries ago:

*<sup>1</sup> The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those **who prophesy from their own hearts:** ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’ <sup>3</sup> Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets **who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!** (Eze. 13:1-3, ESV)*

Note two of the things God hated about false prophets. They (1) “prophesy from their own hearts,” and (2) “follow their own spirit.”

## Following Your Heart & Following God: Not The Same Thing

Have you ever felt strongly about a religious idea – one that seemed so true, so clear, and so logical? Maybe statements like, “Surely God would like this,” and “Surely God wouldn’t do that” resonate with you at times. Perhaps your spiritual zeal is so strong that you confidently feel, “This must be what God wants me to do.”

The question is: **How do you know God wants you to follow what you feel in your heart to be right?**

How can you know anything about God?

Of course, we can know *about* God by observing nature. “The heavens declare His glory” (Psa. 19:1). “His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived [...] in the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:12). The physical world itself testifies to the existence of God.

But how can you know His thoughts? 1 Corinthians 2:11 tell us,

*For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

## How Do We Follow The Spirit of God?

**How then do we know the Spirit of God?** The answer lies in two frequently misunderstood passages. In the first one, Jesus is telling His apostles that the Spirit would “teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). In the second one, we find Jesus promising His apostles,

*[The Spirit] will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever he hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:13)*

In these two passages, Jesus was speaking specifically to the men who would be His apostles, only promising the Spirit to them personally. People often mistakenly try to make these promises to all believers today. Yet if Jesus promised His Spirit to all believers today, then every true believer must at all times know “all the truth” and “all that Jesus said.” Who today can claim that (who isn’t a complete wacko)?

So how can we follow the Spirit today if the Spirit was only directly promised to the apostles? Two passages give us the answer. In [1 Peter 1:20-21](#), the apostle writes,

*...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.<sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

In the next passage, [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), Paul writes,

*<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Scripture is the product of the Spirit, and Scripture is all we need to be “righteous” before God. In the 27 books of the New Testament, we find the words of the apostles who were directly instructed by the Holy Spirit.

## “Proof-Texting:” Not Always A Bad Thing

Looking again at [Ezekiel 13:1-3](#), we are reminded that it is easy for man to be convinced he’s “gotten religion right,” regardless of whether or not he is led by Spirit-inspired scripture. Jesus warned that the some of very people who would kill His disciples would think in doing so they were “offering service to God” ([John 16:2](#)).

**How do we avoid false religion? How to we avoid a spirituality that is not pleasing to God? By making sure our views are based entirely upon the Bible – book, chapter, verse.** To speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where the Bible is silent, is how we preserve our fidelity to God’s Will. This deep respect for Scripture is the only thing that can guard us against the infinite number of apostasies that can result from following “our own spirit” and “our own heart.”

Making sure our beliefs are completely founded on Scripture is commonly mocked today, often disparagingly referred to as “proof-texting” or “legalistic.” But when we respect the context and meaning of each passage, proof-texting is a good thing! Indeed, we must have Spirit-inspired “proof” behind our

views. **If you can't back it up with Scripture, you shouldn't be doing it.** And it isn't "legalistic" to be concerned about following God's Will to the best of your ability.

## Conclusion

We must remember that the only way we can know anything about God's Will for our lives is through what He has said. Living by the words of the Bible does not deny the power of the Spirit but esteems it. Isaiah said,

*But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My word. (Isa. 66:2, ESV)*

**You cannot know God's Will by following your heart. Your heart must be led by His Word.**