

BULLETIN

SEMINARY EXTENSION

DEPARTMENT

LEE GALLMAN, DIRECTOR

P. O. BOX 530

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THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The attempt made here will not be to investigate this subject thoroughly, but to ask certain questions relative to it. Perhaps even there we will only raise these questions. One hears this expression so often in Baptist life that one gets the impression that it is the easy answer to all things. Should a pastor move to another field he need only to ask the Spirit. The Spirit will answer in no uncertain terms. Should a church want to build or repair, just as you would pick up the telephone to ask for information, it appears that the answer is immediately accessible.

While I definitely believe in the work of the Spirit of God and particularly as it relates to the life of individual Christians, I am also conscious in my own experience that the answer has not always been an easy one. I can look back and see where through certain circumstances I was led to make this decision or that decision and at the time I was not aware that such a decision had the implications that it contained. I can look back to moments when I prayed earnestly for an answer and came up with a mistake. I was just as conscientious in making the mistakes as I was in doing the thing right. I can see now that I was guided in making certain decisions by some self-centered influence or some self-centered motive that may have been more deeply hidden than I realized. Sometimes we find the answer in a choice of several possible answers. Sometimes we fail to find the answer in such considerations. Sometimes the answer comes as a result of prayer and impressions. Sometimes the answers

are not dependable. This is not to say that the work of the Spirit is not dependable, but it is to say that the human instrument which interprets the work of the Spirit is not an infallible one. Not too long ago I listened to three different sides of a question, all of which was supposed to have been the result of the Spirit's leadership. The individuals involved, I believe, were conscientious. Each said that they had prayed earnestly in the matter, but the Spirit of God does not have such a divisive nature.

Some of my friends were a little disturbed when I made a decision to enter the Seminary Extension Department. We all knew how much I loved to preach and that I loved people. They all warned me that I would miss the pastorate and I could assure them now after these nearly four years that I miss it now more than ever. At the moment I made this decision friends held me by the hand and said, "Be sure that you are doing what God wants you to do." I accepted the work with convictions and with the promise to offer to the Lord all that I had to offer, but there certainly was no sure feeling that this is the one and only thing God would let me do.

When I was in the seminary, I used to meet with young people who had specific calls to mission fields. One in particular do I remember who said that God had given her a definite call to Morocco. She is further from Morocco now than she was then, for she married a Baptist preacher who had no intention of going to Morocco, and I believe now that she is doing the will of God.

Others stated that they were supposed to go to some particular spot on the globe. "God told me so," they said. Some did go and some didn't. Perhaps some disobeyed him in not going. Perhaps still others answered the call of God to give complete dedication, thinking that it meant to go to the mission fields only to find later that it was a mistake.

This preacher could not answer in a paragraph nor in a book the question that asks, how do you find the will of God? For each individual must find it for himself. Through his own method he must come up with an answer that is so satisfactory to his own heart that he can give himself completely to it. The call of God is a prominent one. It is one of dedication. This never changes, but in the dedication one may be called to be a missionary over a number of years only to return to this land to take up another task. It may be to spend a time in the pastorate and go out and lead in some other area or vice versa. In making changes, of course, we should be very careful lest we follow the bent of our self-centered natures. We must also be careful lest we confuse the Holy Spirit's leadership with some other motive, hidden or unhidden.

TAKE THE SHORT CUT

Some time ago I wrote an article captioned "Don't Take the Short Cut." In its context this article stated what I intended to state, but in another context I want to write just the opposite - "Take the Short Cut." In these days of road planning many a traveler has learned that the well-chartered course is the shortest way in the long run. The so-called short cuts are not really short cuts. The so-called cut-off roads lead to slow progress, delays, and dead ends. This was made evident to me in a recent trip. According to the map I could take a few back roads and save some miles of travel, but the map did not show bridges washed out or paving deteriorated or long detours. In the long run we traveled more than twenty miles out of the way taking what seemed to be the short cut. So it is with those who plan to take a short cut in education. It isn't a short cut. My advice is to take the real short cut.

The real short cut consist of full, well grounded education that follows recognized standards. In my own experience I wasted six years playing around with the short cuts. A young man came to our booth in Miami and stated that after a number of years in a pseudo-education program he was discovering that he was still inadequately trained and incompetent as a leader. Did you ever try to put some new mechanism together without reading the directions? You hurry right down to the main project only to discover that you have to go back and straighten out some little detail that you missed. If you had read the directions you would have saved time. The shortest route to proficiency is through standard education. I wouldn't take the time to go to anybody's Bible school if I could attend a Junior college or a recognized academy. I wouldn't take the time to attend anyone's business college (they ought to be sued for calling it a college) when I could go to college to get a sound commercial course. There are no short cuts to proficiency that is superior to sound academic training. A man said to me, "Why I'm thirty years of age and I lack two years finishing college. I could take a two years course in X Y Z Bible School and be prepared to preach," but he is mistaken. He could take five years and be prepared to preach by completing his college and seminary education. At the same time perhaps he could be the pastor of churches that would be as important as any he would lead in his life time without the college and seminary education. So after further investigation, after listening to the heart-breaking experiences of pastors who wasted their time with some fly-by-night school, I should like to encourage the young preacher or young Christian to stand by what is known to be standard in education. That is the short cut--the only real short cut you need to consider.

Statistical Report: Correspondence students 1433; extension center students 2020.

The Director will have conferences in Ohio, Mich., and Ill. in June for those interested in establishing seminary extension centers.