

HOLY SPIRIT pt II “How do we know it’s the Holy Spirit leading us?”

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-morgan young 3.29.09

First of all, did anyone get trampled last week? Mark said “RUN” don’t walk to the bookstore to get “Wild Goose Chase” by Mark Batterson and you did---we sold out the ENTIRE CASE!!!

If you weren’t here last week, Mark used the metaphor that following the Holy Spirit is like being on a “Wild Goose chase.” It’s hard to see where you’re going, it’s full of adventure, and it’s not easy.

Last week one of the big ideas Mark talked about was **INVERTED CHRISTIANITY**. Which means, “Instead of following the Spirit, we expect the Spirit to follow us.”

Let me show you what this looked like in my life:

(Stage left--illustration) At this point in my life, it’s just after high school. I am not a Christ follower but I’m living with some dear friends & devout Christians in Chula Vista, California. I finally get to the point, after years of questioning, where I believe Jesus is the sinless Son of God and He died on a cross to pay for my past and future sins. And I asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins and to lead my life.

And I had no doubt that experience was real and that God was in and adopted me as His son.

But right after that, I came back to Kokomo and in essence, kept going in the same direction as it ever had. Just now, I prayed more and read the Bible sometimes.

And not surprisingly, my life didn’t change a lot. It was still a struggle, primarily because I kept leading my life and being God.

It wasn’t til years later, after Sandra and I got together and started attending Oakbrook, that I slowly began to realize that I had to **reorient** my life. Christ was in me, but the direction and FOCUS of my life was off. I had been living inverted Christianity.

I don’t think any of us are honestly trying to live an **inverted Christianity** life. I think it’s fairly unintentional and in my case I didn’t understand the “repentance” piece of salvation.

Let me explain. Let’s look at these verses where Jesus is talking about salvation:

(MS1)

*From then on Jesus began to preach, “**Repent** of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”*

Matthew 4:17 nlt

*“The time promised by God has come at last!” he (Jesus) announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! **Repent** of your sins and believe the Good News!”*

Mark 1:15 nlt

*"I (Jesus) have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to **repent**."*

Luke 5:32 nlt

(And there's at least 6 other similar verses between Mark & Acts.)

(Illustrate—change of direction that I didn't do in CA)

The word "repent" in the original Greek text is "metanoi" which means:

(MS2)

Metanoia: **Profound change of mind** accompanied by **regret** and **change of direction**. (from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness)

Because no one wants to imagine an afterlife spent in hell---it's easy to focus on the GRACE side of salvation and accidentally marginalize the REPENTANCE part of salvation...

But biblically these two ideas: GRACE & **orienting our life under God's leadership**—go hand in hand.

In CA., I got grace, but when it came to orienting my life on God, you could say I was still "lost as a goose."

And I'm starting here with repentance, because this is where God starts with each of us. Salvation is the place that the Holy Spirit enters our life.

All of the new testament stories begin when Jesus or a disciple says, "Repent of your sins and turn to God." (Matt 4:17) Accept what's been done FOR you---and now YOU CHANGE—REORIENT your life.

God starts with us by saying, "**Follow me.**" (ACTION)
Not "**Think about Me.**" (passive)

So when God calls us to **repent**, He's saying that faith is not a "**state of mind**" it's an "**expression of our life!**"

(selah)

So the first step in knowing if you're really following the Holy Spirit is to see if your life is **oriented toward God.**

And don't say "yes" too fast...(we all want to say "yes"...))

To see if our life is focused on God---in a Colossians 3:17 way, we need to take an inventory & **examine** our **words**, our **actions**, our **finances**, our **time**, our **thoughts**, our **relationships**...

When we examine our lives, there is always one OF TWO common denominators: **Us or God.** We're driving it or God is. And the test isn't "state of mind" it's "expression of life."

Is God your **entrée**, or is God your **side dish**?

Is God your **everyday clothes** or is He your **Sunday best**?

Is God your **every breath** or a **Glade plugin**? →

Are you **playing in God's band** or is there just **Christian music in the background**?

And this is **tough**...the easiest thing for me to do is to **SAY what I believe**. The hardest thing--- is the daily choices to **live** what I believe...

(Dungy story about his son, Santana Moss & the Jets 41-0 first playoff defeat.)

This idea of orienting your life towards God is SO important in knowing if we're following the Holy Spirit----

because if your life is oriented around YOU----instead of being on a "Wild Goose Chase" you'll accidentally end up on a "**wild YOU chase**."

(MS3) Principle #1)

**It's hard to be on a "Wild Goose Chase"
if your life isn't already following the "Wild Goose."**

Have you only *accepted* what Christ has done for you?
Or are you also **reorienting** your life to reflect "The Wild Goose?"

(selah)

When I first started coming to Oakbrook (which was the first church I'd ever regularly attended in my life!) I just **jumped in**. Started playing with the band, started meeting with Mark.

And after a few months of actually serving and coming to church EVERY week, I **had a great job offer**.

The company I worked for really liked me and wanted me to move away, open up a store and after that, become a district manager, get a company car and make an even bigger salary.

Had this offer happened before we started coming to Oakbrook, this would have **never** been a discussion. I would have jumped at it and Sandra & I both would have been thrilled. We would have packed up "baby Meghan," all our things and moved out of Kokomo, the end.

But God was **changing us** as we were engaging in the life of the church...

We weren't just attending—we were really trying to orient our life around God—we'd listen to the messages, talk about them at lunch and figure out how to DO what we learned. We didn't know it in these terms, but we were **letting God lead our lives**.

And when you **let** God lead you—when you give Him **carte blanche** with your life—a strange thing will happen: He'll communicate with you in undeniable ways. (repeat)

If we **really** want the Holy Spirit to **speak to us**—we **really** have to be ready to hear what He'll say. Because His agenda is His Kingdom—not **our comfort**.

I should have been thrilled with the job offer (it's what I always wanted)...but God was telling us something else. I was conflicted.

And Sandra was a little bummed...because the company wanted us to go back to the city she'd just moved from...and she really wanted to go back to ;-)

And so Sandra and I were **praying a lot** about this. I was praying for God to be clear---I was praying that, ***"I'll do whatever you want, God, we'll go or we'll stay---YOU tell us."***

And Sandra was praying, ***"God, please help Morgan to come to his senses so we can go back to a really cool city!"*** ;-)

So we **prayed a lot**. And we **talked a lot** with our friends at Oakbrook—people who'd been **following God longer than we had**.

And we felt like God was saying something like, →
"My plans for you are HERE at this church. You might think they're out there—you had planned on moving...but My plans for you are here."

And God used this moment to show us that He'd been transforming us. He showed us that NOW, we really did long to be players in the Kingdom—more than we wanted to be successful business people.

This story goes on and it's long, but here's the digest version: Saying "no" to that job and telling God **"Yes" to whatever He wanted**, sent us on a Wild Goose Chase.

Eventually not only did I say no to the promotion, but we felt God leading me to step out of that career altogether—leaving my salaried position to make **\$200 a week** working at a local music store so we could be more family oriented and be more involved in ministry.

And it's **not** like we were sitting on **big cash reserves**. This was a Goose Chase! It wasn't logical by the World's standards. And we were praying. And we were **talking with mature believers** through it all.

Within a year or so, the music store closed. ***"Uh...God...thought this is where you wanted me?..."***

But this is what a Wild Goose Chase looks like---following the Spirit is **not a MapQuest**; it's not a **Garmin**---it looks like you're **lost** sometimes---it looks like you **took a wrong turn**.

And so I took another job, and this time God blessed us financially—(yea!) Sandra and I have often joked,
"Why does God always lead us to make LESS money?" ;-)

And then 2-3 years into this job, somewhat unexpectedly, I get asked to join the Oakbrook staff.

And isn't that how a Goose Chase ends...

God, WHAT are you doing?

God, WHERE are we going?

God, is THIS what I'm supposed to be doing?

God, WHEN are we going to get there?

And the answers to those questions come flying into your brain when you finally get there.

The first week I worked here (10 years ago now...) every day I'd get up and sit in the auditorium and pray---and weep...

Because once I was here...I could see the Wild Goose Chase clearly. Saying "no" to the job, making less money, staying in Kokomo----everything was to **build more into the Kingdom, to mature us**, and keep us here "for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14)

(selah)

There are a couple principles from my story—and from every Wild Goose Chase in the Bible actually.

(MS4) The 2nd principle is: **Pray (a lot!) and seek wise counsel.**

And I really want to emphasize the "wise counsel" part. If you're getting ready to step out in faith, it's really wise to pull **Christ followers into the process ---who are further along than you.** People who will tell you the truth...

Mature Christ followers will help you **discern the difference** between the **Holy Spirit** and **holy heartburn.**

Proverbs 12:15 says, "Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others."

(MS5)

Principle 3:

A Wild Goose Chase Will always be about God's Glory---not ours.

I **don't** believe that God led Sandra and I on a Wild Goose Chase because He wanted **me to be fulfilled in my vocation.**

I believe God wanted to advance His Kingdom in Kokomo IN, and He graciously wanted to use me in the process. I say that humbly....and I've questioned it...

He chose ME...this guy who didn't go to church the first half of his life?
This guy who didn't go to Bible college? This guy with a high school diploma? What is He doing?

And yes, there is an **energizing** part of my calling.

But there are lots of times when this is the **hardest**, most **challenging**, most **gut-wrenching** job I've ever had...

And those days I am reminded this is **not** about MY glory—it's about **His Story.**

The truth about God is that from the beginning of time, to the end of time, He is telling His Story that's all about His Glory...

and in the timeline of the world---for a **microsecond**---He **graciously** asks YOU...and me...

to **come into His Story** because He wants to use PEOPLE LIKE US to reveal himself to people who are lost and to help each other reach our maturity in Christ! (**selah**)

So anytime you think you're on a mission for God, but it looks like it's a **really great deal for YOU**—I respectfully ask you to re-evaluate if that's from God.

Biblically, Wild Goose chases initially look more like, "Ooo, sucks to be you!"

From the outset, they often look like a trade DOWN, rather than a trade UP. Which means this: they take FAITH. A Wild Goose chase will require **more faith than you have now**.

They require us to TRUST GOD, even though it looks dangerous or scary.

And again, biblically—they don't tend to look attractive on the outset:

e.g.

"Mary...yeah...I'd like you to do something for me...yeah, could you carry this baby for Me?...I know you're not married...this is going look...what's the word?...BAD..." (Matthew)

"Moses....yeah...how bout you leave the royal palace and, uh....well...herd sheep for 40 years...and, yeah...then I'll need you to grab that cool little stick of yours and lead (how many?)...um...ALL the Israelites away from the biggest best equipped army in the world...Yeah...so be sure to take your STICK with you...yeah..." (Exodus)

"Yeah, Saul...I'm going to need you to quit killing all the Christians...and yeah..."poof" you're blind....Yeah, "Paul"(that is)...you're gonna need to take some beating, floggings, stonings, shipwrecking, imprisonment...yeah..." (Acts 9...)

Now before we all turn away from a Wild Goose Chase because it looks hard and challenging, we must look at these words from Mary in the beginning of her pregnancy:

(MS6)

Mary responded, "Oh, how I praise the Lord.
How I rejoice in God my Savior!
For He took notice of His lowly servant girl,
and now generation after generation
will call me blessed." Luke 1:46-48 nlt

She goes from "oh my.." to "Oh my how I am BLESSED!"

Mary acknowledges that God is painting on a canvas that's bigger than her life---she realizes the HONOR it is that the Holy Spirit would use HER to reveal a slice of God's Story!

And so it is for ALL OF US---when God would choose US—these lowly little people—to be part of His eternal story!

And look at James 1:1-4

(MS7)

Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your **faith is tested**, your **endurance** has a chance to **grow**. So **let it grow**, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be **strong in character** and **ready for anything**.”

James 1:1-4

This verse says that when we are stretched and tested **IN** the Wild Goose Chase, that God uses the **process**—the **chase**—to GROW us, to STRENGTHEN us, to MATURE us in Christ.

This is the mysterious God part: Primarily, He’s orchestrating HIS Story—it IS about GOD and His plan. But if we’ll say YES—if we’ll ENDURE IT---He will CHANGE us, GROW us and MATURE us in the process!

And like Mary, we might get the privilege of seeing what a blessing it is to be **used by the Holy Spirit!**

(selah)

(MS)

The last principle is: The Holy Spirit is a He; so you must *know Him*.

In John 3, Jesus is talking to the Jewish leader, Nicodemus. Nicodemus wants to know how to be “born again,”—in other words, how to come into a relationship with God.

*Jesus replied, “The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and **the Spirit**. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the **Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven**. So don’t be surprised at my statement that you must be born again. Just as you can **hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.**”*

John 3:5-8 nlt

I want us to look at this verse because it’s a great defining picture of the Holy Spirit. It tells us that He’s like **the wind**.

In fact in the original Hebrew and Greek languages of the Old and New Testaments, the words for “Spirit” are “**ruach**” and “**pneuma**”---which mean “wind or breath.”

John paints a mysterious picture when he writes:

*“Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you **can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.**”*

But even though the Holy Spirit has “whispy,” “wind—breath” attributes, the Holy Spirit is still a HE.

The Holy Spirit is NEVER referred to as “IT” anywhere in the Bible.

Come in close, come in close and speak
Come in close, come closer to me