



Purpose Driven or Spirit Led?

By Joel Hart, Puyallup, WA

(This writing was born out of prayer and a study through the book of Acts. I feel it necessary to note that I have not read any of the popular "Purpose Driven" books. This letter is not meant to be an endorsement for or a rebuttal toward those books or the authors, as I know nothing about either. I did not set out to write anything on any subject, much less this one. This is simply an expression of the impression made on me by the Holy Ghost in a place of prayer early in the morning.)

In the last few years the words "Purpose Driven" have become a slogan or catch phrase for many church congregations. There has developed in our nation purpose driven churches, purpose driven lives, days, weeks and months of purpose. Individuals and congregations have been consumed by "purpose." Does the Church have purpose? Absolutely! Is the Church to be driven? Not scripturally. Is this merely semantics or is it a subtle deception? Let's compare the "purpose driven church" to the "Spirit led church" in the book of Acts.

Let's look at the following examples and choose; 1) purpose driven or 2) Spirit led.

- 1) Acts 2:1-11 – the "Birth" of the Church/Holy Ghost outpouring/Peter begins speaking (**Driven, or led?**)
- 2) Acts 2:38-47 – salvation message and following actions of fellowship, all things common, prayer from house to house... (**Driven, or led?**)
- 3) Acts 3:1-3 – Peter & John on their way to the temple for prayer meet the lame man (**Driven, or led?**)
- 4) Acts 4:7-14 – Peter speaking to the council/declaring the Name of Jesus Christ (**Driven, or led?**)

Let's skip forward a few chapters:

- 5) Acts 7 – Stephen speaking before the High Priest, beginning at Moses until he's stoned (**Driven, or led?**)
- 6) Acts 8 – Let's spend a few minutes here:

Philip goes to Samaria and begins preaching Christ, performing miracles, casting out spirits and healing the sick. (vs. 5-7) As a result, Philip baptizes many. (vs. 12) Nobody is receiving the Holy Ghost yet. In verses 15-17 Peter & John, Philip's brethren from another city, show up and begin to lay hands on the believers and they receive the Holy Ghost. Here's Philip seeing the fruit of his labor in the new birth of souls. Suffice it to say that harvest has come to Samaria. So Philip should pitch a tent, dig in and labor with purpose to continue seeing fruit. Right? Well, it depends. If Philip were purpose driven, that would be the thing to do, but if he is Spirit led...

Acts 8:26 "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."

What?! Leave the greatest outpouring that Samaria has ever seen just when people are receiving the Holy Ghost to follow real specific direction? "Go toward the south." Not only broad and general, but also it's toward the desert. Sure, that's where we want to go when the Holy Ghost is being poured out as a result of our personal prayer, teaching and sacrifice. Furthermore, Philip went and only found one man passing through. You mean, leave a thriving outpouring in a city to go into the desert to meet one man you don't know and apparently will never see again. **Purpose driven or Spirit led?** Consider this, nowhere in scripture can you find where Philip ever returned to Samaria.

Continue reading through the book of Acts and asking the same question? Peter on the rooftop before going to Cornelius house - **driven or led?** Consider Acts 16 – Paul is moving city-to-city and working with churches being established in the faith, and increasing in number daily. They were ready to move on into Asia – Purpose - but verse 6 says they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost. Verse 7 says they wanted to go into Bithynia – purpose - but the Spirit wouldn't allow it. Thank God, the Spirit led them! Purpose would have taken them into Asia or Bithynia, but the Spirit led them into Macedonia where a woman and her household were baptized, a damsel was delivered from a spirit and a prison keeper and his house received truth and were baptized.

Read on, it is a pattern throughout the remaining twelve chapters. Men and women of God being led by the Spirit. The only time you find someone driven by purpose in the book of Acts is in Chapter 9. Saul had purpose driving him!

Two other times in the book of Acts you can find individuals being driven, both of those times they were being driven by storms.

You see the nature of Jesus is not to drive, but to lead.

Go all the way back to the Old Testament. It is a pattern established by God Almighty throughout. When He brought the Israelites out of Egypt they were led by a cloud and a pillar of fire. The Egyptians were doing the driving until the Red Sea.

Purpose doesn't cause a man to eliminate the majority of his army just to take 300 men into a battle. It had to be God leading. Purpose doesn't take a man to a brook to drink and be fed by ravens. It had to be God leading. Purpose causes a king to say, "I'll build you a temple." A king choosing to be led by the Spirit of God recognizes when purpose must be set aside.

Is it wrong to have purpose? Of course not! However, having purpose and being driven by purpose are two very different things. We as the church of the living God must have purpose, but we must be led by the Spirit. If we are driven by purpose, we are setting ourselves up with deception and a false sense of security. When a church, ministry or individual is purpose driven, the achievement of the purpose serves to validate the church, ministry or individual rather than the voice of God serving to lead and direct. It becomes our way of determining what we believe God feels about our actions and us. Our lives lived for Him become lives based on fulfillment of purpose rather than lives built on a relationship with Him that grows each day.

One of the key indicators is when we begin to feel pressure. Purpose driven ministry creates pressure. Pressure to see results. Pressure to prove time spent in prayer was effective. Pressure to show that we are doing something for the kingdom. Pressure to have a plan of our own. The leading of the Spirit never creates pressure. God does not pressure his church. He leads and His church follows. Is it possible to become so driven by purpose that when God shifts His direction we miss it, because our eyes have become more focused on purpose than on Him?

Can God ask us to wait on Him in a place of prayer for days, weeks or even months until His promise comes or does the need for a visible, viable plan of evangelism justify a deaf ear? (Acts 1 & 2) Can God ask our brothers to come into a city to pray for souls to receive the Holy Ghost where we have been praying, preaching, working and baptizing or does the time and labor we've invested make it our work and justify a deaf ear? (Acts 8:5, 6, 12-17) Can God ask us to walk away from a mighty outpouring of the Holy Ghost to head south towards a desert or does the addition of souls where we are ministering justify a deaf ear? (Acts 8:26-39) Can God ask us

to stay out of a city that hasn't got a church in it yet because it isn't His time or does being missions minded justify a deaf ear? (Acts 16:6-7)

Let's visit one other situation in scripture.

Luke 10:38-42

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Martha knows that Jesus is in the house. Martha has a purpose – serve Him. Prepare a meal for Him. Make His room look nice. She was very busy working for Jesus. She was driven by purpose. So strong was her purpose that she felt her sister should join with her in fulfilling this purpose. There was one problem though. Mary, her sister, didn't live her life with Jesus based on purpose. It was completely about relationship for Mary. And so, Martha finally asked Jesus whether He cared that Mary wasn't helping to fulfill purpose. Can you believe the boldness of Martha? Doesn't it strike you as a strange question? "Jesus, don't you care?" Here is someone at Jesus' feet and her sister is asking, "Jesus, do you care?" Martha had become so blinded by purpose that Jesus Christ had to let her know that Mary, by simply being at his feet, had chosen the good part. It seems we can become so busy fulfilling purpose in working for Jesus that His Spirit can no longer lead us to a place of simply waiting at His feet. In this purpose driven day, waiting at His feet can be viewed as inaction or a lack of a plan. What a subtle deception.

Consider *Matthew 4:1 & 2, Mark 4:1*. "**Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.**" Purpose didn't take Christ to a place of prayer and fasting – the Spirit did.

Gal 5:16-18

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Rom 8:13-19

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

In this hour like no other, His Spirit must lead us, the church of the living God. The world is starving for a Spirit-led church. The souls around us are hungry for a Spirit-led life. Your soul and mine want a Spirit-led ministry. According to Romans 8:19 there is an earnest expectation of the creature that waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. Let us not be deceived by purpose for we need manifestation. Jesus, help us to lay aside our purpose and choose to follow your leading.

(Joel Hart is Associate Pastor of New Life Pentecostal Church in Puyallup, WA and also serves as Washington District Youth President for United Pentecostal Church.)