

Lifebyte 53

Kingdom Living (Part 3)

Born Again—Guided By The Spirit Of Jesus

Jesus Proclaims A Kingdom



*For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?
Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)*



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There's a reason for our starting this Lifebyte with the poem below. Read it slowly so you can fully grasp its key points.

STEP BY STEP

*"As thou goest, step by step
I will open the way before thee"*
(Proverbs 4:12a, New Translation).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of My Command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as thou goest, all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thine adversaries counting,
Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,
In all thy journeying I go before.

Frank J. Exley

If you're at peace only when all the details have been laid out for you before you act, you need to be reminded that King Jesus gives us only *one step of guidance at a time*. If you're looking for the whole plan to be revealed to you in advance, don't! He doesn't intend for you to see the whole picture, and your frustration over thinking you've missed a detail will make you despondent and hesitant to obey our Lord. Be assured: One step is far enough for anyone's faith to know and obey. Take that step before you seek the next step of obedience!

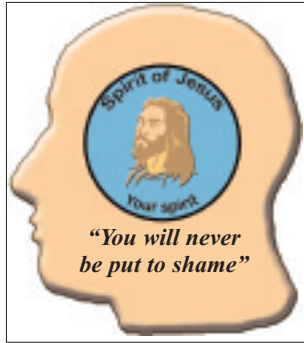
The Spirit of Jesus Himself Guides His Followers

In Lifebyte 52 we quoted Jesus relating the Spirit to a peculiarity of the wind's nature: *"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone born of the Spirit"* (John 3:8). On what basis does Jesus make this comparison?

On the surface it seems as though a person born of the Spirit has no real foundation, as if they're adrift like the wind. This is the way those who are *not* born again perceive a born-again individual. That's because those who haven't experienced spiritual rebirth are **"outcome based"**. (So are many who *are* born again but rely strictly on their *soul*—their mind, will and emotions—for guidance rather than on the Spirit of Jesus within them.)

If you're outcome-based, you see something you want and go for it. If you don't get what you want, you become frustrated and angry. Many outcome based people are unable to take just *one step* of faith. They've got to have all their "ducks in order" before they act. But this response only reflects their pattern of relying on guidance from their sin nature-controlled soul.

On the other hand, one who is truly born again is **"obedience based"**. Because of their loving trust in their Lord, they seek to *obey His will*. One step is enough for their faith to act upon. The born-again person has the Spirit of Jesus in them, and chooses to obey because of their trust in their Lord. The consequences of their obedience don't have to be weighed, for they know in their heart that *"anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame"* (Romans 10:11).



Will the Spirit of Jesus within you ever let you be put to shame? No! As a result, if you're born-again, obedience rather than rationale is key. Since you're not

driven by worldly motives, people who aren't indwelt by the Spirit through rebirth can't understand you. So don't get upset when those without the Spirit of Christ think you're a fanatic. From their carnal perspective, you ARE!

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

- **Do you hear the voice of Jesus in you? Yes or no? If yes, do you readily respond with just one step of His direction? Describe yourself.**

“But the word [rhema] is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may DO IT” (Deuteronomy 30:14, apperceived in Romans 10:8).

As the various man-made forms of church governments developed over the

centuries, an important element of guidance for the early Church was lost. That neglected element that was so essential to the early followers of Jesus is *rhema*, the words from God that are intended to be *acted upon*.

In the Newer Testament there are two Greek terms which mean “word”: *logos* (law'goss) and *rhema* (ray'muh).

- *Logos* represents God's commands and ways, forever unchangeable. The Bible is a part of God's *logos* which has been written down for man.

- *Rhema* is specific revelation given by the Spirit of Jesus in His followers. Without His Spirit there can be no *rhema*. Through *rhema* the Spirit of Jesus brings a particular portion of the total counsel of God for man to a *particular time and individual*.

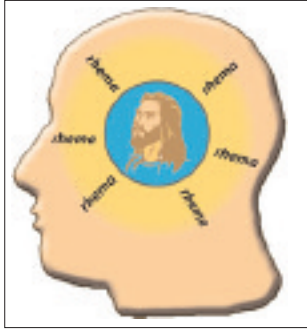
“Rhema,” writes Derek Prince, “is like each of the broken pieces of bread with which Jesus fed the multitudes; it is suited to each person's need and capacity; often it comes to us through another. Thus, we can see the need for connectedness in the body of Christ, our need for one another.”

Obedience to that which is heard was the norm for God's people in both testaments. So that man might realize he has a *spiritual* responsibility that's just as life-nourishing as his physical needs, this principle was emphasized: *“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”* (Deuteronomy 8:3, apperceived by Jesus in Matthew 4:4).

The Greek term used for “word” in both the quoted Romans 10 and Matthew 4 verses is *rhema*. The Spirit of Jesus in you reveals His will to your spirit so that you will respond in *obedience*. To HEAR His Word is to DO it out of lov-

ing response to your King.

A *rhema* may come from the Spirit of Jesus within you, or through a prophetic word or word of knowledge from another



follower of Jesus. You may find as you read the Bible that the Spirit of Jesus inspires a particular verse or passage for you or deepens a new understanding and application for you. Just know that your key source of *rhema* will always be Jesus through His Spirit in you.

A *rhema* will provide guidance for one step of faith, and even for that step of obedience you may not know *why*. Our capacity to understand our Lord and His ways is so minute and His wisdom so beyond our comprehension. That's why He's GOD!

'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts' (Isaiah 55:8,9).

Man lives "on every word [*rhema*] that comes from the mouth of God." The word "comes" is in the continuous present tense, meaning that it's *ongoing*. Another way to say this is, "We find spiritual nutrition as we **feed in obedience** on every *rhema* as it comes out of the mouth of our Lord."

Our ongoing dependence on the *rhema* from Jesus is humbling to our sinful soul. Seeking His *rhema* is to us what gathering manna was for the Israelites during the Exodus: "He gave you manna to eat in the desert...**to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you**" (Deuteronomy 8:16).

Two apostles apperceived Proverbs 3:34 when they cited the need for humility in our relationship with our Lord: "**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble**" (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). In light of these verses and the preceding Deuteronomy one, do you see the connection between seeking *rhema* >>> which produces **humility** >>> which results in **grace**? If you want grace, then start seeking *rhema*! And, the source to *rhema* is the Spirit of Jesus within His follower.

Note this: Europeanized Christianity teaches that Bible *knowledge* is the chief issue. Wherever knowledge of biblical facts has been promoted and the Spirit of Jesus perhaps acknowledged but not emphasized, people's lives remain unchanged. In fact, Bible knowledge *apart from* the indwelling Spirit of Christ has produced *dwindling numbers* of those who press on. Why is this so?

Because *words alone* have no power unless the *Spirit of God* brings them to life (see 2 Timothy 3:5)! Think of the people you know who own a Bible or have even read it yet are unchanged. To people who are devoid of the Spirit, God's Word is just a historical compilation of "good ideas".

- **Describe how earnest you are in seeking Jesus's *rhema* for your life. Describe how you seek and confirm our Lord's will.**

That Which Was Important For The First Followers Of Jesus Must Be The Same For Us Today

The Hebraic early Church realized the significance of pursuing God's specific guidance. They understood from the

Older Testament that obedience to God's direction brought blessing and victory. For example King David sought God's specific guidance for his battles. When the Philistines attacked Israel, David inquired of the Lord: "*Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?*" And the LORD said to David, "*Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand*" (2 Samuel 5:19).

On another occasion when the Philistines attacked, David again prayed. This time God gave him a different strategy: "*Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army*" (2 Samuel 5:23,24).

Just because God has provided specific guidance for a particular circumstance in your life or in someone else's does not mean that the same answer will apply for all situations you encounter. Joshua and his people were given the *rhema* to march around Jericho seven times to gain the victory (see Joshua 6), yet God revealed other strategies for subsequent battles.

The first followers of Jesus knew not to *lean on their own understanding* (Proverbs 3:5); that is, they wanted spiritual revelation, not reason, to guide them. They also trusted that where there is *no revelation*, people cast off restraint (Proverbs 29:18a).

Whenever the revelation of God is lacking, people *increase in wickedness*. Unrestrained people give ever-increasing vent to their sin nature, moving along from sinful thoughts to "secret" sins to blatant, open rebellion to Him and His ways—all the while rationalizing.

Consider how important seeking God's guidance was to the fledgling followers of Jesus who earnestly came before Him with open spiritual ears:

*In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers... As they **ministered to the Lord and fasted**, the Holy Spirit said, "Now **separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**" Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away* (Acts 13:1-3).

The *rhema* from the Lord's Spirit, His specific revealed will, set apart Saul and Barnabas for their particular ministry.

You may be wondering how this trusting dependence on the Spirit of Jesus was lost as an essential element of Kingdom living. Much of the responsibility can be laid at the feet of Augustine (AD 354-430). Insisting that because God was a rational being Who had given mankind a mind like His own, Augustine taught that we must doggedly pursue knowing and understanding Him *through the mind*. In other words, you *cultivate your mind* as the only instrument by which you can know God.

However, God has always sought those who worship Him *in spirit and in truth* (John 4:23,24). The union of *our spirit with His Spirit first* ensures that we recognize the *truth* of His Word. Then we are empowered by His indwelling Spirit to choose to obey that Word. The mental faculties He has imbued in each person are thus *subject to His Spirit* at work in our spirit so that our will can align with His. And, His will always coincides with the truth of His Word.

The influence of Augustine's theology caused European Christendom to put their confidence in human logic and

knowledge acquisition. As a result, when a young man wanted to devote his life in service to God, monasteries and seminaries required him to spend years studying prescribed areas of learning such as rhetoric, philosophy, theology, and the Bible for its content.

Because of the focus on the mind with little emphasis on the spirit, clerics were trained who for the most part directed their influence toward others who also had been highly educated. Those in the pew had no opportunity to discover their worth as fellow heirs in Christ through their spirit. Similar to the attitude demonstrated by many scribes and Pharisees, the clergy looked down upon the “common masses” but lifted not one finger to help them *grow in spirit* through His Spirit. This is evil of Nicolaitanism that has subjugated so many over the centuries.

As is so common today, the spirit is given lip service but the focus is on the mind — the very area in which man is prone to deception unless it’s submitted to the Spirit! Sermons and Bible studies are aimed at rationally and systematically conveying content to the human mind.

But your mind alone is unable to move you to *submit as a way of life* to the Lordship of Messiah Jesus. Only the indwelling *Spirit of Jesus* can bring about that change as you earnestly seek His *rhema* on your lifelong journey to salvation.

- **Do those who know you well call you a “Spirit-led person” or one who relies on your mind alone in making decisions? Describe yourself, then solicit their input.**

Rhema: A Vital Power Encounter With Our Lord

When God reveals a *rhema* for a specific purpose, He also empowers the individual involved to fulfill it. In the New Testament the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to a son who would be called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:31). When she asked how she, a virgin, could conceive, the angel replied, “*Nothing is impossible with God*” (v. 37).

In other words, every word (*rhema*) that comes from God will bring with it the *power to fulfill His purpose*. Mary’s humble acceptance to willingly obey what had been told her was faith enough for God to act: “*Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word*” (v. 38).

In the Bible, wherever you find a *rhema* of God given and received, you see His spiritual power go forth to accomplish His will. But be aware. There are consequences when you receive a *rhema* and fail to trust it with follow through!

For example, Gabriel also appeared to Zechariah with the startling message that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son. Doubt and unbelief filled the response of the elderly priest as he focused on his *mind’s rationale* rather than on the miracle-working power of God: “*How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years*” (Luke 1:18).

What a sad contrast to the loving trust of the humble young woman from Nazareth! That doubt cost him the joyous testimony he could have shared with others during the course of his wife’s pregnancy: “*But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time*” (v. 20).

The will of our God WILL be accomplished; you can cooperate with Him the easy way or the hard way!

- **What kind of Holy Spirit “power encounters” have you had as you obeyed our Lord’s guidance? What was the response of those with whom you shared your testimony of these?**

- **Are you aware of any *rhemas* in your life that you failed to act upon? If yes, what were they and what was the result of your disobedience or resistance?**

Love Your Wife As Christ Does: Guide Her By *Rhema*

A married man is commanded to apply the truths of Scripture to his family, particularly in his relationship with his wife: “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word*” (Ephesians 5:25,26).

“*Sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word*” indicates a husband’s vital role in his wife’s spiritual development. “Word” in this verse is *rhema*, not *logos*. The husband is not being enjoined to teach his wife the written *logos*, that is, the Bible. His responsibility is far deeper than that.

Our Lord wants a husband to humbly seek His *rhema* for their lives together. In this light, he is directed to both uphold God’s will and guide his wife and family

in a way of life that pleases Jesus (see Ephesians 5:8-10).

This means he needs an *obedient spirit* that follows through with pursuing *rhema* with the *intent of applying it*. Depending on others to teach his family for him indicates his own neglect of the Spirit in him. And, that example disheartens his wife and speaks to his children that Jesus isn’t really the Lord and King he proclaims Him to be.

- **If you’re a married man, describe the *rhema* you provide for your wife and how you go about discerning it. If you’re a wife, how does your husband provide our Lord’s guidance for you and your family?**

***Rhema*: The Sword In Our Spiritual Battle Against Evil**

An essential facet of winning a war is *gathering intelligence* about your enemy. Many conflicts have been won by knowing beforehand what the enemy would do and when. Appropriate countermeasures can then be put in place to thwart your opponent’s plans and weaken his position.

Rhema from our Lord is key in our battle against the spiritual forces in the heavenlies. When you cooperate with the Spirit of Jesus in you, you are aligning your spirit with the purpose for which He became Man: *to destroy the devil’s work* (1 John 3:8).

Our King provides the guidance for us to carry on His work against Satan. Without a solid biblical understanding of the ongoing battle between our Lord and Satan, the religious system and its appeal

to your soulish self will prevail. Then your need for the *rhema* that only Jesus can provide through your spirit will diminish.

Only through following the counsel of the Spirit will you be victorious in spiritual warfare. The *sword of the Spirit, which is the rhema of God* (see Ephesians 6:17) is powerful in combating the hosts of darkness! The specific applied *rhema* which the Spirit quickens to your spirit helps you discern the nature of the spiritual forces that oppose you in serving our Lord's will and purposes. As well, the *rhema* He reveals guides you in resisting and defeating the enemy's agitating servants.

- **The devil loves ignorance of his warfare strategies. What has Jesus shown you about the demons who battle against you, and any leeway you've given them in your life?**

Rhema: God's Guidance In Leadership

If you aspire to serve as an elder or are doing so now, be determined in providing those you're serving the Lord's *rhema*. Only by discerning *rhema* with those you're guiding in Jesus can you help to equip them to fulfill their purpose in the Kingdom. Our Lord isn't short on revealing His *rhema*, His revealed will for specific purposes and situations! But He does depend on elders like those He spells out in Timothy 3 and Titus 1 whose spiritual ears are listening and whose hearts are open to obediently follow through.

Have you ever heard the old saying, "Don't rest on past laurels"? In our context it means that biblical eldering shepherds can't get by on practices and knowl-

edge that may have been effective in the past or were good for someone else. Just as God's mercies are new every morning, so are His plans and opportunities for spiritual growth for each of His people. Constant diligence and willingness to seek guidance are needed if you are to know the mind of Christ for those you serve!

Shepherds who fail to diligently seek His Spirit's guidance face dire consequences:

*For the shepherds have become dull-hearted, and have **not sought the LORD**; Therefore they **shall not prosper**, and all their flocks shall be **scattered** (Jeremiah 10:21).*

- **If you're serving our Father's children in leading, how well are you helping to provide *rhema* for them? Ask them.**

- *If you're in a faith community whose leadership isn't seeking *rhema* to help guide you, please leave. If you don't, your spiritual power will dry up, you'll learn how to be religious, and you'll falter in wholly serving your King.*

Hear Only The Voice Of Jesus

Over the years we've encountered many who ask, "How can I be sure if I'm listening to the Spirit or a demon? Often I hear two conflicting voices." If you're hearing two voices, be assured of these possibilities.

1. **You have NOT demolished all the strongholds in your soul;**
2. **You're still responding to your sin nature-controlled soul rather than your spirit;**
3. **You enjoy entertaining demonic whispers as they pass your way.**

Each of these options is your responsibility to correct. You may want to review our book *Demolishing Strongholds* for help.

(Excerpt from our Hebraic Article: *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*)

The vast majority of people who have sought help from us over the years have shared a common thread: they entertain demons in their thought life. Our Lord warns, ***“Demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up [in your soul] against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”*** (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Make sure all demonic strongholds are demolished, and that your thoughts are made obedient to the Spirit of Jesus in you. This ongoing process calls for follow through each and every time you’re assailed by thoughts that you know are contrary to the Word of God and the character of Jesus.

As your thought life is brought under obedience to the Spirit of Jesus to align with His thoughts and ways, you begin to recognize that your motivations are being changed. You yearn for intimacy with our Father and the joy of fulfilling His purposes more than you crave sinful satisfaction. Recognize this all-important sequence: First your *motivations* change; then your *behaviors* are changed by your motivations.

We do find ourselves rebuking demons who insert deceiving or agitating thoughts into our minds. Demonic voices can sound just like the voice in your own head. You discern these deceptive voices by knowing God’s commands in the Bible and realizing that the demons are trying to get you to sin or to at least doubt God.

If you reflect frequently on what you’ve read in the Bible, you can recognize evil intent in the demonic spirit’s voice. Aren’t we told that *“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light”* (2 Corinthians 11:14)?

A demonic voice imparts nothing that Jesus would think, say or do. His Spirit and His Word are your standard for what’s true and what’s of the Liar. Rely in trust on the authority of Jesus’ Name and rebuke the Adversary’s servant. Then ask Lord Jesus for His mind on the matter and praise Him for the difference!

Demons labor to hinder us from walking according to the Spirit of Jesus. Paul writes definitively that we can’t drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; we can’t have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21). We’d like to add:

You can’t entertain the voice of demons in your mind and hear the Spirit of Jesus or experience His power at the same time.

Our Lord’s indwelling Spirit produces a *way of life* that becomes increasingly Christ-like on your pilgrimage to salvation if you *stop* listening to the demons and *continue following through* in the Spirit and the Word. Listening to demons and believing their lies quenches His Spirit’s power.

- **Do you hear one voice or more than one? If you’re hearing two voices, what is the source? What do you need to do?**

Rhema and Religion: Never The Two Shall Meet

Throughout these segments on the Kingdom we’ve been directing you to the Spirit of Jesus within you. Perhaps you’re attending a “Christian” religious system and believe you can practice religion and still serve the King. But Jesus is not the

author of religion nor its practices. In fact, He is fighting against the Nicolaitan spirit behind it (Revelation 2:6,15). Can you uphold a system which is breaking His heart as it separates His people from dependence on *His indwelling Spirit*?

“Christian” religion, with its Nicolaitan influence of others standing in the gap to represent God before you, keeps you *externally directed* in your faith practices—that is, relying on clergy, programs and rituals. In contrast, the Kingdom of Jesus is *internal*—led and empowered by the Spirit of the King in His followers according to His Word.

Because it’s impossible to serve *external religion* while obeying His *internal guidance*, Jesus warns, “**No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have *torn the new garment*, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined**” (Luke 5:36,37).

Look at the diagrams on the next page. The **first diagram** describes the influence of Nicolaitanism, a man-centered demonic influence behind the various forms of “Christian” expression today. This *external* influence focuses you on everything except the indwelling Spirit of Jesus. System authorities give you a common identification by telling you what you must believe (creed) according to their denominational standards. They construct holy edifices for worship which mirror the Tower of Babel. Rather than being equipped to serve the King in His Kingdom, you’re held tightly within the standards and practices of whichever “ism” you’re told to adhere to.

The **second diagram** describes how

the King guides and empowers His followers. It all flows from following the indwelling Spirit of Jesus in us as His conduit, giving us unity as He guides us to fulfill His Kingdom purposes. This is His desire in and through each of us that we might bring Him joy.

- **If you’re in a religious system, describe how you’re fully following Jesus while adhering to your religious practices and duties.**

- **If you’re outside religious systems, recount how Jesus has been guiding you. List recent testimonies that give glory to our Father.**

Be Biblically Safe: Confirm A *Rhema* With Two or Three Others

One of the primary issues facing the first followers of Jesus was *confirming* truth. In other words, how did they assure themselves that it was truly our Lord’s will? The method of confirmation from the Hebrew Scriptures was based on *two or three witnesses*; followers of Jesus realized they could be guided by His Spirit as He confirmed truth through His presence in one another.

According to the Bible, because of our sin nature our hearts are inclined to deceive us: “*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9). Since childhood the Hebraic followers of Jesus had been nurtured on Proverbs 3:5,6, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not*

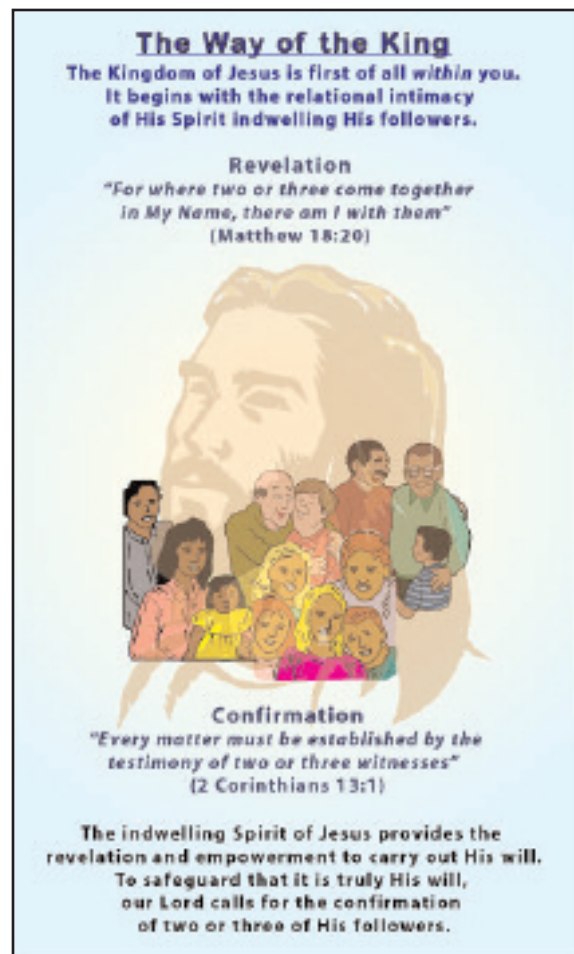
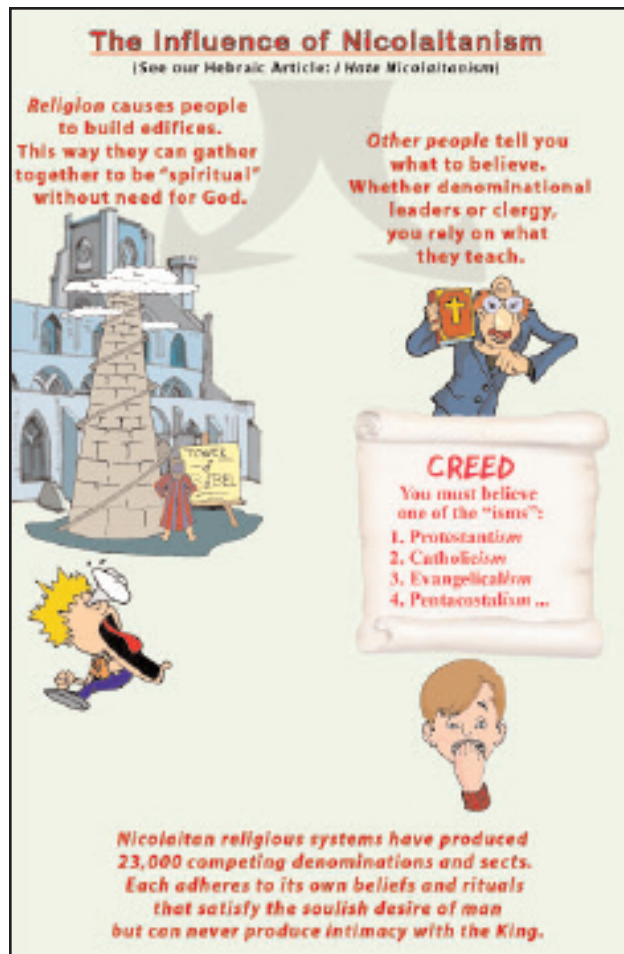
on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and HE will make your paths straight."

To keep His people from being deceived by their own personal desires and human inclinations, our Lord continued His pattern from the Hebrew Bible: the confirmation of two or three. "A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Deuteronomy 19:5, apperceived in Matthew 18:16,20, 1 Timothy 5:19, Hebrews 10:28). Autocratic decision making by individuals was foreign to the early followers of Jesus.

Confirmation through agreement in spirit was a basic understanding among those Jesus discipled: "Again, I tell you that

if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). And Paul reiterated the same principle: "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

- Do you rely on the confirmation of two or three others to determine our Lord's will? Yes or No? If yes, how do you go about it? If no, why don't you?



If the Spirit of Jesus is guiding you, then you should increasingly act, live and love like Jesus. Are you???