

Convicted!

Welcome back to “Walking with Christ”, where today we’ll learn more about the gift Christ left us as He left this earth! So make yourselves comfortable, and have a good discussion in your small group about how the Holy Spirit has...well...done His job well when we are UNcomfortable!

One of the telltale signs of a healthy spiritual life is the level of misery a person feels when convicted by the Holy Spirit! How quickly does that person respond in repentance when God uses the Holy Spirit to speak that something is sin? First of all, though, what do I mean by conviction? Is it the same as being convicted in the court of law, where a sentence is handed down with a punishment? No, but I must tell you...it can feel that way sometimes! I remember the story of Nora, a woman who was SO excited to be staying in a fancy hotel. She didn’t have a lot of money, and her husband’s job didn’t give many bonuses. But one year he was required to take a business trip, which included a 4-day stay in the nicest hotel she had ever seen...and SHE got to go along! She enjoyed every moment...from making the coffee with the provided supplies, to the huge sunken bathtub with free soaps! But what *weren’t* included were the fluffy, monogrammed hotel bathrobes. Just before check-out, she slipped one into her suitcase and mentioned the “missing” item at the front desk...suggesting maybe it got left at the pool. It was no problem, the clerk told her. But although she walked out seemingly “free”, the battle had just begun! That bathrobe cost her 3 nights of missed sleep, as she wrestled with her conscience, then kept reminding the Lord that it was “JUST a bathrobe, and probably only cost the hotel \$10!” Couldn’t He just forget about it now that she had confessed her sin to Him? But the Holy Spirit wouldn’t let it go. The lady was finally so miserable that she mailed that bathrobe back with a note of confession and apology. She bent her knee to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and finally found peace.



Fellowship

1. Can you share about a time when you felt heavily under the Holy Spirit’s conviction? What did you do about it? What did it take to make it go away? (It’s ok, you can be honest. We’re all family here!)



Discipleship

The great Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen was the first to discover the South Pole and also the meridian of the North Pole. On one of his trips, Amundsen took a homing pigeon with him. When he had finally reached the top of the world, he opened the bird's cage and set it free. Imagine the delight of Amundsen's wife, back in Norway, when she looked up from the doorway of her home and saw the pigeon circling in the sky above. No doubt she exclaimed, "He's alive! My husband is still alive!"

So it was when Jesus ascended. He was gone, and the disciples already felt the loss! But they clung to his promise to send them a gift: The Comforter...The Holy Spirit. What joy, then, when the dovelike Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost. The disciples had with them the continual reminder that Jesus was alive and victorious at the right hand of the Father.

Turn with me now to our passage for today found in John 16:5-16 and let's put ourselves in the place of the disciples as we listen to the words of Jesus.

"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."

The Holy Spirit's role is to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, unbelievers who heed His conviction of guilt will turn from their sin to the One Who died for it. The Holy Spirit is a gift to the unbeliever, as Jesus didn't leave them alone, but in His mercy uses Him to draw men to Himself and salvation.

The Holy Spirit is a gift to the believer! Since Jesus is no longer here in bodily form to teach, lead and guide, He gave to us what the Old Testament Christians didn't have the privilege of having: The continual indwelling Spirit of the Living God! He convicts us of righteousness and, verse 13 says, guides us into *all* truth. He makes known to us the truths of God. Just as Jesus made people uncomfortable while here on earth, the Holy Spirit can make us uncomfortable as well! Just as people had the choice to accept or reject His teachings, so can we.

So how do we need to respond to our consciences when we are under the Holy Spirit's conviction? First of all, we need to realize that "feelings" are not to be confused with

Holy Spirit-induced conviction. Let's contrast two stories to get a clear picture of what that means. In 1 Samuel chapters 10 and 13, we can read the story of Saul in his early days of his being anointed as King of Israel. Samuel had told him to wait 7 days, after which time he would return to make burnt and fellowship offerings and then tell Saul what to do. When Saul didn't see Samuel coming at the appointed time, he took it upon himself to offer the sacrifices without Samuel when he saw his troops deserting him. Saul said he "felt compelled" to do something that was sin! Feeling compelled to do something doesn't make it right! Only when we are walking in step with the Spirit will we not fulfill the desires of the flesh. The second lesson we see from this story is that sometimes it takes another God-sent messenger to point out the sin in order for us to come to the place where we admit we're wrong. Samuel came to rebuke Saul, and at first he continued to justify his actions. Yet just like the Holy Spirit, Samuel would not let up. Since the Holy Spirit wasn't given to men at that time to indwell and lead people into truth, God graciously used human means to relate His message. Contrast this story with that of David in Second Samuel chapter 12. Many of you already know the story of David and Bathsheba. Wealthy David wanted this beautiful woman for himself after he saw her bathing, but there was one problem: she was married. In fact, Uriah (her husband) was one of David's mighty warriors! But this didn't stop David from sleeping with and impregnating her. When all of David's scheming didn't work (to get Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba so his own sin would not be discovered), he had Uriah killed. What is interesting to note is that David's repentance did not come until some time later! Chapter 11 leaves us reading about Bathsheba mourning her husband's death, giving birth to a son (that's 9 months right there)...with still no repentance on David's part. But God is so patient isn't He? How often has He waited for *me* to miss my fellowship with Him and to confess on my own before giving me heavenly discipline? Well, when it didn't happen in David's case, the Lord finally sent another messenger...this time in the form of Nathan. Through a story about a small lamb that David can relate to, God shines His light of truth on David's situation. Remember what we said earlier? One of the telltale signs of a healthy spiritual life *is the level of misery a person feels* when convicted by Truth. David, known as a "man after God's own heart", immediately repented and was restored. In fact, the child God blessed him with was in the lineage of Christ! His mercy is great and His power unlimited to transform times of repentance into glory for Himself!

A Sociology professor recalls a deeply moving incident that happened in a Christian junior high camp. One of the campers, a boy with spastic paralysis, was the object of heartless ridicule. When he would ask a question, the boys would deliberately answer in a halting, mimicking way. One night his cabin group chose him to lead the devotions before the entire camp. It was one more effort to have some "fun" at his expense. Unashamedly the spastic boy stood up, and in his strained, slurred manner, he struggled with each word to simply say, "Jesus loves me—and I love Jesus!" That was all. Conviction fell upon the youth. Many began to cry. Revival gripped the camp. Years afterward, this professor still meets men in the ministry who came to Christ because of that testimony.

When your conscience is making you uncomfortable, the Holy Spirit can seem like anything but a gift. But isn't it awesome to realize that the Lord loves you SO much that

He is willing to keep calling you to Himself and unbroken relationship with Him? But as with any gift, take care that you respect it. Don't reject and harden your heart against the Holy Spirit's work! It's been said that, "Once we assuage our conscience by calling something a 'necessary evil' ...it begins to look more and more necessary and less and less evil." We can drown out the Holy Spirit's voice! Leo Tolstoy said, "The antagonism between life and conscience may be removed in two ways: by a change of life or by a change of conscience."

A man consulted a doctor, "I've been misbehaving, Doc, and my conscience is troubling me," he complained. "And you want something that will strengthen your willpower?" asked the doctor. "Well, no," said the fellow. "I was thinking of something that would weaken my conscience."

An intimate walk with God **must** be accompanied by obedience to the Holy Spirit's voice. The character of a woman named Damaris was being described during a job interview, "She won't listen to her conscience. She doesn't want to take advice from a total stranger." May that not be said of us. As you get to know the Lord, enjoy unbroken fellowship with Him by becoming instantly obedient to His voice...not quenching His precious Holy Spirit.

2. Re-read John 16:5-16. How can knowing that the Holy Spirit will lead you into truth be a constant comfort?
3. How important is it to make sure the Word of God lines up with your "conscience"? Why is that? (verse 14)
4. The book of Exodus is filled with times that Pharaoh hardened his heart against messengers of God and refused to change his behavior. How can his example serve as a warning to Christians today?
5. Take a few moments right now to search your heart and ask the Holy Spirit if you've been hardening yourself against His voice. If so, talk to God about it, repenting as quickly as David.



Ministry

6. Read together Psalm 51:1-17, making it a personal prayer.



Evangelism

7. Pray for the Holy Spirit's conviction to the world (and your unsaved family/friends) regarding sin, righteousness and judgment...that all men would soften their hearts and respond to the gift of the Holy Spirit!



Worship

8. Sing a song together or take time sharing what you appreciate about God's personal love and guidance in *your* life!