

THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

The Spirit Convicts the World

Questions for Personal Study

- Begin by reading John 16.4-11. What promise does Jesus make? Imagine the disciples - how would the promise feel to them?
- Do you believe Jesus' words about his absence being to our advantage? Remember the context - Jesus turning ministry over to his disciples...
- Do you carry the weight of Jesus' command to make disciples?
- Do you think it is true that every Christian should carry this weight?

Questions for Study in Community

- As a community, do we believe Jesus has entrusted us with his ministry? What difference would it make if we did? How might we change?
- As a Missional Community, how are you making disciples together? Are you in Journey Groups to disciple and nurture one another? Is that one way you could step into discipling together and carry the weight?

Questions for Staying on Mission

- Discuss the Spirit's 3 convicting roles. How did this happen in your life? Think about those you are sharing Christ with. Is the Spirit convicting them? What do you think our role is in bringing this conviction? Anything? How should we live knowing the Spirit is doing this convicting? Are you experiencing opportunities to share the gospel? With whom?

Practical Thoughts on the Empowering of the Spirit

"Because we are, each of us, the image of God, we will worship, in fact we must worship, someone or something, either our Original, as we should, or, with the illusion that we are the original or our own ultimate point of reference, ourselves. If the latter, we will give ourselves over, with the full, still efficient resources of our imaging capacities, to some figment, some distorted image, focused on ourselves or on some aspect of the world, ultimately seen as an extension of ourselves. What Calvin observed long ago is no less true today: the human heart, our image-bearing and image-fashioning nature, is an idol factory." (Richard Gaffin, *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine*)

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The Church of Jesus

Today we continue our study on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in John 14 - 16, Jesus' final instructions to his disciples. Up to this point, Jesus has been the center of attention. He has been the one doing the ministry, and the disciples have largely been along for the ride. They were spectators with front row seats, enthralled by the person and work of Jesus, the Son of God! Imagine being present with Jesus as he turns water into wine (and lots of it!), heals the blind, raises the dead, and preaches to the masses about the kingdom of God. Imagine the tension as Jesus takes his disciples to eat with tax collectors and prostitutes, while the religious leaders grumble and complain and begin to plot his murder. The disciples have experienced so much!

And then, to their great surprise, Jesus begins to give instructions for how these disciples are to carry on his work after he is gone. They are trying to listen attentively and take good notes; but did he just say he was leaving? They begin to be anxious and overwhelmed, not only by his leaving but by the responsibility he is placing in their hands. How can he really expect them to do what he has done, and continue on with out him?

Stop for a minute and reflect on your own understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Does he not expect these same things of each of his followers? Do *you* personally feel responsible for carrying on the work of Jesus, for loving your brothers and sisters in Christ, and re-arranging your life around making disciples? As a church, this IS what we believe it means to follow Jesus. Because he has saved us by his life, death, and resurrection, we believe we've been swept up into his kingdom and are called to align our lives with his purposes, though it cost us everything.

Are you still living a spectator Christianity, where you show up and expect someone else to put on a good show? Are you getting tired of that yet? Are you ready for something more costly and adventurous than weekly attendance? Have you been captured by the love of Jesus to you, and are ready to give your life away for his cause? This is what Jesus invites each disciple into!

The Promise of the Spirit

This is the context into which Jesus promises to send His Spirit to his church. The Spirit doesn't come to help the church put on good programs, or to make the Sunday show more slick. The Spirit comes to carry on the work of Jesus, and the promise of the Spirit is to anyone who is ready and willing to walk in obedience to Jesus. The Spirit wants to empower us to love one another like Jesus has loved us, and to make disciples of Jesus even as we learn what it means to be a disciple. The Spirit is the God's empowering presence!

In John 16.7 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away." In isolation, that is a remarkable statement. How could it possibly be true for the disciples that they will be better off if Jesus is no longer around?! But Jesus continues: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." Ah-ha! So Jesus leaving is good for us because his leaving is the pre-condition to the Spirit coming. And when the Spirit comes, Jesus' ministry will be carried on through each and every disciple of Jesus. The Spirit does for *each* disciple what Jesus did for the original 12!

The Spirit as Prosecutor

One of the key roles the Spirit plays is that of prosecuting attorney. Jesus says when the Spirit comes he will "convict the world," meaning he'll bring the world to see their guilt before a Holy God and their need for salvation in Jesus. J.I Packer says, "Jesus said that the Spirit would "convict the world" of the sin of not believing in him, of the fact that he was in the right with God the Father (as his welcome back to heaven proved), and of the reality of judgment both here and hereafter (John 16:8-11). This threefold conviction is still God's means of making sin repulsive and Christ adorable in the eyes of persons who previously loved sin and cared nothing for the divine Savior." But how?

First, the Spirit convicts the world in regards to sin, "because they do not believe in me" (John 16.9). Most of us are accustomed to thinking of sins (plural), not sin (singular). Sins are those failures to be who we think we should be or want to be. Both religious people and non-religious people have a list of things they believe should and shouldn't be done, and both fail to some extent. But when the Bible talks about sin (singular), it is talking about something much more profound. The problem is not that we are trying hard but fail sometimes; rather, the problem is the whole pursuit. We are trying to earn our worth, to be

our own savior, to live in such a way that we'll be acceptable and loved and worthy. When the Spirit brings conviction, we don't just repent of our sins, we also repent of our good deeds because we realize they were all done as a way to avoid God as Savior. The Spirit helps us to see our real Sin: that we've rejected God and looked to something else to fulfill us. We worship idols and not the true and living God who sent his Son to rescue us.

Secondly, the Spirit convicts the world in regards to righteousness, "because I go to the Father" (16.10). If we are all - religious and non-religious - ultimately making and worshipping idols, how can we be reconciled to God? How can we be made right with him if our best efforts are actually an affront to him? The answer is here in the second work of the Spirit: we must look away from our righteous record and trust in the only one truly righteous, the only one who earned by his life a welcome into the arms of the Father. None of us have earned this, but Jesus has, and by faith in him, we can be counted righteous. The Spirit's second work is to bring us to see Jesus as our substitute, living the life we could never live, and dying the death we deserved to die. The Spirit brings this story home, and we come to believe in and rejoice in Jesus.

Finally, the Spirit convicts the world in regards to judgment, "because the ruler of this world is judged." It is one thing for Jesus to rescue sinners, and set them into right standing with God the Father. But that is not all Jesus has come to do, because the world needs more than personal salvation. The world needs to be redeemed and healed, and evil needs to be eradicated. In his death and resurrection, Jesus destroys evil itself: He absorbs it and goes to the grave with it, rising 3 days later to conquer and destroy it. What Jesus does in his death and resurrection re-writes history, and ensures that one day God will make all things right again, renew the heavens and earth, and come to dwell with us on this earth forever.

Listen again to the words of J. I. Packer: "This threefold conviction is still God's means of making sin repulsive and Christ adorable in the eyes of persons who previously loved sin and cared nothing for the divine Savior." Does this describe your life? Have you moved from loving sin to loving the Savior? Has the Spirit of God come into your life and opened the eyes of your heart so that you "see" your sin for what it is, your Savior for who he is and all that he has done? Have you come to bow your knee before him in love and reverence? If so, be encouraged: the Spirit of God has done the greatest miracle ever!