

Never Resist the Convicting Fire of the Holy Spirit

NEVER RESIST THE CONVICTING FIRE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT; EMBRACE IT AND COOPERATE WITH GOD IN TRUE REPENTANCE AND GRATITUDE. HE IS PREPARING YOU FOR GREATER USEFULNESS IN HIS KINGDOM.

During a regular prayer meeting, held in our home with my husband and three evangelists, I was praying for lost souls in the city where we lived, when I first asked God to “show me my heart as You see it.” I wanted my motives to be pure, as we were engaged in extensive evangelism.

Immediately the Holy Spirit answered me by giving me a revelation of my heart as it related to bringing correction to others. He showed me that to some of the men in the room I had pointed out some small areas that required correction in their lives while never having seen the need to apply the needed correction to my own life.

For 15 minutes or more, I sobbed my heart out to God in deep repentance as He showed me the pride of my heart, and I acknowledged it openly. I was deeply changed by that encounter.

But the most life-changing experience, in relation to “making holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1, Living Letters), occurred when God instructed me to undertake an in-depth Bible study on the fear of the Lord and apply it to every area of my life.

According to Proverbs 8:13, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (NKJV). Simply put, it means to have a passion for holiness in thought, word and deed and to hate sin in the same dimensions.

Prior to going on my first Bible teaching trip to seven

nations, I was convicted by the Holy Spirit three times in one week of the sin of pride. In order to really repent of that sin, I realized I needed to see the root of pride in my heart.

I got in a room alone and with a desperate desire and faith asked God to reveal to me my heart as He alone knows it. Nothing happened.

Then I remembered how Jacob wrestled with God before he became a changed man (see Gen. 32:24-26). So I asked God again for divine revelation of my heart and told Him three times that I wouldn't let Him go until I saw the root sin of pride. Absolutely nothing happened.

I thought of Moses, who pled God's character to God when interceding on behalf of the children of Israel. I tried again, telling God that because of His faithfulness and because He had started this conviction, He needed to come through and complete the work He had started.

I quoted two Scriptures: "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it" (Phil. 1:6), and "The Lord will complete that which concerns me" (see Ps. 138:8). Like Jacob, I wrestled with God again and said, "I will not let You go. I will not let You go. I will not let You go."

Then it happened! I saw the mixed motives of my heart.

My husband, Jim, and I were heavily involved in the Teen Challenge ministry and other forms of evangelism inside and outside the spheres of our church. From time to time I would report to our pastor some of the results of the conversions taking place in the ministry that was not connected to the church.

God revealed to me under the bright searchlight of the Holy Spirit's flame that while I genuinely had a burden for the lost souls and gave some of the glory to God, I was at the same time taking some of it to myself by hoping that the

pastor would be impressed by my zeal. It was a horrifying discovery.

I sobbed my way to deep repentance of the sin God hates the most. Pride heads the list of seven things that are abominations to God (see Prov. 6:16-19).

Then the realization came to me that I was to humble myself and make restitution to my pastor by telling him exactly what God had shown me. I obeyed and was graciously received by an understanding man of God.

That experience made an indelible imprint on my life and was part of the needed preparation for God's sending me out to the nations to teach His Word. Over a three-month period, the truth of "My glory I will not give to another" (Is. 42:8, NKJV) was permanently burned into my spirit.

PURITY AND POWER

I've learned that true brokenness before God and man is a forceful means of releasing the power of the Holy Spirit upon us. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "'But on this one will I look [the one who gets God's attention]: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word'" (66:2).

I was greatly encouraged to find that the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to minister to others was in exact proportion to the level of purity I was experiencing. Purity and power became synonymous, a truth upheld in Leviticus 10:3: "This is what the Lord has said, 'I will show Myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified'" (RSV).

How wonderfully kind of God to express His tender love to me through deep conviction of sin. This experience drew me so much closer to Him and deepened my love for Him and understanding of Him. I was learning to appreciate and cooperate with God's loving training program.

Many years later, in times of intense prayer prior to the large evangelistic outreach during the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, I was again crying out to God to reveal anything that would hinder the outpouring of His Spirit on our city. Another painful but necessary milestone of conviction and humbling was the result, but with it God gave me understanding and encouragement from Daniel 11:33-35, which reads: “‘And those of the people who understand shall instruct some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them and make them white.’”

I was getting greater revelation that part of God’s personal love for me was to affirm to me that by His grace He had produced a vessel who had a measure of His wisdom to instruct many from His Word. Because of that high privilege and responsibility, I needed a deeper level of refining and purifying through repentance of sin in order to be more like Him and therefore more useful.

Great gratitude and far less pain accompanied this experience because I was proving that the benefits from repentance far outweighed the humbling involved. As the Scripture says in Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Never resist the convicting fires of the Holy Spirit. Embrace them and cooperate with God in true repentance and with gratitude that He is bringing you closer in relationship with Jesus and preparing you for greater usefulness in His Kingdom.

I was intrigued to learn from a recently converted Persian believer that the god the Persians worship is the god of fire, because they believe that fire is the greatest purifying force. They worship this force because to them, it is the greatest symbol of purity.

This is not only interesting but significant. I believe the depth of our worship to God is equal to the extent of our

understanding of His holiness.

GOING DEEPER IN GOD

God invites us to become more like Him by cooperating with the fires of His love and, thereby, avoiding the fire of His judgment. Jeremiah wrote: "Plow up the hardness of your hearts; otherwise the good seed will be wasted among the thorns. Cleanse your minds and hearts, not just your bodies, or else My anger will burn you to a crisp because of all your sins. And no one will be able to put the fire out" (Jer. 4:3-4, Living Letters).

Plowing involves disruption and uncomfortable change. We're reminded of Jesus' encouraging words in John 8:32 that "'you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'" (NKJV), but we also know that the truth often hurts before we experience the freedom.

The primary agricultural reason for plowing is to get rid of the hardness of the soil. We can easily develop a coldness of heart toward God, His people or the lost. Therefore we need to maintain a vigilant watch over the condition of our hearts.

When we are really serious about having a spiritual heart transplant, we'll cry out to God for the Holy Spirit to break our hearts over what breaks God's heart. We may have to have the supernatural revelation of our heart's condition as only God knows it before a permanent change takes place.

God tells us in Jeremiah 17:9 that "'the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?'"

The answer is found in 2 Chronicles 6:30. Only God knows it.

Once when I was overseas on one of my many teaching ministry trips, I sensed the need for personal spiritual renewal, but I had no knowledge of the area of need for change. I sought the face of God in desperation and faith to give me a revelation of my heart. The result was very shocking to me.

I knew that God knew that I was a genuinely warm, loving wife to my husband, Jim, and a loving mother to our son, John, and our daughter, Jill. But I didn't know there was a small part of my heart that was cold toward each of them, and that the coldness manifested in different ways.

I acknowledged my situation to God with many tears and deep brokenness, and then to each one of them when I returned home. They all said they were entirely unaware of my need for repentance in this area but received me lovingly.

In the days following this time of brokenness before the Lord, while I was still away ministering, at times tears would involuntarily flow, and I found it necessary to explain to one of my team members that they were not tears of sorrow, but it felt like every little bit of hardness of heart was being melted away and my heart was now like liquid love—God's love. This was another life-changing experience from which I have never recovered and trust I never will.

I can honestly say that the personal pain associated with the humbling of confession and repentance of sin is now almost nil. It has been replaced by far more sorrow for having hurt my precious Lord, mixed with the joyous release of peace and the increased power of the Holy Spirit to minister Jesus' life to others.

This explains why my favorite speakers are always those who are used of God to bring the enormous blessing of conviction of sin wherever it's needed in my life. I'm thankful for those who have gone deeper in their experiences with God than I have and have a greater revelation of God's character and ways. Bring them on, God!

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