

7 Ways the Holy Spirit Convicts the World of Sin

Much of the body of Christ today merely thinks about renewal, revival, awakening and manifestations of God's power when they think of the Holy Spirit's function.

Although we would all love to speak about revival and renewal in the church, we have to realize that the Holy Spirit has many other significant functions that are vital to both the church and world. Case in point, an often overlooked function of the Holy Spirit in today's charismatic churches is His assignment to bring conviction in the hearts of people.

Many preachers are merely trying to encourage, motivate and inspire their congregation—when oftentimes the Holy Spirit desires to bring conviction to their church because disobedient lifestyle choices block God's Spirit from freely moving and blessing.

In John 16:8, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. The importance of this function cannot be overstated! Without the Spirit's illumination related to our sinful condition, fallen human beings will never be aware of their sinfulness because their minds have been blinded and their understanding has been darkened (See 2 Cor. 4:4 and Eph. 4:17-19).

Consequently, without being aware of our sinfulness, we will never believe we have a need of a Savior, which means we will never repent of our sins and give our life to the Lord Jesus. Of course, there is a huge difference between "conviction" and "condemnation."

The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin with the express purpose of reconciling them to God; the devil brings condemnation with the express purpose of shaming people into

running away from God.

In this article, I want to focus on how the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin:

1. By keeping the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3).

The apostle Paul makes a profound statement in Ephesians when he talks about our obligation as believers to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Since walking in unity and love is a top priority of the Holy Spirit for the church, He will convict Christ-followers when they attempt to divide the church through gossip, slander and pitting people against each other because of undealt-with bitterness and feelings of resentment.

Jesus said in John 17:20-23 that the world will only believe He was sent by the Father when the church is perfect in unity. Jesus also said that all men will know we are His disciples when we have love for one another (John 13:35). Hence, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the reality of Jesus when they witness people of different ethnic and economic backgrounds experiencing true love through the unity of the church.

2. By witnessing to earthly rulers.

In Scripture, we read the narratives of Jesus witnessing to Pilate (see John 18:36-38) and Paul witnessing to three Roman prelates: governors Felix, Festus and King Agrippa (see Acts 24-26). By preaching the gospel to earthly rulers, the Holy Spirit brings conviction to influential leaders, who in turn can open doors for gospel infiltration in culture through their conversion and/or through granting favor to the church. Even though an earthly ruler is not more important than the average person in the street, the Holy Spirit often focuses on these kinds of individuals to aid the spreading of the Word of God in a particular city or nation.

3. By the general preaching of the gospel.

Of course, anytime we proclaim or share the Good News of Jesus, the Holy Spirit inspires faith in the heart of the hearers (see Rom. 10:17). The apostle John in 1 John 5:6-11 also refers to the fact that the Holy Spirit bears witness as to the reality of the Son of God in the hearts of people.

Unfortunately, when believers are silent, they do not give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to anoint our words and bring conviction to the world at large. This is why Paul asks the question: How can a person believe without a preacher? (See Rom. 10:14.)

Since the Holy Spirit has already been poured out upon all flesh (see Acts 2:17) the world desperately needs anointed and poignant Gospel proclamation the Spirit can use to save, transform, and seal people for the day of redemption (see Eph. 1:13,14).

4. By depicting the beauty of God via art, music and nature.

God depicts His beauty through the creativity of His image bearers (see Gen. 1:27) who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, work together with Him to depict His beauty through art, music, literature, film and the sciences, which also includes the study of nature and natural law in astronomy, geology, biology, physics and beyond. These all point to the intelligent design of a master mind behind all natural and spiritual phenomena. This is why the Bible says the works of the Lord should be studied by all those who delight in Him (see Ps. 111:2) and why nature declares the glory of God (Ps. 19), which in and of itself is enough to be convinced of the reality of God's divine nature and power (see Rom. 1:19-21).

5. By living a holy life.

When Christ-followers live holy lives, yielded totally to the will of God, the Holy Spirit can use that to bring conviction

of sin to unbelievers. (See Luke's account of Peter's conviction that came from being with Jesus in Luke 5:8.)

I have also read various accounts of people getting convicted of sin when they sat down on a train or a park bench next to men of God like Smith Wigglesworth—who was continually seeking after God in his life. Also, in the autobiography of Charles Finney is a story he recounted about the time he casually walked into a factory located in a town where he was conducting evangelistic meetings, which resulted in so many people weeping from conviction of sin that the owner of the factory had to shut down the business and hold a religious service!

6. By the church practicing justice.

Jesus told His followers to imitate Him by feeding the hungry, caring for strangers, visiting people in prison, helping the sick and needy (see Matt. 25). Micah 6:8 also reminds believers that God has already told us that He requires His people to do justice, love mercy and walk in humility with our God. Hence, when Christ followers live a life such as this, the Holy Spirit is able to showcase a community of people who live out the Beatitudes (see Matt. 5:1-16), which is a foretaste of how life can be experienced on earth as it is in heaven (see Luke 11:2-4), which the Holy Spirit will use to convict the world of sin and unbelief.

7. By worshipping Jesus as Lord in word and deed.

Jesus made it clear that He expects His followers to obey His will and not to merely love Him with their lips (see Matt. 7:21, Mark 7:13,14). Thus, when significant amounts of Christ-followers worship Jesus by obeying His commandments (see John 14:15) and live lives of obedience to Him Monday to Saturday—not merely on Sunday—the Holy Spirit will use this to bring conviction to untold millions of people so the world will believe Jesus was truly sent by the Father to be the Lord

and Savior of the world!