

When the Holy Spirit Convicts You About Your Prayer Life

As I travel, I find people living with feeling bad about their prayer life. They feel bad because they don't pray enough. They may have felt like this for years.

The way to find freedom is a simple distinction between condemnation and conviction. Condemnation makes you feel bad and to beat yourself up. *Condemnation causes you to think, "I don't pray like 'so and so' does so why even bother trying."* Paul says there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

Conviction, on the other hand, should lead us to change future action. When the Holy Spirit convicts us about the nature of our prayer life we should listen for the specific actions He has for us in the future. Conviction should lead you to the prayer life that God is looking from you. You may feel bad for the moment, but long term it leads to freedom.

Another way of looking at this would be from a marriage standpoint. Suppose a guy is never talking to his wife but spending all of his time talking to other ladies. He should feel bad about this behavior. Conviction would lead him to change his action with some very specific changes. Condemnation may make him feel bad but won't produce a change until things completely fall apart.

So, the place to start is to take your heart before God and really listen. Don't compare your prayer life to someone else that you know. Maybe before talking to God in prayer about other things you should talk to God about what your prayer life should look like right now. Once you understand what God is calling you to right now, you will have a place to begin.

Say, for example, after spending some time listening to God

you feel like He is calling you to a daily 30 minutes with Him. Maybe you even feel like it is specifically supposed to be your 15-minute commute to and from work.

During the next Sunday church service you hear someone share about praying one hour every day. This makes you feel bad. At that point you can rest assured that what you are experiencing is condemnation and not conviction and let it go. God hasn't yet called you to an hour a day of prayer.

However, now imagine that you are on your way to work and you are listening to talk radio. At this point you remember your commitment to spend that time in prayer. Your challenge then is to respond to the conviction and turn off that radio and spend the time with God. Do you see the difference?

Condemnation leads to a defeated attitude and causes you to throw up your hands and say, "That is just who I am."

Conviction leads you to ask for forgiveness and then move toward the action that God wants for you. The starting point however is listening to what God is calling you to do. Start with the question, "God, what do you have for me to do today?" Then move out of the condemnation and into the life that God has for you. {eoa}

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