

The Spirit Who Convicts

John 16:4b-15

July 5th, 2026

Big idea: The Holy Spirit continues and expands the work of Jesus by convicting the world and revealing truth.

Intro

A common conversation game with kids is “Would you rather?” The conversation goes like this: “Would you rather...” and then two embarrassing or painful options are presented and you have to choose one of the two options. For example, they might say, “would you rather eat an entire bottle of mayonnaise in one sitting or eat only potatoes for an entire year?” “Would you rather come to church wearing a snowsuit or a giant blue mohawk?”

What if the “would you rather” question was a choice between two good things and you had to choose the best thing? “Would you rather have Jesus in the flesh right next to you to teach you and walk with you through life or have the Holy Spirit active in the world?” Most of us would choose Jesus. Jesus says to choose the Holy Spirit.

Why? What does the Holy Spirit do that is so significant, so powerful, so precious that it is to our advantage that He goes away and sends the Spirit?

In essence, The Spirit continues and expands the work of Jesus.

1. Jesus is **leaving** but the Spirit is **coming**. (16:4b-7)
 - a. Jesus is telling them things He hadn't told them before because He was with them before. (v. 4b)
 - i. Now that He is about to leave, He is telling them what they need to know for what's next. He is preparing them for the future.
 - ii. (Carter) First, he has not fully revealed his departure. Throughout the Gospel Jesus speaks of his death, but it's only now that He fully lays out His death, resurrection, and ascension.
 - iii. Second, he has not fully revealed their mission to be His witnesses by the power of the Spirit.
 - iv. Third, he has not fully revealed the world's reaction to the message.
 - b. None asks Him where He is going (v. 5)
 - i. Peter did ask Him in 13:36.
 - ii. Thomas brought it up in 14:5.
 - iii. But what Jesus is saying is a mild correction to their responses.
 1. They have responded by focusing on themselves, their fear, their uncertainty, their sense of loss. (v. 6)
 2. DA Carson uses the example of a child planning on a fishing trip with his dad who is suddenly called away for a work trip. The child says, “Aw, Dad, where are you going?!” – it's more of a protest and lament than an honest question about where Dad's work trip will take him.
 3. They ask but its more about how it affects them and their sense of loss, which is what Jesus point to in v. 6.
 - c. Why is it to their advantage and to ours that He went away and sent the Spirit?
 - i. As God, the Holy Spirit did not have a beginning and was active in the OT.
 - ii. Repeated emphasis that the coming of the Spirit was something new.

1. **John 7:39** But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
 2. **John 14:16** "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;
- d. What was the role of the HS in the OT and how is it new in the New Covenant?
- i. God created and gave life by the Spirit.
 1. **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness;
 2. **Psalms 104:30** You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the ground.
 - ii. He empowered people for leadership and service.
 1. **Judges 3:10** The Spirit of the LORD came upon him (Othniel), and he judged Israel . . .
 - iii. He imparted creative ability to people for special tasks.
 1. **Exodus 31:2-5** "See, I have called by name Bezalel . . . ³ "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *kinds of* craftsmanship,
 - iv. He empowered and inspired the prophets and authors of the OT.
 1. **2 Peter 1:20-21** But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
 - v. His work was limited to certain people instead of all believers.
 1. Came upon people at certain times for certain purposes, but isn't a blanket filling and empowering of all believers.
 - vi. His work was limited to certain kinds of ministry.
 1. Empowered for service, leadership, gave skills – same as NT
 - vii. His indwelling and empowering was limited in duration.
 1. **1 Samuel 16:14** Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul,
 2. **Psalms 51:11** Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
- e. Why did Jesus have to go to send the Spirit?
- i. It's not that they can't occupy the same space or minister at the same time. Rather, the coming Spirit would characterize the new age of the new covenant that would be inaugurated by Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and return to glory.
 - ii. **Ezekiel 11:19** "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,
 - iii. **Joel 2:28** "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.

2. The Spirit **convicts** the world. (16:8-11)

- a. “Convict” is to expose guilt, bring to light, prove to be wrong.
 - i. We use the term to talk about someone being “convicted of a crime” – they were accused, it was an alleged crime, but the headline changes after the trial and they are convicted.
 - ii. The HS gives new life through regeneration, produces fruit in the Christian, leads us into truth, and much more.
 - iii. But in these verses, the focus is on his work in the world, to the world in rebellion against God.
- b. V. 8 gives the summary – convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment – vv. 9-11 develops each of those three, but still pretty brief and may not be obvious what is meant.
- c. He convicts concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me (v. 9)
 - i. The Spirit convicts, showing people that things are not as they should be. It is a growing sense that some things are right and wrong, and we do wrong.
 - ii. The characteristic sin of the world is unbelief. It is the chief sin that Jesus has addressed throughout His ministry and the Spirit continues that work.
- d. He convicts concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father (v. 10)
 - i. The HS is picking up where Jesus left off
 - ii. Jesus exposed the false self-righteousness of the world, but when He returns to the Father, who will carry on that work of exposing? The HS
 - iii. Truly humility that compels us to come to Christ is when we realize that even our best efforts at righteousness fall far short of God’s holy standard.
 - iv. **Isaiah 64:6** For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
 - v. Jesus told the religious leaders that they were like whitewashed tombs, that looked good on the outside but inside held dead men’s bones. That is to expose their sin and self-righteousness that hid a messed up inner life.
- e. He convicts concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged (v. 11)
 - i. Jesus has already said that Satan is a liar from the beginning and when they oppose Christ, they take his side.
 - ii. **John 8:44** "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
 - iii. What Satan thought to be a triumph at the cross would be his downfall as the penalty for sin is paid and the fear of death is taken away.
 - iv. **Hebrews 2:14-15** Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

3. The Spirit **reveals** truth. (16:12-15)

- a. What we have seen in John is that Jesus is culmination of God's revelation.
 - i. **John 1:18** No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.
 - ii. There is a finality of the revelation of God through Jesus in that He is the peak, the pinnacle, the culmination of revelation about God because He is God.
 - iii. **Hebrews 1:1-2a** God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,
 - iv. So as the Son departs, the Spirit continues that role of guiding into all truth.
- b. Just as Jesus did not speak on His own initiative, so neither will the Spirit speak on His own initiative.
 - i. **John 12:49** "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.
 - ii. This does not demote the Son or the Spirit to a lesser nature than the Father. Rather it describes unity between the members of the Trinity. They are not giving competing messages or competing wills, but are in joyful, lockstep communication.
 - iii. Moody: The word, the Spirit, and Christ work together (v 15). The Spirit inspires the word, and the word points to Christ. Do not set at variance or in opposition the Bible and the work of the Spirit. Neither divide Christ from the Bible. He who loves Jesus will love the Bible, for the Bible honors Jesus.
- c. Primarily the apostles in mind as they write the NT but in a secondary way as the Spirit of God points us to the Word of God and works in us to understand it and apply it.

4. Applying the Word

- a. Be ***grateful*** for the age in which we live.
 - i. It's the age of the New Covenant, of the Spirit living within us.
 - ii. D.A. Carson, "Before the triumphant inbreaking of God's saving reign, before the inauguration of the new covenant, millions ignored the claims of the true God. Pentecost transformed that limitation, and millions have been brought to happy submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and to growing obedience by the power of the Spirit whom He bequeathed."
 - iii. Jesus says it is to our advantage that He sends the Spirit, but what He emphasizes is not the personal indwelling of the Spirit to comfort and encourage us, although that's true, but the work of the Spirit to convict and to reveal, bringing more and more people to saving relationship with God.
 - iv. The advantage is gospel expansion – 100's of millions turning to the living God in saving faith. There are followers of Jesus on every continent, across thousands of languages. Christianity is incredibly diverse ethnically, spreading far beyond it's geographic and cultural origin.
- b. ***Conviction*** of sin points to our need for God.
 - i. The Spirit convicts people of their need.
 - ii. The Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 - 1. That's an apologetic argument from human sin and need.

2. How do I know God is real and that I need Him? I can't deny my own sin, my own inability to do what's right. I can't deny the moral code written into the universe and on my own conscience, but I also can't fully follow it.
- c. **Gladness** in creation points to the goodness of God.
- i. Scripture also makes an apologetic argument from God's goodness and blessing.
 1. **Acts 14:15-17** and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. ¹⁶ "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; ¹⁷ and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."
 2. What was His "witness"? doing good to us, satisfying us with food and with gladness.
 3. When someone who is agnostic about God, enjoys a meal with friends on a patio in the summer time and leaves the night with a glad heart, it's a little taste of the goodness of God pointing us to God's reality.
 4. Someone recently compared it to the little pink spoon you get at an ice cream shop to sample the flavor. It's just a taste of the full cup to come. Likewise, God gives us a little taste of His goodness, even when we are far from Him as a witness to His reality and goodness.
 5. When the Spirit convicts that some person about their inability to do what's right, that also points to God's reality and our need for His mercy. In that way, He is pointing him to Jesus, the creating God who made His heart glad with food and the saving God who died for Him.
 6. The world is full of undeniable brokenness and beauty. Christianity explains both.

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