

PART 1: When (*and How*) the Spirit Speaks

John 16:5-15

Several weeks ago someone approached me after service with a proposition and a question. He said, “We always here that we *should* listen to Holy Spirit, but no one ever talks about *how* we learn to do it!” And he was right!

I’ve never met anyone who would say “I don’t really want God to speak to me” ... not, everyone seems to think this would be a great idea! But this statement alone makes an odd presumption ... it presumes that He isn’t speaking at all, or maybe yet. Like there’s something WE need to do in order to make Him start talking.

But ... what if He is already speaking? What if we aren’t hearing because we are resisting what He is saying?

I mean, most people want His guidance about decisions, timing, jobs, money, and general life direction. We talk about hearing the Spirit as though it means we get some sort of impression, a feeling, or a prompting and there’s some truth in that ... experientially

[SLIDE 1]

But The Holy Spirit does not produce subjective impressions detached from Truth.

In John 16, He tells us He speaks by **convicting** (*elenchō*), **guiding into objective truth** (*alētheia*), and **glorifying Christ**, primarily through the Word He inspired, but first

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CAVEAT: Question from someone on the staff ... Who has the Spirit and how do they know? Good question ... here's the Cliff Notes version:

1 Corinthians 12:13 - *For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink.*

John 7:37-39 - 38 - *The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” 39 He said this about the Spirit. Those who believed in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

Romans 8:9 - *You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.*

Galatians 4:6 - *And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!”*

There's a difference in being indwelt with the Spirit which every believer is, and being filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 - *And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit:*

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Indwelling by the Spirit	Filled with the Spirit
All Believers	Yielded Believers
One-time, permanent, and unchanging	Ongoing command, dynamic, repeatable
Identity, Sonship, and Secure Belonging	Spiritual power, Ongoing Growth, and Active Fruit

Indwelling by Spirit = All Believers
Filled with Spirit = Ongoing Yielding, Power, Growth, Fruit

So ... let's talk about how the Spirit Speaks and How we can learn to hear what He is saying....

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Deepest Problem with Hearing from God

Before we ask, "HOW do I hear the Spirit?" we must ask, "Am I willing to receive the kind of truth the Spirit speaks?" In John 16, Jesus shows that the Spirit does not come to validate our feelings. He comes to tell the **TRUTH** about Himself, our **sin**, about **Jesus**, and about **reality** itself.

The Spirit speaks objective truth → we must receive it

The Spirit first comes to confront the heart BEFORE He clarifies the path.

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John 16:5 - 7

*But now I am going away to him who sent me, and not one of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 6 Yet, because I have spoken these things to you, **sorrow has filled your heart.** 7 Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. **It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you.** If I go, I will send him to you.*

So what does He do when He comes?

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I. The Spirit Speaks Into Our Confusion

Counselor (*paraklētos* or *Paraklete*) means helper, advocate, one called alongside.

The Spirit is not **merely** a comforting presence. He is the Advocate who interprets reality rightly when we cannot.

The disciples are sad, confused, and unable to make sense of what Jesus is saying. Their problem is not that they don't have enough information. Their problem is that **sorrow has clouded their ability to understand.** Jesus does not leave them there. He promises the Spirit.

Cross References

- **Luke 24:25-27:** Jesus later corrects slow-hearted disciples and explains the Scriptures to them.
- **1 Corinthians 2:12-13:** The Spirit is given so believers may understand what God has freely given.

Confusion is not solved by more noise. It is solved by Spirit-enabled understanding of truth.

Application

When life feels unclear, **do not assume God is absent**. Pray ... ask for the Spirit's help to interpret your circumstances by **God's truth** rather than by **fear, grief, or impulse**.

If the Spirit speaks into our confusion, what does He **actually** do when He speaks?

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John 16:8-11

*8 When he comes, he will convict the world about **sin**, **righteousness**, and **judgment**: 9 About **sin**, because they do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; 11 and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.*

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II. The Spirit Speaks Conviction, Not Affirmation

Convict (*elenchō*) means **expose, cross-examine, bring to light, prove wrong**.

The Spirit does not merely suggest. He proves. He exposes what is true about us and about **Christ**.

He convicts concerning:

- **Sin**: because they do not believe in Jesus

- **Righteousness:** because Jesus goes to the Father (not here to tell everyone of their sin)
- **Judgment:** because the ruler of this world has been judged (telling the Truth like it is)

This means the **Spirit** does not come primarily to affirm our spiritual sincerity. He comes to reveal and expose reality.

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The Piercing Reality of Conviction

- **Hebrews 4:12:** *For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*
- **Acts 2:37:** *When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”. Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The Spirit does not come to make us feel affirmed **in our own imaginations and ideas**. He comes to tell you what is **true**.

If your Holy Spirit life never confronts our sin, our pride, our bitterness, or our unbelief, **then something is wrong**..

Conviction is not condemnation. It is mercy that leads to repentance.

But the Spirit does not **only** expose what is wrong. He also leads believers into what is true.

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John 16:12-13

12 *"I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now.*
13 *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come.*

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III. **The Spirit Guides Into OBJECTIVE Truth**

Truth (*alētheia*) means reality as God defines it.

The Spirit does not guide through internal impressions **first**. He guides through revealed truth already given by God.

He is called the **Spirit of truth**, not the spirit of private imagination. His ministry is tethered to what He hears from the Father and the Son. He does not create a rival voice to Scripture. He faithfully communicates divine truth.

- **John 17:17**: "Your word is truth."
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17**: Scripture is God-breathed and fully equips the servant of God.

The verb "**guide**" carries the sense of ongoing leading. The Spirit **continually** leads God's people in truth, not by bypassing written revelation, but by illuminating it.

Truth is not what I FEEL most strongly. Truth is what God has revealed most CLEARLY.

If what you think you are hearing contradicts Scripture, it is not guidance. It is deception. The more anchored you are in the Word, the clearer your hearing will become.

QUESTION: Is Truth always clear? Not always, not to everyone, for sure. Stay in the Word, in Prayer. The problem isn't usually that the Word is unclear (though sometimes that's true) but that we don't like what it says!

Where it isn't clear ... or isn't clear **YET**, practice **GRACE** and **HUMILITY** not **ARROGANCE** and **OVERCONFIDENCE**

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John 16:14-15

He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.

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IV. The Spirit Glorifies Christ, Not Experience

And the truth the Spirit reveals always moves in one direction. Towards God / Jesus.

The Spirit's mission is *Christ-centered revelation*, not *experience-centered pseudo spirituality*.

He doesn't draw attention **away** from Jesus. He doesn't create fascination with the mystical while leaving Christ secondary. He glorifies the Son.

- **John 15:26**: The Spirit testifies about Jesus.
- **Colossians 1:18**: Christ is to have first place in everything.

If it does not exalt Christ, it is not the Spirit.

Evaluate every spiritual claim (from ourselves or others), experience, and impulse with this question: ***does this make Jesus clearer, weightier, and more precious, or does it make me more fascinated with myself or others?***

So where does the Spirit ordinarily do this work of conviction, truth, and Christ-exalting clarity?

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V. **The Spirit Speaks Through the Word He Inspired**

Word and Spirit are inseparable. They walk hand in hand ... ALWAYS (God did not tell you to divorce your wife and marry your secretary)

The Spirit-inspired Scripture, ILLUMINATE Scripture, and NEVER contradicts Scripture. Hearing God is not mystical in the sense that it is detached from the WORD. It is a Scriptural and Spirit-illuminated practice He intended for us to have.

- **Psalm 119:105:** God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.
- **Ephesians 6:17:** The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit.
- **2 Timothy 3:16:** Scripture is God-breathed.

Closed Bible, unclear hearing.

Do not ask for a **fresh** word while neglecting the **written** Word. Open your Bible daily. Pray as you read. Ask the Spirit to illumine what He has already breathed out.

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What we must understand is this:

The Voice of Conviction is the Voice of Grace

The Spirit was sent because Christ **completed** His saving work. He (Spirit) exposes our sin, reveals Christ's righteousness, and declares the already declared and finished defeat of Satan.

The same voice that cross-examines the heart is the **SAME** voice that leads us to **GRACE**.

To hear the Spirit rightly is to be brought again and again to His Word, to Jesus, to His cross, to His righteousness, and to His Lordship.

[SLIDE 16]

Closing Challenge - Assess your own Heart

- Are you **resisting** conviction?
- Are you **chasing** feelings instead of **truth**?
- Are you **seeking** guidance without **submission**?
- Are you **neglecting** the **Word** while asking God to **speak**?

The Spirit is speaking truth. Are you receiving it?