

FIRST THINGS FIRST

John 4:28-31

Introduction: Most of us don't like preliminaries, we want to "get on with it" and some, dads, especially, are prone to not follow instructions in assembling something. They read the directions only after all else has failed. Women are also prone to not follow instructions, for instance in baking or cooking something. They add a "dash of this or a pinch of that" instead of the exact amount prescribed in the recipe. Children certainly don't want to be told how to do things as we all know. So what is all this about? To have fellowship with God things have to be done HIS way. One doesn't just suddenly go into close fellowship with God from being ignorant and uncaring to knowing God personally and deeply. There are things that must happen first and in God's order.

I. GOD'S WORD PRODUCES CONVICTION

1. The woman at the well began to remember her sinfulness as she talked with Jesus.
 - *1 Corinthians 14:24-25* indicates that God's written word produces the same effect.
 - Often a pastor is told after a service by one of the members that "you have been reading my mind...you have just described my life...you have just talked about my very condition..." when of course the pastor didn't know anything at all about that person.
 - The Holy Spirit applies God's word whether it is written or being spoken. Conviction of the reader or hearer of sin happens, it comes.
 - The mind is blind and deaf to conviction UNTIL God's word is applied by the Holy Spirit.
 - God's Word must be involved first in a person's life before one can come to God as God wants.

2. Only God knows what is happening to the soul.
 - The Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit to a person opens a window to the soul for the person's mind to begin to see his/her TRUE condition as God sees him/her.
 - Graveyards may be well kept, trimmed, flowered, beautiful and peaceful, but underneath the ground or in concrete crypts there is death and decay.
 - So it is with people. All may seem well with a person until the word of God is heard or read and the Holy Spirit reveals to that person's mind and soul that all is not as well as thought and his/her true condition as God sees it is first seen.

3. The Holy Spirit awakens the conscience to actually pass judgment on one's every thought and act.
 - The human mind is awakened to previously unknown facts, truths about SELF, and the real condition of his/her soul. God's Word is like a sharp, two-edged, sword.
 - The Samaritan woman finally saw herself as God saw and knew her to be.
 - Without God's Word and the Holy Spirit to awaken, to show one's real, true condition before God, no one will ever find God on his/her own.

II. BEING CONVICTED PRODUCES CERTAIN RESULTS

1. Conviction causes a person to want to know more.
 - The Samaritan woman's interest grew as she became curious about how Jesus knew all about her.
 - The Philippian jailer became convicted of his need after hearing and seeing Paul and Silas and cried out, "*...sirs, what must I do to be saved...*"
2. When the heart is unaffected by God's word or by the Holy Spirit scepticism and doubt prevails.
 - Thomas doubted that what the disciples saw was really what they saw.
 - Israel in the wilderness was filled with doubt many times when things were tough.
 - The more the conscience is awakened, the more prone a person is to receive God's word as God wants it to be received.
 - The degree of awakening of a person's conscience determines the readiness of one to receive God's truth.
3. The awakened conscience prompts the desire to tell others what has been experienced.
 - The Samaritan woman hurried back into town to tell her friends what she had just experienced. She was excited.
 - Andrew hurried to find his brother Simon (Peter) to tell him about finding Jesus.
 - A person whose conscience has just been awakened by God's word and the Holy Spirit just has to tell somebody about it.

CONCLUSION:

1. God's word, used by the Holy Spirit can bring conviction to anyone.
2. There are no circumstances, no condition that can prevent a person from being accepted by God when that person responds to God's word as God desires.
 - Anybody hearing God's word, being convicted of his/her sin by the Holy Spirit using God's word, and then repenting, trusting Jesus, and surrendering completely to Jesus as his/her Lord will be saved!
3. The Samaritan woman knew very little about Jesus but she hurried off to tell others about Him.
 - No believer in Jesus has an excuse for not sharing his/her knowledge, be it great or small, of Jesus Christ. No preaching, just simply sharing.
 - Share what you know of Jesus with your own kind, that's what the Samaritan woman did, that's what the lepers did, the beggars, the publicans did. All whose lives Jesus touched hurried off to tell their own kind about Jesus.
4. God's Word, the Holy Spirit, our conscience, our proper reaction equals being right with God.