



SOULWINNING 201 SESSION 5

# HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO DECISIONS

## 1. UNDERSTANDING CONVICTION

- A. Decisions are a result of the working of the Holy Spirit; without the Spirit of God, there can be no spiritual decisions.

Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts. SC 26.3

- i. This makes it essential for us to work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. In order to do this, we must understand how the Holy Spirit works.

B. The work of conviction

- i. “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment...” (Jn. 16:8).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince the soul of its need of Christ. Ev 283

It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has the power to convict and convert men’s souls. RH 6.18.89

The Holy Spirit strives with every man. It is the voice of God speaking to the soul. HP 22

- ii. The Spirit brings conviction by way of the conscience

1. *“Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one...” (Jn. 8:9, emphasis added).*

Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. AG 202

- iv. The Bible speaks of different types of consciences. This simply shows that our response to the Spirit's voice influences our ability to hear it in the future.
  - 1. *A Weak conscience (1 Cor. 8:7)*
  - 2. *A defiled conscience (1 Cor. 8:7; Tit. 1:15)*
  - 3. *A good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16, 21)*
  - 4. *A pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3)*
  - 5. *A seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2)*
  - 6. *A cleansed conscience (Heb. 9:14)*
  - 7. *An evil conscience (Heb. 10:22)*
- v. However, for the Holy Spirit's work to become effective in the life, a personal choice must be made.

It is the Spirit that convinces of sin, and, with the consent of the human being, expels sin from the heart. OHC 52

The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature... COL 411

- vi. This is why Ellen White says

What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will... Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. SC 47-48

- C. To summarize, the Holy Spirit presents before the human mind God's idea of right and wrong, along with the results of each respective choice. Then He moves upon the heart to choose the right way. When we learn to recognize conviction, we will no longer find ourselves trying to urge an unwilling person to decide for Christ, but will instead be uniting with the Holy Spirit's working already in progress. Conviction is the work of God, and we must work in cooperation with Him. However, if we do not understand how the Spirit works, we may find ourselves working against Him, counteracting His influence and grieving the Spirit of God.

### 3. RECOGNIZING CONVICTION

- A. Jesus told Nicodemus that the work of the Spirit upon the human heart was like the blowing wind (Jn. 3:7-8). You can hear the *sound* of the wind, and see the *effects* of the wind, but you can't see the wind itself. In the same way, the moving of the Holy Spirit can be "seen" in the *evidences* of conviction.

#### NEGATIVE

- Sorrow
- Self-Justification
- Objections
- Avoidance
- Anger
- Irritability
- Rationalization
- Resistance
- Restlessness
- Silence
- Tears
- Questions

#### POSITIVE

- Joy
- Repentance
- Personal Application
- Can't Stay Away
- Excitement
- Friendliness
- Lifestyle Changes
- Restitution
- Peace
- Silence
- Tears
- Questions

- B. Some scriptural examples of conviction

- i. Anger – King Ahab (1 Ki. 18:17-18)
- ii. Sorrow – Rich Young Ruler (Mt. 19:20-23)

To give up his earthly treasure, that was seen, for the heavenly treasure, that was unseen, was too great a risk. He refused the offer of eternal life, and went away, and ever after the world was to receive his worship. DA 520.4

- iii. Avoidance, Excitement – Woman at the Well (Jn. 4:16-20)
- iv. Repentance – Jews on Day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:37)
- v. Resistance – Sanhedrin at Stephen's trial (Ac. 7:52f)
- vi. Avoidance – Felix the Governor (Ac. 24:24-25)

A ray of light from heaven had been permitted to shine upon Felix, when Paul reasoned with him concerning righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. That was his heaven-sent opportunity to see and to forsake his sins. But he said to the messenger of God, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." He had slighted his last offer of mercy. Never was he to receive another call from God. AA 427.2

1. *Felix visited Paul and conversed with him often over the next two years, but never again with the opportunity to respond to the Spirit's call.*

## 4. THE IMPORTANCE OF CALLING FOR DECISIONS

### A. Words must be spoken

- i. “You do not have because you do not ask...” (Jas. 4:3)

It is the *work of the Holy Spirit* to convince the soul of its need of Christ. Many are convicted of sin, and feel their need of a sin-pardoning Saviour; but they are merely dissatisfied with their pursuits and aims, and if there is not **a decided application of the truth to their hearts**, if **words** are not **spoken** at the **right moment**, **calling for decision** from the weight of evidence already presented, the convicted ones pass on without identifying themselves with Christ, the golden opportunity passes... and they go farther and farther away from the truth, farther away from Jesus and **never take their stand** on the Lord’s side.... **The people should be urged to decide just now to be on the Lord’s side.**  
Ev 283, emphasis added

When persons who are **under conviction** are not brought to make a decision **at the earliest period possible**, there is danger that the conviction **will gradually wear away**....  
Ev 229

- ii. The need of “direct, personal appeals”

The secret of our success and power as a people advocating advanced truth will be found in **making direct, personal appeals** to those who are interested, having unwavering reliance upon the Most High. – *Review & Herald, August 30, 1892.*

Many times minds are impressed with **tenfold more force** by **personal appeals** than by **any other kind** of labor. **The love of God in the heart will lead them to make earnest appeals**,--to warn, entreat, and reprove. If this work is neglected, souls will continue in sin, confirmed in a wrong course by those who have spoken to them only smooth things. – *Review & Herald, June 17, 1884.*

After the meetings are through, there should be a personal investigation with each one on the ground. Each one should be asked how he is going to take these things, if he is going to make a personal application of them. And then you should watch and see if there is an interest in this one or that. **Five words spoken to them privately** will do more than the **whole discourse** has done. Ev 285

If more personal calls were made, more decided movements would be made to follow Christ. – *Review & Herald, August 15, 1899.*

## 6. THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

### A. Knowing Where to “Hit”

- i. A person can swing a hammer at a nail for an awful long time with absolutely no results if he never hits the nail! One person can labor with an interest for an hour and get nowhere, while another can spend fifteen minutes and gain the decision because he knows just *how*, *where* and *when* to hit. Everyone who labors for souls need to learn how to speak the right word to the right person at the right time to influence the will toward a decision for Christ.

1. *“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how [how to speak] to speak a word [what to speak] in season [when to speak] to him who is weary [who to speak it to].” – Isaiah 50:4.*

- ii. The purpose of the soulwinner is to learn how to speak the right word to the right person at the right time to influence the will toward a decision for Christ.

### B. Three Counselors to the Human Will (factors in our decision-making)

- i. **Reason** – what is right, reasonable, and logical to do (reasonableness)
- ii. **Conscience** – what you ought to do (rightness)
- iii. **Ideals** – what is best for you to do (rewards)

### C. Steps in the Decision-making Process

- i. **Information** - This is the level where facts are presented. A very important question to ask is “Does the individual have adequate information to make the right decision?”
- ii. **Conviction** - This is an inner sense (prompted by the Spirit) of what God wants. Proper information brings conviction. A person cannot be convicted about something they don’t know.
- iii. **Desire** - Wanting to act. This will be influenced by the benefits of right-doing as compared with the consequences of wrong-doing.
- iv. **Action** - When a person has adequate information, a conviction of what is right and a desire to do it, action is the next logical step.

1. *Decisions are made, not simply as men and women are convicted of what they ought to do, but as they develop the desire to act on their conviction. – Finley, Persuasion, p. 26.*

### D. The Minimax Principle

- i. This principle says that Individuals will act on a given item when the benefits are maximum and the risk minimum. Maximizing the benefits of a right action will produce dramatically greater results than focusing on the negative consequences of that follow a wrong action. Jesus often motivated people by sharing the benefits of making right decisions (see Mk. 10:28-30).

2. *Benefits of right doing*
  - a. *Peace (Rom. 5:1; Isa. 32:17; Phil. 4:7)*
  - b. *Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:15-16; Ac. 5:32)*
  - c. *Happiness (Mt. 5:1-8; Jn. 10:10; 13:17)*
  - d. *Heaven (Lk. 12:33; Heb. 11:13-16; Rev. 21:3)*
  - e. *Forgiveness/freedom from guilt (1 Jn. 1:9; Mt. 11:28)*
  - f. *Truth (Jn. 8:31-2; 16:13)*
  - g. *Majority/fellowship (1 Jn. 1:7; Eph. 3:15)*
3. *Consequences of wrongdoing*
  - a. *Loss of light (Jn. 12:35)*
  - b. *Deception (2 Thes. 2:10)*
  - c. *Grieving the Spirit (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30; Ps. 51:11)*

## 7. MEETING OBJECTIONS AND CALLING FOR THE DECISION

- A. Cognitive dissonance is the friction that occurs in the mind when new ideas are incompatible with established ideas. Questions are raised, and these questions become obstacles to a person accepting the truth. However, every question should be seen as an open door to decision. We discover that open door by learning what it is that is holding a person back. When questions do arise, it will save the soulwinner much time and energy to carefully follow these steps:
- i. **Listen carefully** to the question. Often it is a request for more information.
  - ii. **Restate the question** to make sure you understand it correctly.
    1. *Do I understand correctly that...?*
  - iii. **Get a commitment** that if the question is answered, your study interest will decide for the truth.
    1. *“Upper layer approach” – typically the first objection a person gives is not the real issue.*
    2. *Make sure you have an honest question and not an excuse by asking if that is the only reason they are not deciding. You can ask something like “If this issue was cleared up, would you then see your way clear to accepting Christ?... Keeping the Sabbath?... Being baptized?... Etc. Is this the only thing that holds you back?”*
  - iv. **Summarize the truth** in order to fix the truth more firmly in the mind.
  - v. **Answer the question** with short, concise answers.
  - vi. **Call for the decision**, appealing to their love for Christ.
  - vii. **Pray with them and for them**, that they may have courage to follow through.