

When I went to the Seminary we had to take a class on counseling. In it we learned the basics of how to try and help people through their problems through communication and the ability to talk. Whereas the class was helpful in learning the art of communication, in some senses I felt a little messed up by it all. It seemed like two farmers sitting beside a pile of manure.

One says to the other, “how did the manure get here?”

The other says, “I think Bessie left it here.”

The first one replies, “It looks kind of nasty.”

The other says, “Yea, I wonder what she’s been eatin.”

The first exclaims, “Let’s examine her food. We’ll sample it and try to change it to make the manure more healthy lookin. Then we can continue to examine this to see if it can smell better.”

So they go off to try and deal the source of the manure, but never actually take the shovel and clean it up.

My point is that you can counsel and counsel and talk about the how and the why of your actions and feelings, but ultimately, that won’t do the deep cleaning. There are many mental problems that do need counseling and specially prescribed drugs - to help people straighten out their thinking. It does work when it comes to that. Yet I also believe that this has now progressed to the point that psychology and counseling has become the cure all for everything. Why is the man attracted to children? Get a counselor to straighten him out. Why did the boy decide to attack his parents with a knife? Let’s get a counselor and find out. Ok. Then what? Do the drugs always work? Does the counseling always provide a solution? Even if the person realizes how his or her thinking was messed up, that doesn’t address a deeper need - for repentance and faith. If I dismiss every thought and action as an illness that drugs or counseling can cure, I’m not getting to the deeper issues

“The Counselor Comes to Convict” John 16:6-11 Cantate 2025
of sin and grace. We need these issues not just from a mental aspect, but more importantly from a spiritual aspect.

Why do I bring this up? In today’s text, the Holy Spirit is called a “Counselor.” That does not mean He’s here to examine our minds and just get us to understand our feelings. He’s not here to fix our brains. He’s here to mend our souls and our hearts. The disciples had just had their hearts broken. Jesus told them that He was leaving them - by dying on a cross and then ascending into heaven. The disciples were thinking to themselves, “how could this be? How will we be able to survive without our Teacher, our Mentor, our Savior, and our Friend? This simple statement struck them at their very hearts and souls. They felt like Jesus was deserting them. That’s when Jesus promised - not a miracle drug - or a Dr. Phil or an Oprah - but the Holy Spirit - to help them through the rest of their lives “without” Jesus. He would provide the “Counseling.”

How does He do this? Jesus said, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. This seems like a very strange kind of counseling, wouldn’t you say? In the world’s eyes, this whole concept of religion is the REASON for depression and mental illness - using GUILT! Yet Jesus says that the Holy Spirit - whom He would send - counsels by convicting the world of guilt. What does this mean? How does this help anyone?

In the past few decades there has been an all out attack on sin. What is really a sin anymore? Is a child molester just a “sick” individual, or is he not also a terribly sinful individual? One young lady said to me about having sexual relations with her boyfriend, “I guess that’s not very Christian of me, is it?” Not very Christian? It’s a sin that can damn you to hell. When children mouth off to their parents, they aren’t “just being kids.” Their being sinful - their

“The Counselor Comes to Convict” John 16:6-11 Cantate 2025
dishonoring God and breaking the Fourth Commandment. Sin is still sin.
David said, “I was sinful at birth” (Psalm 51:5). But some say God doesn’t
really hold them accountable for that kind of sin. What happened to the
attitude of Joseph who said to Potiphar’s wife, “how could I do such a
WICKED thing and sin against God?” The things that have become
acceptable to Americans and the world - that should be seemingly obviously
evil from their very consciences - have almost completely been eradicated by
our society. There seems to be a logical excuse for everything - of why it’s ok
or why it happened - a diagnose on everything.

But the sin that the Holy Spirit has come to convict is a different kind of
sin. It isn’t a seemingly obvious sin like greed or laziness or adultery and the
like. It’s deeper than that - something that nobody could tell without a
revelation from the Holy Spirit. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come to
convict the world of guilt - in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me.
The specific sin that the Holy Spirit has come to convict and reveal is the sin of
unbelief. The greatest sin that you can commit against God, is to say you don’t
want or don’t need His gift of Christ.

This is impossible for the world to see. Look at it this way. Imagine if you
had planned for an eternity and worked a lifetime to give one gift to someone.
Imagine if you for instance found the cure for cancer, after having studied your
whole life to find the cure. Imagine if you went to someone and offered them
one little pill to take - and promised them they would live with that pill - and
they told you that you were a crackpot - or accused you of trying to kill them
with the pill. What if they took the pill, but never swallowed it? Wouldn’t you
have a right to be angry with them? The ultimate “sin” for them - the reason
they would die of the cancer, could be rooted not to the cancer, which had a
cure, but to the rejection of the cure.

That’s what the Holy Spirit is here to convict people of - to show. The Holy Spirit is here to show people that the worst sin a person can commit - the only sin that really ends up damning - is the sin of unbelief. The worst sin you can commit against God is to say, “I don’t want Christ,” or “I don’t need Christ.” The Holy Spirit does not say, “it’s ok, you believe what you believe, we’ll believe what we believe.” He says, “you need to repent and believe in Christ. Without faith in Him, you will be guilty of the greatest sin against God. You will be damned.” This is the first part of His “Counseling.” The plain and simple truth of the Scriptures is what Jesus said in John 14. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. NO ONE can come to the Father EXCEPT through HIM. I can’t convince anyone of that truth. That truth goes much deeper than the brain. No amount of human counseling can convict you of that truth. The Holy Spirit must do it.

The third tier of the Holy Spirit’s work is “in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.” Judgment is the pronouncing of what is right and wrong. The prince of this world - Satan - likes to think of himself as the author of what is right and wrong. In his mind, I believe he is convinced that he is the truly righteous one - that he knows the difference between right and wrong. Throughout Scriptures, you can see him trying to play the role of the judge. For instance, consider the story of Job. He said to God, Job 1:9-11 “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.” Satan was accusing God of spoiling

“The Counselor Comes to Convict” John 16:6-11 Cantate 2025
Job - making it easy for him. In his mind, true justice would be served if Job could prove himself.

If you look at Satan in this way, can't you see then how and why he is called the “prince of this world.” Everything that Satan does - that whole attitude of wanting to be the judge and the accuser - is the attitude of the world. Their version of righteousness is that you've got to earn it. Their version of justice is that there should be NOTHING for free - no grace - no forgiveness. They love to show how sinful Christians are and how hypocritical they all seem to be. Everyone should have to pay for their OWN sins. Everyone should have to earn their OWN way. How dare you preach a FREE salvation! How dare you say that there is hell without Christ! Where is the JUSTICE?

When the disciples were left with the prospect of finishing their lives without Jesus on earth, they felt deserted and in despair at first - like sheep that would be without a Shepherd. We live in an age where people live that way every day. They don't know what to believe. They don't know what to do. All they can come up with is some nice terms like, “You believe what you believe. You do what you do. I'll do what I do. What's right for me, may not be right for you.” It's led to the acceptance of we now call “alternate lifestyles,” same sex marriages, and a whole onslaught of other problems. It's also led to many convicts getting away with murder and all sorts of crime. Why? Because despite the counseling, there isn't much conviction anymore, a majority of the world, therefore, is sadly lost in a land of “I don't know.” They're like sheep without a Shepherd.

Jesus assured the disciples they would not be alone. They would be given a Counselor - the Holy Spirit. The Counselor's job would be to convict them with the Truth. That's what the Holy Spirit has done with us. He

“The Counselor Comes to Convict” John 16:6-11 Cantate 2025
has convicted us of sin, righteousness, and justice. We know we’re sinful. We
know we’re not righteous. We know we deserve God’s justice. Yet the
Counselor has also shown us where all of these convictions come together - at
one place, the cross, the cross and the cross. Only in the cross do we see sin
paid for. Only in the cross do we find our righteousness. Only in the cross do
we see God’s kind of justice. With this Counseling it brings us joy in the face
of sadness and hope in the midst of despair - confidence to face this life
without Jesus physically standing by our side. Thank God, then, for our
Counselor - the Holy Spirit - who convicts us with the truth and fills us with the
confidence to go on. Amen.