



**Luke 5:4-11**  
***True Conversion***

4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

A recent Southern Baptist poll shed light on a growing crisis in the modern evangelical church, namely that only around 14% of the kids converted through youth group ministries, such as Young Life or Inter Varsity go on to become Christians in adulthood and join churches. The vast majority quickly wither away once their association with the youth ministry they were converted under ends.

I am told that one local church on hearing those stats and realizing from their own experience that they were true, concluded that the answer was to massively expand their youth group outreach on the theory that the more people they had in the youth group, the larger that 14% that did continue to follow Christ in adulthood would be.

Never though, does it seem to occur to most modern evangelicals, that the problem is not in the number of fish in the sea, but perhaps that our approach to fishing has become radically defective, because brothers and sisters, while we don't have definitive numbers, the numbers of young people converted in the early church and for instance the church at the time of the reformation who went on to become Christians in adulthood were surely much higher.

What I believe has happened is that sadly, the church has lost two vital components of the authentic gospel, two components that seem to have fallen entirely out of favor in our approach not only to youth group ministry but to ministry altogether. And these components are absolutely vital to real conversion.

The first of them is seen clearly in the passage of that we just read, a passage in which we see Peter's eyes opened to the identity of Christ, and most probably the moment of his conversion.

**What is that element? *Conviction of Sin.***

Now the interesting thing to me about this episode in the life of Peter, is was not Christ's first encounter with him. It came after Jesus had initially called Peter to follow him. It even came after Peter had seen some of Christ's miraculous work and heard his preaching. But the great moment of change in Peter's life comes when he realizes because of this particular miracle, that this man who can command even the fish of the sea is not just a prophet, *but God almighty*. And confronted with the fact that he is in the boat with the Son of God what does he do? Does he jump for joy?

No friends, he falls down at his knees and confesses "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Now this Peter isn't what people would have called a terrible sinner, sure fishermen are rough folk with ripe language, but this is no murderer, or thief, or heartless tax-collector. He's a hardworking family man, who understands the value and importance of religion.

So what happened to him? The holy spirit worked in his heart not only convincing Peter of who Christ was, but opening his eyes to see who he himself was. Holy God  $\leftrightarrow$  Unholy Peter. And instantly he is convicted! His eyes are opened in a moment to see how far from being good enough to be in the presence of a holy God he really was. And it is DEVASTATING! He is undone in that moment. He can't even stay around him.

I want to suggest to you, that although it may happen differently in various lives this element of conviction of sin, leading to repentance, is a vital part of true conversion. I have never seen a true conversion that hasn't included conviction of sin and repentance, and that shouldn't surprise us. That is the biblical norm, namely that men whose eyes are opened to the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin respond in the way that Peter did.

Turn with me to Isaiah 6:1

***NKJ Isaiah 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.***

***2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.***

***3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"***

***4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.***

***5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."***

***6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.***

***7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."***

***8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."***

Isaiah, prophet of Israel is brought into the throne room of God, and he is coming apart at the seams he realizes just how far he is from the kingdom. And it is not until he receives assurance from God himself that his sin has been paid for, purged away, that he is restored. There is an amazing parallel here to what happened with Peter, Peter comes into the presence of God, he sees and is undone, he receives words of assurance from Jesus and then like Isaiah is told he himself will be sent to preach the gospel.

And friends understand this, unless you understand the gospel from that standpoint of experiencing its power like Peter and Isaiah, you will never truly be able to preach it. This is the confession of many a pastor who was converted in the pulpit. For instance Ebenezer Erskine, who had been ordained for several years, and said he used to preach for a fixed amount of time while staring at a single stone in the back of the church, one day heard his brother and his wife speaking of the gospel through an open window in his study, and in a moment realized that he knew nothing of the Savior nor the power they were speaking so naturally about. At that moment his eyes were opened and he himself closed with Christ.

Look if you will at the preaching of the Apostles themselves if you still have doubts that this element of conviction of sin is as vital as I maintain:

Turn with me to *Acts 2:36* ***"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."***

***37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"***

***38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***

***39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."***

***40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."***

Now you won't get far today, calling the nation a perverse generation. But again and again you see the Apostles using a formula that would never fly in our churches today. They open up the holiness of God, the fact of Sin, then the free offer of the Gospel. Men are "cut to the heart" but far from producing despair and depression good fruit is the result, they flee to Christ.

That flight along with repentance is what conviction of sin is designed to produce. Not merely sorrow!

Paul makes this point in 2 Cor. 7:9 ***Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.***

***10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.***

This true repentance is based on and rooted in the work of regeneration. It is the effect of regeneration in the conscious life. It involves a change of thoughts and opinions, of desires and volitions. It is an altering of the entire course of life. The book of Lamentations describes conversion as involving a twofold aspect. "Turn thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned..." On the one hand, there is the passive aspect of conversion, in which God is the active agent. This involves the subconscious level of man. It is the regenerating work of God. On the other hand, there is the active response of man. This is the resulting conscious act of the regenerated man, by which he through the grace of God turns to God in repentance and faith.

Conviction which springs from having ones heart changed by the Spirit produces flight to Christ.

Why do the convicted flee to Christ, because The Second Element in true Gospel Preaching after the opening up of the law to drive men to Christ and convict them of sin, is to show them the marvelous grace of Christ. They flee to him, because they know they can go nowhere else. And they receive his grace as a lifegiving balm.

But too often men are not converted to Christ, they are swept up by emotion

Luke 8:13 ***“But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.”***

DL Moody –

Billy Graham – time between call

Newest Fads – Joel Osteen, seats 16,000

Here are two testimonies of other bloggers who have invested time into researching Osteen. Don Elbourne watched a webcast and concluded that there was "No Christ, no cross, no mention of man's moral bankruptcy, just the feel-good positive message of assurance that God always rewards human effort and virtue." Michael Spencer, who says he has listened to over twenty five hours of Osteen says "Osteen's messages are about "God's Favor" on marriage, finances and career. Sin is never mentioned. In well over 25 hours of preaching that I listened to this year, Jesus was almost never mentioned, and when he was mentioned, it was in a perfunctory prayer in the last minute. Sin, the Cross, the atonement? Not there."

Jesus is rarely mentioned. If He is mentioned, it is as our helper in becoming better people.

Salvation means being reconciled to God; and that involves and includes sin's dominion over us being broken, enmity within us being slain, the heart being won to God. This is what true conversion is; it is a tearing down of every idol, a renouncing of the empty vanities of a cheating world, and taking God for our portion, our ruler, our all in all. Of the Corinthians we read that they "first gave their own selves unto the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5). The desire and determination of those truly converted is that they "should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15).<sup>1</sup>

Yourself?

Two Testimonies,  
Martin Lloyd Jones  
John Newton

***Q76: What is repentance unto life?***

***A76: Repentance unto life is a saving grace,[1] wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit [2] and word of God,[3] whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger,[4] but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins,[5] and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent,[6] he so grieves for [7] and hates his sins,[8] as that he turns from them all to God,[9] purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.[10]***

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<sup>1</sup>Pink, A. W. 2002. *Profiting from the Word* (electronic ed.). Ephesians Four Group: Escondido, CA