

DEVELOPING CONVICTIONS AND RESPONDING GODLY

INTRODUCTION

- But what exactly do we mean by the term conviction? Conviction means “the act or process of convincing,” “the state of being convinced,” or “a fixed or strong belief.” Thus, by biblical conviction we mean convictions or beliefs derived from and based on a commitment to Scripture, the Bible. As God’s Holy Word, it is the absolute index for the whole of our lives—faith and practice.
- Conviction refers to the state of being convinced and confident that something is true; it means a strong persuasion or belief. In other words, conviction stands opposed to doubt and skepticism. When we think of a man of conviction, we also think in terms of action and direction. We think of a person whose convictions have a definite impact on how he lives, on what he does, says, and where he goes. **By a man of biblical convictions, we mean a man whose convictions are derived from Scripture and whose convictions affect him scripturally.**¹
- **2 Timothy 1:12** “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”
 - This is Paul telling Timothy about His own convictions regarding God. Where did Paul derive his personal convictions from?
 - He says *whom I have believed*. “Paul stood convinced (same word as “persuaded” of v. 5) that divine power could preserve him. Paul knew that he had placed his faith in a living person who would never disappoint him.”²
 - This point is foundational. It is from this conviction that Paul builds all his other ones. If he did not believe that God was able to guard and be trusted, Paul’s life would have looked a lot different.
- Conversely, Paul encourages Timothy to do the same thing in **2 Timothy 3:14** “**You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them...**”
 - Notice the common themes between Paul’s personal testimony and his exhortation to Timothy?
 - Learning/believing/knowing...being convinced of by an outside source...from whom...
- We need to learn, know and believe the Bible and then we will be able to build some convictions and stand firm when we are challenged in these areas.

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/mark-6-biblical-conviction>

² Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, New American Commentary, (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 194.

- Biblical conviction is really the product of three things that characterize the ideal Christian leader or the person of maturity: (a) a commitment to Scripture as one's authority, (b) the construction of specific beliefs and convictions based on that authority, and (c) the courage to act on those convictions in faith.³
- These three areas we are going to dive into tonight.

A COMMITMENT TO SCRIPTURE

Committed to Scripture as inspired, thus inerrant and the final word

- **2 Peter 1:20–21** “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, *but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*”
- **2 Timothy 3:16** “*All Scripture is inspired by God* and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...”
- *Let us now discuss the inerrancy of Scripture, a fiercely debated topic in contemporary theology. The term simply means “no errors,” that is, “truth” in the common, garden-variety sense. What Scripture says, is true, never false. Therefore, you can rely on it. There are no errors in it.*
- *By the way, error is not the same thing as imprecision. We often express ourselves imprecisely, as when we use round numbers. But to do so is neither to lie nor to make a mistake. Often we must use some round numbers to express ourselves clearly. If I tell you my age down to the minute and second, that is too much precision, precision that interferes with communication. The Bible never claims to be perfectly precise. It only claims to be true.*
- *It is true because it is God's Word, and God always speaks truly. Error comes from deceit (telling lies) or ignorance (making mistakes). But God never tells lies (Titus 1:2), and never makes mistakes (Heb. 4:13).⁴*
- Among all the other characteristics of Scripture (infallible, clarity, necessity, sufficiency, etc.), inerrancy is the bedrock for them all. If you believe the Bible to have errors, two things are going to become evident.
 - You are going to go to another source of truth that you deem to be the best.
 - You are not going to have an unwavering faith in God and His ways.
- To believe that the Bible is free from errors and that God inspired the writers of the Bible, is to accept that the Scriptures are not just about God but from God. They are *exactly* what He wanted (and wants) to communicate to us. This one simple belief will have multiple implications in our thinking and worldview.

³ <https://bible.org/seriespage/mark-6-biblical-conviction>

⁴ John M. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 67–68.

Committed to Scripture as being our standard of thinking.

- **Romans 12:1** “And do not be conformed to this world, *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
- **Philippians 4:8–9** “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, *dwell on these things*. The things you have *learned and received and heard and seen in me*, *practice these things*, and the God of peace will be with you.”
- The only way a man can have his mind renewed is through the Scriptures. If we believe the Scriptures are from God and through them He has revealed Himself to us, then we need to go to them to learn how to rightly think in this life.
- As we learn about God and what He desires, we are starting to build convictions on how we are to live. These convictions are not found in our own hearts and minds, but after diligently putting our work into finding out what God’s standards are for us.

Committed to Scripture through our diligent study and standard of living.

- **Colossians 3:16** “*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you*, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. *Whatever you do* in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”
- We cannot have the Word of Christ richly dwelling in us if we are not reading the Bible on a consistent basis. This does not mean that we are all academic theologians, but it does mean that we should have a steady, consistent diet of God’s Word flowing into our hearts and minds.
- We should never expect to live in accordance with God’s standards or please Him with our life if we do not know what His Word says for us.
- What we know to be true about God will dramatically affect the way we live our life.

COMMITTED TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

- “If reason alone be sufficient to direct and duly excite men to virtue and happiness, why did Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and innumerable others of the life complexion distress the world with their costly and tedious instructions?”⁵ If the world’s philosophy and wisdom were enough to build our convictions upon, why do philosophers keep coming? Why does the world keep looking for a source of ultimate truth and worth?

⁵ John Brown of Haddington, *Systematic Theology: A Compendious View of Natural and Revealed Religion*. p. 41.

- If we are going to have anything meaningful or powerful to offer the world and for our own hearts to live by, it must come from the Bible.
- As we mine the depths of Scripture for our convictions, we must firstly be willing to and active applying these things to our own life.
- Our convictions mean little to nothing if they have no impact on our own hearts. People are not going to believe the power of the Word if that same Word has no affect in your own life.
- **1 Thessalonians 2:13** “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”
- Do you believe that the Word of God can do what it says it can do? If so, you must take application in your own life, set the example for others and then give them the same Word.

Building a Biblical Conviction⁶

- A Biblical conviction is always based on a study of, submission to, and application of Scripture.
 - **Psalm 119:11** “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”
 - As we discussed earlier, we need to find out what the Bible says in order to live in such a way that is pleasing and honoring to God.
 - We must hate sin, stive for holiness and have compassion on those who hate us.
- A Biblical conviction is always predetermined.
 - **1 Peter 5:8** “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
 - The swiftness in which people say they have convictions shows that they have never thought about something before it was time to give an answer. We need to have a consistent study of the Bible and be ready to make a choice *before* the situation comes upon us.
 - A conviction is not a kneejerk reaction or emotional response, it is something that has been worked out in our own hearts and minds that we hold dear.
- A Biblical conviction will not change with the circumstances.
 - **Ephesians 4:14** “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”
 - If you are convinced of something from the Bible, then it should not matter what society throws at you. This goes back to your belief in the inerrancy of the Word. If the Word of God is without error, then by believing something else you are, by default, believing a lie.

⁶ Paul Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, 2001, pp. 128, 132-133

- We must make sure we are continually tethering ourselves to the Word so that we are not going up and down, ebbing and flowing, with the culture.
- Biblical convictions are inflexible.
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:15** “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.”
 - This has been exposed to be true about the current church age. Far too many churches have allowed sin to come in because it has been too hard to fight. They have become flexible with their beliefs because they never really believed it anyway.
 - You cannot allow something to change the definition of a word to suit their desire.
- True biblical conviction is bold.
 - **Psalm 138:3** “On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul.”
 - We must take a bold stance for the Lord when it is called for. We must not shrink away, hoping that something better will come to us.
 - Remember that the very fact that you are a Christian is already a bold witness in a godless world that only holds its own ideas as dear.
- True biblical conviction is always lived out.
 - **Colossians 1:10** “...so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...”
 - Our lives are a direct reflection of what we believe. There is not a person alive that does not live according to what they are convicted of.
 - Our hearts are the “mission control center” of our whole life, directing how we act. Therefore, the thing that controls our hearts is going to control our actions.
 - This is why we cannot seek to overtake society with goodness, their hearts are still dead and wicked. In order to live out God’s ways, we must have a new heart.

Biblical VS Personal Convictions

- As believers and those who hold to the historic Christian faith, we must have certain convictions which have been developed out of our common belief in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world.
- When we talk about personal convictions, we will formulate our belief about something that is not directly talked about in the Bible. They are very important, and I would assert that these convictions, while not expressed in the black-and-white nature of the Bible, need to always be driven by Biblical principles.
 - As Paul said in **1 Corinthians 10:23** “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

- This means that when it comes to building our own personal convictions which are not black-and-white in the Bible, we should be asking if they are profitable and do they edify.
- We will dive more heavily into this topic on May 4th, but sufficient to say we must be able to tie what we believe to what the Bible says...either explicitly or in principle.

COURAGE TO BIBLICALLY RESPOND ACCORDING TO OUR CONVICTIONS

- What we know to be true and what we are convicted of are of real no substance if we are not able to effectively communicate with people who hold to differing views.
- *“It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.”*⁷
- Dialogue and debating are good things, especially for the church. All that we hold dear to us as Christians, from our Bibles to our doctrine, was at one time called into question. Bold men and women had to stand against false claims and properly defend the historic faith.
- As believers, we need to be watchful of our practice and our doctrine.
- Paul exhorts the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 16:13–14** “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” We have five commands here from Paul, the fifth modifying the first four. All that we are to do, we do with love.
 - We need to be on the alert, or in other words...be watchful. One definition says “to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake you.”⁸

How We Do Not Want To Respond

- Ad Hominem – attacking the person
 - Calling someone names or questioning their intentions *instead of* the topic at hand.
 - Our goal should not be to call the persons character into question but speak on the topic that they are having issues with. If you attack a person, it shows that you really do not know what you are talking about and you have to instead “sling mud.”
- Slippery Slope⁹ – A course of action is rejected because, with little or no evidence, one insists that it will lead to a chain reaction resulting in an undesirable end or ends.
 - The slippery slope involves an acceptance of a succession of events without direct evidence that this course of events will happen.
 - This may be a valid argument, but we must make sure we have evidence in presenting our case.

⁷ Joseph Joubert

⁸ Thayers Greek Lexicon

⁹ <https://www.txstate.edu/philosophy/resources/fallacy-definitions/Slippery-Slope.html>

- Biblically speaking, we know that some acceptance of sin will lead to other sin (ex. Rom. 1). If we can lead someone down that path, then do it.
- Irrelevant Authority¹⁰ – The fallacy of irrelevant authority is committed when you accept without proper support for his or her alleged authority, a person's claim or proposition as true.
 - Just because you think something to be true does not mean it is true. We must *always* anchor our beliefs in what the Bible says.
 - Remember, it is not your job to convince them of the truth but to deliver it to them properly.
- In anger or an uncaring way. – The way we speak is just as important as what we are saying. Showing care to people will go a long way when trying to give them the truth.
 - Some of the truths that people hold to (transgenderism, LGBT, etc.), they have made them part of their identity. It does not mean that you say nothing, it means you speak to them in a caring way.

How Do We Respond Biblically?

- Convictions overlap with wisdom and Christian freedom of conscience. We should be able to show from the Bible where we develop our convictions. But just because we derive convictions for ourselves from Scripture doesn't mean we can impose them on others. In many cases, Christians may come to different personal convictions because of the biblical principles they are applying and how they weigh out various applicable biblical texts. The rule of faith should keep us from elevating our convictions to universal moral law. And the rule of love should keep us from imposing our convictions self-righteously on others.¹¹
- First and foremost, we need to be able to speak the truth.
 - **John 8:32** "...and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
 - The meaning here involves knowing Jesus as truth, who brings a transforming sense of freedom to human life. It is not a statement advocating attachment to mere information or doctrine about Jesus. It is instead a statement about a living relationship with the Son of God, "the truth," who gives freedom to human beings (cf. 8:36).¹²
- We must be able to speak with wisdom.
 - **Colossians 4:5** "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity."
 - When we are interacting with the world, we need wisdom. We need to be able to see the issues behind the issues.

¹⁰ <https://www.txstate.edu/philosophy/resources/fallacy-definitions/Irrelevant-Authority.html>

¹¹ <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2020/12/07/on-building-convictions-and-wearing-masks/>

¹² Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 303.

- The world is looking for something to fill their empty hearts and relieve the dread that is on their soul. We have that answer.
- We must have boldness, not in ourselves but in God who uses our weakness for His glory.
 - **1 Thessalonians 2:1–2** “For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.”
 - In Philippi Paul was mistreated, put in jail and beaten for the Faith (Acts 16:19–30). When he came to Thessalonica, he still preached the message with boldness. It was not because he was so great but because of his conviction that God was so great.
- We must have clarity when responding to people.
 - **Psalm 119:130** “The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.”
 - We must be able to “unfold” the Word of God in order to give the light. We are not trying to convince people to hold to our convictions but to know and respond to the gospel. Do not try and speak in such a way that makes you sound smart, speak to the issue and the heart.
- Our words must have love/grace throughout.
 - **Colossians 4:6** “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”
 - Our heart should not be to “win” an argument or to “prove someone wrong.” These things are going to win souls but build walls and potentially enemies to the gospel.
- With an offensive message...not an offensive personality
 - **1 Corinthians 1:23** “...but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness...”
 - “If the truth offends, then let it offend. People have been living their whole lives in offense to God; let them be offended for a while.”¹³
- With the end goal of glorifying God
 - **1 Peter 4:16** “...but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.”
 - Overall, our convictions will inevitably lead us to be persecuted by the world. There is no escaping it. How we respond to it should have God’s great glory our mind.

¹³ John MacArthur *Found: God’s Will*