

The Need For Conviction

Introduction. In 2001, Mark Cuban, owner of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, offered WGN Chicago Radio sports-talk host David Kaplan \$50,000 to change his name legally to "Dallas Maverick." When Kaplan declined, Cuban sweetened the offer. Cuban would pay Kaplan \$100,000 and donate \$100,000 to Kaplan's favorite charity if he took the name for one year.

Despite some soul-searching and email bombardment from listeners, who said he was crazy to turn down the money, Kaplan held firm. "I'd be saying I'd do anything for money, and that bothers me," Kaplan said. "My name is my birthright. I'd like to preserve my integrity and credibility."

That's conviction! "Convict" means to "convict by convincing" (John 8:46). This is someone who reaches a belief because they have been firmly persuaded about a matter; the word usually suggests putting the convicted person to shame. The word in the original language is variously translated as "convinced" (1 Corinthians 14:24), "reprove" (2 Timothy 4:2), "rebuke" (Hebrews 12:5), "expose" (Ephesians 5:11, NKJV), and "tell him his fault" (Matthew 18:15).

When you're able to walk away from tremendous financial reward because you believe in something, you're convicted. And this conviction is the same attribute that Christians need to possess. We have a responsibility to live every day in a way that brings honor to the name of Christ, and we're going to see how that's done today.

I. What God Expects And Wants From Christians

A. Paul demanded three qualities of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

1. Steadfast.
 - a) This word suggests "sedentary; i.e., by implication, immovable." The Message translates this phrase as "Stand your ground." The word is translated as "settled" in Colossians 1:23.
 - b) For something to be steadfast, it has to be on solid ground. For the Christian, Christ is our rock and foundation (1 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 2:20). We are planted in truth and building on the rock (Matthew 7:24-25).
2. Unmovable.
 - a) "Steadfast" refers to their firm establishment in the faith; "unmovable" to that establishment relative to assault from temptation or persecution. Through our steadfastness we become unmovable.
 - b) This is the only time the word is used in the New Testament The CEV translates the phrase as "Don't be shaken."
 - c) Two elements we must not be moved from is our faith and hope;
 - (1) Paul was trying to persuade them of the veracity of the resurrection.
 - (2) He gave rational grounds for faith and hope in Jesus the risen Lord.
3. Abound in the work of the Lord
 - a) Abounding is more than a little — it means to be or exist in abundance, with the implication of being considerably more than what would be expected (John 15:8; 2 Peter 1:8).

- b) Abounding in the work of the Lord is keeping the commandments of the Lord, and doing good works to His glory (2 Corinthians 8:7; 9:8).
 - (1) If it is not authorized in the scriptures, it is not a good work.
 - (2) It does not bring God glory any more than Nadab and Abihu's strange fire brought glory to God (Leviticus 10:1-2).
 - c) Fixedness is a condition of abounding in work, and If you abound in being steadfast and unmovable, then your labor is not in vain.
- B. This is what we want; in fact, many of you are striving to and fulfill all these requirements, but we do see people that:
- 1. Conform to the world and abandon the Lord's standards of purity.
 - 2. Forsake the assembly or get as close to it as they can without doing it.
 - 3. Abandon truth and true worship for error.
 - 4. Quit the Lord and leave His church altogether.
- C. I want you think about and answer the question of why. Why make a commitment and then fail so badly at it?

II. Many Fail Because Of A Lack Of Conviction

- A. In the parable of the sower, Jesus talked about soil wherein the seed could find "no root" (Matthew 13:6, 20-21; Luke 8:13). "No root" is synonymous with a lack of conviction!
- B. The work of the Holy Spirit is summed up in John 16:8 by showing how He will convict the world in three areas:
- 1. Of sin:
 - a) Sin is a transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4), and we stand convicted (James 2:9).
 - b) All sin is always against God (Genesis 39:9; 2 Samuel 12:13), and everyone has committed sin (Romans 3:23).
 - c) The seriousness of sin is seen in that it separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), and that it took the death of Christ to remedy it (Romans 6:23).
 - 2. Of righteousness:
 - a) Like the Israelites of old, our righteousness, developed from our own mind, is thoroughly inadequate to save (Isaiah 64:6).
 - b) The righteousness of God, born of grace, is available to us through our faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24-26).
 - c) God's grace can be ours if we will repent (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).
 - 3. Of judgment:
 - a) Fearing God and keeping commandments are essential because the judgment is coming (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).
 - b) Our judgment will be according to what we have done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).
 - c) Remembering that judgment is coming will make a difference in our decision-making (Hebrews 11:24-26).
- C. How does the Spirit convict us? The apostles received the Spirit, and then they convicted us by the word — first spoken, then written, and today proclaimed to people (2 Timothy 4:2). The power is in the word (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians

1:21; 2:1-5; Hebrews 4:12). Paul (Acts 17:1-4; 18:4) and Apollos (Acts 18:28) were great examples of this in New Testament times.

D. We need to be convicted:

1. Of important doctrinal elements.
 - a) There's only one true body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4).
 - b) God is intolerant of false religious groups (Ezekiel 13:7).
 - c) The Lord's Supper should be served every Sunday (Acts 20:7).
 - d) The use of instrumental music in worship is wrong (Colossians 3:16).
 - e) Baptism is essential for salvation (1 Peter 3:21).
2. Of important moral elements.
 - a) Letting other activities get in the way of service to Christ (Matthew 6:33).
 - b) Exposure to ungodly forms of entertainment (1 Peter 2:12).
 - c) Using euphemistic, profane, and crude language (Ephesians 5:4).
 - d) Public and private use of alcohol (1 Peter 4:1-3),
 - e) Dressing/undressing ourselves in an immodest way (1 Timothy 2:9-10).
3. We have to come out of the world and be pure, both doctrinally and morally (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). Conviction means transformation (Romans 12:2)!

III. Final Thoughts About Conviction

- A. Your conviction cannot be borrowed; it must be personal (2 Timothy 1:5). It cannot be your parent's or your spouse's conviction.
- B. Your conviction is not just a preference for the moment, it is a choice for life. It is commitment to the One you believe in — Christ (Luke 14:26-31).
 1. There's a saying I've heard all my life and it's when older preachers say, "I know less or I'm less sure now than I was when I was young."
 2. What we need are men who can say, "I've studied all my life and I'm more sure now that I've ever been." That's conviction!
- C. Your conviction extends beyond what is convenient. Sometimes we think only in terms of where the closest building is and where will I receive the most perks. We need to think of where we can develop our talents (Matthew 25:20-23).
- D. Your conviction is much deeper than how you perceive hypocrisy in others and how you perceive you've been slighted by others (Galatians 2:11-13). Your devotion is your devotion no matter what anyone else does.

Conclusion. Our congregation is aging because Lufkin is aging. Lufkin is aging because the United States is aging. I've read 20-30 articles over the last several years to this effect. As we age, we need to be convicted, for our conviction passes down to our children. Furthermore, let's not make our conviction only based on the fact that we're older and set in our ways. The gospel is too valuable for that. Be convicted because of a lifetime of love for the Lord and His church, and the bountiful study that's been done on your part over the decades.

Now can be your time to respond, so come up to the front to tell us if you need to obey the gospel of Jesus or recommit yourself to true devotion to Jesus.

I am deeply indebted to Harold Hancock for the use of his material.