

Standing Firm in the Culture of Compromise

Core Convictions-3rd Sermon

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Culture values grinds against our Christian values until either they crush and crumble or we stand up to encounter them. If we want to live a godly life in the middle of this friction/battle, we must determine our core convictions according to the Bible and know how to live them—before we face the pressure from the people around us. It is always easier to resist the winds of change if your roots run deep in God's truth.

Daniel and his friends knew this first-hand. After their Babylonian captors changed their names, their new master Ashpenaz, did something else significant: he assigned them a portion of the King's table. You might be tempted to think, *that doesn't sound so bad—what's the big deal? May be the old Ash was just being hospitable.* BUT THINK AGAIN.

Not only did the King's rich food & drink violated the dietary laws of Jews/Israel, but most of it had been offered up to idols prior to being served. Instead of enjoying the sumptuous meal, Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food & wine, in order to remain pure in body and spirit. He asked instead if he and his friends could have veggies, grain and water (Dan 1:8). Daniel knew the kind of nourishment his soul and body needed and he knew how he was to live out his convictions. So, when the opportunity to compromise came, he did not think twice. When we know what is in our CORE, we don't struggle to decide.

Receiving new names and being invited to eat at the King's table, may, on the surface, have seemed like welcoming acts, but they were in fact, the start of a full-scale assault on the young Jewish men and their faith. Much like the broader scheme, the Devil uses in our lives to convince us to compromise our standards. Using the shifting sands of culture, the Enemy tries to erode our convictions and change our behaviour. Remember! If he can lure us into the forbidden, then he has derailed our relationship with God and undermined our divine purpose.

The Enemy uses all kinds of enticements to pull believers/church away from God's plan, or to lessen our impact. He will make them seem easy and enjoyable—no big deal. Some will even seem like gifts from the Lord, blessings that look harmless to accept. But they derail us from what God actually has for us.

Consider King David. He wrote "My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end... And because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path (Ps 119:12, 128). He was far from perfect, but David always found his way back to God. He knew what he believed and not even Goliath, Saul Bathsheba and Absalom could shake David's faith.

Ultimately, each one of us is responsible for what we hold true within our hearts. The question is whether it's God's truth or man's truth. What we hold true will be questioned.

Knowing what we believe and why we believe it is foundational to our ability to be people of positive influence.

Recently, a study was carried out in America—called Barna study. In this study, 62% of American polled said they considered themselves “deeply spiritual”. The same people were then asked how this deep spirituality affected their decision making. Almost 32 % said “I make my moral choices based on what feels right and comfortable”. Another 18% of this group said “I make moral choices based on whatever is best for me”. Another 14% said “I make moral choices based on whatever causes the least conflict with others”. ONLY 16% said “I make my moral choices based on what the Bible says, what God’s Word says”. You know what this means? This means most Christians have non-Christian worldview.

You and I may be a believer and be on our way to heaven yet still not have a Christian worldview because we got it from the world and not from the Word. If we don’t base our decisions on the Bible, then there will be devastating consequences. We need to have our worldviews from a correct Word-view.

If we want to maintain a worldview centred on Christ and live according to God’s standards, then we must determine our Core Convictions. Just as building must have Load-bearing beams to support its structure, our worldview relies on beliefs determined by God’s Word.

CORE CONVICTIONS

Convictions require us to decide what’s right ahead of time. They are not based on what feels good or seems right in the moment. They are, instead, the unmovable foundation upon which our lives are built. Our beliefs, values and moral convictions provide a starting point for what we think and feel, the decisions we make and the actions we take. They share every aspect of our lives. We don’t need to be mean or judgmental when we share them with others BUT we do need to be sure of them. For our mutual benefit, I would like to explore a few areas of convictions that are crucial to how one engages with the surrounding culture and the worldviews.

1. **WORSHIP**—placing worth & value on who God is, tops my list. Scripture is crystal clear about God’s pre-eminence (better than all others/outstanding), the way He surpasses all others. {Reading Colossians 1:15-18} When we worship God, we embrace His attributes. We see Him as Omnipresent (everywhere at once), Omniscient(all-knowing), Omnipotent(all-powerful)—totally good and totally loving. Worship is not only about responsive readings and singing hymns. True worship is surrendering ourselves to the power, majesty and goodness of your creator, letting God be God—even when we don’t understand what he is doing or when we don’t agree. In Roman 2:1 Apostle Paul says “ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship”. When we surrender ourselves to God in all things and acknowledge His headship, we don’t question Him, even when the culture does.
2. **GOD’S WORD**—placing worth & value on the Bible and believing it is the infallible Word of God, comes next. {Reading 2 Timothy 3:16-17}. With any situation we face, let God’s Word settle it. Don’t let society explain away what God says is true. We must

stay full of the Word of God, using it as the guiding light for our daily lives and the moral basis for our value system. We must be careful to rely solely on truth, avoiding gossip, hearsay and the opinions of others.

3. HOLYNESS—raises the standard of personal purity as we honour the lordship of Christ. God’s character, Christ’s example and the Holy Spirit’s guidance provide our understanding of personal holiness. It’s being set apart from the world in a way that distinctly reflects who God is and what He is about. In 1Thessalonian 4:2-5 Paul says {To be read}. Holiness requires us to maintain a standard of Salt & Light leadership to those around us. It acknowledges God’s lordship over our lives and demonstrates our willingness to follow in the sacrificial footsteps of Jesus. It means we think through our words, actions, habits and attitudes at all times. Holiness prevents us from conforming to moral and cultural changes/shifts.
4. FAMILY—carries worth and value as a sacred institution created by God. We are made in His image and designed for relationship. As children, we are instructed to honour our fathers & our mothers and to obey them. As parents, we are warned not to provoke or harm our children (Ephesians 6:2-4). Families take care of one and another. In 1-Timothy 5:8, the Bible says “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”. One relationship that is central to the family is marriage. Marriage is designed to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church. According to Ephesians 5, husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the church and wives must love their husbands with respect, honouring them through sacrificial devotion(vv22-26). Strong families grow out of strong marriages.
5. LIFE—has intrinsic(essential) value in all forms, reflecting this most precious gift from God. Therefore, no person has the right to terminate human life, their own or anyone else’s. Jerimiah 1:4-5 reads “The word of the LORD came to me, saying, “before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations”. God knows each person even before he or she is conceived, so we must value each life as a gift from God. In the light of this truth, we must face the fact that abortion is a murder AND taking one’s own life, including euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide—is not our decision to make. Life is precious and a gift of God and ONLY He has the right to control when we live and when we die—not human beings.
6. HUMILITY—reflects an attitude of service, compassion and strength. It is the quality of placing the needs of others above our own. Refusing to draw attention to ourselves. Truly humble people always reflect the glory of God, reminding us that He is the source of life. The opposite, of course is pride—our human tendency to want the praise, adoration and attention of those around us, to take all the credit and shift all the responsibility. Yet God’s view on human pride is clear in James 4:6 “God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble”. Humility serves as the remedy for prideful self-centeredness. It reflects simplicity and sincerity, a willingness to sacrifice one’s ego. Living simply lowers costs and frees up our time & money that can go to the work of the Lord. Sincerity keeps us real and

touchable and it makes sure our word and thoughts match. Humility keeps our hearts tuned to God and not to ourselves.

These core areas of convictions probably don't surprise some of you. But if we don't know what we believe about any of them, then I encourage you to explore God's Word and commit to His truth. Culture and the world will continue to be our Enemy's smokescreen for obscuring truth & confusing god's people. But If you & I keep our eyes on the firm-ground of God's truth and deciding what to believe, then we will stand firm and strong, no matter how many bow-down to the cultural pressure around us.

Mya the Good Lord help us to Stand Firm on the foundation of His truth & His Word.....Amen.